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The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia. William H. Shannon, Christine M. Bochen and Patrick F. O'Connell. Orbis Books. 2002. ISBN: 1570754268.

n the time since its publication. I have found The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia to be a wonderful reference source. As Director of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University I deal with thousands of Merton related queries every year, frequently I find myself turning to the Encyclopedia as my starting point in answering these queries.

The Encyclopedia has been written by an outstanding team of scholars. William H. Shannon, the general editor of the five volumes of Merton's letters. author of numerous books on Merton, and most recently editor of The Inner Experience. Christine M. Bochen editor of The Courage to Truth, Merton's letters to literary figures, and volume six of Merton's personal journals, Learning to Love as well as the superb introductory collection, Thomas Merton: Essential Writings. Patrick F. O'Connell, editor of The Vision of Thomas Merton and of The Merton Seasonal. In this volume these longtime scholars of Merton have written excellent introductory articles to aspects of Merton's life and work falling into the following four categories: all of Merton's published books; the essential themes of his writings; the persons important in his life; and, to a much lesser degree, the places where he lived. The book goes from "A" for "Abbot" through to "Z" for "Gregory Zilboorg" and contains over 350 entries with many illustrations.

Two recent queries I was dealing with related to Merton's writings on the Book of Psalms and on the Holy Spirit. Although there was no specific article in the Encyclopedia on the Psalms there was an article about Merton's book Praying the Psalms and a more general article on "the bible," both of which were very

helpful in beginning to write a reply to the query I'd been asked.

The entry in the Encyclopedia for the "Holy Spirit" provided an outstanding analysis of Merton's thinking and references to the Holy Spirit throughout his literary work, from early comments in writings on St Bernard all the way through to comments he made in Asia in 1968, shortly before his death. This entry, an essay in its own right, brought together a wealth of information on this topic and provides a very good example of the depth and breadth of the knowledge of the authors of this book that strikes the reader in entry after entry.

However, having sung the very worthy praises of this volume, I now want to raise a number of questions which I believe can be addressed in future editions.

In the introduction to this book the authors state that they have

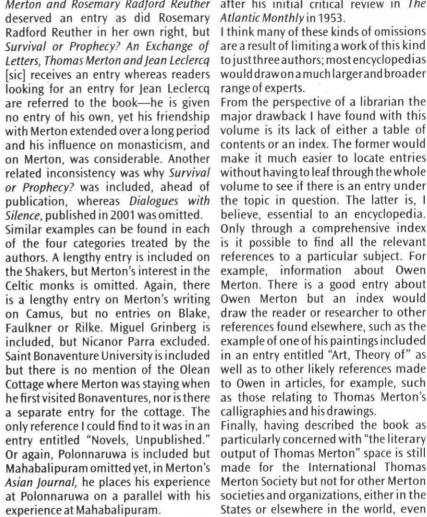
"limited themselves to printed materials. Thus, we have not included electronically recorded talks by Merton." (xvii.)

Although not stated, it must be presumed that manuscript material was also not included. This is a major omission since there are over 600 hours of Merton's recorded conferences and over 60 of his working notebooks in existence, not to mention other substantial amount of manuscript materials. A striking example was the absence of an entry for Merton's "banned book" Peace in a Post-Christian Era, or even references to it in otherwise good articles on subjects such as peace, war and censorship. I think the omission of such a large body of material calls into question the use of "encyclopedia" for this volume. It is a extremely fine reference volume, but in no way is it encyclopedic.

was a little puzzled by some inconsistencies in the volume, for example the authors felt At Home in the World: The Letters of Thomas

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for Dr Robert E. Daggy, the editor of so many of Merton's books, longtime the Thomas Merton Center does not Director and Archivist of the Thomas Merton Center, and one of the central These comments are not meant to figures in Merton Scholarship and the continuing interest in Merton. Edward Deming Andrews, a friend and the world of Merton publishing. I make correspondent of Merton is not listed. use of this volume almost daily and Again, Aelred Graham is an interesting have high hopes that future editions will figure omitted, especially with the build on its considerable strengths and reversal of his opinion on Merton's work eliminate its flaws.



Merton and Rosemary Radford Reuther after his initial critical review in The

are a result of limiting a work of this kind range of experts.

From the perspective of a librarian the major drawback I have found with this volume is its lack of either a table of contents or an index. The former would make it much easier to locate entries without having to leaf through the whole volume to see if there is an entry under believe, essential to an encyclopedia. example of one of his paintings included as those relating to Thomas Merton's calligraphies and his drawings.

Finally, having described the book as particularly concerned with "the literary output of Thomas Merton" space is still made for the International Thomas Merton Society but not for other Merton States or elsewhere in the world, even A major omission is the lack of an entry though societies such as the one in the Netherlands pre-dated the ITMS. Even qualify for an entry in its own right!

> detract from the value of this excellent volume which fills an important gap in