

Introduction

This volume of articles and reviews about Thomas Merton and his writings appears two decades after his untimely death. It is a reflection of Merton's prodigious energy which has generated a large body of writing about him, his life and work, and relationships to wider issues. The diversity of Merton's interests is demonstrated in the subtitle for this new scholarly publication, "Studies in Thomas Merton, Religion, Culture, Literature, & Social Concerns." As a contemplative and a writer, he was interested in all these subjects. Our intent as editors of this publication is that *The Merton Annual* represent the best in contemporary scholarship about Merton's wide-ranging interests.

The need for such a scholarly avenue for Merton related scholarship has been recognized for a long time. We believe that substantial materials will be produced in years to come for inclusion in *The Merton Annual* as still more Merton manuscripts, letters, and journals are studied and published. As editors we hope to accomplish several things with *The Merton Annual*. Primarily, this annual volume will provide an outlet for scholarly investigations which are of a length sometimes difficult to place in journals, which are limited by space considerations. We hope to publish lengthy studies of Merton, but length is not our main concern. This annual's most important function will be to provide a carefully edited and refereed organ for scholarship related to Thomas Merton's accomplishments as monk and artist.

As is reflected in this first gathering, we will seek to use items in the annual which include art and photography by Merton and also unpublished, or obscurely published, writings by him which will help to further his reputation. We hope to include lectures and papers from Merton symposiums, conferences and commemorations which occur with ever-increasing frequency. We also plan to include interviews of persons who knew him, as well as articles which may be speculative in the sense of relating to Merton's work in a concrete, but sometimes, indirect fashion. Therefore essays on subjects as diverse as the peace movement, or race relations, or Christian art, which are in the spirit that Merton cultivated will always be welcome. Another regular feature of this publication will be its inclusion of a bibliographic essay which provides commentary about all

the significant (and perhaps the insignificant) Merton scholarship which appears during the preceding year. The editors will also solicit reviews and review-essays on the most important books by, and about, Merton.

This annual is edited in a spirit which the editors hope Merton would acknowledge as valuable. We want to provide an organ which will encourage scholars to examine all aspects of his life and work. Everything which a scholar can bring to bear on Merton's writing and life -- from biography to textual bibliography, from theology to sociology, from close readings to studies of culture -- will be welcome. Merton's energy, insight, love, and compassion are more and more appreciated as additional readers and scholars come to appreciate his life's work. We want *The Merton Annual* to reflect Merton's own best characteristics.

The Editors