

**THE VOICE OF THE SPIRIT:
RESPONSIVE
SERVICES FROM THE
"IMITATION OF CHRIST"**

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The Voice of the Spirit: Responsive Services from the "Imitation of Christ" by Lewis G. Wilson

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LEWIS G. WILSON

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RESPONSIVE
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"IMITATION OF CHRIST"**

The Voice of the Spirit.



RESPONSIVE SERVICES

FROM THE "IMITATION OF CHRIST."

SELECTED AND ARRANGED

BY

LEWIS G. WILSON.

If we traverse the world, it is possible to find cities without walls, without letters, without kings, without wealth, without coin, without schools and theatres; but a city without a temple, or that practiseth not worship, prayers, and the like, no one ever saw. — PLUTARCH.

HOPEDALE:
GUILD OF À KEMPIS.
1891.

*Give me strength to resist, patience to endure,
constancy to persevere.*

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PREFACE.

It was found by the Guild of à Kempis that, while the "Imitation of Christ" was a mine of deeply religious and practical thought, suitably arranged for responsive reading, it yet contained much which was addressed directly to the monastic life of the time in which it was written. It seemed highly desirable, therefore, to select and arrange such verses as should form a series of services applicable to present needs. To this end the "Imitation" has been freely used. Other selections have been made to complete these simple services, and it is believed that, while this little book will be found of much value in the home, it will most of all supply a much-felt need among the young people's religious societies of the present day.

L. G. W.

NOTICE.

All passages in *italics* are to be read *in unison*; all other passages by the one who conducts the service.

First Service.

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, which was and which is and which is to come.

O Light Eternal, transcending all created lights, dart Thy bright beams from above, and penetrate the inmost recesses of my heart.

Cleanse, gladden, brighten, and enliven my spirit with all its powers, that I may cleave to Thee with ecstasies of joy.

O, when shall that blessed and longed-for hour arrive, when Thou wilt satisfy me with Thy Presence, and be to me All in all.

Until this is granted to me, my joy will not be full.

Thou makest us to think well of all, and to praise Thee in all circumstances; and nothing without Thee can afford any lasting pleasure; but if any thing is to be pleasant and delightful, Thy grace must accompany it, and Thy wisdom must impart a relish to it.

This is my hope and my only consolation, to fly to Thee in every trouble, to trust in Thee, to call upon Thee from my inmost heart, and to wait patiently for Thy consolation.

“Assist me, O God, in this my good purpose, and in Thy Holy Service; and grant that this day I may begin perfectly, for that which I have hitherto been able to carry out is as nothing.”

My son, hear My words; My words are most sweet, surpassing all the knowledge of the philosophers and wise men of the world.

My words are spirit and life, and are not to be weighed by man's understanding. Neither are they to draw us to a vain complacency,

but they are to be heard in silence, and to be received with all lowliness and with great affection.

And I said, "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law: that Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, and that he may not be desolate in the earth."

I — saith the Lord — have taught the prophets from the beginning, and even now I do not cease to speak to all; but many have hardened their hearts, and are deaf to My voice.

Many would rather listen to the world than to God, and more readily follow the desires of the flesh than the Will of God.

That which is valueless is sought after; for one coin sometimes there is a disgraceful litigation; for a trifling thing and a slight promise men shrink not from fatigue day and night.

But, alas! for a changeless good, for an inestimable reward, for the highest honour, and eternal glory, they soon grow weary even with a very little labour.

Blush, therefore, O slothful and complaining servant, that those are found more ready to labour for death than you for life.

They rejoice more in vanity than you do in the truth.

Sometimes, indeed, they fail to realise their hopes; but My promise never fails, nor sends him empty away who trusts in Me.

What I have promised, I will grant; what I have said, I will fulfil; if only a man abides in My love — faithful to the end.

I am the Rewarder of all who are good, and the Mighty Prover of all who are devout.

Write My words on your heart, and meditate diligently upon them, for they will be found to be very needful in time of temptation.

What you cannot understand when you read, you shall know in the day of visitation.

In two ways am I in the habit of visiting My elect, namely, by temptation and by consolation; and daily I read to them two lessons, one by rebuking their vices, the other by stimulating them to advance in virtues.

Give me strength to resist, patience to endure, constancy to persevere.

May I reach

That purest heaven, be to other souls
 The cup of strength in some great agony,
 Enkindle generous ardor, feed pure love,
 Beget the smiles that have no cruelty—
 Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,
 And in diffusion, ever more intense.
 So shall I join the choir invisible,
 Whose music is the gladness of the world.

Our heavenly Father, we invoke Thy blessing upon our lives. Be thou our Guide to higher wisdom, our Strength in hours of weakness, our Hope always, and the object of our constant faith. And Thine be the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.



Second Service.



Canst thou by searching find out God?
 Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?
 It is high as heaven; what canst thou do?
 Deeper than the grave; what canst thou know?
 The measure thereof is longer than the earth,
 And broader than the sea.
 If thou set thine heart aright,
 And stretch out thine hands towards him;
 If iniquity be in thy hand, put it far away,
 And let not unrighteousness dwell in thy tents;
 Surely then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot;
 Yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear:
 And thy life shall be clearer than the noonday;
 Though there be darkness, it shall be as the morning,
 And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope.