



## **The Seven Storey Mountain**

*Thomas Merton , Robert Giroux (Introduction) , William H. Shannon (Introduction)*

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A modern-day Confessions of Saint Augustine, *The Seven Storey Mountain* is one of the most influential religious works of the twentieth century. This edition contains an introduction by Merton's editor, Robert Giroux, and a note to the reader by biographer William H. Shannon. It tells of the growing restlessness of a brilliant and passionate young man whose search for peace and faith leads him, at the age of twenty-six, to take vows in one of the most demanding Catholic orders--the Trappist monks. At the Abbey of Gethsemani, "the four walls of my new freedom," Thomas Merton struggles to withdraw from the world, but only after he has fully immersed himself in it. *The Seven Storey Mountain* has been a favorite of readers ranging from Graham Greene to Claire Booth Luce, Eldridge Cleaver, and Frank McCourt. Since its original publication this timeless spiritual tome has been published in over twenty languages and has touched millions of lives.

## The Seven Storey Mountain Details

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Author : Thomas Merton , Robert Giroux (Introduction) , William H. Shannon (Introduction)

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# From Reader Review The Seven Storey Mountain for online ebook

## Jason says

Merton's quest for personal happiness leads him from a life of booze and women to a Trappist monastery. I read this book with an open mind, hoping that some of Merton's findings would translate into my own life. He abandons his secular life in favor of godly devotion, but along the way he trades analytical analysis for superstition, and logic for blind faith. He routinely blames saints and devils for mundane events in his life, and interprets the outcome of any situation to be a sign from God. Rather than convince me of the virtues of religious devotion, his book has left me feeling even more disillusioned and disappointed with organized religion.

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## booklady says

I listened to the abridged version of Merton's spiritual autobiography back in the 90's, loved it, and actually thought I'd read this book. Now I've read the unabridged book and learned all I missed.

However, given where *I* was 20 years ago, I doubt I would/could have appreciated so many of the things Merton described so well in his journey, especially his experience of being led from one Master to another, often via friends, travels and the many pitfalls of sin and shame. Speaking just about some of the mountain tops he climbed: Dante Alighieri, Étienne Gilson, William Blake and Jacques Maritain. His descriptions are so good they remind you of a Baedeker for the world of spiritual literature.

Reading the complete book is so much better than listening to the abbreviated audio version. I can't believe I waited this long to read it in full. Also, I'm glad I went on to read *The Intimate Merton: His Life from His Journals* and *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton* because these two works not only told the rest of the story which he was not allowed to include in his autobiography, but they also continued past the time when this book ended.

A fascinating read about an incredible man.

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## MattA says

Merton is a gifted writer, and his descriptions of growing up in Europe are interesting. Much less interesting are his spiritual/religious judgments of others. These judgments seem to break down along the following lines:

If you're a bad person, and are not Catholic, the reason you're bad is because you're not Catholic.

If you're a bad person, and are Catholic, the reason you're bad is because you're not Catholic enough.

If you're a good person, and are not Catholic, the reason you're good is because you hang around with so many Catholics.

If you're a good person, and are Catholic, the reason you're good is obvious.

I didn't expect anything but a pro-Catholic stance from Merton--he was a Catholic monk, after all--but some

of his takes border on religious bigotry. In one passage he praises the prayer-work of a group of monks, stating outright that the reason the United States is a successful nation is because this small group of cloistered guys in upstate New York prays on a daily basis. And he means this not in some abstract "it takes all kinds to make the world go round" way, he means it literally. The monks pray, God hears their prayers and responds, and that's why our country is blessed. No other reason. Then, not two pages later, he has the gall to criticize someone else's religious practices as "obviously silly."

I would have found his tale more enlightening if he had turned his perceptive talents on those aspects of Catholicism that are "obviously silly" and then described how in spite of them he was able to grow in his faith.

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### **Daniel Villines says**

Merton's autobiography is the story of his quest to understand life and to give it some semblance of purpose. Not unlike each of us, in our own way, trying to develop a philosophy that will provide us the seeds of meaning to the infinite number of events that will assail us between now and the end of our days. If this was all that Merton accomplished in *The Seven Storey Mountain*, then this would not be the book that it is. In my mind, Merton crosses the line. He selfishly places his quest above everybody else's and makes his form of enlightenment one that the entire world should aspire to. The problem lies in the fact that no one's quest to understand life is better or more righteous than the quests pursued by any one of us (except for the axe-murderers among us).

This central theme of selfishness is the issue that pushed this book away from me even though Merton's selfishness may not have been of his own choosing. His mother died at the age of 8 and his father was more interested in his art than he was his son's life until he died when Merton was 15. At about that time, Merton was turned loose on the world with a trust fund that allowed him to pursue his own interests without a need (or a desire) to contribute to anything or anyone.

During the next ten years Merton simply indulges himself in himself and he finds the emptiness that can develop from true selfishness. Then, rather than searching for a cause and cure for the emptiness in his life, he finds a justification and a substitution. Merton simply substitutes a faith in a higher power for the emptiness that encompasses his life, and with this transformation he is free to continue his self-indulgences with a sense of righteousness that is reinforced by the Catholic Church.

After Merton's initial transformation, when threatened with the prospects of service to his surrounding community and when threatened with the possibility of military service in World War II, he yet again searches for an even deeper faith. This subsequent search results in his true calling to the Trappist monastery, where his continued ability to self-indulge in himself is permanently assured.

In the end, Merton may have found a way to convince himself that he has made atonements for his selfishness. However, at the same time, he continues to satisfy his own selfish desires. It's this deep-rooted and unresolved conflict in Merton's character that shows itself as a bitterness that pervades the entirety of this book.

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## Cheryl says

Now this, I never knew about men:

Is there any man who has ever gone through a whole lifetime without dressing himself up, in his fancy, in the habit of a monk and enclosing himself in a cell where he sits magnificent in heroic austerity and solitude, while all the young ladies who hitherto were cool to this affections in the world come and beat on the gates of the monastery crying, "Come out, come out!"

This is the tone you get from this author as he tells of his life: a peculiar mix of contemplation, self-mutilation, and philosophy. Losing both his parents to illnesses, you sense the underlying melancholy of a young man who is alone. Nonetheless, he was still raised privileged, attended Ivy League universities, traveled from Europe to America, was expected to be groomed for European diplomatic service, until...well, until he decided to become a monk.

It was a bit hard to rate this book. There was something inherently motivational about it; Merton's passion for books was alluring, but then again, there were moments where you felt like you were being lectured to by a priest. Merton writes in the classic style of some of the authors he admires: D.H. Lawrence and James Joyce. So it is an autobiographical piece that is as much about the author as it is about the experience for the reader; it stays true to the art and true form of the genre.

Oh, but the discourse:

When a ray of light strikes a crystal, it gives a new quality to the crystal. And when God's infinitely disinterested love plays upon a human soul, the same kind of thing takes place. And that is the life called sanctifying grace.

When the book was first published, it became a bestseller. Yet the New York Times refused to include it on their list because they deemed it a "religious book." Despite that, the original cloth version sold over 600,000 copies in the first year and it has reached multiple millions since then. Hmm, surprise, surprise, a scorned book sells millions. Did I think it was a religious book? Well from the afore-mentioned quote (and many more within the book) I can see why it would be labeled as such. If you are not into Catholicism (I'm not a Catholic but it didn't bother me) it could also be off-putting. It is not a book for everyone, that's for sure.

But I would have to agree with what Merton's editor said when he received hate mail saying, "Tell this talking Trappist who took a vow of silence to shut up!" He said: "writing is a form of contemplation"--when written well, memoirs say great things about the world. This is why I love to read them. And this is one that says a lot about what makes people do what they do.

Merton was a writer and poet. A literary critic. A scholar. To him, *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus*, *Purgatorio*, and *Holy Sonnets* are all commentaries on ethics and psychology. I would have to say yes to *Hamlet* and *Holy Sonnets*--the others I haven't read.

This is not a book about religious swaying. After all, this was a man who at first considered himself an atheist. So you can only imagine what a journey he embarks upon.

He was an avid reader so part of my fascination was with his thoughts on books: the *Poems of William Blake*, the *Spiritual Quixote*, and *St. Augustine's Confessions*. For him, it was either to live the rest of his life "in the relative peace of a college campus, reading and writing books," or to "live in a world that was charged with the presence and reality of God." Why could these two not coexist?

So how did he become a monk? He says: "It was something in the order of conscience, a new and profound and clear sense that this was what I really ought to do."

Really though, his love of books had an effect. He read James Joyce: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and voila--his transformation started. I kid you not. I had to dig through my shelves to find my copy because this reminded me of days of philosophical debate in college over this book.

If phrases such as this one seem ostentatious to you, this will be an off-putting read for you:

...The more you try to avoid suffering, the more you suffer, because smaller and more insignificant things begin to torture you, in proportion to your fear of being hurt. The one who does most to avoid suffering is, in the end, the one who suffers most: and his suffering comes to him from things so little and so trivial that one can say that it is no longer objective at all.

I, on the other hand, find such phrases thought-provoking.

Reading through certain portions of the book, you get a sense that the memoirist took a break and in waltzed the literary critic and article writer. At times it seemed as though he was critiquing his feelings. Then you get to the end, the epilogue, where you get this beautiful, introspective, lyrical, glimpse into his life as a monk:

The morning sun is shining on the gate-house which is bright with new paint this summer. From here it looks as though the wheat is already beginning to ripen on St. Joseph's Knoll. The monks who are on retreat for their ordination to the diaconate are digging in the Guest House garden.

It is very quiet. I think about this monastery that I am in. I think about the monks, my brothers, my fathers.

And I'm like, more please? Now you see why it was a hard book to rate.

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## **Lynne King says**

*A Trappist monastery is a quiet place! In a Trappist monastery, monks typically have three motivations to speak to one another: to get a particular work project carried out efficiently, to engage in a community*

*discussion, or to discuss one's spiritual progress with a director or confessor. Sometimes, too, Trappists will enjoy friendly conversations with each other in a conversation room or in nature. These different types of conversation are balanced with the discipline of fostering a general atmosphere of silence in the monastery. Trappists find the silence helps them to practice continual prayer.*

This is an amazing biography of a man who did quite relatively normal things in his life such as becoming a member of a young Communist group as *he was concerned over the social and economic injustices of modern life*. However, a completely different change of direction occurred when he decided to become a Trappist monk at the age of twenty-six.

I'm surprised, and yet not surprised, that Merton did in fact turn out the way he did. His parents were artists (an English father and his mother was an American Quaker), who travelled extensively between America and France, between the First and Second World Wars and Merton as a child seemed to be continually on the move.

Also the difference between being a gregarious individual and then deciding to forsake that to go and live in a world of quiet contemplation did have me wondering I must confess. Nevertheless, Merton was being called, had made up his mind and that was the end of it.

We have here a deeply religious individual, who was a prolific writer, writing from his monk's cell for the outside world which rather astonished me. He also had quite an international reputation. Never mind being witty and thoroughly enjoying life up to the full until his untimely death at the age of fifty-three, twenty-seven years after he entered the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky.

I've always had a fascination for nuns and monks. Indirectly, I blame my father because he gave me a book to read *The Nun of Monza*. I couldn't put it down and my interest grew from there. I don't however believe that living in a monastery would suit my personality. Conversation is too important for me and to listen to other views.

As usual, I was intrigued by the title and it transpires that Merton uses the seven-tiered mountain (Dante's image of Purgatory) as a symbol of the modern world.

The attention to detail throughout the book is remarkable and so you must trust me and read it. Believe me, I know that you will not only like this book but be enthralled by it.

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### **Nathan Marone says**

Reading Merton's autobiography almost tempts me to become a Catholic. As a Protestant, there are elements of Catholic theology that I could never affirm, but Merton, an excellent spokesman, gives the reader a sense of the aesthetic beauty and solemnity of the Catholic faith that us pragmatist Protestants sorely lack. We are casual and friendly with God where they are formal and filled with awe. There is probably a right balance in our response to God here, and Merton's book offered me the vicarious pleasure of receiving a communion with some sense of ritual gravity, or of reading the lives of saints that we can call our own.

Most of the book concerns Merton's life prior to entering Gethsemani, a Trappist monastery. What is incredible about Merton is that his unbelieving life is sinful in only an average way, but his reaction to that life is to look on it with the dismissiveness a child might reserve for a broken toy. Though he doesn't put it in these exact terms, he finds sinfulness in the careless consumerism of American culture, in his own need to be recognized as a good writer, and in his own inherent laziness and aimlessness. It is refreshing to read a man so repentant over things that most of us would more or less take for granted. He did not, at least as he tells it, end up on drugs or with a million women. He was an ordinarily intelligent young man who realized that his life was a meaningless exercise in temporal existence without God.

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### **Mie says**

There is so much to be gained from this book. I will need to read it again.

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### **Wanda says**

The first part of this book was painfully slow at times, yet interesting. Then in the second part, after Merton was baptized.... WHOOOOSHH!!! off we went! And I was spellbound til the end. Its impossible to summarize this book, and there are many reviews out there for everyone to peruse. So I'll simply quote a few of my favorite passages in the book.

As a newly baptized Catholic, I found this passage incredibly beautiful and accurate:

"I had come, like the Jews, through the Red Sea of Baptism. I was entering into a desert -- a terribly easy and convenient desert, with all the trials tempered to my weakness -- where I would have a chance to give God great glory by simply trusting and obeying Him, and walking in the way that was not according to my own nature and my own judgement. And it would lead me to a land I could not imagine or understand. It would be a land that was not like the land of Egypt from which I had come out; the land of human nature blinded and fettered by perversity and sin. It would be a land in which the work of man's hands and man's ingenuity counted for little or nothing: but where God would direct all things, and where I would be expected to act so much and so closely under His guidance that it would be as if He thought with my mind, and if He willed with my will. It was to this that I was called. It was for this that I had been created. It was for this Christ had died on the Cross, and for this that I was now baptized, and had within me the living Christ, melting me into Himself in the fires of His love. This was the call that came to me with my Baptism, bringing with it a most appalling responsibility if I failed to answer it." (p. 248)

"All that is necessary to be a saint is to want to be one. Don't you believe that God will make you what He created you to be, if you will consent to let Him do it? All you have to do is desire it." (p. 260)

"Our happiness consists in sharing the happiness of God, the perfection of His unlimited freedom, the perfection of His love. What has to be healed in us is our true nature, made in the likeness of God. What we have to learn is love. The healing and the learning are the same thing, for at the very core of our essence we are constituted in God's likeness by our freedom, and the exercise of that freedom is nothing else but the exercise of disinterested love -- the love of God for His own sake, because He is God. The beginning of love is truth, and before He will give us His love, God must cleanse our souls of the lies that are in them. And the



most effective way of detaching us from ourselves is to make us detest ourselves as we have made ourselves by sin, in order that we may love Him reflected in our souls as He has re-made them by His love. That is the meaning of the contemplative life, and the sense of all the apparently meaningless little rules and observances and fasts and obediences and penances and humiliations and labors that go to make up the routine of existence in a contemplative monastery: they all serve to remind us of what we are and Who God is -- that we may get sick of the sight of ourselves and turn to Him: and in the end, we will find Him in ourselves, in our own purified natures which have become the mirror of His tremendous Goodness and of His endless love...." (p. 410-11)

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## **Janet says**

(from notes in my journal, Nov. 9, 2007)

Why did I wait so long to read Thomas Merton? I've known so many fans of his work and had so many opportunities to get to know him. In my mid-twenties I lived for a few years in Lexington, Kentucky, just about an hour from Gethsemani, the Trappist monastery where Merton spent the second half of his life. I had a lover who made regular pilgrimages and once brought me seeds from Merton's garden, carefully folded inside a dollar bill. But I never visited Gethsemani myself, and in all these years I'd never even opened one of Merton's books.

Tonight I started "The Seven-Storey Mountain," because it was assigned for class next week. Merton is a philosopher as well as a damn good writer, and his reflections are vivid, complex, and rich.

Why did I wait so long to read Thomas Merton? I've known so many fans of his work and had so many opportunities to get to know him. In my mid-twenties I lived for a few years in Lexington, Kentucky, just about an hour from Gethsemani, the Trappist monastery where Merton spent the second half of his life. I had a lover who made regular pilgrimages and brought me seeds from Merton's garden, carefully folded inside a dollar bill. But I never visited Gethsemani myself, and in all these years I'd never even opened one of Merton's books.

Tonight I started "The Seven-Storey Mountain," because it was assigned for class next week. We've gone through several major spiritual autobiographies (Thoreau, King, Gandhi, Day) They've all been fascinating, but none were written with such skill and power as this one. Merton is a philosopher as well as a damn good writer, and his reflections are vivid, complex, and rich.

I was a bit disappointed that young the Merton in this work is not much like the older ecumenist and peace activist of the 1960s. I'm perplexed by any spiritual quest (and there are so many) that lead through renunciation or retreat from the world. I'm also not able to wrap my brain around the ideas of original sin and the need for salvation. But if I try to empathize with Merton and understand his journey within his world-view, there's a lot to be gained from this early autobiography.

A passage that hit me with particular force is Merton's adult explanation of his youthful scorn for his adoring little brother, who followed him everywhere only to be dismissed and rejected.

"And in a sense, this terrible situation is the pattern and prototype of all sin: the deliberate and formal will to reject disinterested love for us purely for the arbitrary reason that we simply do not want it. We will to separate ourselves from that love. We reject it entirely and absolutely, and will not acknowledge it, simply

because it does not please us to be loved. Perhaps the inner motive is that the fact of being loved disinterestedly reminds us that we all need love from others, and depend upon the charity of others to carry on our own lives. And we refuse love, and reject society, in so far as it seems, in our own perverse imagination, to imply some obscure kind of humiliation." (p. 26, Harcourt Brace ed.)

I'm no Christian, and certainly no monastic, but I do recognize myself in this description. By this definition, I'm a huge sinner. I've had a long habit of refusing love, perhaps more often when I was younger, but I still do it now. Simply because it does not please me to be loved. And probably even more because of my aversion to that "obscure kind of humiliation."

Recently I've been treated to the terrifying experience of loving deeply and fearing that I will be rejected. In a way it would be only fair. But so far my love has been welcomed and returned. It's a kind of beautiful agony to be suspended in mutual love, feeling joyful and vulnerable at the same time. It's a profound form of dependence, but rather than leaving one impoverished, it is immensely enriching.

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## **Matthew says**

Hugely disappointing. There were two main things about this book that turned me off:

First, I am irritated by the way that he seems to treat esoteric Catholic doctrines as clear and obvious, thus needing no explanation. For example, he presents Marian intercession as a universal principle that should be self-evident to any person capable of reason, despite the fact that (so far as I can tell) it has very little basis in Scripture and is not even a particularly important part of scholastic philosophy. Maybe this is a small thing, but I repeatedly found that Merton talked about his faith and beliefs in ways that did not make sense to me, and probably would not to anyone who was not already a Catholic. Perhaps this book is meant to, as they say, preach to the converted, but if so then that is a rather disappointingly narrow outlook.

Mostly, though, I had read this book because I hoped to read the words of a man who had found in his being a great affirmation. I wanted to hear him talk about beauty and joy and grace, and perhaps even holiness. Despite this dude's reputation as one of the preeminent religious figures of the 20th century, I found that his path to God seemed to have left him angry, bitter, self-righteous, and occasionally straight up mean. His whole heart seems consumed by a great rejection, and disgust, and ugliness, so that cloistering himself was the only way to escape. Leaving him with peace within four walls and a seething hatred for everything outside of them. And that is not what I am looking for.

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## **Stephanie says**

I finally read Thomas Merton's *Seven Story Mountain*. Mostly out of obligation because if you tell anyone you've read Merton they ask if you've read *Seven Story Mountain*.

First, one neat story. Merton was at Cambridge, studying sociology, economics, history (196). On Merton's first day of school, he accidentally seated himself in a class on the works of Shakespeare. So he got up, then sat back down, stayed. Later that day he went to the registrar and officially added the course. Here's what he

said about it:

"The material of literature and especially of drama, is chiefly human acts--that is, free acts, moral acts. And, as a matter of fact, literature, drama, poetry, make certain statements about these acts that can be made in no other way" (197).

Merton describes a sort of progressive conversion, first mind, heart, will, body, imagination. He sampled several religious orders, and eventually became a Trappist Monk. He explains about these monastic orders: Franciscans, Benedictines. Of course, the Trappists have a reputation for being most extreme in terms of penance and discipline—they grow their own food, make their own shoes, fast for more than half of every year. Second only to the Carthusians who are basically hermits. But there weren't any Carthusians in North America so Merton had to settle for the Trappists.

Here's what I've learned about "the seven stories." It's not a story of how he rose to higher ranks in the faith. The stories represent 7 layers of *sinfulness* and how he rose through them finally reaching the point where it was *possible to be saved*.

Of course when you read a Trappist monk say that he's led a horribly undisciplined and shallow life, you start to feel pretty miserable. But I took away a few new ideas.

- Merton tells a story about his childhood. He had a little brother John Paul who always wanted to be with his older brother. Of course, being older, Merton would send him away. And he carried incredible guilt about this (26). Then there's this great scene...neighbourhood gang is out front, the boys are kicked out the back door, they sneak to safety. Then John Paul comes bravely walking down the center—it's disinterested love. Merton said, "We did not chase him away." I love that he only implied the metaphor, the image of Christ, walking bravely toward the cross because we were on the opposite side.
- I don't think this first point was said directly, but the implication was strong enough that it sent me back searching for a direct passage. It's this: we sometimes talk about ourselves as being divided. We believe one thing, but act in another way. Don't know why. Merton suggests that there's no disagreement. We act according to what we believe. The seclusion of monastics is evidence that they believe prayer is more effective than works.
- Secondly, we have basic desires—not just sinful ones, but for comfort, food, success—and we act according to what we want. Merton says it's an illusion that we can act without self-interest, we can act without serving our desires (224).
- What it boils down to is this: it's all about converting your will, converting your intentions. Sometimes that means going without, fasting, etc.
- Here's a cool idea. Union with God. How does that happen? Is that when you're singing the worship song so hard there's sweat dripping, and you ascend into some sort of spiritual euphoria? Merton says that from a physical point of view it's impossible. We are matter and God is spirit. You can't join those. Except when it comes to your intentions—basically, your will. If you can conform your will to God's, that's unity (253, 407).
- Which is better, the active life or the interior life? Which best serves God, activity: teaching, soup kitchens, delivering aid to Indonesia, building churches or a life cloistering yourself away from the world centred in contemplation and prayer—in isolation, mostly. The answer would seem obvious—that we're called to be

working. I've never understood the rationale of a monastery. How could my time spent along in reading, writing, thinking, prayer, help anyone else? Of course I've always felt a bit guilty because my preference is usually to be left alone and it's pretty selfish and all. Anyhow—Merton presented a way to redeem my antisocialness.

- It works like this. If—and this is a weighty if—if we really believe in the mystical body of Christ—that in reality we are one person with many parts, then when one of us reads, thinks, learns, writes, prays, it does serve the rest. Merton claims that the reason God hasn't destroyed the US is because a little Trappist monastery tucked away in the hills of Kentucky. I don't think he's far off (454).

It's not a matter of trying to share each other's joys and sorrows—unity isn't something to achieve, it's not a metaphor, it's a spiritual reality. This tied-togetherness is what I love most about the faith. It's what I love about Christian community and about the school where I teach. You see it in something as simple as curriculum sharing... It makes sense. Because if we do believe in the mystical body of Christ, there isn't room for competition, jealousy, hoarding. Because if one person advances, if one of us does well, then it really does help the rest.

That one quality is so obviously lacking in the world. And it works both ways. (Here I'll soap box for just a minute.) When Christian leaders kill 100,000 civilians in Iraq, it really does hurt the rest of the world. When a colleague ends her career amid scandal, it's not just sympathy pains, it's real pain.

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## **K.D. Absolutely says**

My first encounter with Thomas Merton (1915-1968). Orphan at the age of 16. Monk in the Trappist Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky, USA at the age of 26. This is his memoirs detailing the first half of his life when his family that originated in France had to move to England, Bermuda and United States. Born protestant, his parents were not avid followers of any religion, he got his first attraction to Catholicism by wandering around old deserted churches in France until his family moved to the US when he got enrolled in a Catholic university. The first part of his life had its highlight with the death of Merton's father from brain tumor.

Merton also had the talent in writing. Even at his young age, he thought that he would become a journalist instead of a religious person or a monk. In fact, the end part of the book detailed his day-to-day experience as a new monk. At this time, he was encouraged by his abbot to compose his life story. The result is this book, his first. *The Seven Storey Mountain* came out in 1948 right after World War II and it became an instant hit because of the people's need to be inspired and reconnect with the spiritual beings torn by the savages and disillusionment brought about by the world war. This book was highly praised by notable Catholics Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Clare Boothe Luce and Bishop Fulton J. Sheen who compared this to St. Augustine's *Confessions* (4 stars). Like *Confessions*, this has become one of the most widely read spiritual classics of all times.

Did I like the book? Yes. It is fascinating to know how an agnostic can turn into a contemplative monk. I am always interested to know how people can change religion into some kind of "awakening." More often than not, there is an underlying reason: feeling of belonging (peer pressure) or *pakikisama*, just to be different or *papansin*, drama or *para maiba lang*, *para mapagusapan* or in an acquaintance's case, to despise his family whose members belong to different religions compared to him and that is because he secretly hates himself

by failing them.

They say that God works in mysterious ways. Whatever is the reason for one's awakening, it is only God who knows what is our role here on earth. I know that this book has inspired many people to discover the Catholic faith or strengthen the faith of those who are steadfast to their belief.

This will not be my last Merton book. They say that this is only the beginning. One has to read his other works to appreciate how he evolved into a deeper spiritual mysticism.

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### John Doe says

I have been thinking about this book--daydreaming about become a monk. I think that it wouldn't be such a bad way for things to end up. I think about what would be different. Would I read more scripture everyday? Would I pray?

There is a scene when Thomas Merton is visiting a monastery in Kentucky and they give him the key to the library where he can spend his morning reading whatever he wants. Later, when he lives there he has to grow his own food and do a bit of laboring.

It sounds like kind of a nice life. I don't know. Anyway, this is a very good book. Highly recommended!

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### Oksana says

האם אפשר לומר, שההתעוררות היא תוצאה של תהליך ארוך? האם יש משהו שניתן לעשות כדי להימנע מהתעוררות כזו? האם יש משהו שניתן לעשות כדי להימנע מהתעוררות כזו? האם יש משהו שניתן לעשות כדי להימנע מהתעוררות כזו? האם יש משהו שניתן לעשות כדי להימנע מהתעוררות כזו?

האם יש משהו שניתן לעשות כדי להימנע מהתעוררות כזו? האם יש משהו שניתן לעשות כדי להימנע מהתעוררות כזו? האם יש משהו שניתן לעשות כדי להימנע מהתעוררות כזו? האם יש משהו שניתן לעשות כדי להימנע מהתעוררות כזו? האם יש משהו שניתן לעשות כדי להימנע מהתעוררות כזו?

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