

Editorial

The death has recently been announced of David Scott (1947-2022), priest, poet, playwright, spiritual writer, and a founding member of The Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland. In 1993 he organised a three day Thomas Merton Celebration at his parish in Winchester – with over ninety attending – which led to the founding of the society, imparting to it a gentle Anglican ethos. He made regular contributions to this journal, spoke at many of the society's conferences, where he took part in readings of his own poetry, and latterly was a patron of the society. Due to ill health he retired to his beloved Cumbria with his wife Miggy in 2010.

Alongside his parish ministry he published five volumes of poems, several plays for the National Youth Music Theatre, and six religious books. In 2008 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, conferred on him a Lambeth Degree Doctorate of Letters (DLitt) 'in recognition of his contribution to deepening the spiritual life of the Church through his standing as a poet and his teaching ministry, particularly on the work of Thomas Merton but also on a range of other writers from Anglo-Saxon times onwards, and his recent work, *The Mind of Christ*.'

Among those attending the Winchester celebration was the Augustinian priest and fellow poet Pádraig J. Daly. Thus it is most appropriate that the journal includes two poems from his most recent collection, *A Small Psalter*, along with a review of the volume by Danny Sullivan, another attendee at Winchester. Also included is an essay-review by James Cronin of two recent volumes by Gregory Hillis and Gordon Oyer examining Merton's social concerns, and a review by Ron Dart of Fons Vitae's final volume of its series examining Merton's interfaith dialogue, *Merton and Hinduism*.

Two articles focus on Merton's artistic explorations. In his article '**Thomas Merton in Black and White: *Entre les Deux***', Marshall Soules finds similarities in the conflict between personal freedom and collective freedom that challenges both the jazz musician and the cloistered monk; Susanne Jennings, in '(Re-)Learning How to See', explores how, through Merton's Zen photography, 'the inbreaking of the Divine was, and is, to be seen and apprehended in the most unexpected of places.'

In his article 'Finding Hope in the "Sacramental" Economics of

Thomas Merton & Walter Weisskopf, Gordon Oyer gathers together scattered bits of commentary from across Merton's *oeuvre* to find hope for the future despite the economic forces ravaging our world. Fiona Gardner's article, 'Lessons from Hawk's Diner', examines the events of a single day, April 4th, 1968. On that day Merton visited, in the company of Donald Allchin, the Shaker village at Pleasant Hill. Returning, they heard the news on the radio of the assassination of Martin Luther King, and so went on the Hawk's Diner in Bardstown to be alongside the black owner, 'Hawk' Rogers. Her article explores how, on this day of all days, 'the tension between opposite experiences needed to be held.'

This year marked the death of the feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether who corresponded with Merton in the 1960s. In her article, 'At Home in the World', Erin Clarke, writes about reading their correspondence for the first time, where she found the two writers to have 'sharpened one another's appetite for God and God's kingdom.'

In one of David Scott's most moving poems, 'Ibn Abbad woke early', the poet imagines an encounter between Merton, the Sufi master Ibn Abbad and the Hasidic leader Rabbi Schmelke, and their joint entry into Paradise. There they sit in silent communion with Jesus. The poem ends with lines that could be a description of David's own faithful ministry, and concludes with a Christmas blessing for us all:

After a long time they opened their eyes,
and there were only three at the table.
Jesus, Mary's son, had gone,

had gone to join some other hands in love
sit by some other beds of pain
pray with some other desparate men
break for some other hearts the loaf
share with some other faiths the way

and that goes on today,
unceasing in his care to see beyond the robes
of different length, and hue, and cloth,
the common beating heart, and to mark again
as on the Bethlem night, the angels' call:
Peace on the earth, good will to all, to all.

Stephen Dunhill

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