

## INTRODUCTION

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This volume of THE MERTON ANNUAL continues to reveal the diverse patterns established in the four preceding books. Our subtitle—studies in Thomas Merton, Religion, Culture, Literature & Social Concerns—anticipated this diversity of approaches in relation both to Merton's life, and to the wider culture. The sixteen pieces in the present gathering provide insight into Merton's writings; into his life; into parallels between Merton and others; as well as his bearing on our contemporary culture.

These essays demonstrate that Thomas Merton absorbed earlier writers including St. Augustine and St. Bernard, then built upon that knowledge for today's reader. In addition to these literary-critical approaches, Volume 5 offers readers an unpublished fragment from an early novel by Merton; an interview with one of his brother monks, Frederic Collins; and the second part of a detailed reminiscence by Benjamin Clark (Part 1 is published in MERTON ANNUAL: 4). These more personally focussed pieces provide insight into the concerns of Merton deriving more specifically from his nature as artist and as monk within his monastic setting, the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky.

Beyond any picture of Merton, however, the contents of Volume 5 demonstrate in several ways how Merton continuously reached back in time to his forbears (beyond even Augustine and Bernard, for example, to the Eastern Fathers), and also forward to his readers as they confront the future. Thus it is especially appropriate that the volume includes nine papers culled from the Second General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society held in Rochester, New York in June 1991, papers which reflect the vital presence of the growing body of Merton readers who have joined the Society since its founding in 1987. These presentations illustrate the various dimensions of Merton's continuing connectedness with others in the past, present, and future. There is, for example, a study of Merton's appreciation of the Eastern Orthodox Fathers. Another paper is an incisive examination of the exchange and developing friendship between Merton and the presenter's father, John Wu, the Chinese scholar-philosopher, who quite literally brought Merton to the East.

This volume also includes nine substantial reviews. One is about the third series of lectures by Merton, further evidence of an indefatigable energy. Another is a biography. Other books reviewed demonstrate that he is being studied along with many spiritual writers.

*Introduction*

As this volume concludes the first series (Volumes 1-5) of THE MERTON ANNUAL, it is an opportune moment to express thanks to the many contributors who have made THE MERTON ANNUAL succeed as a serious organ of inquiry about Merton and his diverse interconnections. The range of contributions during these five years bodes well for future Merton studies. Since Dr. Robert E. Daggy, Brother Patrick Hart, and Dr. Dewey Weiss Kramer are ending their terms of service as editors of THE MERTON ANNUAL, this is also an opportunity to thank them for all the hard work which they have contributed to this endeavor. We are especially thankful for the assistance which was provided through the facilities of the Thomas Merton Studies Center at Bellarmine College, and for the typesetting which has been provided by Dr. Daggy. We also wish to thank all our referees and members of the editorial board for their careful advice and counsel. A special word of thanks is due to Gabriel Hornstein, the publisher of AMS Press, Inc., who saw the wisdom of THE MERTON ANNUAL at its inception, and dared to take on this project. Although a second publisher will continue this series of books for the next five years, we remain extremely thankful for the foresight and support of AMS Press, Inc.

As we move toward the next series (Volumes 6-10), and as 1993 approaches, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Thomas Merton's death, it is auspicious that the range of inquiry into his life and writings continues to expand. The fourth volume of Merton's selected letters will appear in 1994, and work has already begun towards the publication in seven volumes of the personal journals of Thomas Merton, under the general editorship of Patrick Hart. We plan to include papers from the Third General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society, scheduled for June 1993 in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in later volumes of the MERTON ANNUAL.

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Continuing Editor