

powerful image of Christ present in the world. Merton was "wounded . . . , the wounded healer . . . ; who is, of course, . . . the perfect man of compassion." Quenon and Kelty both develop, therefore, as source of the continuing and increasing popularity of the *writings*, the ongoing presence of the *man* as real presence, a presence not restricted to the memories of those who knew him but actual to those whom he continues to enfold in his charity.

### Skillful Editing

The placement of Quenon's "Charity does not fall away" as motto to the whole program is an instance of the careful editing at work here. The interludes between speakers are both graceful and substantial—Ron Seitz reading his poem on Merton, Gethsemani Vespers or Compline, etc. Perhaps the most striking, though subtle, instance of how the interludes further the content is provided by the one following the Kelty interview. Kelty ends with reference to absence of a mother's love suffered by Merton. The interlude then leads directly into Vespers, recording the Gethsemani community as it chants, "For the mothers of all monks of this community, let us pray to the Lord," and continues with petitions for those various groups of persons who are (still) suffering from and in the world. It is precisely that suffering which Kelty cites as crucial to Merton's make-up. And it is the presence of that suffering, experienced and articulated for others, that lets Merton lead others beyond it to the awareness, cited by Quenon, of a loving God.

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M. Basil Pennington. *Thomas Merton, My Brother: His Journey to Freedom, Compassion, and Final Integration*. Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 1996. 208 pages. Paper. Approximately \$15.

Reviewed by Raymond Wilkie

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Fr. Basil Pennington is well-known to Merton scholars and International Thomas Merton Society members, as well as to many (including the reviewer) who have attended his popular lectures and

read his books on spirituality and centering prayer. For more than two decades Father Basil has written prolifically on prayer and spirituality and, as founder and one-time editor of *Cistercian Publications*, he has edited the works of other writers, including Thomas Merton. His own writings about Merton (most of which emphasize Merton's conception and practice of prayer) include twenty-four essays, six book reviews, and four books. The most recent of these is *Thomas Merton, My Brother*, a collection of reprinted essays (Father Basil calls them "vignettes") that supplement his 1987 biographical volume *Thomas Merton, Brother Monk: His Quest for Freedom*.

The first two essays in *Thomas Merton, My Brother* are a summary of the 1987 companion volume and a bridge to the rest of the essays. The next two essays briefly describe Merton's journals and his circular letters. Three essays deal with Merton's intellectual relationship to the Cistercian tradition and, especially, to Bernard of Clairvaux. Two are concerned with spirituality and centering prayer and two are on Merton as educator and spiritual director. One essay is about Merton's trip to India and the last two essays trace the evolution of his spirituality and worldview.

Although these collected essays and the 1987 biographical essay differ in style and purpose, they have nearly identical titles and cover designs. They are also alike in that each includes a chronology of Merton's life and a selected bibliography of his major publications. The 1987 volume includes a bibliographic essay (as an appendix) that another reviewer considers the book's most valuable contribution. The essays have an appended bibliography of Father Basil's writings on Merton telling the interested reader when and where each essay was originally published. Both books emphasize Merton's conception and practice of contemplative prayer and its grounding in the writings of the Greek, Desert, and Cistercian Fathers. Also discussed in the essays, but not equally, are Merton's compassion for all humankind, his openness to increased monastic freedom, and his opposition to closed-minded authoritarianism in the Church. Little is said about Merton's prophetic critique of modern society, his poetry, or his literary essays.

Three of the reprinted essays (unlike the 1987 biographical essay) are descriptive summaries of Merton's journals, of his "Circular Letters," and of *The Spirit of Simplicity*, his translation and commentary on the 1925 Cistercian General Chapter. Most of the essays include ex-

tensive Merton quotations. Merton enthusiasts (such as this reviewer) will appreciate such quotations, but in some of the essays they are excessive. For example, the essay entitled "Thomas Merton and Centering Prayer" contains more quotations than commentary. The purpose of such extensive quoting in this essay is to show the essential identity of Merton's conception and practice of contemplative prayer with Father Basil's conception and method/technique of centering prayer, an effort that is not convincing.

The introduction points out that Pennington's essays were written for widely differing purposes and occasions, but does not give any specifics. It would have been helpful if each essay's context—its publication history, original purpose, and intended audience—had been included on its title page. With such background information the reader would understand why each chapter/essay does not follow (logically, rhetorically, or aesthetically) from the preceding one.

Father Basil's writing on Merton is based on a thorough knowledge of his work, a deep respect and admiration for Merton's thought, and the shared experience of being (like Merton) a post-Vatican II, American, Cistercian monk. Making these essays accessible in paperback is a valuable service. But the title, *Thomas Merton: My Brother*, is somewhat misleading and the subtitle, *His Journey to Freedom, Compassion, and Final Integration*, compounds the problem. These essays constitute neither a biography (as the primary title implies) nor a narrative account of Merton's spiritual journey (as the subtitle implies).

An additional problem with the title is that the phrase "my brother" implies that Father Basil had a particularly close personal relationship with Merton—that might have yielded unique insights into his thought or character. This impression is reinforced by the book's excessively frequent references to Merton as "Tom." To the contrary, however, no encounters or other events described in the essays (nor in Merton's published letters to Father Basil) evidence such a close personal relationship.

Father Basil exudes enthusiasm for Merton and his interpretations are in the mainstream of Merton scholarship. But Father Basil's viewpoint, and these essays, are better appreciated if accompanied (or preceded) by the reading of his 1987 biographical essay *Thomas Merton: Brother Monk* and by his 1980 *Centering Prayer*.