

# Thomas Merton and the Quest for the Holy Spirit

By Andy Lord

## Introduction – Problem and Quest

Theological studies of Thomas Merton are rare but have been steadily developing alongside fresh understandings of the nature of systematic theology and its links with spirituality and praxis. Within such studies Christology, the understanding of Jesus, has taken pride of place and is often seen as the center around which all else circles. Hence it is extremely rare to find reflections on Merton's pneumatology, his understanding of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit. This article seeks to explore why this is the case and trace a rationale for a more integrated approach between Christology and pneumatology. It also outlines some of the key aspects of Merton's understanding of the Holy Spirit which provide pointers for future work. I want to suggest that there needs to be a fresh quest for the Holy Spirit through the works of Merton.

Work on Merton's theology has been slow largely because he is seen as a writer on spirituality and also because he did not tend to see himself as a theologian. Yet as the nature of theology has been re-examined in recent decades so it has been realized that Merton's work can be profitably seen within frameworks of sapiential (wisdom-oriented) or spiritual theology. Such approaches integrate better theological, biblical, spiritual and practical reflections in comparison with the traditionally more abstract systematic approaches.<sup>1</sup> Significant and pioneering in this regard has been the work of Christopher Pramuk, who suggests a sapiential approach to understanding Merton's Christology.<sup>2</sup> This is particularly driven by Merton's *Hagia Sophia* and his engagement beyond his own tradition. The "hidden Christ" is seen as present in all things and hence the unifier in Merton's ever-expanding engagement with the world. Pramuk builds on some of the earlier works on Merton's theology and Christology, notably that of George Kilcourse.<sup>3</sup> Kilcourse also speaks of "the hidden Christ of kenosis" (Kilcourse 7) and points out Merton's preference for sapiential theology. He also notes that Christology was undergoing a renewal within theological studies during the time Merton was writing and this is the background for his own focus, although he has a wider engagement with other theological themes. We might suggest that outside factors have stimulated a Christological focus on theological studies of Merton.

It is important to note some of the wider theological studies of Merton although, for most, the theological reflection serves other purposes. An early study of Merton's mysticism by Raymond Bailey often considered its topic in relation to Christology although that is not its primary aim.<sup>4</sup> Mark Quinn sought to study Merton's understanding of God through the themes of transcendence/immanence and apophatic/cataphatic – traditional approaches to exploring the ways God is experienced as far above us and yet close to us, hidden from our understanding and yet choosing to clearly reveal Himself.<sup>5</sup> This is

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an important study but does not explore the Trinitarian nature of God in Merton's thinking. More recently Timothy St. Onge has explored divine immanence with respect to Merton and other writers.<sup>6</sup> This takes a sapiential approach, developing that of Pramuk, and turns to Merton's Christology for understanding how God is present in the world through the presence of the cosmic Christ. It is significant that these studies of different themes are all notable for their lack of engagement with pneumatology and preference for Christology.

It might be thought, on this basis, that Merton had very little to say about the Holy Spirit and this is what is guiding the different scholars. It must be admitted, of course, that the Holy Spirit does not leap from every page of Merton's writing and so if the Spirit is significant then maybe this is in deep subterranean ways that are best left alone. Yet it can also be said that Jesus Christ is not everywhere present in Merton's writing and there are a number of themes deemed significant that are so considered on other grounds. Significance and understanding are not always based on the frequency of reference to specific terms.<sup>7</sup> What I want to suggest here is that for Merton Christology and pneumatology cannot be separated. They come together in his thinking and considering one without the other leaves any theology seriously lacking. Of course, they also need to be thought of within a Trinitarian framework but this takes us a long way beyond the scope of this article. This is recognized in general studies on Merton's thinking, particularly in terms of the two missions of God, Word and Spirit who work together.<sup>8</sup> Sadly this has not yet transferred into more theological reflections linking Word and Spirit. Hence there remains the need for a pneumatological quest in Merton studies.<sup>9</sup>

This article seeks to be a modest pointer to encourage such a quest into the future. There is one significant work which can provide a good basis for this quest, despite the currently limited access to it. Enda Cunningham completed in 1995 a doctorate exploring the nature of the Holy Spirit as the personal grace of God.<sup>10</sup> He suggested that the "Spirit of Christ is 'uncreated grace' in Person, the self-communication of God as 'gift' who establishes communion of human persons with Christ and, in and through Christ, with the Father" (E. Cunningham 2). Further, he suggests that this understanding of the Spirit is the unifying theme in Merton's theology, a pneumatological vision that mediates Christological realities. Clearly this might be seen as going too far the other way in placing Christology under pneumatology, but is a helpful corrective to some current assumptions. In the future it would be creative to explore Merton in terms of the kind of Spirit Christology that Cunningham's work is suggestive of, but for the moment the need is to consider what are the key insights Merton has on the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup> It is not possible to present an exhaustive study at this point, nor even an outline chronological study. Rather specific key themes that the present author has identified will be presented with a particular focus on some resources not usually engaged with in Merton studies. These might better provoke further research than exploring again some of the more familiar texts.

### **St. Paul at the Midway Point**

I want to start with the lectures of Merton on St. Paul that were given to student monks during the 1950s.<sup>12</sup> This is a helpful place to start partly because they come midway in Merton's thinking, after he has developed many of his thoughts but prior to his more notable "turning to the world." It recognizes the reality that Merton would have heard the letters of St. Paul being read most days of

his life in the monastery. Indeed, as Bonnie Thurston has pointed out, “Merton’s Christian thought is startlingly Pauline in its assumptions.”<sup>13</sup> Merton’s lectures are entitled “Sanctity in Christ” and this is a theme he returns to later, in 1963, in presenting an accessible introduction to the Christian life.<sup>14</sup> Starting with Merton’s biblical reflections is also a corrective to those who want to spring from Merton’s thoughts into a very different mindset without holding onto his biblical engagement.<sup>15</sup> What I want to suggest is that in Merton’s biblically shaped understanding Christology and pneumatology go together. This can be seen in the lectures and resonates with his wider thinking.

In these lectures Merton stresses how St. Paul addresses the most important issue in monastic life and represents the “final peak of the ascent of progressive revelation about our union with God” (“SESP” 266). St. Paul is writing about sanctity, about the process of sanctification, about the way of the Spirit transforming us into Christ. The “pneumatic life” inaugurated by the Resurrection forms us into Christ by an “interior, supernatural principle of life” (“SESP” 291). This is the positive invitation to life with God that pervades St. Paul’s writings. It requires a personal response of faith and results in a growth in charity. In union with God those of faith are able to offer an *agape* love for the world. This is seen in both individual and communal ways – to be united to God is to be united to others in Christ. For St. Paul this process is placed within an eschatological framework in which by the Spirit the first fruits of the future are seen in the present. Merton’s summary of St. Paul’s basic teaching is notable for the way it treats in order sanctification, pneumatology, Christology, faith, charity and eschatology. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that comes first in the sanctification process because it is by the Spirit that the work, life and love of Christ are made real in the lives of believers. Focusing on the Spirit is the natural outcome of the Resurrection.

Merton then goes on to develop the thought of St. Paul within a framework inspired by the Fathers, that of “recapitulation in Christ” (“SESP” 301 ff.). This is the way in which God reverses the process by which sin infected the earth, and gathers together all creation in a new economy of salvation. This reversal is a movement towards the renewal of creation and humanity within it. We have here a clear cosmic vision in Merton, prior to his “turning to the world” when he worked this out in more detail with reference to particular concerns. Merton draws on St. Basil and St. Maximus to suggest that this is seen as a movement of “divinization” through the Spirit, one that we are called to participate in and that is made possible because of the death and resurrection of Christ. This journey is one Merton refers to elsewhere as a return to “paradise,” to the original unity with God at creation.<sup>16</sup> The indwelling of the Spirit and the gifts that the Spirit gives, the charisms, are key in this transformational and eschatological movement. The saint through this movement “is one who lives in and by Christ – who is sanctified and moved by the Holy Spirit” (“SESP” 355). The Spirit works alongside Christ in a personal way as part of a cosmic movement of transfiguration.

Merton links the work of the Spirit with grace: grace is another way of seeing “the life of Christ in us – beginning with His Resurrection” and the way we are constituted “in the Spirit” (“SESP” 364-65). The Holy Spirit is a gift whose presence and guiding, in faith, needs attending to if we are to be led into maturity in Christ. This maturity is characterized by a true wisdom, the “wisdom of the Spirit” (“SESP” 376). It is known only as we allow the Spirit to guide us into the desert, into the ways of asceticism. We are to use our free wills to respond positively to the guiding of the Spirit and so be led through the challenges of the flesh, opposition and the law, to a greater charity and giving of ourselves to others in the way of Christ. There is much more detail given in the lectures and they

do not cover the whole of St. Paul. Yet there is enough to support the argument that the Spirit and Christ are seen together, for Merton, and both relate to grace and wisdom. To separate them in our thinking and practice is to lose the Christian way that St. Paul outlines.

I am suggesting that this integration of the working of the Holy Spirit and of Jesus Christ is foundational in Merton's thinking and rooted in the teaching of St. Paul, the Fathers and general Church teaching. If so, then we would expect such an integration to be seen arising in other discussions in which St. Paul or the work of the Spirit are not the focus. A few examples can illustrate how this is indeed the case. Earlier in the 1950s Merton was trying to put together some writing under the general theme of the "School of the Spirit" which he decided not to publish but which is illustrative of his thinking. Outlining a similar process to the one we have seen above, but without such reference to St. Paul, Merton suggests that there are "two invisible missions in the interior life: the mission of the Word and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Word and Spirit are inseparable, so their missions to our souls must take place inseparably."<sup>17</sup> The mission of the Word comes first logically but is immediately followed by that of the Spirit. The Spirit is the means by which the image of Jesus becomes real in the person of faith. Similar themes are found in Merton's 1960 essay on a theology of creativity. There he suggests that a "theology of creativity will necessarily be the theology of the Holy Spirit re-forming us in the likeness of Christ, raising us from death to life with the very same power which raised Christ from the dead."<sup>18</sup> In a more meditative work, Merton urges his readers to experience Resurrection which "is the life and action of Christ in us by his Holy Spirit."<sup>19</sup> In a different style, Merton returns to St. Paul on Galatians to expound a way of Word and Spirit. More evidence could be brought to bear but we can see Merton choosing to keep the ministry of Jesus and the Holy Spirit together in regard to different themes.

### **Holy Spirit and Contemplation**

The transformational journey in the Holy Spirit is characterized, for Merton, by contemplation. Much has been written about Merton's focus on contemplation from many angles and there is not space here to engage with all the studies. Rather it is worth reminding ourselves of some of the ways Merton links contemplation with the work of the Spirit. He quotes St. Bernard on the journey into charity as "something which can only be had by the special and extraordinary action of the Holy Spirit within the wine-cellar of contemplation."<sup>20</sup> The outworking in charity by the Spirit comes from a deep awareness of the love within which we are held in God, by the same Spirit. Merton speaks of how we realize our "divine sonship" through the Spirit of fire.<sup>21</sup> There is an emphasis here on the way God freely gives of the Spirit to those who ask, in contrast to a grasping from God that is characteristic of what he calls Promethean theology.<sup>22</sup> Contemplation is rooted in the belief that God longs to give of His Spirit and that our responsibility is to recognize, receive and freely act upon the Spirit's presence and guidance. This is the way of love, with the Holy Spirit seen as "a personal principle of love and activity" (*IE* 45). Such love leads us into truth, into the reality of life, and we should desire to become true under the action of the Spirit. For Merton, contemplation is an entry into the loving, truthful action of the Holy Spirit who transforms us in the direction of Christ: "The foundation of our life is that the Spirit is given and that we are led by the Spirit."<sup>23</sup>

This transformation inevitably means that the Spirit will lead us into the desert where love is tested and purified.<sup>24</sup> This is a rich work, caught in Merton's poem "Clairvaux":

O holy Bernard, wise in brotherlove,  
 Vintner who train and grow, and prune and tie us  
 Fast, trim us in sure and perfect arbors of stability and rule:  
 You have forseen what vintages the Holy Spirit,  
 Ripening, in our concord, as in vine-vein the strong sun,  
 Will trample in His press, His charity, in the due day,  
 To barrel us, His Burgundy.<sup>25</sup>

This purification is both a self-emptying in the way of Christ (cf. Phil. 2) and also the simple desert emptiness of a broken vessel lying open to God's Spirit.<sup>26</sup> It is where we learn to distinguish between good and evil within ourselves.<sup>27</sup> This is the purifying journey into union with God, "a process in which the gift of the Spirit unites the believer to the Son, in whom one is united to the Father."<sup>28</sup> Or as Cunningham puts it, the Holy Spirit is the personal "agent of sanctification and of union" (E. Cunningham 6). Here I have drawn on a variety of Merton sources to illustrate the foundational nature of the Holy Spirit (within the Trinity) to contemplative life.

### **The Holy Spirit Drives Engagement with Other Traditions**

Merton's later years were characterized by a deepening involvement in Eastern religions that built in part upon his engagement with Orthodox theology. This is usually seen largely in terms of a Christology of the "hidden Christ," the incarnate Wisdom of God present in all things. It is therefore worth looking at some of the ways in which the Holy Spirit is also seen at work by Merton in such thinking. This is not an exhaustive analysis but rather aims to provoke the realization that something is missing and is in need of further study. An obvious place to start on these themes is the work of Pramuk already noted. He bases his work on Merton's *Hagia Sophia* and takes *Sophia*, Wisdom, to be Christ. Yet, as Cunningham argues, this can have a more varied interpretation. He sees *Hagia Sophia* as a symbol of grace which has a "multilayered significance – pneumatological, creational, personal, and Christological" (E. Cunningham 14). We could also turn to the earlier work of Oliver Dufresne, who speaks of Merton's belief "in some sort of special presence of Christ in the cosmos, as in things and events etc. . . . which naturally he termed the 'Cosmic Christ.'"<sup>29</sup> This approach enables him to speak of the action of Christ independent of Church and Christians, although he does consider these also. He argues that Merton affirms Christ's central place in human and cosmic renewal with the Incarnation as the *leitmotif* of his work and a lived reality in his life (Dufresne 103). Again, the issue is not that Christ is involved in the renewal of the cosmos, or can be brought together with Wisdom, but rather the consideration of the action of Christ (or Wisdom) separate from that of the Spirit which is assumed by Merton.

Merton's engagement with Russian Orthodox traditions is also brought to the fore in considerations of Christology and Wisdom, and rightly so. Yet we need also to recognize that these traditions also highlight the Spirit. Merton's recognized that Orthodox theologians correctly critique Western theology for its lack of pneumatology. He notes that for Eastern Orthodoxy,

This economy, this plan of God is centered on the fact that man is the image of God, and that God comes down to earth and empties Himself to save man, and

the restoration of man is the work of the Holy Spirit. So the reality of the Christian mystery is precisely the work of the Holy Spirit, and the most important reality of the present age, which is the eschatological age, the last age, is therefore that everything is in the hands of the Holy Spirit. (*TMA* 83-84)

It is not surprising, therefore, that A. M. Allchin summarizes Merton's integration of Russian Orthodox thinking in terms of a cosmic transformation in which our lives have "Trinitarian dimensions, a call to offer all things to the Father, through the life-giving death of the Son, in the transforming power of the Spirit." All this "is to be done with power, in the freedom which the Spirit gives, as we become co-creators working with the Spirit who is the Creator of life."<sup>30</sup> Orthodox thinking emphasizes the power of the Spirit in the universal impulse and it is the Spirit that brings together contemplation and eschatology. It remains to develop Allchin's insights alongside the Christological insights of others that we might better understand Merton's approach to cosmic transformation.

This universal impetus is particularly highlighted in terms of Merton's engagement with Eastern religious traditions. Some scholars see this through the lens of the hidden Christ, and others through a more general lens of God's working without a Trinitarian engagement.<sup>31</sup> Whilst valuable, again I want to highlight the role of the Spirit that remains to be fully explored. When Merton speaks of early Jesuit mission engagement in China he notes that Matthew Ricci "in the light granted him by the Holy Spirit . . . distinguished what was essentially Christian and truly Catholic – that is, universal – from cultural and accidental accretions proper to a certain time and place."<sup>32</sup> The Spirit guided the discernment of truth in another culture, just as the Spirit leads individuals into truth through contemplation as we saw above. Without such guiding we are in danger of "grieving the Holy Spirit" who has asked us to take risks in sharing the Gospel of Jesus. As Brother Ramon summarizes, Merton saw that the "work of the Holy Spirit was manifest universally among all peoples, cultures and traditions."<sup>33</sup> In terms of peace and non-violence some Buddhist and Hindu traditions were seen to understand the language of the Spirit better than the Christian Church in a Western capitalist society. The language of the Spirit is one of peace (a fruit of the Spirit) and may be heard in surprising places. This is not to undermine the missionary nature of the Spirit in witnessing to Christ but rather widening the scope of this witness. Even as early as 1946, in his poem "A Whitsun Canticle," Merton was speaking of how the Spirit is poured out and "we will go evangelize the continents" (*CP* 119). This is quickly followed up with a turn to creation, to minds, hills, trees and birds that also proclaim the good news. Spirit draws out witness from all creation, an understanding Merton recognized early and later developed in his understanding of mission and dialogue.<sup>34</sup>

Merton's correspondence with John Wu, a Chinese Christian with whom he dialogued over the nature of Eastern religions, is full of references to the Spirit's work. Merton speaks of joint vocation with Wu as willed by God as it has the "marks of the Holy Spirit's action on it everywhere."<sup>35</sup> He links Chuang Tzu to the freedom of the Spirit expounded by St. Paul and prays regularly in his letters for the guiding and blessing of the Spirit. The work of the Spirit pervades their letters. Turning to Merton's writings, Cristóbal Serrán-Pagán notes that for Merton "*wu-wei* is the mode of action of the Dao itself which moves spontaneously like the Holy Spirit throughout the universe" (Serrán-Pagán 38). He suggests that it is hard to translate the term *wu-wei*, but negatively it means "to act without action" and positively it means "to follow the course of Nature which is to be in harmony

with the Dao” (Serrán-Pagán 38). This is an “inner activity, the ability to achieve effortlessly that which apparently causes an intentional effort” (Serrán-Pagán 39). Here is the start of a refreshed understanding of the Spirit through engagement with another tradition. It was also worked out in his dialogue with Daisetz Suzuki in which they each seek to use the language of the other to advance their understanding. Although Merton’s work here is perhaps limited, it suggests an area for study that might engage with wider pneumatological approaches to other faiths.<sup>36</sup>

Merton’s engagement with people of other faiths was always personal and practical, perhaps seen above all in his meeting with the Dalai Lama and their conversation that focused on methods of meditation.<sup>37</sup> Yet behind the scenes the Holy Spirit was driving Merton’s engagement with other traditions, alongside the understanding of Christ as the often hidden wisdom of God. What is needed is an exploration of Merton’s approach to religious encounter that is more fully Trinitarian and engages with his understanding gained from Scripture and connects with his practical concerns.

### **The Holy Spirit as Contemplative and Prophetic**

It is perhaps surprising that the study of the Holy Spirit hasn’t occupied more space in Merton studies since there has been a revival of such study in recent decades. Also, the rise of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements has highlighted particular workings of the Holy Spirit in ways that have encouraged experience and study of God’s ways. Merton himself went as far as to say that “we are Pentecostals without necessarily having all the Pentecostal trimmings” (*TMA* 76-77). There is a shared emphasis on the experience of the Spirit’s leading and the understanding of the Spirit as the gift of God. The links here are worth further study although Merton’s contact with Pentecostalism was limited. He had contact with some monks who had been involved in classical Pentecostalism although not perhaps the most positive examples.<sup>38</sup> What Merton seems to have taken from this is an understanding of speaking in tongues, the evidence of Spirit baptism for classical Pentecostals, which he reflected on and rethought. At the height of the struggle for civil rights Merton sees tongues as an outlet for people’s fears and as “an ultimate protest against the unacceptable realities and challenges of the historical situation.”<sup>39</sup> Merton later links tongues to the problem of language at a time of war: when common language is being used to support war how can we protest? He suggests that speaking in tongues “is in its own way an expression of a curious kind of radicalism, a reaction to a religious language that is (perhaps obscurely) felt to be inadequate.”<sup>40</sup> Of course, the limit of tongues is that it can bring dialogue to an end because it is hard to speak against. Yet there is something positive in a Spirit-given language of protest at times when language, even religious language, has failed.

When the Catholic Charismatic movement started in 1967 this had a focus at the University of Notre Dame and people from there regularly visited the Abbey of Gethsemani to try and encourage similar experiences of the Spirit.<sup>41</sup> There is one tape recording of Merton speaking the day after such a visit when he encouraged the monks to share their thoughts and questions.<sup>42</sup> Merton, as always, seeks to find the positive and notes the encouragement to spontaneous prayer which he has found beneficial alongside the set prayer forms they used seven times a day; also the use of guitars in worship which he has enjoyed; and a shared desire for purity of heart. There should be “opportunity for the Spirit to work in every possible way” although different vocations are given to different people and communities. Thus, for Merton, the charismatic movement contains good through the shared gift of the Spirit but may not be appropriate for everyone and needs critical reflection. In particular

he questions whether Pentecostal practices are appropriate for a structured monastic community – there is a danger of demanding the Spirit speak to our timetable. Also, Pentecostals tend to be more vocal and the monastic calling is to silence. Hence Merton contrasts Pentecostalism as prophetic to monasticism as contemplative – both important, but the Pentecostal charism should not drive out the monastic charism. Merton is distinguishing between two ways of the Spirit’s working and seeing the monks as within the contemplative stream. This is a contrast also suggested by James Finley and is worth further reflection in terms of the nature of the Spirit’s work.<sup>43</sup>

Of course, the problem with this analysis is that Merton is usually seen as a prophet who is also contemplative! Out of the contemplative practice came the Word of the Lord that needed speaking out, often as “the cry of the oppressed.”<sup>44</sup> Theologically, Merton has been seen to develop a “mystical-prophetic” understanding (see St. Onge 66-70). Revelation of God’s wisdom comes through contemplation and is spoken out in prophetic word to others. This is a deeply disciplined and prophetic way of life through which the charismatic gift of prophecy is communicated.<sup>45</sup> Merton lived a disciplined life in which he sought God in contemplative prayer and stressed the need for openness to the charisms of the Spirit. The particular gift of prophecy was one that he was given that made a significant impact on those who read his writings. Thus the division between prophetic and contemplative that he draws when reflecting on charismatic renewal is perhaps aimed at being helpful to monks generally rather than describing in full his own situation. Perhaps Merton’s limited contact with such renewal limited a more detailed engagement and he was offering some wise initial guidance. However, there remains a fruitful overlap between Merton and the understanding and practices of the charismatic movement in terms of the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit. Developing an engagement with the charismatic tradition brings into focus the gifts as well as the fruit of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12 – not just Gal. 5). It was perhaps by the Spirit of love that Merton was enabled to see good in a movement that many Catholics struggled with. Ultimately it is perhaps such a love that can hold together the contemplative and the prophetic, God’s love for individuals and a broken world, the quiet and the speaking, the hidden growth and the sudden inbreaking of God, the painful purging in the desert and the dramatic healing of the damaged. The two streams of the Spirit are united in love and further exploration of such depths of the Spirit could bring many gifts.

## **Conclusion**

It is widely recognized that studies of Merton’s theology have been limited, for understandable reasons, but have benefited from continuing reflection. Current studies have focused on Merton’s Christology, particularly as it relates to contemplation and the turning to the world. What is needed, I have suggested, is a fresh quest for the Holy Spirit in Merton. Furthermore I have briefly outlined a number of sources that might be fruitfully mined in such a quest. The biblical materials, particularly the writings of St. Paul, were for Merton the foundation of his life and understanding of the Spirit’s work within a Trinitarian framework. These bring together the personal, communal and cosmic workings of the Spirit within an eschatological framework. The practice of contemplation is grounded in an understanding of the Spirit as gift, the gift of love who transforms us like Christ. It is by the Spirit that believers are led on the purging journey of sanctification to union with God. The Spirit represents a universal impulse whose power and wisdom drives us ever outwards into cosmic engagement, and Merton’s engagement with Orthodox traditions is helpful here. This also implies an engagement beyond the Christian world and the work of the Spirit in Eastern religions was



a reality for Merton. In all of this the Spirit is granting charismatic gifts, with prophecy significant in Merton's ministry. The overlap between the contemplative and charismatic traditions provides rich nourishment in deepening such an understanding of the Spirit.

The quest for the Holy Spirit in and through Merton is on – the Spirit who acts in individuals, communities and the world, the Spirit who quietly works, who purges, who gifts, who enables speech, who touches the mind and will, the emotions and the heart. This is the Spirit of fire (breaking in and purging us), the Spirit of wind (quietly directing and transforming us), the Spirit of water (bringing resurrection and new birth), and the Spirit of the earth (speaking through nature and granting creativity). Let us take the challenge to explore and live the manifold riches of the Holy Spirit.<sup>46</sup>

1. Within systematic theology we can point to David F. Ford, *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
2. Christopher Pramuk, *Sophia: The Hidden Christ of Thomas Merton* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009).
3. George Kilcourse, *Ace of Freedoms: Thomas Merton's Christ* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993); subsequent references will be cited as "Kilcourse" parenthetically in the text.
4. Raymond Bailey, *Thomas Merton on Mysticism* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975).
5. Mark Quinn, "Thomas Merton's Understanding of God" [Ph.D. Dissertation] (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 1982).
6. Timothy S. St. Onge, "Cosmosophia: The Dwelling of the Divine in the Contemporary World" [Ph.D. Dissertation] (Mishawaka, IN: Graduate Theological Foundation, 2010); subsequent references will be cited as "St. Onge" parenthetically in the text.
7. Take, for example, the debate in biblical studies over the link between themes and words stimulated by James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).
8. See Thomas Merton, *The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation*, ed. William H. Shannon (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2003) 42-49; subsequent references will be cited as "IE" parenthetically in the text.
9. See, as a starting point, Patrick F. O'Connell, "Holy Spirit," in William H. Shannon, Christine M. Bochen and Patrick F. O'Connell, *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002) 207-10.
10. Enda Cunningham, "Grace as the Self-Communication of the Holy Spirit in the Writings of Thomas Merton" [Ph.D. Dissertation] (Rome: Gregorian University, 1995); subsequent references will be cited as "E. Cunningham" parenthetically in the text. Currently only two chapters and the bibliography are available in the Thomas Merton Center [TMC] at Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY, although access to the complete thesis continues to be sought.
11. Spirit Christology has been highlighted as a theme by a number of theologians in recent decades. A helpful treatment in the present regard is Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).
12. Thomas Merton, "Sanctity in the Epistles of St. Paul" (1954), mimeographed conference notes included in vol. 23 of Thomas Merton, "Collected Essays," the 24-volume bound set of published and unpublished materials assembled at the Abbey of Gethsemani and available both there and at the Thomas Merton Center; subsequent references will be cited as "'SESP'" parenthetically in the text. A version of this material was published in *Liturgy OCSO* (1996-97) although because this was not an official publication I am referring to the pages in the "Collected Essays" (see <http://hymnsandchants.com/Texts/Liturgy/LiturgicalCommission> volumes 30 and 31 [accessed 4 March 2014]).
13. Bonnie Thurston, "Thomas Merton and St. Paul," *The Merton Seasonal* 34.1 (Spring 2009) 14.
14. Thomas Merton, *Life and Holiness* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1963) 70-74.
15. We can note, for example, such a lack in the otherwise fruitful study of St. Onge.
16. See William H. Shannon, *Thomas Merton's Paradise Journey: Writings on Contemplation* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2000), although again appropriate attention to the work of the Holy Spirit is lacking.
17. Thomas Merton, "School of the Spirit [Final Draft]" (unpublished manuscript [1951]) 40 (TMC archives).
18. Thomas Merton, *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton*, ed. Patrick Hart, OCSO (New York: New Directions, 1981) 368.
19. Thomas Merton, *He is Risen* (Niles, IL: Argus, 1975) 10.
20. Thomas Merton, *The Silent Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1957) 114.
21. Thomas Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable* (New York: New Directions, 1966) 84; subsequent references will be

- cited as “RU” parenthetically in the text.
22. See RU 79-80; Thomas Merton, *The New Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1961) 24-29.
  23. Thomas Merton, *Thomas Merton in Alaska: The Alaskan Conferences, Journals, and Letters*, ed. Robert E. Daggy (New York: New Directions, 1989) 77; subsequent references will be cited as “TMA” parenthetically in the text.
  24. See Thomas Merton, *The Monastic Journey*, ed. Brother Patrick Hart (Kansas City: Sheed, Andrews & McMeel, 1977) 30.
  25. Thomas Merton, *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1977) 128; subsequent references will be cited as “CP” parenthetically in the text.
  26. See James Finley, *Merton’s Palace of Nowhere: A Search for God through Awareness of the True Self* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1978) 56.
  27. See Thomas Merton, *No Man Is an Island* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955) 89.
  28. Patrick F. O’Connell, Introduction to Thomas Merton, *An Introduction to Christian Mysticism: Initiation into the Monastic Tradition* 3, ed. Patrick F. O’Connell (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2008) xxiii.
  29. Oliver J. Dufresne, “Human and Cosmic Renewal: Thomas Merton’s Affirmation of Christic Involvement” [Ph.D. Dissertation] (Strasbourg: Université des Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg, 1975) 80; subsequent references will be cited as “Dufresne” parenthetically in the text.
  30. A. M. Allchin, “Our Lives, A Powerful Pentecost: Merton’s Meeting with Russian Christianity,” *The Merton Annual* 11 (1998) 38.
  31. For example see Ekman P. C. Tam, *Christian Contemplation and Chinese Zen-Taoism: A Study of Thomas Merton’s Writings* (Hong Kong: Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre, 2002).
  32. Thomas Merton, *Mystics and Zen Masters* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1967) 83.
  33. Brother Ramon, SSF, *Soul Friends: A Journey with Thomas Merton* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1989) 187.
  34. See “Letter to Pablo Antonio Cuadra Concerning Giants” (CP 384) and James Conner, OCSO, “Thomas Merton – Final Integration through Interreligious Dialogue,” *The Merton Annual* 23 (2010) 27, which speaks of Merton’s openness to the Spirit in other religions.
  35. Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love: Letters on Religious Experience and Social Concerns*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1985) 613 [4/1/1961]; also found in Cristóbal Serrán-Pagán, ed., *Merton & the Tao: Dialogues with John Wu and the Ancient Sages* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2013) 184 (subsequent references will be cited as “Serrán-Pagán” parenthetically in the text).
  36. See for example Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions*, JPT Sup. 20 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).
  37. See Judith Simmer-Brown, “The Liberty That Nobody Can Touch: Thomas Merton Meets Tibetan Buddhism,” in Bonnie Thurston, ed., *Merton & Buddhism: Wisdom, Emptiness & Everyday Mind* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2007) 66-73.
  38. On Pentecostalism a good introduction is Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
  39. Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) 110.
  40. Thomas Merton, *The Nonviolent Alternative*, ed. Gordon C. Zahn (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1980) 236.
  41. A monk there told me of how they came and tried to convert them to charismatic ways!
  42. Thomas Merton, “Pentecostalism; Cassian (Why Come to Monastery); Purity of Heart,” Audio CD #179.1 [8/4/1968] (TMC Archives).
  43. See Glenn Crider, “Interview with James Finley: Cultivating a Contemplative Lifestyle,” *The Merton Annual* 19 (2006) 355-56.
  44. William Apel, “Mystic as Prophet: The Deep Freedom of Thomas Merton and Howard Thurman,” *The Merton Annual* 16 (2003) 187.
  45. See Kyle Arcement, “In the School of Prophets: The Formation of Thomas Merton’s Prophetic Spirituality” [Ph.D. Dissertation] (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2013) 114-15; [http://aladinrc.wrlc.org/bitstream/handle/1961/14385/Arcement\\_cua\\_0043A\\_10371display.pdf?sequence=1](http://aladinrc.wrlc.org/bitstream/handle/1961/14385/Arcement_cua_0043A_10371display.pdf?sequence=1).
  46. I am very grateful to Paul M. Pearson, Director of the Thomas Merton Center, Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY, who introduced me to Merton studies and graciously helped guide me to relevant sources at the Center; and also to the Anglican Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham, England, for giving me the time and support to undertake further studies.