Notes

1. Pierre Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality, Vol. I: From the Time of Our Lord till the Dawn of the Middle Ages* Translated by W. H. Mitchell and S. P. Jacques (1927; Westminster, Maryland: Newman, 1953).

2. *Pachomian Koinonia,* 3 vols. Translated by Armand Veilleux. Cistercian Studies Series 45-47 (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1980-82).

3. For example: William Harmless, S.J., *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). O'Connell lists other items in Appendix C.

4. Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian: A Study in Primitive Monasticism* (Cambridge: University Press, 1950; 2nd ed. 1968). Merton obviously used the first edition.

5. For example: Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: the Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992).

6. The only comparable thing is Adalbert de Vogüé, "Understanding Cassian: A Survey of the Conferences," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 19.2 (1982): 101–21, which attempts to help orient the reader by explaining the structure of the conferences. Vogüé does not deal with Cassian's teaching as Merton does.

7. John Cassian, *The Conferences.* Translated by Boniface Ramsey. Ancient Christian Writers 57 (New York/Mahwah: Paulist, 1997) and John Cassian, *The Institutes.* Translated by Boniface Ramsey. Ancient Christian Writers 58 (New York/Mahwah: Newman, 2000).

8. Thomas Merton, *The Climate of Monastic Prayer.* Cistercian Studies Series 1 (Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian Publications, 1969).

Mark DelCogliano

BECKER, Holly (Producer) and SCHONEGEVEL, Carey (Director), *Original Child Bomb* (Santa Barbara, CA: Unquiet Projects, 2004. DVD available for purchase at www.originalchildbomb.com $25.00.

Perhaps the greatest testament to the urgency, necessity, and achievement of this remarkable film adaptation of Merton's 1962 poem comes from the audience who most needs to see it: the young people of today. After viewing the film several times myself, I decided—in light of the current nuclear crisis in North Korea—to screen it for my sophomore world literature class. I was horrified to discover that only about one third of the class was aware of this

crisis, and further shocked to learn that only about half of the students could name the two Japanese cities destroyed by atomic bombs in 1945. So we watched the film, and the written comments I received about it were both stirring and affirming. "Of all the movies I've ever watched in all of my school years, this one has affected me the most," wrote one student. "This movie has made an impact on my life and I was truly moved . . . I had only read about Hiroshima and Nagasaki in high school, and was hardly fazed. I had no idea of the destruction and horrific genocide the bombs caused," wrote another. Capturing perfectly the essence of all the comments I received, a student who was literally moved to tears in the classroom wrote of her reaction to the film, "Heartbreaking. Repulsive. May God have mercy on us all."

Many of my students are now reading for themselves Merton's poem, so the film certainly succeeds in inspiring interest in Merton's work. But to consider the film only as an adaptation of, or homage to, Merton's poem is unfair. The poetic image, as my students are learning, is different from the cinematic image, and while the message of both poem and film is the same, the film merits consideration of its own.

The film is comprised primarily of carefully edited archival footage, much of it now declassified and exhibited here for the first time. The film opens with shots from 1940s Hiroshima. Children are playing, people are walking the streets—smiling, shopping, working, simply going about the routine of daily life. There is a startling low angle shot of a little girl, a cut to a plane in the sky, and as Sergei Eisenstein expressed in his early theory of film montage, the juxtaposition of innocence and power is shocking. These are real people, the audience thinks, and that is a real plane, yet how the two collide with one another seems horrifyingly unreal. When the bomb makes impact, then, instead of seeing a literal image of its destruction, we see a starkly terrifying animation sequence that imagines what still is almost impossible to imagine.

Throughout, the film utilizes this rhythm of contrasts, what Eisenstein called oppositions. Beyond the effective and frequent juxtaposition of live action and animation, black and white footage alternates with color; newsreel footage of the bombings and Cold War nuclear tests is contrasted with reaction from contemporary students; and throughout we see and hear from American children and Japanese children, the young and the old, those scarred emotionally and those maimed physically. An occasional

cold voiceover recites passages from the poem, and haunting whispers murmur as we watch past and present footage of modern Japan and New York, images of nuclear testing and Ground Zero. Typical documentary techniques of interviews and voiceovers are used sparingly and effectively. I don't think I will ever forget the pronouncement of President Truman, that the victory achieved by the dropping of the atomic bombs represents "the greatest achievement of organized science in history."

Perhaps the greatest effect of this constant shifting of perspectives is that it underscores the universality and enduring implications of those horrible days in August 1945. The film makes clear that rather than being a past threat, the possibility of nuclear holocaust is even more real today. The film only conveys the statistics that really matter; beyond the obligatory death tolls of the atomic bombings and the horrifying numbers of people who later died from radiation effects, the film makes clear the fact that there still exist 22,000 nuclear warheads, with more likely in production.

I'll not summarize here all the sequences in the film; to do so would detract from your own first encounter with it. I do want to address, however, a few techniques that emphasize the resonance of past events upon the present. In one effective sequence, for example, we meet a young Japanese boy who explains that when he first learned about the atomic bombings in the sixth grade, "it hurt [his] heart a little." This is a young man who, like many young Japanese, has adopted the dress, the music, the strut of American youth culture. Ironically, this child of a conquered and defeated nation has become as aloof as his conqueror. Yet the film depicts him, in color, walking against the black and white backdrop of the ruins of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while we listen to the voices of survivors on the soundtrack. Whether he realizes it or not, the boy is a product of the past. This footage contrasts with that of American high school students who express a full range of opinions about their feelings about the bombings, and their sentiments range from compassion to rage, from shock to a disturbing sense of inevitability, even perhaps ambivalence. In his poem, Merton certainly wanted to address not only the horror of the children who died, but also the tragedy of all the children who might die in similar attacks. It is chilling to see and hear them represented here.

This childlike presence is beautifully achieved in the film by the voice of a girl who recites an alphabet in which, for example, D stands for "destruction" and N stands for "nuclear." And the

film is meant to appeal to youth; its ambient soundtrack is immediately recognizable to a young audience who know and admire much of the music and musicians who contributed to the film. Indeed, much of the film's pacing and editing is very similar to contemporary music videos. Finally, that the film is fully aware of itself as a film is demonstrated by the frequent use of onscreen text and literal stops, reversals, and fast forwards. This approach achieves a jerky, edgy effect that is relevant to today's new digital media, but it also echoes the tone and rhythm of the Merton poem.

At one point in *Original Child Bomb*, we hear from a Japanese woman who recounts the story of her young daughter who survived the bombing only to die a few months later of a seizure caused by radiation effects. The mother remembers her grief, and says "but I suppose you cannot undo the past." Merton certainly hoped to redeem the past with his poem, and this film adaptation has the same aim. A terrible beauty was indeed born in August 1945, and though the human capacity for hope, compassion, and empathy was not destroyed by the bombs, it certainly needs constant nurturing from generation to generation.

*Original Child Bomb* is essential viewing for anyone who wants to be reminded of the responsibility we have to teach today's young people the lessons of past failures. Though the film does contain some graphic, even shocking images, it is certainly appropriate for high school and college audiences, and is highly recommended for classroom use. When the film concluded, my class literally left the room in stunned silence. But silence, as Merton knew so well, can be a remarkable catalyst for action.

David King

SHANNON, William H., *Thomas Merton: An Introduction* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), pp. xiv-199. ISBN 0-86716-710-6 (paperback). $16.95.

As expected from William Shannon, this is an excellent book. It is a revision of his *Something of a Rebel* (1997), which I have not read, and now will not need to. In the introduction, Shannon makes it clear that although he has changed this title, he is not backing away from its idea of Merton as in some sense a rebel. And in what sense? In his refusal "to be content with the *status quo* when it no longer nourished the human spirit" (p. 2), and in his ongoing work of making his faith and his monastic tradition truly his own in response to conventionality in all its forms.