

Foreword

*Victor A. Kramer**

It is with a great deal of thankfulness that I compose these words about this new series for *The Merton Annual*, a project first conceived in the mid-1980s, and which began to develop in 1986. At that time the editors of volumes 1-5 (1988-1992) planned the project which has now evolved into the present publication. During the initial five years of this annual publication of scholarly writing concerning Merton, we have chosen numerous essays, review-essays, interviews, and reviews which examine the continuing critical inquiry about Thomas Merton, someone who "elected silence," but whose voice keeps speaking to an enormous range of persons throughout the world.

Merton has proven to be a catalyst. *The Merton Annual* editors realized that his life, writing, and influence were continuing to have enormous value for serious readers and scholars. What has, in addition, become increasingly clear during the past decade, however, is that it is not just a matter of Merton's work being admired, used, analyzed, or documented. His voice also helps others to make specific applications in the present moment concerning matters of significance which Merton, only indirectly, might have earlier anticipated. As the new series begins, two new editors join in this enterprise. George Kilcourse, with expertise in theology, ecumenism, and Merton studies, as well as Michael Downey, with expertise in Christian spirituality and sacramental theology, bring new strengths to the editorial work of *The Merton Annual*. These editors have assisted in redefining and broadening the mission of the *Annual* which will seek to make more connections between Merton's vision and the contemporary world of scholarship. It is fitting, then, that this first volume

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of our new series (1993) coincides with the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of Merton's death in 1968 and should reflect in its varied contents many different ways for spirituality to be extended beyond just his life, or monasticism, and Catholicism.

There are many similarities between Volume 6 and the preceding five volumes of *The Merton Annual*, but this volume is different in that it so clearly looks beyond just honoring Merton. We will continue to include unpublished, or obscurely published Merton material, interviews about him, bibliographical materials, and appropriate reviews. What the new editors hope to emphasize, however, is that while we will not cease to be interested in the living traditions which fed Merton, we are now graced with an expanding vision precisely because so many have absorbed Merton's work. Therefore there are so many more ways to demonstrate that these springs feed many lives, and that all of this is moving beyond any narrowly defined focus, while it also becomes more catholic.