

**OF THE IMITATION  
OF CHRIST**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649050147

Of the Imitation of Christ by Thomas A. Kempis

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**THOMAS A. KEMPIS**

**OF THE IMITATION  
OF CHRIST**



OF THE  
IMITATION OF CHRIST.

*The Rights of Translation and of Reproduction are reserved.*

En Memory of  
A MOTHER AND SISTER

*Asleep in Jesus.*

W. T. B.





## INTRODUCTION.

---

BORN at Kempen in 1379-1380, dying in 1471 at the age of ninety-one, the author of the 'De Imitatione Christi' passed through 'the waves of this troublesome world' in so quiet and hidden a manner that, were it not for the fragrance of his writings, his memory would have perished as utterly as that of the violets of that wonderful century. His real name should be Thomas Haemmerlein; he was educated at Deventer, under the tutorship of Florentius, the head of the Brothers of the Common Life; and of many of his spiritual pastors and masters he has left interesting and touching biographies in his 'Chronicles of Mount St Agnes,' to which he proceeded in 1401, becoming a Canon Regular in 1406, on the feast of Corpus Christi. Driven from his monastery through the brethren obeying a Papal interdict, Thomas à Kempis, now Sub-Prior, did not return till an interval

of fourteen months had passed, this interval being spent by him in nursing his brother John during his last illness and death. With the exception of the usual changes in the monastic life, no other facts remain to be recorded until his death in 1471. 'The daily round, the common task,' the continual services, the copying Biblical and other MSS., the composition of his sermons and of a few poems and hymns, with the writing out of his great work, furnished him with all that he asked or wished for. No purpose is to be served by going into the disputed authorship of the 'Imitation ;' suffice it to say, that the best authorities agree in now giving the honour to À Kempis, and the claims of his only formidable rival, John Gerson, are now generally abandoned. His other works do equal in terseness and force the world-famous book, the subject of this introduction ; but, as it is known that upwards of four hundred editions have been issued in the last four centuries, its popularity is greater than that of any uninspired book without exception. A full bibliography is still a *desideratum*, and the book has been translated into all cultivated languages, while even a Mahommedan edition has been issued for Turkish use. It has

naturally produced a plentiful crop of imitations, but remains alone and unrivalled.

Of the spiritual value of the work it is almost needless to speak, yet a few historical reminiscences of its influence in the past may be recalled, and the names quoted will show how it has formed and moulded characters, alike in the busiest and most active spheres of life, and in the cloistered seclusion of the monastery. Leibnitz speaks of it as 'one of the most excellent treatises ever written: happy is he who, not content with mere reading, carries its precepts into practice.' Amplé, the physician, when dying, was asked by a friend if he should read him a portion, and the reply was, 'he knew it by heart.' Cardinal Cajetan writes, 'For its reading not only never wears, but wonderfully delights the mind of the reader, though a thousand times repeated. For in it lies hidden some Divine and secret virtue of the Holy Spirit which, when it is read with attention and devotion, is shed over the soul of the reader or hearer, until he is fully changed, and borne from created things to God the Creator Himself.' With Louis I. of Bavaria the book was such a favourite that his copy was worn out; not only letters, but whole lines having perished