

Box 35
Hedley, British Columbia
Canada
March 29, 1967.

Dear Tom,

Thank you for the great letter. Such words keep one going. During this year or so in the north woods working away on this book, I've thought often of the contemplative vocation, of you in particular, how necessary the silence and the loneliness (which, on the other hand, is communion) is in order to arrive at anything. The speed with which events everywhere are moving now almost overwhelms me, would have overwhelmed me by now were I anywhere but here. I live in a constant tension between the need to speak quickly through this book (which is, I recognize, a monumental temptation), to get it out before everything is all over as it seems increasingly on the verge of being -- I don't mean the holocaust necessarily, but the "going beyond" everything which is occurring everywhere and which you refer to -- and the much deeper need to speak the truth, all of it, so far as possible. That last is agonizingly slow in my case but I find it the only way possible to go forward at all, inch by inch, with no certainty that the next inch will come at all.

Yes to all you say about a post-political or post-historic era and the danger of "contributing to the big slide into technical totalism." What you were sent by Ping Ferry is an early chapter in the book and an effort to make a base for what I hope will culminate in a cross-centered theology of history, or better existence, essentially a moment of contemplation under the chaos and at the root of things. But none of that is possible unless the activism is treated first, and Gandhi seems to suggest the way out of that without capitulating through either involvement or retreat. The next step is Christology, and I find Gandhi the key there also, although it is a truth which is not yet clear. I shall send you that chapter soon and will be even more grateful for your comments there, as the issue is crucial and I feel like the water is moving up to my nose.

Ping Ferry said in a Christmas note that Joan Baez had been in to see you. She sang and talked non-violence on a CBC show several nights ago and was terrific: purity. I wrote her a letter which will probably get lost in a stack of fan mail. Anyhow it is beautiful how clearly defined certain lines are becoming in the midst of everything else.

For your Easter wishes deep thanks and the same. We hope your operation was as minor as you say and wholly successful. We are all fairly well and growing all over. This past year has been incredibly strange and beautiful.

You must know, but I shall say it, that the chapter you read and much else keys largely off Merton. It is a debt which will be acknowledged in a foreword to the book -- with many other debts, we've been beggars from the beginning.

Shalom,

Jim

P.S. If you still have the chapter manuscript, may I ask if you can please send it to me? I discover I have no copies left.

Father Eusebius of the Abbey of New Clairvaux has become a sponsor of the book and a great friend in every way, although he still insists periodically that he can't agree with everything I'm doing.