

Postscript: A Statement about the Publishing History of *The Merton Annual*

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The concept for a yearly publication of Merton studies was first planned in detail in New York City, in December 1985, after months of discussion with AMS Press Incorporated. The publisher, Gabe Hornstein, who at that time was also publishing the Georgia State Literary Studies Series for which I was the General Editor, enthusiastically supported the plan for establishing an annual volume devoted to Merton-related scholarship. The original idea for a book-length annual collection, which would publish substantial scholarship about Merton and related subjects, had already been discussed by Brother Patrick Hart and me in the early 1980s when I had finished the first phase of the Thomas Merton Oral History (1980-1983).

In the spring of 1986, I and my wife, Dewey Weiss Kramer, were planning to serve as co-editors of this newly-conceived annual project. Patrick Hart and Robert Daggy were supportive of the idea and both shared knowledge of manuscripts which were too lengthy for the publications of which they were editors at that time, namely *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* and *The Merton Seasonal*. Dewey and I invited them to join us as co-editors and some of those longer manuscripts were solicited for evaluation.

The actual production of *The Merton Annual* as a four-editor, refereed journal began in summer, 1986. Volume 1 appeared in the summer of 1988, and I remember receiving the first copy in Waco, Texas, at Baylor University where I was a Guest Professor that year. The first four volumes were published on schedule. Volume 2 made its public appearance at the First General Meeting of the International Thomas Merton Society in Louisville in 1989. Volume 5 was delayed for several years, partly because of AMS Press's reluctance to continue to back the

project but in particular because of Bob Daggy's failing health. Already in 1991, it was evident that Bob could not continue to both edit and produce the camera-ready copy. In 1993-1994, Gregory Ryan very generously typeset all of Volume 5 when Bob Daggy was unable to do so.

In 1991, because of other duties, Dewey Kramer and Patrick Hart ceased to be editors, although both continued as members of our editorial board. I made the proposal to Fr George A. Kilcourse Jr that he might become a co-editor. He agreed to this. Michael Downey was also teaching at Bellarmine College at that time, just as he was finishing his editorial work on *The Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* for the Liturgical Press. George Kilcourse proposed that Michael Downey also might serve as an editor. Downey became instrumental in securing the publishing services of the Liturgical Press. The three of us then took it in turn to edit *The Merton Annual* through to Volume 10.

Professor Kilcourse and I were again faced with a crisis in 1998 when the Liturgical Press announced that it could not continue to publish *The Merton Annual*. I sought advice from friends, and Professor Patrick Graham of The Pitts Library, Candler School of Theology, suggested that I contact Sheffield Academic Press in England. I arranged to go to the UK to make a presentation to the Press and also participated in the 1998 meeting of The Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland. Sheffield Academic Press not only agreed to publish, they also agreed to get us back to our original production schedule, and thus Volume 11 was released on time in the Fall of 1998. Five good years followed. However, in 2001 Sheffield Academic Press was purchased by the Continuum International Publishing Group, who are seeking greater publishing profits and have now closed down the Sheffield office.

At this time we, the editors, must bid adieu to *The Merton Annual* in its current form. I thank our many friends, supporters, and contributors, all of whose generosity has kept this project moving forward for almost two decades. The Aquinas Center of Theology at Emory provided an office for me since early 1996 and helped sustain the work of this publication from Vol. 10 (1997) through to Vol. 16 (2003), seven years of indirect support. *The Merton Annual* has also enjoyed an informal relationship with the International Thomas Merton Society. Half of the 16 volumes published have included materials which were revised and expanded from presentations at the ITMS General Meetings.

While I hope that a similar publication will appear in the future, *The Merton Annual* has long since matured and come of age. More support has been sought. Offers were made this year by The Thomas Merton Foundation and Fons Vitae Publishers to assist in saving the *Annual*

through distribution and printing, but continued office space and editorial assistance at the Aquinas Center seem unlikely. George Kilcourse and I therefore think it best that we now bring the publication to a close. Eighteen years of effort and many good things achieved in, and for, Merton scholarship allow both editors to express their pleasure with these many accomplishments.

The Merton Annual has contributed in many ways to stimulating new scholarship about Merton. The *Annual* has also raised the level of scholarship about Thomas Merton's work and related matters. However, I think an independent journal for such scholarship may now have served its purpose, and is no longer necessary. It may now be time for scholars to seek publication within both broader and different forums.

I hope that our decision will give the International Thomas Merton Society and its members an opportunity to take the initiative for similar work in the future. This is a time for building stronger links into the future.