

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF
THOMAS MERTON

ELECTED SILENCE

WITH A FOREWORD BY
EVELYN WAUGH

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W M

About the Author :

Thomas Merton was born in the Pyrenees in 1915. Both his father and mother were artists, his father having come from New Zealand and his mother from America. In his early years the boy travelled around with his parents, picking up an education sometimes in French schools, sometimes in English. Both his parents died while he was under age and after a restless year at Clare College, Cambridge, he went to America to join his mother's family and finish his studies at Columbia University. At the university he did some reviewing for the "New York Times" and the "Tribune" and was generally considered a young hope of American letters. It was while he was on the staff of St. Bonaventure College, New York, teaching English Literature that he made his famous retreat at the Trappist monastery at Kentucky which determined his career. He was clothed in the habit of the Trappists in 1942 and he has now been ordained a priest.

Press Opinion :

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[Continued on back flap

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Elected
Silence

*Elected silence sing to me
And beat upon my whorled ear,
Pipe me to pastures still and be
The music that I care to hear*

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS



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Another Book by Thomas Merton:
SEEDS OF CONTEMPLATION

IF *Elected Silence* is the story of a progress to the contemplative life, *Seeds of Contemplation* is as the author says: "the kind of book that writes itself automatically in a monastery"—drawn from the thoughts that came to him "in odd moments" as he learned both from books and from experience about the life of the spirit, but set down and arranged in order, to present certain traditional but generally neglected ideas about the life of prayer.

Seeds of Contemplation gives no method or handy way of prayer and renunciation. Learning the contemplative way of life is not easy, and Merton does not make it out to be so. He comments wryly on the "big, warm, sweet, interior glow" which is the product of the sentimental type of religious feeling. On the contrary, mysticism, renunciation and solitude are seen as strong and masculine, an energetic and stirring vocation. It is in the spirit of this vocation, too, that Merton, not content to enjoy his newly-found freedom in retirement from the world, should pass on to others the fruits of his own reflections: "The ultimate perfection of the contemplative life is not a heaven of separate individuals, each one viewing his own private vision of God: it is a sea of love, which flows through the One Person of all the elect, the angels and the saints: and their contemplation would be incomplete if it were not shared, or if it were shared with fewer souls or with spirits capable of less vision and joy."

"*The approach and style and background are the author's own, although his style is severely disciplined and the writing wonderfully objectified. Fortunately, it is not depersonalised, but vigorous and of great flavour*"—

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