

mature reflections on what he had written at various times under the inspiration of the moment. *The Asian Journal*, one must believe, would read quite differently had Merton lived to rethink many of the things he said about the East and the contacts he made there.

One might ask for what kind of audience this book is destined. Without question, it is an excellent book for someone who is making the acquaintance of Merton for the first time. It will, as the editor intends, whet their appetites for more Merton. It could also find a happy home with those who are well acquainted with Merton, but would find it most helpful to have in one volume a healthy selection of his writings on spirituality. This would especially hold for those who look to Merton as their spiritual master. A third type of audience that this book would especially fit would be a classroom of students or a study group who wanted to deepen their acquaintance with his writings on spirituality.

The book is pleasingly designed, the cover gracefully adorned with a Meatyard photograph. The publishers are to be congratulated for making this valuable contribution to Merton studies "financially friendly." In today's economy \$14.95 is a modest price for almost any 437-page paperback. It is a special bargain for this helpful and most welcome book of Merton readings.

A REVISED JOURNEY

Review of

Thomas Merton

THE MONASTIC JOURNEY (Revised edition)
 Edited with a foreword by Brother Patrick Hart
 Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1992
 xi, 186 pages / \$12.95 paperback

Reviewed by **Jerome Machar, O.C.S.O.**

I am a recent convert to the monastic way of life, having professed in 1991. One receives a slightly different introduction to the person of Fr. Louis from those who actually lived with him in community. As one with "professional bias," I picked up Brother Patrick Hart's revision of *The Monastic Journey*. There is a blunt honesty in these pages which makes the monastic life believable and credible. This collection of reflections is a great resource for one who is seeking an introduction to the monastic life.

Having read some of the biographical works and heard some of the "inside stories" about Merton, some laughs and tears were produced by the reading of *Journey*. Merton always spoke out for the integrity of the monastic life, and this concern is found loudly and clearly in these pages. Fr. Louis also fought hard to see the return of the hermit life to the Cistercian Order. In the fact that he wanted to be a hermit, yet could not find it in himself to lock the door behind him, one finds encouragement to dream dreams, even if they may never materialize. The dream you have may become someone else's reality.

It takes someone who was not well adapted to using his hands to write a line like this: "The hermit remains there to prove, by his lack of practical utility . . . that monks themselves ought to have little significance in the world." Knowing that Merton was not into manual labor, knowing that he liked being in the middle of things, knowing that he said more about silence than he seemed to live it — all make this volume more valuable.

Merton knew his heart's desire. At the same time he was aware of his personal defects. He entered upon the monastic journey in an effort to allow God to find him. This collection of writings allows the reader to become aware of the various aspects of the monastic life which go into making the journey successful.

I am grateful to Brother Patrick Hart and Cistercian Publications for preserving this volume of Thomas Merton's writings. It is strongly recommended that people who are interested in the monastic life or who are interested in possessing some of Merton's better writing on the topic add this to their collections.

PRELUDE OF MYSTICISM

Review of

Thomas M. King, S.J.

MERTON: MYSTIC AT THE CENTER OF AMERICA

The Way of Christian Mystics 14

Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press/ Michael Glazer, 1992

x, 150 pages / \$12.95 paperback

Reviewed by **Kenneth M. Voiles**

Thomas Merton referred to the subject matter of his book, *The Ascent to Truth*, as "the prelude to mysticism." What he meant to indicate, I think, was that what he wanted to do in the book was organize and present, for himself and his readers, the basic and foundational theoretical information that one must have before setting out in any serious way on the road of contemplation and mysticism (or, at least, a specifically Catholic and Thomistic sort of mysticism and prayer). And, on specifically such a level, *The Ascent to Truth* is, more often than not, quite successful. Still, some years later, Merton would refer to it as his "emptiest book." His critique of his

□ **Kenneth M. Voiles** lives in Englewood, Colorado, and is a student at St. Thomas Seminary in Denver. He is a member of *The International Thomas Merton Society* and is serving on the Program Committee for the Third General Meeting of the *ITMS* in 1993. He was last represented in *The Merton Seasonal* by "Prades: A Photo Essay" (Summer 1992).



KENNETH M. VOILES