What Newman called "realization" describes something more than intellectual certitude or an ethical mandate; it describes an experience, an encounter, a confrontation, that both adds to a previous storehouse and at once "clicks" or "shifts" our worldview toward real *metanoia*. In mystical or theological terms, as in the Fourth and Walnut experience or Merton's dream of Proverb, such moments carry an event-like quality of grace, which is to say, the initiative is *on God's side* of the encounter. God's loving design for Merton "from before the beginning," as it were, is God's loving design for every person, without exception. "*If for me*," I realize, "*then for all the world*." To violate the dignity of one – the "secret beauty" (48) and "spark" of the divine which shines in us like the sun[11] – is to violate the dignity of all; indeed, it is to blaspheme against God.

In *Thomas Merton: The Monk of Civil Rights*, Vinski gives us a welcome, sensitive and often fascinating account of Merton's "slow-paced" growth toward social and racial solidarity, even if the book's final appeal to the reader's conscience falls short of fully appreciating or naming the revolutionary and sometimes unsettling grace needed to unleash that *metanoia* in each of us, through and across the stubborn racial divide.

Christopher Pramuk

MEEGAN, William J., *Remembering the Forgotten Merton*, Foreword by Christopher Pramuk (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2023), pp. xv, 137. ISBN 978-1-6667-3053-1 (paper) $23.00.

William Meegan has successfully blended his scholarly background in psychology with his formidable research skills to offer a welcome look at Thomas Merton's younger brother, John Paul. With meticulous care, he delves into journals, documents, church registries, ship manifests and unpublished letters/essays to provide documentation about John Paul's early life, his university failures, determination to join the armed forces, brief marriage and military career. A small book of fourteen chapters, Epilogue and extensive bibliography, Meegan offers readers an important perspective on Tom Merton's younger brother and their troubled relationship.

The three initial chapters (1-42) ground Meegan's interpretation of John Paul's life by providing the genealogy of the Merton family (2-3) and his father Owen's numerous painting forays (1921-25), when he left young John Paul in the care of the maternal grandparents (31-32). Many of these facts are well-known to readers of Michael Mott's *The Seven*

11. Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) 140-42.

Mountains of Thomas Merton[1] and Merton's autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain*.[2] Nevertheless, the picture Meegan draws emphasizes the loneliness of little John Paul and his father's "abdication of responsibility" (40). Indeed, by chronicling Owen's painting trips, Meegan substantiates that John Paul lived with his father only eight months out of a possible forty-eight. Meegan suggests that this loneliness contributed to the intensity of other losses in the boy's early life: death of his mother, loss of the Hillside home, virtual rejection by his father and the multiple insults perpetrated by his only sibling, Tom. With expertise in child psychology, Meegan offers a credible observation: "We can only guess that John Paul finished his early childhood with something akin to this see-saw style of getting along in the world. . . . Yet John Paul kept reaching out and remained hopeful" (41). The habit of "reaching out" to others to satisfy their needs, combined with an easy-going disposition, became John Paul's way of coping and a life-long characteristic.

Chapter 4, "Childhood in Douglaston" (43-55), documents John Paul at age six attending public school, and later the Choir School of St. John the Divine. Every two years, his grandfather Sam Jenkins orchestrated a trip to Europe, staying in expensive hotels and infuriating the hotel staffs. On the first of these, after a visit with father Owen and brother Tom in Saint-Antonin and in Montauban where Tom was to attend school, the travelers returned to the States in August 1926 (49). Meegan's evaluation of that excursion coincides with Mott's: "It was done. The first of the biennial 'vacation' trips John Paul was to take had left him exposed to many cultural and historical sights. His education outside the classroom had been a success; however, his connection with his father and brother left much to be desired. What had been imagined to be an opportunity for family bonding . . . was spent bickering and arguing." John Paul was left to wonder at the "dynamics of this troubled family" (49-50). On another European trip in 1930, eleven-year-old John Paul saw his dying father in a London hospital and was shocked at his swollen and disfigured appearance (see 53).

Chapters 5 and 6 – "Gettysburg Academy" (56-61) and "Cornell University" (62-73) – focus on John Paul's schooling. The brothers' relationship continued to be contentious during the summers, with sixteen-

1. See Michael Mott, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984) 17-18, 21, 25-26, 36, 51-53, 63, 72, 86, 102-104, 116, 152, 159, 168, 198, 220-222.

2. See Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948) 8, 22-24, 44-47, 77, 148-49, 151, 287, 299-300, 309, 35-36, 355, 384, 393-404 (subsequent references will be cited as "*SSM*" parenthetically in the text).

year-old Tom "unavailable and self-absorbed" (56). Meanwhile, John Paul – referred to by his Gettysburg pals as "Mert" – was associate editor of the 1934 class yearbook, a member of the rifle team, and while "having a good time . . . avoided going beyond the bounds of acceptable behavior" (58). When John Paul graduated in 1935, "he had a strong academic background in Latin, French, American history, ancient history, science, and math" and was remembered by faculty for his "voracious appetite for reading" and his writing skills (60). John Paul's future appeared to be on the right path. Then came Cornell University.

Meegan, the seasoned academic, analyzes John Paul's lack of focus and impetuous course selections. Thinking he might like to be a scientist, John Paul registered for several chemistry and physics courses, but when his grandfather Sam died that semester, he failed all his courses and was placed on probation. On probation more than once in 1935-1940, John Paul was finally dismissed from Cornell. This reviewer surmises that Meegan wishes he had been John Paul's academic adviser to help redirect and focus his energies. A saving influence, however, was John Paul's serendipitous meeting with Leonard Miscall, who welcomed John Paul into the Miscall family and provided, to some degree, the loving relationships he craved. "Not only was John Paul's world falling apart with the loss of family and a failed bachelor's degree, but the world at large was in chaos" (69). Casting about for meaningful activity, John Paul took flying lessons in spring 1940, and twice tried unsuccessfully to enlist in the American armed forces. Meegan regards John Paul as "impetuous and without purpose or direction," spending time in Mexico, then making a visit to brother Tom at St. Bonaventure College. Still dreaming of "doing something that would give his life greater meaning," John Paul joined the military in Canada (73).

"Royal Canadian Air Force" is an apt title for chapter 7 (74-83). Using Canadian library and archival documents, Meegan traces John Paul's steps to becoming part of the Eagle Squadrons – special units approved by the British Air Ministry between September 1940 and July 1941 (see 76). Meegan notes that the self-restraint missing in his life at Cornell was now enforced in "a disciplined, structured lifestyle." The young recruit was expected to master "the theory of flight, meteorology, navigation, duties of an air officer, military administration, algebra, and trigonometry" (78). His instructors, however, documented that besides being "a good lad . . . he needed a lot of help and could be temperamental" (78). Rejected for training as a pilot, John Paul became an air observer – the "navigator and bomb aimer, responsible for guiding the plane to its target and making the decision to release the bombs," then taking a photograph to document

the strike (79). While the broad strokes of this episode in John Paul's life are known through Mott's and Merton's accounts, Meegan has provided readers with new insights about John Paul's training, evaluation of his skills and a general conjecture of the perils he was facing: "In 1942, the life expectancy of crew members of Allied bombers was two weeks" (83).

Midway into this engaging text, this reader's heartbeat was pounding. We know the ultimate ending of the story, but details leading up to John Paul's death are scanty. However, Meegan wisely pauses his narrative to investigate John Paul's emerging spirituality. Throughout chapter 8, "Transformation" (84-100), Meegan detects nascent spirituality in the gentle-tempered John Paul by recounting the well-known episodes of five-year-old John Paul standing silent before the barrage of rocks thrown by Tom and his buddies to keep John Paul out of "their" clubhouse, as well as the youngster's demonstrated love when he "courageously stared down and walked through a gang of approximately twenty-five older boys who were threatening his brother and his friends" (86). Meegan regards these episodes of John Paul's continuing devotion to Tom as "the defining elements of the spirituality of forgiveness" (86). Over the course of the next 10+ pages, Meegan offers particulars about John Paul's baptism, confirmation, interest in Catholicism, two brief visits with Tom at Gethsemani and his formal acceptance of Catholicism – familiar facts from Merton's autobiography. Meegan's particular contribution to these events, however, is his belief that reconciliation was required of Tom, although John Paul had "long ago forgiven Tom for his mean, neglectful behavior" (97).

Chapter 9, "Wartime in England" (101-11), returns the reader to the dangerous path John Paul had chosen. Not yet twenty-four years old, John Paul now had a sense of purpose. During breaks in his training regiment, he courted Margaret May Evans who, herself, was contributing to the war effort through intelligence work (see 106). Married on February 23, 1943, the couple enjoyed a brief honeymoon in the Lake District (see 105-10). Some years later, Margaret confided in a letter to a former Trappist monk: "Our honeymoon was spent in Grasmere . . . . We walked for miles taking photographs, visiting beauty spots and making plans with youthful confidence of home in America when the war was over. I was never to see him again" (110). The final pages of this chapter chronicle John Paul's seven bombing missions with the 155 Squadron and his reassignment to the 166 Squadron with Flying Officer Lupton, "whose mission was to lay mines in enemy waters and to do night bombing over enemy territory." John Paul flew six sorties as the Air observer/Bomb Aimer "before a fateful mission to Mannheim, Germany" (110). With customary accuracy, Meegan offers the reader details of the Dambusters Raids, their insufficient air defense,

and the mounting casualties (see 110-11).

With accounts from John Paul's RCAF service record in the Ottawa Canada Library and Archives, chapter 10, "Final Mission" (112-15), details how "Lupton's Wellington aircraft took off Friday, April 16, 1943 at 21:19 hours" with extra fuel tanks to carry the bomber over the English Channel and on to Germany. Somehow the engines cut out and the plane never made it across the channel, crashing "nose first at a ten-degree angle. The plane sank within seconds of hitting the water" (113). Relying on a detailed narrative from Flying Officer Eric G. Hadingham (rear gunner), a survivor, the reader learns that John Paul, despite being critically injured, was supporting Lupton, his commander, who had died and was soon "released into the sea." Another crew member remembered: "Mert was in the last stages of exhaustion being severely wounded about the forehead and unable to move from the waist down. I think probably his back was broken." According to Hadingham, "*Most of the time he had left was spent in prayer*. Shortly after the Bomb Aimer became delirious and about three hours later he died" (114). In the evening of April 19 "'In as Christian manner' as possible, they let John Paul's body slip into the sea to join the bodies of Lupton, Whitfield, and a multitude of others. . . . John Paul was twenty-four years old and had been married fifty-four days" (115).

Readers will want to study chapter 10 for additional details and statistics as well as the specifics of chapter 11, "Aftermath" (116-20), to learn the fates of the crew, the official enquiry into the crash, the correspondence between Margaret May Merton and the Bomber Command, and the "spiritual comfort" (115) Tom Merton attempted to give her. Ironically, on Holy Saturday, April 24, 1943, brother Tom received a letter from John Paul and, not knowing he had died, wrote to him on Easter Monday. Meegan wonders how the relationship might have changed had Tom been able "to have the open and direct conversation John Paul had longed for his whole life" (120).

The life of John Paul Merton is evaluated by Meegan in chapter 12, "Inspiration" (121-23). With impassioned clarity, Meegan insists:

> The energy released in John Paul in order for him to rescue Lupton was more than the energy of his psychological makeup as a humble, optimistic, and caring person. It was more than the energy one gets from being a comrade-in-arms; it was certainly more than the energy one gets by throwing caution to the winds. The source of his energy came from the deepest part of his soul – who God created him to be. (122)

"Memorials," chapter 13 (124-25) lists the various places and citations

that commemorate and honor John Paul's service, and "The Rest of the Story," chapter 14 (126-28), identifies the outcomes of those connected with John Paul. The paragraph-long "Epilogue" (129) reminds readers that Meegan's focus is to acknowledge the working of grace in John Paul's life: "He lived his law of love from his earliest days until his final day" (129).

One can only be inspired by reading this short account of Thomas Merton's brother and reach tearfully for the poem appended to the end of *The Seven Storey Mountain*: "For My Brother: Reported Missing in Action, 1943" (*SSM* 404). Meegan has offered us more than a biography of John Paul Merton, with its tale of the terror and futility of war; he has tendered a portrait of an inspiring young man who discovered the importance of always reaching out with love.

Monica Weis, SSJ

TURLEY, Hugh and David Martin, *Thomas Merton's Betrayers: The Case against Abbot James Fox and Author John Howard Griffin* (Hyattsville, MD: McCabe Publishing, 2023), pp. 265. ISBN 978-0-9673521-6-9 (paper) $16.95.

Columnist Hugh Turley and writer/activist David Martin renew their argument, first made in *The Martyrdom of Thomas Merton: An Investigation* (2018),[1] that the United States government was responsible for the murder of Thomas Merton, abetted by leaders at Merton's home abbey, Our Lady of Gethsemani and the wider Catholic Church, along with the press and scholarly world generally. In this book, they name Merton's principal betrayers – Gethsemani Abbot James Fox, Merton biographer John Howard Griffin and Brother Patrick Hart – and others who have misled concerning the truth of Merton's death.

The subtitle of *Thomas Merton's Betrayers* highlights the focus of this book. On page 73, Turley and Martin identify Abbot Fox as a principal creator of the official statement that Merton was accidentally electrocuted by a faulty fan in a letter dated February 1, 1969 addressed "To the Gethsemani diaspora."

Turley and Martin condemn the "treachery" (81) and "deceitful actions" (82) of Abbot Fox and John Howard Griffin, who had been appointed to be the authorized biographer in 1969, a task he never completed. They review three documents – the doctor's death report and death certificate along with a report on the Death of an American Citizen – sent

1. Hugh Turley and David Martin, *The Martyrdom of Thomas Merton: An Investigation* (Hyattsville, MD: McCabe Publishing, 2018) (subsequent references will be cited as "*Martyrdom*" parenthetically in the text).