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How did Thomas Merton become Thomas Merton? Starting out from any one of his earlier major life moments—wealthy orphan boy, big man on campus, fervent Roman Catholic convert, new and obedient monk—we find ourselves asking how by his life's end he had grown from who he was then into a transcultural and transreligious spiritual teacher read by millions. This book takes another such starting point: his attempt in the mid-1950s to move from his abbey of Gethsemani, in Kentucky—a place that had become, in his view, noisy beyond bearing—to an Italian monastery, Camaldoli, which he idealized as a place of monastic peace. The ultimate irony: Camaldoli at that time, bucolic and peaceful outwardly, was inwardly riven by a pre-Vatican II culture war; whereas Gethsemani, which he tried so hard to leave, became, when he was given his hermitage there in 1965, his place to recover Eden. In walking with Merton on this journey, and reading the letters he wrote and received at the time, we find ourselves asking, as he did, with so much energy and honesty, the deep questions that we may well need to answer in our own lives.

THE CAMALDOLI CORRESPONDENCE

# THOMAS MERTON *and the Noonday Demon*

DONALD GRAYSTON

*Foreword by Douglas E. Christie*

“Grayston offers an excellent example of work that emerges when disciplined scholarship, seasoned experience, and refined pastoral awareness are free to converge and collaborate in the creative mind of a writer. *Thomas Merton and the Noonday Demon* both informs and transforms the reader with a pilgrimage that begins with the unexpected discovery of letters in a Camaldolese monastery and goes deep into the most challenging terrain of Merton’s spiritual journey . . . and our own.”

—DAVID JOSEPH BELCASTRO, President of the International Thomas Merton Society

“This book presents a thorough, engaging, and enlightening study of Merton’s major periods of instability resulting from his desire for greater solitude . . . Through this marvelous piece of scholarship, the reader will gain new and fascinating insights into the life, vocation, and struggles of this great twentieth-century spiritual master.”

—PAUL M. PEARSON, Director of the Thomas Merton Center

“Donald Grayston’s sensitive, inquisitive, and probing examination of the spiritual disorder at the heart of Merton’s restiveness is a gallimaufry, a rich mosaic of psychologically penetrative insights, a tantalizing portrait of a modern gyrovague’s disquiet, a potpourri of snippets and shards of sapiential quality.”

—MICHAEL HIGGINS, Vice President for Mission and Catholic Identity, Sacred Heart University

“Scholarly, accessible, relevant. Grayston unpacks the complex tale told in this hitherto unknown correspondence from a critical period in Merton’s life and shows us yet again the human fallibility that somehow gives Merton greater not less appeal and relevance to the contemporary reader. As we see Merton struggle with his questions about ‘vocation’ and the ‘will of God,’ we find ourselves also being drawn into those same questions in our own lives.”

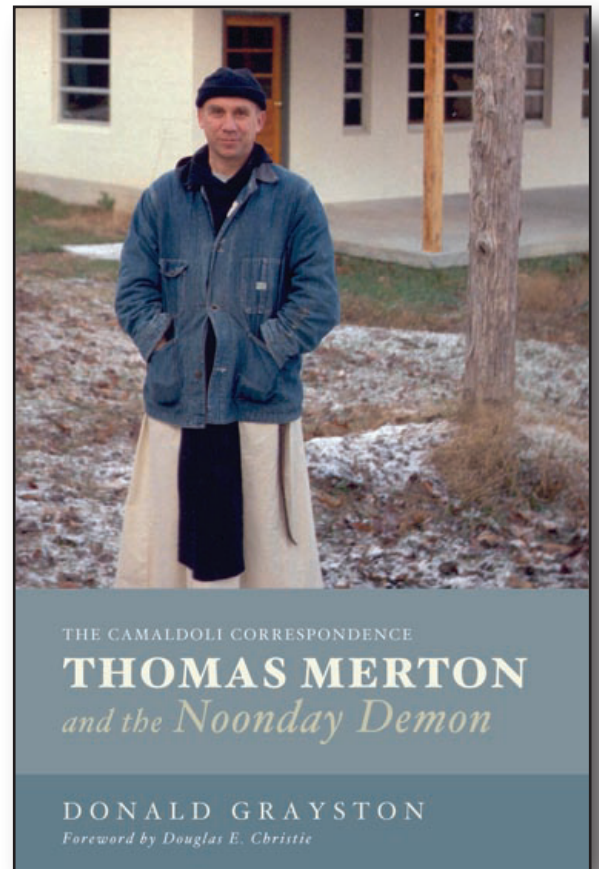
—ANGUS STUART, Past Chair of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland

“Grayston brings together the complexities and paradoxes of Merton’s spiritual restlessness, desire for solitude, and late, romantic relationship with his nurse. The credibility of Grayston’s work is sustained through an impressive and detailed use of sources, some of them new to Merton readers. Grayston writes with considerable verve and originality and with a readiness to make judgments where they are needed.”

—ROSS LABRIE, Professor Emeritus, University of British Columbia

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**Donald Grayston** retired in 2004 from Simon Fraser University in Vancouver as director of its Institute for the Humanities. He is a past president of the International Thomas Merton Society.



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