

Dropped: Original Monk Bomb

(Merton's Journey Home in a SAC Bomber)*

By Jeffrey Cooper, CSC

"I have seen the SAC plane, with the bomb in it, fly low over me and I have looked up out of the woods directly at the closed bay of the metal bird with a scientific egg in its breast!"

– *Day of a Stranger*

I am a sign of contradiction.
 My life known by unknowing:
 A monk by un-monking,
 A prophet by non-profit,
 A voice uttered by silence,
 A free self born by obedient compliance.

A traveler who stands still.
 A seeker firmly fixed.
 An exile always and already home.
 I learned flight from groundedness,
 How to walk the shore by swimming the sea.
 I found myself in you by abandoning me.

And swimming in my loss
 I am swallowed-found.
 Imprisoned in order to be set free.
 In this life one must learn to swim
 With wings and fly with fins,
 For mercy only travels along the pathways of sin.

Life is a journey from the
 Belly of a fish to the belly of a bird.
 The spiritual endeavor is always
 Just the other side of absurd.
 I sought to know the fish that spewed me on shore.
 And I've seen the bird and its bomb bay door.



Jeffrey Cooper, CSC

Jeffrey Cooper, CSC is a Holy Cross priest working in his community's religious formation program in Cascade, CO. He will be giving a presentation on "Merton Reads Gandhi: The One-Eyed Giant and the Power to Suffer Truth" at the ITMS Ninth General Meeting in June at the University of San Diego.

From the belly of that fish
To the belly of this bird,
Whose lumbering frightful flight I cursed.
Born under the bomb, in death I am a bomb.
And only she, the metal sign of awful strife,
Could drop, detonate the secret of me into Life.

*See Michael Mott, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984) 570:
“After many delays, the body of Thomas Merton was at last flown from Bangkok to California, carried
in the bay of a SAC bomber.”