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Book Review: A Different Kind of Cell: The Story of a Murderer Who Became a Monk

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A Different Kind of Cell: The Story of a Murderer Who Became a Monk, by W. Paul Jones. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011. 122 pp. \$14.00. ISBN 978-0-8028-6651-6.

Reviewed by Erin L. Crane, Ebooks Librarian, Collection Management Dept., Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

In this work W. Paul Jones tells the inspiring story of Clayton Fountain, a prisoner convicted of murdering five people, and his conversion to Christianity. As he passes the years in an isolated cell with minimal human contact, he focuses on self-improvement spiritually and educationally. Jones, a Trappist brother at Assumption Abbey, meets Clayton after his conversion and they remain close friends until Clayton's death. Jones tells Clayton's story partly at the request of the family (122) and partly to critique capital punishment and the penal system in general. Jones notes that he came to feel that prisons are more "out-and-out institutions of punishment" than they are "re-formatories" (80). While the story is inspirational, it is not well-documented. While Jones cites some sources, more often he leaves a source unnoted and there is no bibliography. This lowers the biography's scholarly value. The book is also thoroughly a case study as Jones does not introduce other similar stories as more evidence against capital punishment. Its main appeal for a scholarly collection is its unique record of Clayton Fountain's conversion and spiritual transformation. Overall, this work is more appropriate for recreational or Christian inspirational reading than academic research.