

# Editorial

Before travelling to Asia, whilst in Alaska during the autumn of 1968, Merton preached a Day of Recollection for Sisters of the Diocese at Providence Hospital in Anchorage. He referred to his recent reading of the Sufi scholar, A. Reza Arasteh, a pioneer in integrative psychology, blending Western approaches to psychology with Eastern religious concepts. From Arasteh, Merton picked up the idea that psychoanalysis, rather than aiming to get people 'lined up with the rest of society'<sup>1</sup>, should assist in their progression towards 'final integration', meaning 'a final unification of the person in love', beyond self-concern.<sup>2</sup> Being finally integrated, it seems, means being entirely focused on loving.

Sometimes the idea of integration has been heard as meaning something more problematic; that is, when relatively powerless people are accepted into the world of a more powerful majority on condition that they adapt to the behaviours and characteristics of the powerful, without bringing disruption to established (or imagined) cultural, social and economic conditions. Some ideas of integration seem to leave little room for the kind of unpredictable change which is perhaps inevitable when contrasting ideas, perspectives and persons meet and interact.

The contributions to this edition of the Journal bring us a variety of perspectives and reflections on aspects of integration. In his paper on the many currents which flowed through Merton's later, solitary years, Mario Aguilar reflects on Merton's frustrations with the kinds of systems and habits which suppressed developments in religious life, limiting the prospect of a creative integration of fresh perspectives. Sonia Petisco Martínez and Fernando Beltrán Llavador, in their meditation on the potentialities and corruptions of language, refer to Martin Luther King Jr.'s determination to be 'maladjusted' to – rather than integrated into – a culture of segregation, discrimination and colonialism. Farai Mapamula, in a paper which began as a presentation marking the fiftieth anniversary of King's assassination, develops the theme in her personal engagement with Merton's response to the violence of a mid-twentieth century White

American dream. Peter Ellis guides us into Merton's discovering a deeper Amerindian wisdom, and the disruptive, liberating potential of his quest to integrate Christian and (to use a current term) primal spiritualities. Michael Plekon explores Merton's 'last epiphany' in connection with his thinking about the 'final integration' described in Arasteh's work.

Integrated persons, according to Merton, will be 'unusually developed' without knowing it, without caring one way or the other. 'They are simply not interested in themselves.'<sup>3</sup> Self-forgetfulness is part and parcel of this way of integration which is somehow endless, always unfinished. What ultimately matters is 'the unification and the simplification of [our] whole personal being and the unification of all [our] heart and strivings in the one thing that is necessary and that is the love of God.'<sup>4</sup> Which is not far from what Jonathan Dean, in his Easter reflection, tells us of Traherne's 'commitment to univocity': 'God commandeth you to love all like Him, because He would have you to be His Son.'

This rich collection of essays is interspersed with poems and reflections from David Hodges, Elizabeth Holmes and Sam McNally-Cross, along with reviews by Fiona Gardner, Anthony Purvis and James D'Angelo. There is an interview with Francisco Petisco, who integrates the likes of Rilke, Picasso and Blake in the creation of images such as the one on the cover of this edition. In this Eastertide season we celebrate the overwhelmingly integrative mystery of resurrection dawning from the wreckage of our fragmentation, as we dare to trust that what God can produce from the patchwork of our lives is a synthesis way beyond anything we can achieve by our own efforts. The promise comes as invitation to transformation: 'If we really want to be saints in the full sense of the word, we must let God's power really work on us, and build us into one piece.'<sup>5</sup>

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Gary Hall

## Notes

1. *Thomas Merton in Alaska: The Alaskan Conferences, Journals, and Letters*, ed. Robert E. Daggy (New York: New Directions, 1989), p. 146.
2. *Merton in Alaska*, p. 147.
3. *Merton in Alaska*, pp. 147-48.
4. *Merton in Alaska*, p. 145.
5. *Merton in Alaska*, p. 150.