

Persistent hope and sharp critique give shape to timely questions for a church in a period of rapid evolution amidst perceived social crisis.

This is above all a testimony of committed ecumenical discipleship and a reflection upon Protestant evangelical spirituality and praxis. I would commend this book especially to those Protestant practitioners in whose tradition Ringma is grounded, and hope that they too catch the enthusiasm for Merton's legacy that Ringma clearly has.

Gary Hall

Tom's Book: To Granny With Tom's Best Love 1916, Ruth Merton, edited by Sheila Milton (Monterey, KY: Larkspur Press, 2005), [Unpaged.]

Thomas Merton's mother, Ruth Merton (1887-1921) was his first biographer. For his first two years she kept a "baby book" to send to her mother-in-law, Tom's maternal grandmother in New Zealand. Very few documents have survived from Merton's early years so this document is quite remarkable and gives us information about the early years of this equally remarkable man.

This beautiful volume, a limited, fine press edition has been edited by Sheila Milton who introduces Ruth's text with a most informative introduction revealing much about Ruth Merton that has long been forgotten. Her portrait of Ruth balances the negative image of her found in a number of biographies. The attention to detail and care found in the baby book Ruth kept about Tom witnesses clearly to her love for Tom,

and no doubt later, for John Paul. Merton's own memory of her was no doubt from her final years when she must have been enduring much pain prior to her death from stomach cancer in 1921 when he was just six years old.

An example of one of her entries comes from June 1915 where she records: "Began to take a little cream and sugar and water with his other food. On the twentieth of June he made a desperate effort to creep and screamed with rage that he did not succeed." (Although omitted from this volume the mature Merton had written on the margins of this page: "typical.")

Although a little pricy at \$55 for the standard edition and \$140 for the edition printed on Somerset Book paper and hand bound by Carolyn Whitesel this is a beautifully presented book highlighting a unique part of Merton's life.

Paul M Pearson

Piecing Together, David Scott (Bloodaxe Books, 2005), pp. 64, ISBN 1852246960. £7.95

All the poems in David Scott's new book are worth reading. Some are stunning. Take the opening poem, 'First Thing', for instance. It deals with the sighting of a group of deer from indoors:

*How it stopped me
even inside the house
my shirt in my hands
every bit of my body
wired up for watching
every bit of theirs radar
for the merest blink.*