

Mertoniana in this volume) that those interested in Merton move the discussion forward to reflect on issues cognate to those of Merton himself. These essays prove that it can be done.

Thirdly, and finally, the volume ends with reviews of recent volumes on Merton as well as a review of the recent poetry/prose of Denise Levertov who, as Jack Ford recalled in the interview printed in this volume, was a visitor to Merton in the 1960s.

After having read the contributions in this sixth volume, but in no particular order, I asked myself whether there was any thematic unity to the collection. What I discovered and tried to indicate above is that there are still things to learn about the life and activities of Thomas Merton along with a decided feeling that those who find inspiration in him need to “move on” to those topics which he engaged so seriously.

Merton himself once wrote that he refused to become a stereotype, derived from a simple reading of **The Seven Storey Mountain**, foisted on parochial school children. By the same token we cannot enshrine the Merton of the 1960s as the final locus of study and reflection. Like every classic figure he is explicable both in his own terms of vocabulary, culture, and time but his final importance is to be found in the hints and emphases that he gives us for our times. My judgment is that the authors who have contributed to this volume understand that dialectic and desire, as do the editors of **The Merton Annual** themselves, to move our reflections to a new level of discourse.

II. “MERTON AS A DIRECTION,” by **Paul M. Pearson**

Volume 6 of **The Merton Annual** heralds many changes: a change in editors as Victor Kramer, one of the founding editors, is now joined by Michael Downey and George Kilcourse, with volume editorship rotating on a yearly basis; a change in publishers as it is now published by The Liturgical Press; a change from hardback to paperback with a subsequent dramatic fall in price (counterbalanced by being a much shorter volume than the earlier ones); and finally, and perhaps most significantly, a change in direction heralded by the volume’s new subtitle: “Studies in Culture, Spirituality, and Social Concerns,” a change from the subtitle of the first five volumes which read “Studies in Thomas Merton, Religion, Culture, Literature & Social Concerns.” Perhaps the differences between these two subtitles point to the changing direction — an area to which I will return later in this review.

The contents of this volume follow a similar format to earlier volumes with the publication for the first time of a piece of Merton’s writing, this time his correspondence with Douglas V. Steere and Steere’s comments on their first meeting; an interview with John [Jack] H. Ford, part of the continuing important oral history initiated by Victor Kramer; a selection of various essays; a review of Merton scholarship and publication in 1992; and finally a selection of book reviews and a review of the latest release of Merton’s lectures on cassette tape.

In 1990 the Abbey Center for the Study of Ethics and Culture was incorporated by the Abbey of Gethsemani and the bulk of the essays in this book are papers delivered at two conferences at the Center. Three essays, those by Rosemary Haughton, Rembert Weakland and Francis Kline, come from the leaders of the first

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conference in October 1992. Haughton's and Kline's contributions are their rather mundane impressions and reflections back upon the conference with Weakland's being a very personal account of the way his understanding of monasticism has evolved and is evolving in his position as archbishop of Milwaukee.

Five essays in this volume come from a scholar's retreat sponsored by the Center and held at Gethsemani in January 1993. The theme of this retreat was "Spirituality at the Juncture of Modernity and Postmodernity" (p. 3). These five essays vary enormously in their content as in their eloquence. The first of these papers by E. Glenn Hinson developed insights from the interreligious explorations of the Quaker Douglas Steere and is excellently paired with Steere's reflections on his first meeting with Merton along with their correspondence. This combination of an essay examining the thought of one of Merton's correspondents along with both sides of that correspondence, which includes many fascinating insights into Vatican II at which Steere was an Observer-Delegate, provides one of the highlights of this **Merton Annual**.

The other four essays taken from the scholar's retreat tackle more explicitly the theme of that retreat. The first of these essays by Robert S. Goizueta exploring "the aesthetics of the United States Hispanics' 'mestizo community' as a postmodern alternative" (p. 4), I found virtually incomprehensible. This was due, as far as I could tell, to two factors: firstly, the subject matter of the essay which, by its very nature, is culturally limited and, secondly, the language used by the author which was complex and technical. The difficulty with the language can be seen in a sentence such as the following from only Goizueta's second paragraph: "Rejecting the universalism, conceptualism, and rationalism of modernity, postculturalist postmodernity often turns to aesthetics as an antidote to the totalitarian tendencies of modern ontologies and epistemologies" (p. 92).

This essay is followed by one which could not prove a greater contrast in the clarity of its thought and language. "A Spirituality of Mercy: Aelred of Rievaulx" by Katherine M. TePas suggests that a spirituality of mercy would be the spirituality needed at the juncture of modernity and postmodernity. Although Merton is not mentioned in this essay his spirit is very much there in TePas's recourse to a Cistercian Father and her examination of the theme of mercy which Merton so emphasized himself based on his own experience of God's mercy. This essay brought to mind a comment that Merton made in a letter to Bruno Paul Schlesinger in 1961 where he said that "a program of Christian culture needs to be rooted in the biblical notion of man as the object of divine mercy" (**The Hidden Ground of Love**, p. 541) and I felt it was a shame that TePas did not make use of some of Merton's thinking on the theme of mercy.

Tina Pippin in her essay attempts to navigate the reader "through the neglected precincts of John's Apocalypse with an informed feminist's postmodern sensibilities" (p. 4). Steven Payne, a Carmelite and former editor of the journal **Spiritual Life**, contributes a Carmelite perspective on "Spirituality at the Juncture of Modernity and Postmodernity." As with TePas's article Payne touches on themes that were dear to Merton's heart — St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, the desert and the dark night — and he suggests that "a spirituality born of the desert is precisely what we need for survival" (p. 136), but unlike TePas he makes use of Merton's writings and thoughts on Teresa, John and the desert and thus provides a dialogue between his subject matter and Merton's thought, a dialogue I found sadly missing from the Goizueta, TePas and Pippin essays. Of these four essays Payne asks most clearly the question "What are 'Modernity' and 'Postmodernity'?" (p. 136) and in dealing with that question makes the apposite remark that he is not clear "to what extent 'concerns of postmodernity' have really penetrated the collective awareness of Carmelites, those with whom we most commonly minister, and Catholics in general" — a remark which I also found myself thinking as I read these four essays.

The final major contribution to this volume is a transcript of an oral history interview conducted by George Kilcourse with John [Jack] H. Ford — an interview which not only gives some interesting insights into Merton's final years but which also contains some wonderful insights into the life and character of Dan Walsh.

Towards the end of this interview Ford is asked how he would evaluate “Merton’s interests as they’re expressed in many of the Merton circles and activities that claim his name and spirit?” In his reply Ford suggests that it depends on the needs of the people concerned and points to two paths: firstly, those who “need to be continually immersed in Merton himself, going back and looking at his works and seeing the implications of these;” then, secondly, those who “would want to see Merton as a direction, who through his works urges us to look beyond him, in other words, not to have him be an end in himself but to have us breaking more the ground he plowed to begin with” (p. 192).

Michael Downey in his survey of Merton Scholarship and publication in 1992 suggests that a “critical turn” is needed in Merton scholarship and he calls for a dialogue between Merton studies and the discourse taking place in other fields. A move is needed from a monologue about Merton towards a dialogue that will bring “a heightened critical hermeneutic to bear” on Merton’s life and legacy. Downey suggests that three books about Merton, those by David Cooper, Anne Carr and George Kilcourse have achieved this dialogue. It is on this point though that my major criticism of **The Merton Annual 6** rests. In attempting to move from a monologue towards a dialogue I felt that many of the essays in this volume went too far in that direction and ended up as monologues from other fields, and not as dialogues — the dialogue so rightly praised in the work of Cooper, Carr and Kilcourse was too frequently missing.

I feel future editions of **The Merton Annual** need to achieve the balance that Jack Ford was speaking of in his interview with George Kilcourse and to work towards a dialogue with other fields. If the focus on Merton becomes too diffuse I do not think **The Annual** will continue to appeal to that readership who will buy it for its Merton connection, and yet, the volume’s very title may very well put off other readers who would appreciate its new style. The dropping of Merton’s name from the subtitle of this volume mirrors what I found to be a deficiency in a number of the essays in this volume and I would hope that in future volumes Merton will be seen more clearly “as a direction” (p. 192) and that the dialogue Downey speaks of will be achieved.