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# Ace of Freedoms: Thomas Merton's Christ

*George Kilcourse*

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**Ace of Freedoms: Thomas Merton's Christ** George Kilcourse
In "Ace of Freedoms" George Kilcourse explores the range of Thomas Merton's writings as embodying a Christ-centered spirituality. More specifically, the book traces the development of the well-known Trappist monk's explicit and implicit christology, which, Kilcourse claims, can best be discovered within his poetry where one finds personification of the "true" or "inner self". Throughout, Kilcourse demonstrates that Merton's understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what he has done for humanity proved to be intimately connected with two other dimensions of Merton's experience: the quest of self-identity and the use of autobiography as dialogue, in which he voices the discovery of his deepest identity, empowering readers to wrestle with their own spiritual identity. Kilcourse examines first Merton's conversion as an experience of salvation. Within his own Cistercian tradition, Merton found the source for a more complete christology and a sapiential theology of experience. He then discusses Merton's poetry, describing the poet's ontological concerns in terms of a "paradise consciousness". To illustrate Merton's encounter with the inner self of others, Kilcourse examines his criticism of Pasternak, Camus, and Faulkner. Finally, Kilcourse explores how Merton's efforts at Western monastic renewal and the dialogue with the Asian spiritual traditions converged during his final years, clarifying his christological understandings and further validating the kenotic patterns of Merton's mature work. "Ace of Freedoms" could draw readers back to Merton's prose, journals, letters, and especially his poetry; in these works they will discover what influenced his spirituality and how it has garnered a unique staying power for today.

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