



**THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY
OF GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND**

**the night spirit
and the dawn air**

**9-11 APRIL 2010 OAKHAM SCHOOL
RUTLAND**

Eighth General Meeting & Conference

www.thomasmertonsociety.org

THE THOMAS MERTON SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

aims:

- to promote interest in, and study of, Thomas Merton and his concerns
- to encourage the formation of local groups or chapters of the Society
- to organise national meetings of the Society
- to encourage publication of works by or about Thomas Merton in the Great Britain and Ireland
- to issue twice a year the *Merton Journal*.

Exhibition of Contemporary Artwork

Throughout the conference there will be an exhibition of artwork, the 40 painting series “Not Silenced by the Darkness”, drawing on the Hebrew poetry of the Old Testament, by inspirational Christian artist Hilary Guise.

Cover image by Hilary Guise

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Hebe Welbourn, born 1922, worked as a community child health doctor in Uganda from 1946-64. Hebe subsequently moved to Bristol, where she continued to work in children's health. After retirement, she trained as a lay reader in the Anglican Church, becoming Warden of Elsie Briggs House of Prayer from 1991-2004. She now lives in Quaker sheltered accommodation, is still a practising Anglican and also a member of the Bristol Chan Group.

Patrick Woodhouse is Canon Precentor at Wells Cathedral. He recently published *Etty Hillesum, a Life Transformed* (Continuum 2009). He is also the author of *Beyond Words, a guide to contemplative prayer*, and *With You is the Well of Life*, a book of prayers for public and private use (both published by Kevin Mayhew).

We are now in the most perfect days of the Appalachian spring, late April: days of dogwood and redbud blossoms. Cool clear days with every delicate shade of green and red in the thinly budding branches of the oaks and maples. Later, in the burnt haze of summer, Kentucky's soaked green will be monotonous as a jungle, turning brown in the heat. Now it is France, or England. The hills suddenly look like the Cotswolds.

How the valley awakes..... Here is an unspeakable secret: paradise is all around us and we do not understand..... "Wisdom," cries the dawn deacon, but we do not attend.

Thomas Merton

The third part of Merton's 1966 book, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, is particularly rich. Entitled 'The Night Spirit and the Dawn Air', it holds many light and darker themes that speak directly to us, several decades later, in this our 'interesting era'.

Gary Hall is a Methodist minister, tutor in practical theology, occasional writer and researcher and a former editor of the Merton Journal. Grateful for family and friends, wild landscapes, wild cities, soulful music and vocation.

Roger Lipsey, PhD, was the recipient of a 2007 Louie from ITMS for his book *Angelic Mistakes: The Art of Thomas Merton*. His essay on Merton's late contemplative writings will be published in a mid-2010 issue of *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*. Roger is currently writing a book on the mind and methods of Dag Hammarskjöld and maintains a related website at www.dag-hammarskjold.com.

Paul M. Pearson is Director of the Thomas Merton Center at Belarmine University, Chief of Research for the Merton Legacy Trust, and Resident Secretary of the International Thomas Merton Society. Paul edited *Seeking Paradise: Thomas Merton and the Shakers* (Orbis 2003), and *A Meeting of Angels: The Correspondence of Thomas Merton with Edward Deming and Faith Andrews*, (Broadstone 2008).

Małgorzata Poks holds a doctorate in American literature from the University of Lublin, Poland. Her main interests concern spirituality and modern American poetry and prose. She teaches courses and seminars in American Literature and Culture. Poks was a Shannon scholar in 2001/02 and has contributed articles to scholarly journals and publications, including *The Merton Annual* and *The Merton Journal*. In 2009 her book *Thomas Merton and Latin America: A Consonance of Voices* received the "Louie" award.

Jonathan Sozek is a graduate student at the Institute of Philosophy at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium. He holds degrees in philosophy, religious studies, and the liberal arts, and worked for three years with high school students in upstate New York as a Catholic youth minister and teacher of theology.

Sarah Bird is a Chan practitioner, and a Trustee of the Western Chan Fellowship. She has just completed a Masters in Responsibility and Business Practice, and is interested in how to bring compassion and wisdom into the mainstream of management practice. She is a former pupil of Oakham School.

Tony Bannon is a filmmaker, critic, writer and Director of George Eastman House, the International Museum of Photography and Film based in Rochester, New York and a presenter in 2008 at our conference. He has given presentations at meetings of the International Thomas Merton Society and written articles on the photography of Merton and also on the visual arts and contemplation.

Nass Canon A Clinical Professor of Medicine at UAB and former Chief of Staff at Cooper Green Hospital, Nass teaches and practices medicine.

Fiona Gardner is co-editor of The Merton Journal, ITMS International adviser (2007- ongoing) and ex-chair of the TMSGBI (2004-2008). She is a writer (*The Four Steps of Love* DLT 2007, *Journeying Home* DLT 2004 and two psychotherapy textbooks), trained as a psychotherapist, and is currently working for the Diocese of Bath and Wells and Bath Spa University.

Daniel P. Horan OFM is a Franciscan friar of Holy Name Province (NY) and a graduate student at the Washington Theological Union (DC). Dan is a 2009 Daggy Scholar and has presented papers at both the TMS of Great Britain and Ireland (2008) and the ITMS (2009) conferences. He has written extensively on Franciscan theology, philosophy and spirituality, with particular interest in the authentic retrieval of medieval Franciscan thought for application in contemporary contexts.

Welcome to the eighth Conference and General Meeting for the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland and the sixth to be held at Oakham School.

You will find here all the information you will require to navigate your way around the conference, including a comprehensive outline of our programme and biographical information about each of our speakers.

Keynote, Concurrent & Workshops Sessions

The location of all sessions is shown in the programme timetable. Last minute alterations will be clearly indicated. Please note that a period of **quiet meditation** will precede and follow each of the keynote addresses. It would be appreciated if you could make every effort to be in the *Old School* a few minutes before the start time.

Meals and Refreshments

All our meals and refreshment breaks will take place in the dining hall in **Barraclough**.

Bar Area

In the **Merton Room**, upstairs in **Barraclough**, you will find a comfortable area where you are free to relax during the conference. The bar will be open in this area before dinner on Friday and Saturday. In addition there will be a small display of Oakham school's **Merton memorabilia**.

Conference Bookshop

In Barraclough the **Christian Resources Bookshop** from Leicester will be providing a conference bookstall which will be open on Friday and Saturday.

Prayer times and Worship

Morning and Evening prayer are offered as part of the programme. The worship will be very simple with a few Taize refrains, silence and a short Scripture reading concluding with some intercessions. The Sunday morning Eucharist is traditional and you are welcome to participate as fully as you wish.

Quiet space

A quiet space is provided in the Common Room in Stevens. Please feel free to make use of this at any time, except when it is being used for one of the sessions or for meditation/worship.

Security

Regarding security, please note that access to your accommodation is by door entry code. **The codes needed for the conference are listed on the inside flap of your conference pack.** Doors must be closed at all times. It is advisable to try to keep ground floor windows closed. Individual bedroom doors do not lock so valuables should not be left unattended.

If you have any questions at any time please look for someone wearing a coloured badge who will help you.

Before you leave the conference please complete and post your evaluation form in the box which will be available at lunch on Sunday, or give it to a member of the committee.

We hope you enjoy the conference and have a comfortable stay while at Oakham.

Dream—a Jewish-Christian Conversation, with Rabbi Dan Cohn Sherbok, (Darton, Longman and Todd 2005).

Margaret Silf, is an ecumenical lay Christian, committed to working across and beyond the denominational divides. For most of her working life she was employed in the computer industry but she left paid employment to devote herself to writing and accompanying others on their spiritual journey. Margaret travels extensively within the UK and abroad, including North America, Australia, South Africa and Malaysia to speak at retreats, conferences and workshops. These events have included the Institute for Adult Spiritual Renewal at Loyola University in 2008 and 2009, the Jesuit 500 anniversary Conference at Loyola University, in 2006, and the Religious Education Congress in Los Angeles in 2009. Margaret's books include: *Landmarks* (titled *Inner Compass* in the US), *Wayfaring*, *Roots and Wings*, *Companions of Christ*, *At Sea with God*, *Sacred Spaces*, *Wise Choices*, *The Way of Wisdom* and, most recently, *Compass Points*. She writes a regular column for America magazine.

Concurrent & Workshop Session Presenters

William Apel is professor of religion at Linfield College in Oregon. He teaches a course on "monks and mystics" with Br. Mark Filut at a nearby Trappist Abbey. His most recent book is "Signs of Peace: The Interfaith Letters of Thomas Merton." "Bill" serves on the board of directors for the ITMS and has contributed to the Merton Annual, Merton Seasonal, and the Merton Journal of the Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

Keynote Speakers

Paul Quenon OCSO is a monk of Gethsemani Abbey who was a novice for two years under Novice master Father Louis (Thomas Merton). He comes from Fairmont, West Virginia and entered the Abbey soon after graduating from high school in 1958. He later received a Masters degree in systematic theology at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, and spent three years teaching and helping at Awthum Monastery in Nigeria. In his own words: 'Br Paul cooks, sings a lot in and out of choir, hikes and meditates outdoors. He puts words together into something like a poem, and shoots a camera at something like a picture. Some say he's only something like a monk, but he has stopped guessing about that after fifty years in the monastery.'

Mary Grey is an ecofeminist liberation theologian. She is now a professorial research fellow at St Mary's University College, London. Until recently, she was D.J. James Professor of Pastoral Theology at the University of Wales, Lampeter, and formerly Professor of Contemporary Theology at the University of Southampton, based at the La Sainte Union (1993-7). Before that she was professor of Feminism and Christianity at the Catholic University of Nijmegen. For ten years, Mary was editor of the Journal of *Ecotheology*. Her theological project is now reconciliation, of which reconciliation to the earth is a special focus. See *To Rwanda and Back: Spirituality, Justice and Liberation*, (Darton, Longman and Todd 2008). She is a founding trustee of the NGO, *Wells for India*, a water-based organisation in Rajasthan, NW India and is also Chair of the Theology Group of Friends of Sabeel UK, an organisation for the liberation of Christians in Palestine. Mary's other recent writings include: *The Unheard Scream—the Struggles of Dalit Women in India*, (New Delhi 2004), *Pursuing a*

Conference Programme

Friday 9th April

10.30am
Registration
Barracough

12.30pm
Lunch
Barracough

2pm
General session I
Old School
Welcome to the conference

2.15pm
Keynote Address
Paul Quenon OCSO
Conjectures: Postscript from
Gethsemani

4.00pm
Tea

4.30pm
**Annual General Meeting of the
Thomas Merton Society of
Great Britain and Ireland**
Merton Room

5.30pm
Evening Prayer
Stevens Common Room

6.00pm
Bar open in the Merton Room

7.00pm
**Conference Dinner
with address and presentations**
Barracough

8.30pm
Poetry Session led by Paul Quenon
Merton Room

Saturday 10th April

7.30am
Morning Prayer
Stevens Common Room

8am
Breakfast

9am

General session II

Old School

Keynote Address

Mary Grey

Earthing our Spirituality: What role for contemplation roots in an age of planetary crisis?

10.30am Coffee

11am

Concurrent Sessions I

A *Buchanans Common Room*

Fiona Gardner

Being in the Dark: Explorations in Purification and Renewal

Paul Pearson

'Let Mercy Fall Like Rain': Thomas Merton and the Ox Mountain Parable

B *Stevens Common Room*

Dan Horan

Sparks of Haecceitas: A Scotist Reading of Thomas Merton

Nass Cannon

Attending to the Presence of God: Thomas Merton & Le Point Vierge

12.45pm Lunch

2pm

Concurrent Sessions II

C *Buchanans Common Room*

Roger Lipsey

'Let us walk along here, says my shadow' : Thomas Merton, Doubter

Patrick Woodhouse

Thomas Merton and Ety Hillesum: Twin Guides in a Post-modern Age

D *Stevens Common Room*

Jonathan Sozek

Merton in Conversation with Charles Taylor's 'A Secular Age'

Gosia Poks

Absence of Remembrance in the Ruins of Representation: Thomas Merton's Relevance for the Post-nuclear Age

3.45pm Tea

4.15pm

Concurrent Sessions III WORKSHOPS

E *Buchanans Common Room*

Welbourn/Bird

Thomas Merton and the 'point vierge'

F *Old School*

Hilary Guise

"Not Silenced by the Darkness " : Mystical traditions in Christian Art

G *Stevens Common Room*

Tony Bannon

Merton: Technology and Change

5.45pm

Concurrent Sessions IV

H *Buchanans Common Room*

William Apel

Engaged Spirituality: Merton's 'Contemplative Life' and Bonhoeffer's 'Life Together'

I *Stevens Common Room*

Gary Hall

'Another Kind of Trifling': Merton and the Destructive Hyperactivity of Consumer Culture

6.30pm

Bar open in the Barraclough

7pm

Dinner

8.15pm

Film

Queen Elizabeth Theatre

Interview with

Fr John Eudes Bamberger

Bar to remain open until 10.30pm.

Sunday 11th April

8.00am

Morning Prayer

Stevens Common Room

8.30am

Breakfast

9.30am

General Session III

Old School

Keynote Address

Margaret Silf

"Through Darkness to Dawn": In search of a spirituality of transition in troubled times.

11am

Coffee

11.30am

Conference Eucharist

Buchanans Common Room

1pm

Lunch and depart