

*Welcome to our Contemplative Panel*

*With Merton & Keating's  
Roadmap,  
Where Do We Go from Here?*

*Our session will begin shortly*

*Be aware we are recording this event and will  
post it on Contemplative Outreach Atlanta's  
YouTube Channel*



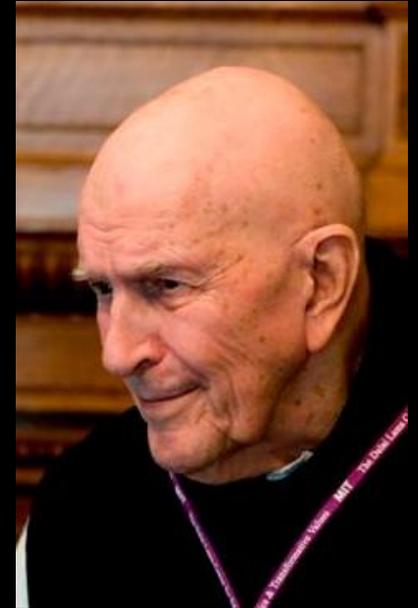
## ***The Four Guidelines of Centering Prayer***

- 1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.*
- 2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.*
- 3. When engaged with your thoughts,\* return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.*
- 4. At the end of the prayer period remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.*

*\*thoughts include body sensations, feelings, images, and reflections.*



## 20 Minute Centering Prayer Session



### *The Four Guidelines of Centering Prayer*

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*My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.* Thomas

Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude* , 79



David Rensberger



## **A Contemplative Countercultural Future Christianity**

Karl Rahner: "The Christian of the future will be a mystic, or will not exist at all"



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Karl Rahner: "The Christian of the future will be a mystic, or will not exist at all"

Corollary: The Christianity of the future will be countercultural and nonconformed



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A mystical orthopraxy of love



... monasticism aims at the cultivation of a certain quality of life, a level of awareness, a depth of consciousness, an area of transcendence and of adoration which are not usually possible in an active secular existence. The need for a certain *distance* from the world does not make the monk love the world less.... the monastic community has the right and duty to create a certain solitude ... But ... the monastic community owes other men a share in that quiet and that solitude.

— *Contemplation in a World of Action*, pp. 27–29



For the monastic life has a certain prophetic character about it..., in the sense that he is a living witness to the freedom of the sons of God and to the essential difference between that freedom and the spirit of the world.

The monastic life then must maintain ... this wilderness perspective... the monk [must] live as a man of God who has been manifestly “called out of the world” to an existence that differs radically from that of other men, however sincere, however Christian.

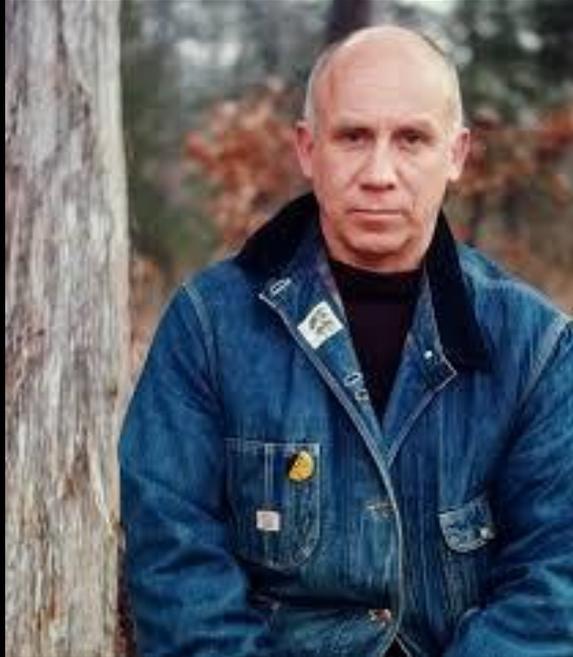
— *Contemplation in a World of Action*, pp. 27–29

David Rensberger



Therefore, it seems to me, personally, that the basis of the Christian mission to the world is precisely that the Christian is “not of this world.” He is first of all freed from its particular myths, idolatries, and confusions by his Christian faith. His first mission is to live that freedom in whatever way God gives him to live it—whether in the world or out of it does not matter.

— *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, p. 328



Father, ... if I were not a mere man, ... capable of all mistakes..., also capable of ... affection for You, I would not be capable of being Your son. You desire the love a man's heart because Your Divine Son also loves You with a man's Heart ... in order that my heart and His Heart should love You in one love, which is a human love.

— *Thoughts in Solitude*, pp. 128–130



... not that we cease to be men in order to become angels or gods, but that the love of my man's heart can become God's love ..., and my human tears can fall from my eyes as the tears of God ... from the motion of His Spirit in ... His incarnate Son.... then our love of other men becomes pure and strong..., loving them with something of ... God's love for us.

This is the true fruit and the true purpose of Christian solitude.

— *Thoughts in Solitude*, pp. 128–130



My “eschatology” says that underlying all of it... lies an ultimate ground in which all contradictions are united and come out “right.” ... [T]his ultimate ground is personal ..., a ground of freedom and love, not a simple mechanism or process. But since we are all in potentially *conscious* contact with this deep ground ... we must try to “listen” to what comes out of it and respond to the imperatives of its freedom.

— Thomas Merton to Walter Weisskopf, April 4, 1968 (Gordon Oyer, *Signs of Hope: Thomas Merton’s Letters on Peace, Race, and Ecology*, p. 245; *Witness to Freedom: Letters in Times of Crisis* (ed. William Shannon, p. 338

In doing so, we may not be able to direct the course of history according to some preconceived plan, but we will be in harmony with the dynamics of life and history even though we may not fully realize that we are so. The important thing then is to restore this dimension of existence.

— Thomas Merton to Walter Weisskopf, April 4, 1968 (Gordon Oyer, *Signs of Hope: Thomas Merton's Letters on Peace, Race, and Ecology*, p. 245; *Witness to Freedom: Letters in Times of Crisis* (ed. William Shannon, p. 338

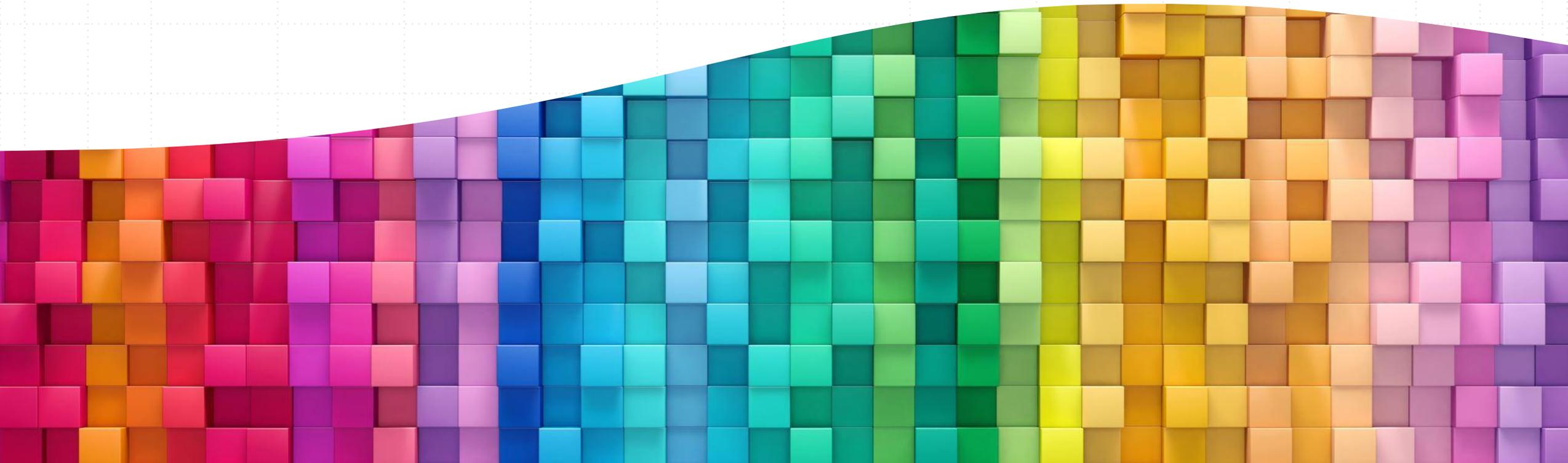


# Merton and the “ONE-ING” of Differences

*He may have not known where he was going but he had an EXPERIENCE-BASED IDEA of what the roadmap was.*

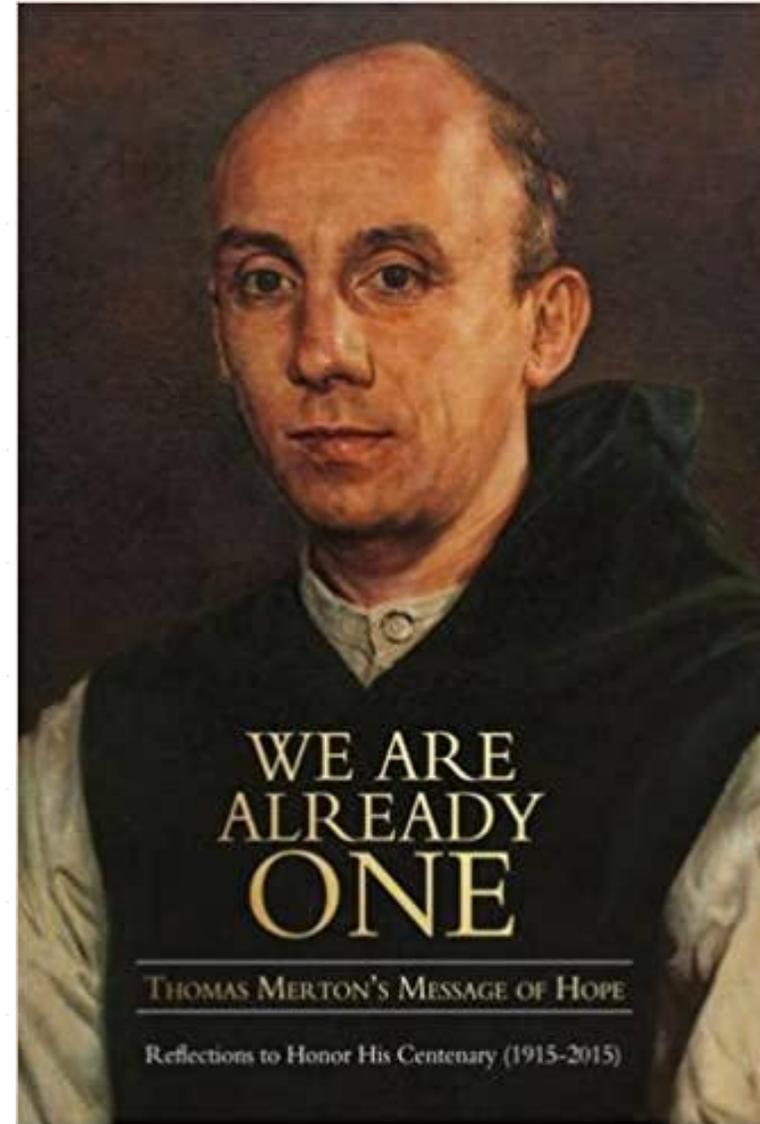
**“With Merton and Keating's Roadmap, Where Do We Go From Here?”**

Saturday, July 16th, 2022, Ed Bacon



# This PowerPoints' journey

1. our HERE
- 2 Merton's terrain and map  
“from separation to  
embracing”
3. How to get from HERE  
to New World of One-ing





# Context: Our HERE is The Disunited States of America

“The United States appears to be drifting apart into separate nations, with diametrically opposed social, environmental and health policies. Call these the Disunited States.

The most immediate breaking point is on abortion, as about half the country will soon limit or ban the procedure while the other half expands or reinforces access to reproductive rights. But **the ideological fault lines extend far beyond that one topic, to climate change, gun control and L.G.B.T.Q. and voting rights.**”

*Spurred by the Supreme Court, a Nation Divides Along a Red-Blue Axis: On abortion, climate change, guns and much more, two Americas — one liberal, one conservative — are moving in opposite directions,*

[Jonathan Weisman](#), July 2, 2022

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/02/us/politics/us-divided-political-party.html?searchResultPosition=1>

# State-based dissolution

One state's banned books are [another's teen summer reading list](#).

Jake Grumbach, a University of Washington political scientist who began studying the **fragmentation of the nation more than a decade ago**, said America was living through a **“hyper-drive of state-based dissolution,”**

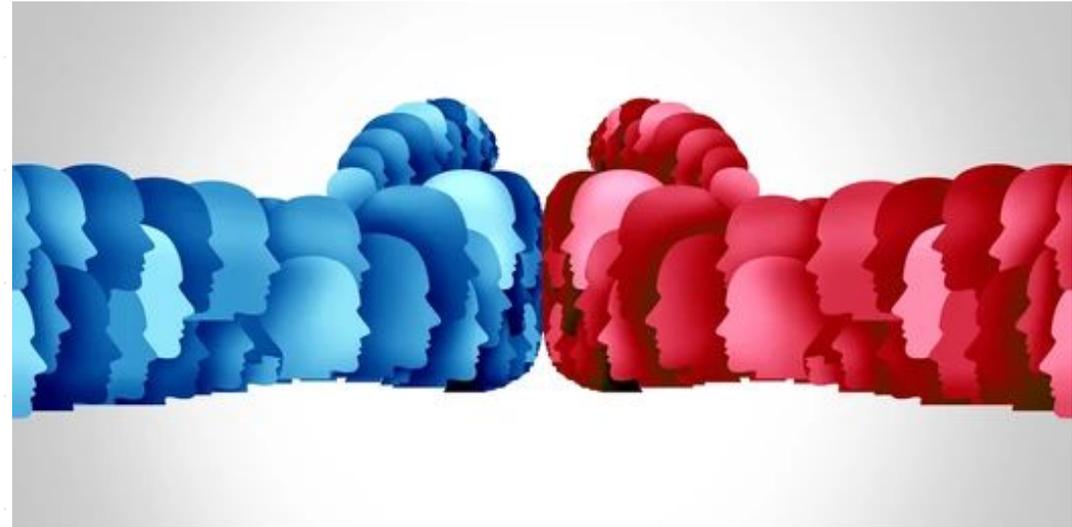
For some people, the divides have grown so deep and so personal that they have felt compelled to pick up and move from one America to the other.

“I did everything I could to put my mouth where my money was, to bridge the divide with my own actions,” said Howard Garrett, a Black, gay 29-year-old from Franklin, Tenn., who ran for alderman in recent years, organized the town's first Juneteenth celebration and worked on L.G.B.T.Q. outreach to local schools, only to be **greeted with harassment and death threats**. Mr. Garrett moved to Washington, D.C., last year. **“People were just sick in their heart,”** he said, **“and that was something you can't change.”**



# Sorting

As the political divide between the states becomes more pronounced, what political scientists call “sorting” may accelerate. The conservative Illinois billionaire Kenneth Griffin announced last week that he had moved to Miami from Chicago, and would take Citadel, his hedge fund, with him. He told his employees that Florida offered a better corporate environment.



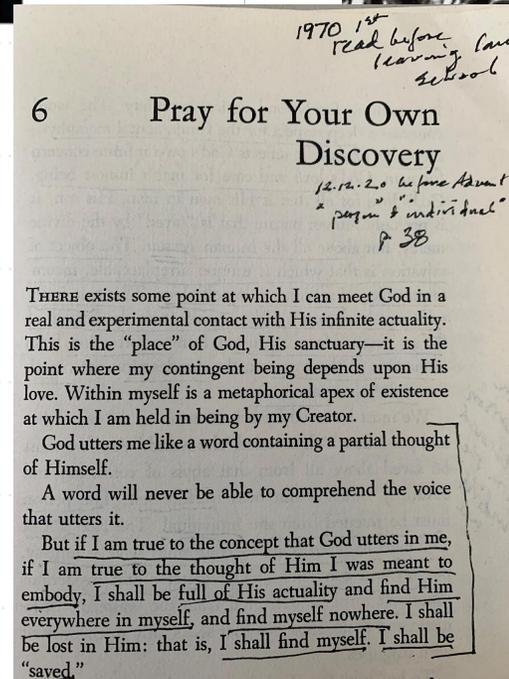
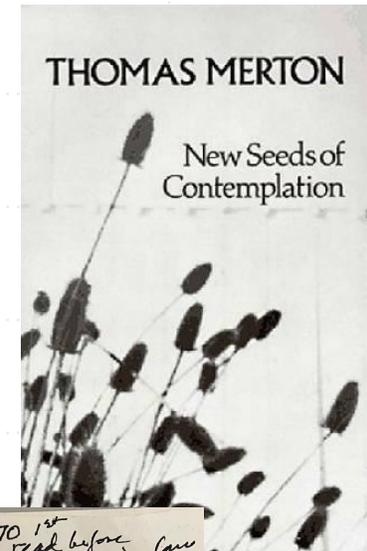
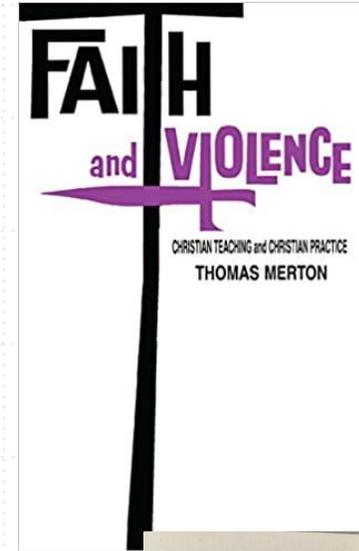
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# My Introduction to Merton: Salvation as Discovering True Self. Another polarized era.

I first read *Faith and Violence* and then *New Seeds of Contemplation*. I did not start my Merton journey through his best-selling autobiography, *The Seven Story Mountain*.

Chapter 6, “Pray For Your Own Discovery,” in *New Seeds of Contemplation* had and still has scriptural valence for me and was the spiritual architecture The Inaudible Voice used to call me out of Law School, January 1971.

- God utters each of us like a word containing a divine thought – a thought of God’s Self. This is the center point of our unique creations.
- When I am true to the concept God utters in me – the thought of God I was meant to embody – I will find God everywhere in myself. I shall find myself. That is my salvation.
- “Salvation” is a beautiful Christian metaphor; it is not the hackneyed despised, vapid synonym for piety that is not even a truly ethical concept. Salvation is the rescue of the “**true inner self**,” creative and mysterious, from the **destructive ego** covered by conformist, conventional, enslaving disguises. Salvation is the return to one’s eternal reality and to live in God. The human person is rescued from the individual.



# Conscious Contact With God: Awareness of God In Me As My True Self

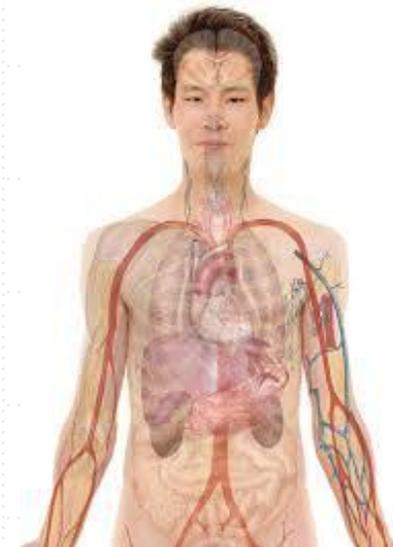
- Our discovery of God is God's discovery of us. God's seeing us gives us a new being and a new mind in which we also discover God.... We become contemplatives when God discovers Himself in us. When we experience contact with God we pass into **infinite reality where we awaken as our true self. God lives in me not only as my Creator but as my true self.**
- Through our capacity of conscious acts of love our life becomes a series of **choices between the fiction of our false self fed by illusions and selfishness and our loving consent to the pure mercy of God.** The consent to the will and the mercy of God as it "comes" to me in the events of life, appealing to my **inner self and awakening my faith breaking through the superficial exterior appearance that form my routine vision of the world and of my own self.**
- Without contemplation I keep alive in me the illusion that is opposed to God's reality living within me, but **contemplation means the complete destruction of all selfishness.**
- God does live in our souls despite our lack of awareness. Otherwise, I can **reduce God to the level of a formality**, forbidding God to move me with a truly vital influence.



# The False Self is the Divided Individual

- In order to live I have to die to being centered on myself, asserting my own desires in a struggle with the rest of the world, imposing myself, cutting myself off from other people and building a barrier of contrast and distinction between us and others.
- Reality is to be sought in unity not division for we are “members one of another.” The one who lives in division is not a person but only an ‘individual.’”

Chapter 7 of *New Seeds*

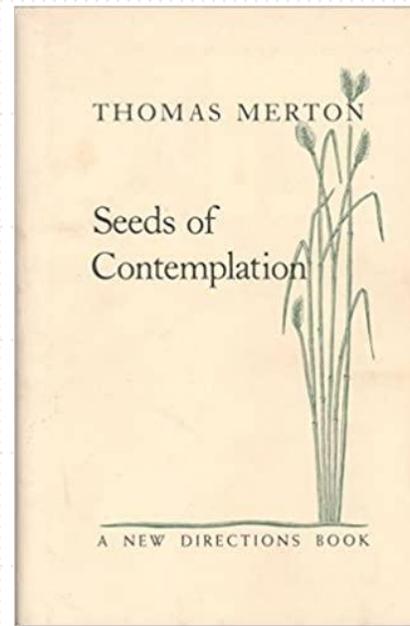
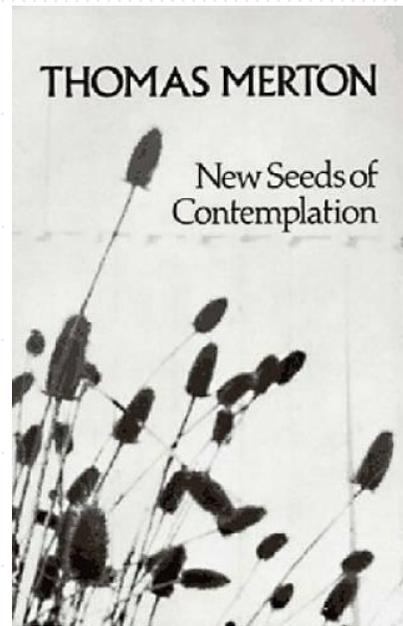


# Love Praying Within Us Too Deep for Comprehension

“One quotation from Merton’s writings had a governing effect on his view of Sufism. He wrote: ‘Contemplative prayer is the recognition that we are the Sons of God, an experience of Who He is, and of His love for us, flowing from the operation of that love in us.... He makes us realize at least obscurely that it is He who is praying in us with a love too deep and too secret for us to comprehend.’”

Fox, quoting Merton, *The Sign of Jonas*, p. 291)





Did God give Merton a “new being,” a “new mind” between *Seeds of Contemplation* and *New Seeds of Contemplation*?

Were the changes in Merton’s thought from 1949 to 1961 as seen in *Seeds of Contemplation* to *New Seeds of Contemplation* “only a normal process of spiritual growth or were they indicative of a **more profound conversion?**....

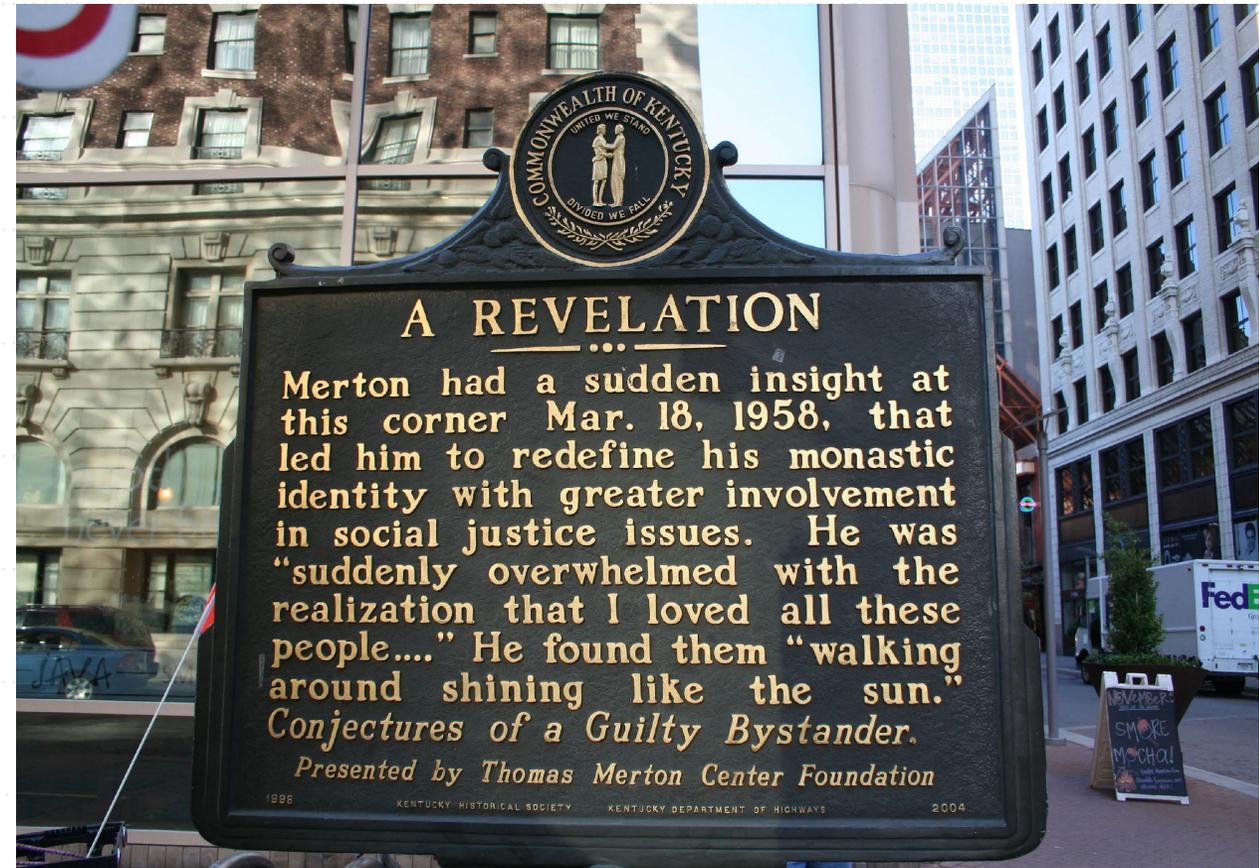
**What had happened between the writing of *Seeds* in 1949 and the publication of *New Seeds* in 1961 was the “Louisville Epiphany.”**

# “The Louisville Epiphany.”

To my mind, there are two different worlds in the two books.

Many Merton scholars note that the shift between the two books is symbolized in what happened on March 18, 1958, called, “The Louisville Epiphany.”

At the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Walnut (now Muhammad Ali Blvd, Merton had an awakening that the religious separateness characterizing his earlier perspective on monastic life was “an illusion.” and that Merton and everyone he saw while walking in that busy intersection were connected in love.





# From Separation to Embracing. The need for our “Here.”

Ruth Fox, in an article about the differences, writes, “The insight Merton had on the street corner in Louisville had a great impact on his view of the world and its relationship to solitude. He had come a long way from *Seeds* to *New Seeds* – from separation to embracing.”

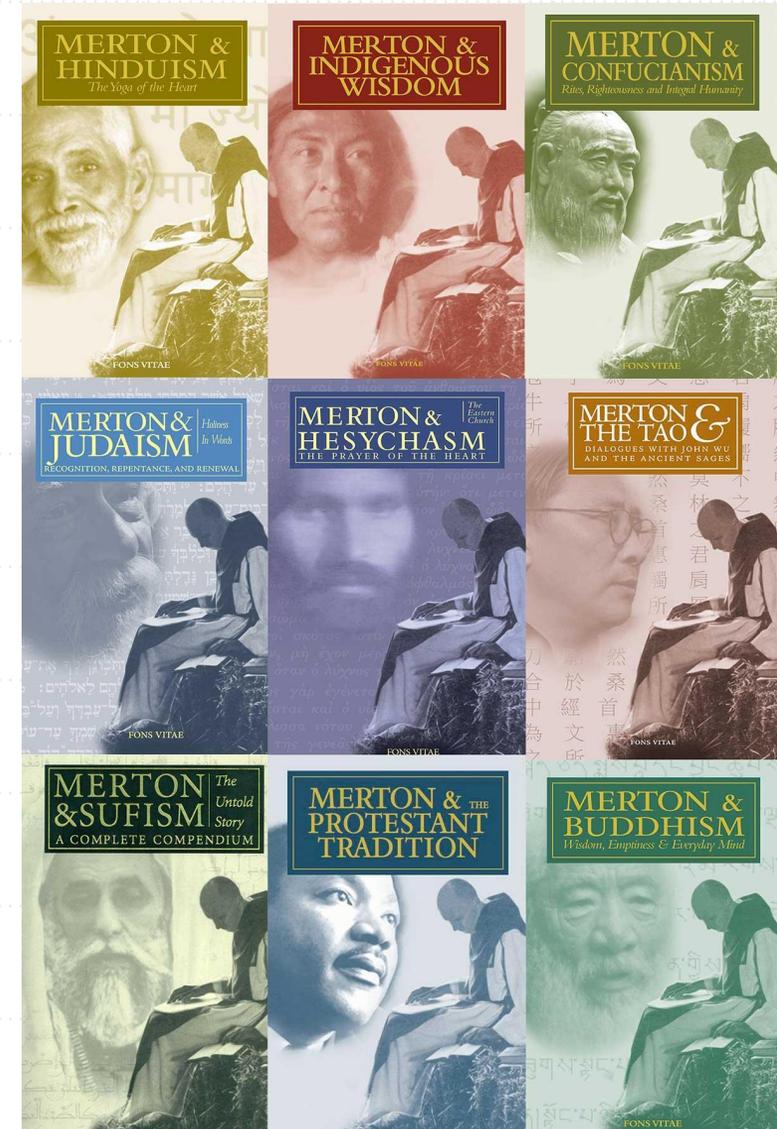
(Ruth Fox, O.S.B., “Merton’s Journey from *Seeds* to *New Seeds*,” THE MERTON ANNUAL - VOLUME 1, P. 263)

The process can be summarized as Donald Grayston writes: ‘**Having fled from the world in anger, self-reproach and confusion, he had returned to it in love and compassion**’ (Donald Grayston, *Thomas Merton: The Development of a Spiritual Theologian*, p. 182).

# Contain all divided worlds in ourselves

If I can unite in myself the thought and the devotion of Eastern and Western Christendom, the Greek and the Latin Fathers, the Russians with the Spanish mystics, I can prepare in myself **the reunion of divided** Christians. From **that secret and unspoken unity in myself** can eventually come a visible and manifest unity of all Christians. If we want to **bring together what is divided**, we can not do so by imposing one division upon the other or absorbing one division into the other. But if we do this, the union is not Christian. It is political and doomed to further conflict. We must **contain all divided worlds in ourselves** and transcend them in Christ.

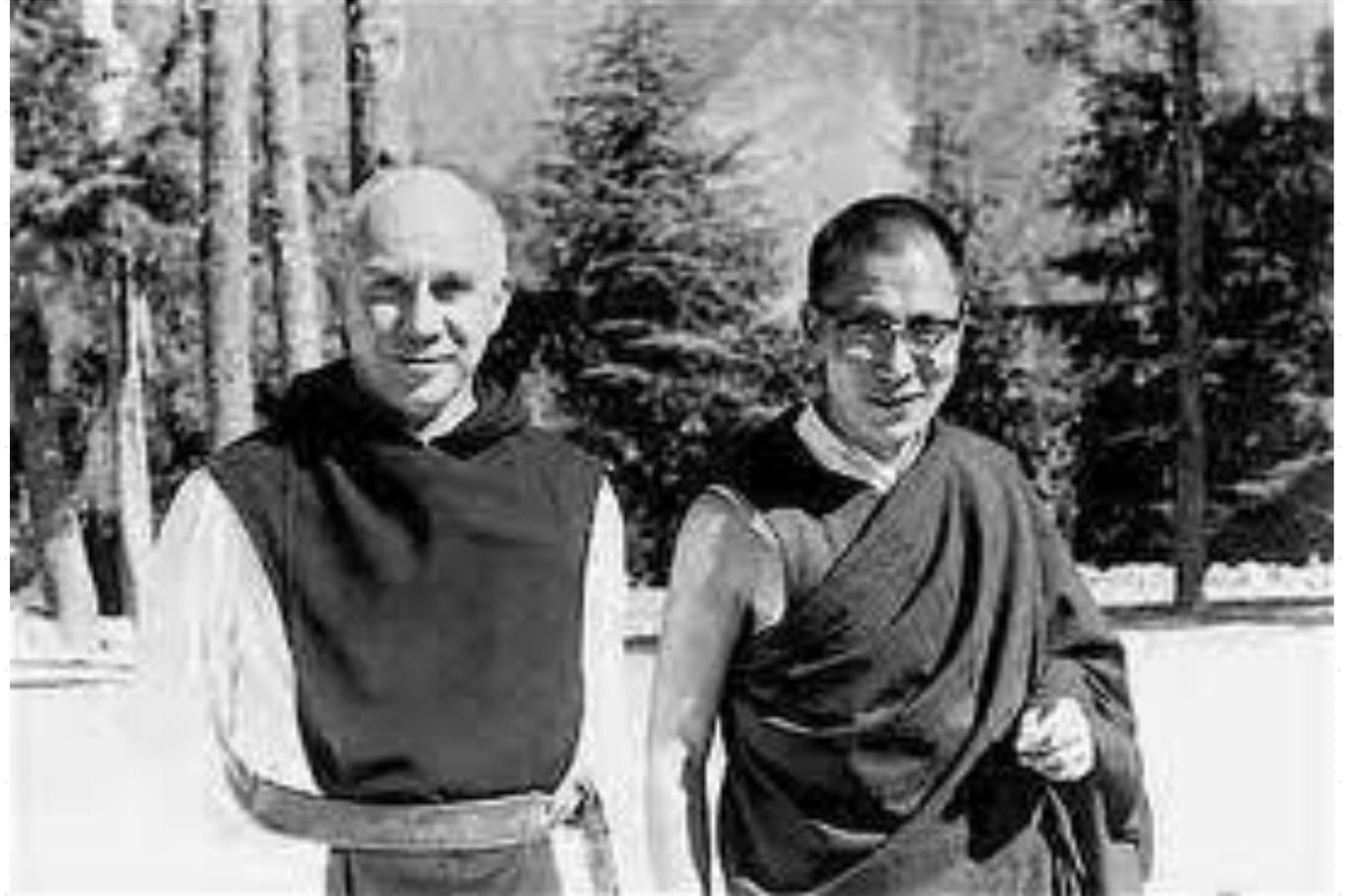
• *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, p. 21



# Journey to “One-ing”

“The deepest level of communication is not communication, but communion. It is wordless. It is beyond words. It is beyond speech. It is beyond concept. Not that we discover a new unity, but we discover an old unity. **My dear brothers and sisters, we are already one. But we imagine we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be, is what we are.**”

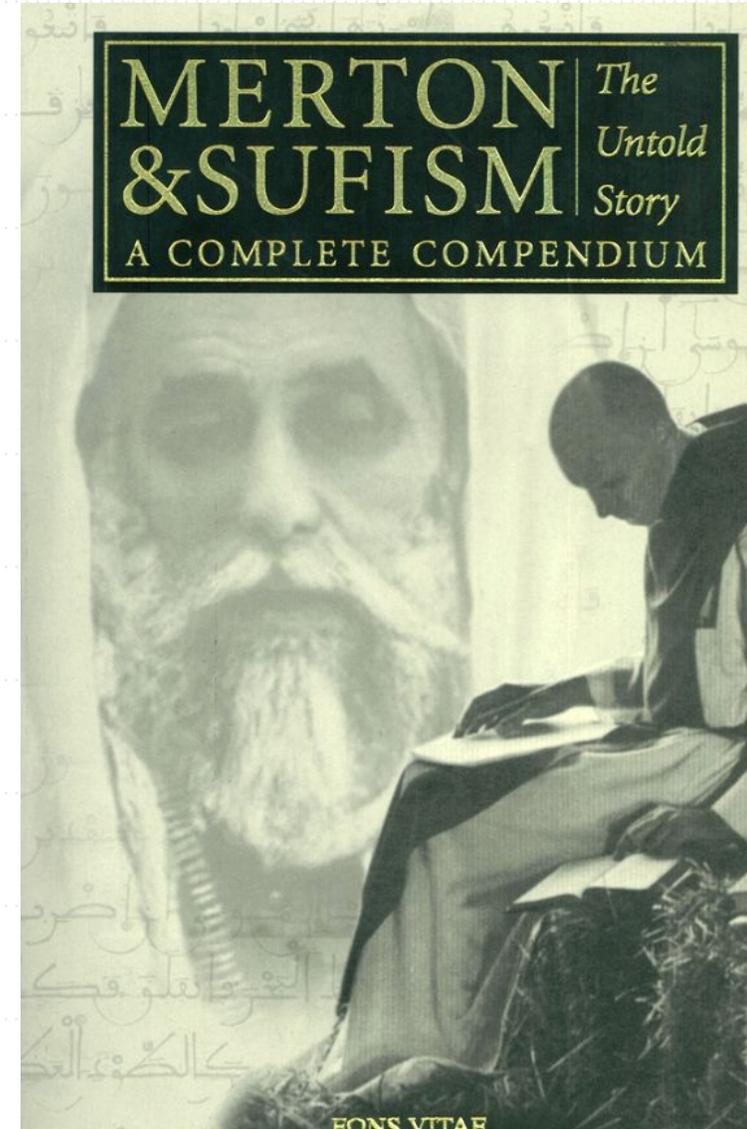
— Thomas Merton, [The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton](#)



## “Monastic Therapy” and Spiritual Maturity Calls For Transformation of Entire Mentality

“The idea of **‘rebirth’** and of life as a ‘new man in Christ, in the Spirit,’ of ‘risen life’ in the Mystery of Christ in the Kingdom of God, is fundamental to Christian theology and practice – it is, after all, the whole meaning of baptism. All the more so is this idea central to that peculiar refinement of the theology of baptism which is the monastic conversation – the vocation to a life especially dedicated to self-renewal, liberation from all sin, and **the transformation of one’s entire mentality ‘In Christ.’**”

An article respecting the writing of Reza Arasteh, *Final Integration in the Adult Personality*, 1965 by Thomas Merton, “Final Integration: Toward a Monastic Therapy”, *Merton and Sufism; The Untold Story*, p. 267





# “Final Integration” needed for our leaders

“Final integration implies the void, poverty, and nonaction which leave one entirely docile to the “Spirit” and hence **a potential instrument for unusual creativity.**

The one who has attained final integration is no longer limited by the culture in which they have grown up. ‘He has embraced all of life....He has experienced qualities of every type of life’...He passes beyond all these limiting forms, while retaining all that is best and most universal in them, **‘finally giving birth to a fully comprehensive self.’** He accepts not only his own community his own society, his own friends, his own culture, but **all humankind... not setting these partial views up in opposition to each other but unifying them in an insight of complementarity.**...The finally integrated person is a peacemaker, and that is why there is such a desperate need for our leaders to become such persons of insight.

Thomas Merton, “Final Integration: Toward a Monastic Therapy”, *Merton and Sufism; The Untold Story*, p. 272



Humans are fully capable of becoming God, not in the fullest sense of the term, but in a very real way where the light, life, and love of God are pouring through them, channeling a source of healing, compassion, and reconciliation wherever they go and whatever they do. They are rooted in the divine compassion and mercy and are manifesting...the pure light of the image and likeness of God within them, which is the assimilation of the mind and heart of Christ in everyday life. **Thomas Keating**, *Heartfulness: Transformation in Christ*

