

# INTRODUCTION

---

This selection of contributions to *The Merton Annual* follows patterns established in the preceding volumes. The range of materials about "Religion, Culture, Literature and Social Concerns" reflects Merton's diverse interests as well as the range of approaches which scholars, writers, and critics bring to bear in subsequent investigations of his work. The unpublished essay by Thomas Merton concerning "The Neurotic Personality in the Monastic Life" opens this volume. It is complemented by the interview with Abbot John Eudes Bamberger, himself a monk, critic, and writer. As a monk-psychiatrist and someone who knew Merton quite well, he provides valuable insight into the complexity of Merton and into the specialized subject investigated in this previously unavailable essay.

The articles include three pieces about *The Sign of Jonas*. Merton's early journal continues to attract many different kinds of readings as evidenced in these essays. Other essays about patterns of spiritual transformation in Merton and Etty Hillesum; about the "true self" in his poetry; and about his ecumenical concerns demonstrate how his monastic reflections and writings led him almost inevitably beyond the immediate concerns of the monastery. In three additional articles, considerations of Merton as he relates to the contemporary world allow critics to show that his writings illustrate basic questions about acceptance and contradiction; about arts study; and about mysticism. They reveal that Merton as a monk-writer kept seeking to make important connections.

The third section of this volume consists of a memoir by Benjamin Clark, a monk who lived at the Abbey of Gethsemani when Merton was first there; a second interview; and Robert E. Daggy's bibliographic survey of Merton publications in 1990. Clark's recollection provides insight into the period of the 1940s at Gethsemani. At the other end of the chronological spectrum, Gregory Ryan's interview with W. H. Ferry, who knew Merton in his final years, shows us again how Merton kept growing and asking questions.