The exclusions I found most difficult to justify occur in some of the early correspondence. At this critical period before entering Gethsemani, when Merton was engaged in vocational discernment, a period with less documentation than in his later life, sections are missing regarding: his justification of a monastic vocation, his fears about living in Harlem, and descriptions of some nightmares which make Doherty's response to them seem out of context.

Overall, this is a fine collection of letters that will interest fans of Merton and Doherty. Their friendship, as demonstrated in these letters, shaped one another's lives and elucidates each other's struggles. The scholar of either of the correspondents may still feel the need to return to the original letters, which is unfortunate. However, the struggle of balancing contemplative prayer and social commitment comes through in the correspondence. It will make a fine addition to collections about Doherty and Merton.

Mark C. Meade

A Meeting of Angels: The Correspondence of Thomas Merton with Edward Deming & Faith Andrews, edited with an Introduction by Paul M. Pearson (Frankfort, KY: Broadstone Books, 2008), pp. 118. ISBN 978-0-9721144-9-3 (cloth) $25.00.

This small, beautifully printed volume contains a good deal more than the correspondence of Thomas Merton and the Andrewses. The short introduction is followed by four sections: 21 letters between Merton and Edward Deming Andrews, 6 letters between Merton and Faith Andrews, Merton's photographs of the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, and an appendix reprinting an old review by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy of the Andrewses' ground-breaking book, *Shaker Furniture*. The twenty-seven letters were written between 1961 and 1965, during which time the correspondents met only once.

The photos, while not distinguished as photographic art, reveal Merton's appreciation of the kind of stark beauty of Shaker buildings and landscape that attracted the "Precisionist" artist Charles Sheeler and photographers like William Winter. The Coomaraswamy review, while very well done, seems tacked on. It is worth pointing out that both Merton, the Catholic monastic, and Coomaraswamy, the Hindu guru and philosopher, became friends of the Andrewses as a result of their mutual admiration of the spiritual life of the Shakers and Ted Andrews' mastery of

Shaker history and culture. (Faith did not enjoy Coomaraswamy's visits. Ananda would descant upon the higher life of the spirit for the benefit of Ted, while expecting Faith to take care of his dog, prepare dinner, and stay away from the men. Faith the feminist found him insufferable.)

A non-specialist in either Shaker or Merton studies might find the letters insubstantial when compared with Merton's lengthy missives to world-famous figures and old friends. Merton and the Andrewses wrote mainly about arrangements for publications and about their deep love of all things Shaker. Except for the paeans to the Shakers, it might seem to the outsider a few paragraphs of publishing shoptalk, and as such, boring. But when placed in a larger biographical and historical context (not provided by the editor), a touching story of a late-life friendship emerges.

At first glance the friendship seems unlikely, more epistolary than real. The Andrewses differed greatly from Merton in cultural and class background. Merton, deeply European, cosmopolitan and Catholic, nevertheless found common ground, in the Shakers, with the Andrewses, bone-deep New Englanders.

Ted Andrews (1894-1964) and wife, Faith Young Andrews (1896-1990), were born in the small industrial town of Pittsfield, Massachusetts and grew up in a conservative, religious, lower-middle-class culture. In the late nineteenth century Ted's father ran a hardware store. The Andrews family was much less conservative in religion and daily life than Faith's broken family, dominated by the narrow religious piety of her mother. Faith had secretarial training, but never attended college, while Ted was able to gain admission to the elite Amherst College, graduating in 1916. After serving in World War I he went on to earn a doctorate at Yale. By sheer force of character, Ted and Faith Andrews rose to join the leaders of American art and culture, centered in New York City. Historically, the Andrewses were closer to Edith Wharton than to Norman Mailer.

Thomas Merton, born almost a generation later than the Andrewses, arose out of a different world. Born twenty-one years after Andrews, he was a quintessentially twentieth-century Catholic intellectual, immersed in the culture of France – that country so suspect in the New England mind.

The Andrewses totally escaped the traditional Protestant hostility to monasticism, and Ted quoted John Dunlavy's relatively respectful assessment of the "Roman monks and nuns" in *The*

Manifesto (1818). Dunlavy was the chief minister of Pleasant Hill and concluded that, compared with the Shakers, the Catholic monastics had produced good fruits, though not in perfection. As Ted wrote in a late letter (November 19, 1963), "Though the [Shaker] culture was in a sense a monk's one, a sub-culture, it is strange how rich it is . . ." (42).

Merton was quick to sense the monastic–Shaker affinity. In his very first letter to Ted Andrews, he very clearly stated the grounds of his empathy for the spiritual life of the Shakers:

> I am deeply interested in the thought that a hundred years ago our two communities were so close together, so similar, somehow, in ideals, and yet evidently had no contact with one another. . . . It would be a crime to treat [the Shakers] superficially, and without the deepest love, reverence and understanding. . . . I think the extinction of the Shakers and of their particular kind of spirit is an awful portent. I feel all the more akin to them because our own Order, the Cistercians, originally had the same kind of ideal of honesty, simplicity, good work, for a spiritual motive. (12-13)

In this same letter Merton also takes note of the plan to purchase and restore the Hancock Shaker Village (1960–) in which the Andrewses were prime movers. He recognized the enormous achievement of the Andrewses, and when Ted wrote his initial letter of November 29, 1960 asking Merton whether it were true that he was writing a book about the Shakers, Merton responded at length and with great respect (December 12, 1960). Their friendship soon flourished and the Andrewses, when they visited Merton at the Abbey of Gethsemani a year later, were enthralled, writing in their posthumous memoir that they had "come to regard [Merton] as a spiritual mentor and intimate friend" (Andrews, *Fruits of the Shaker Tree of Life* 172). In personal conversations Ted and Faith would go far beyond this staid printed statement.

Merton had come a long way from his birthplace in Prades, and the Andrewses a good distance from Pittsfield. Just as Merton learned to love the Shakers, so also did the Andrewses come to hold the Catholic monastics in high regard. But Merton, who had suffered repeatedly from familial hurts and who struggled with wrenching interior conflicts to the very end, never enjoyed the stability and calm of the Andrewses. Perhaps his hard-earned psychic insights helped him sense the stable and very happy mar-

riage of Ted and Faith. Thus, in 1963, when the Hancock Shaker Village board, as a result of internal museum politics, dismissed Ted Andrews, its first museum curator and its principal donor, Merton was quick to sympathize. He had known failure throughout life, even as a celibate monk, and in alluding to conflict over the Shaker Meeting House of Shirley, had a very Catholic response:

> At this [conflict] one need not be surprised, because the law of all spiritual life is the law of risk and struggle, and possible failure. There is something significant in the fact that the Shaker ideal was to most people all but impossible, and that therefore it was inevitable that many good men should fall crashing out of the edifice they had helped to build. God alone understands those failures, and knows in what way perhaps they were not failures. (September 20, 1962 letter to Ted Andrews [37])

In June 1964, a year after his humiliating dismissal from Hancock Shaker Village, Edward Deming Andrews died suddenly and unexpectedly at the age of seventy. Faith was devastated, as were all the friends and admirers of the Andrewses. It is necessary to point out that I was a member of the same original Board of Trustees in 1960 and was the sole defender of Andrews in subsequent legal proceedings (see *Gather Up the Fragments: The Andrews Shaker Collection* [Yale, 2008]). Faith completed Ted's unfinished works and got them published.

Merton was a strong consolation to Faith (see his July 20, 1964 letter to her [59-60]). Her emotional response begins: "Your most comforting letter – followed by the beautiful preface to our book – arrived almost a month ago. I have read them both every day and have not been conscious of the passage of time" (August 18, 1964 [62]). Outsiders saw in Faith a loyal wife who was tart of tongue and quick to critique, but she was also a person of deep commitment, loyalty and love, qualities she saw in Merton. The letters document the story of a late-life friendship between parties of disparate cultural backgrounds, but they also reveal both the dailiness and depth of Merton's spiritual life. It was this spirit of Merton and not his storied intellectual career that the Andrewses found exciting, a kind of first encounter with a Catholicism larger than the old ethnic parishes of Pittsfield.

Although Thomas Merton is a major figure in American and Catholic intellectual history and a great writer of letters, we have only scattered collections of correspondence with individuals,

plus the five volumes of over 2,000 letters edited by William H. Shannon *et al*. The Shannon volumes are incomplete, selective, and full of excisions. Thankfully, Pearson has left the text of the letters untouched; unfortunately, he has provided too little background for a complete understanding of the correspondence. The all too sparse editing is nevertheless balanced and sensible.

The publication of these letters is a welcome aid to our understanding both of the appeal of Shaker Perfectionism and the spirit of Thomas Merton. And also to the oddity of late-life friendships.

Mario De Pillis, Sr.

Thomas Merton: A Life in Letters – The Essential Collection, edited by William H. Shannon and Christine M. Bochen (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2008), pp. xiv + 402. ISBN 978-0-06-134832-7 (cloth) $29.95; (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2010), pp. xiv + 402. ISBN 978-1594712562 (paper) $18.95.

Thomas Merton was a consummate letter writer. He was also prolific in his epistolary output – most letters being written in the last decade of his life. Evelyn Waugh, the English novelist and editor of *The Seven Storey Mountain* in Great Britain (retitled *Elected Silence* in its somewhat abridged British form), even advised Merton to give up other forms of writing and perfect letter writing as a literary art form. Indeed, five volumes of Merton's collected letters were published between 1985 and 1994.

Now, thanks to the excellent editorial work of William H. Shannon and Christine M. Bochen, we have a single-volume compilation of letters taken from the existing five-volume series that well deserves its designation as "The Essential Collection" of this massive corpus. The editors have permitted Merton's letters to speak for themselves. Their brief introduction and helpful notes along the way do not obstruct the free flow of the letters; they only help to enhance our understanding of necessary context.

Selection of the letters themselves from the previously published volumes must have been a daunting task. Many questions arise: what letters to include, what letters to omit? why? why not? So many questions, but Shannon and Bochen are clearly up to the challenge. Who better than William Shannon, general editor of the Merton Correspondence, and Christine Bochen, editor of the fourth volume, *The Courage for Truth*, to do the job? Without solid, knowledgeable editors, "essential collections" of any sort can crash