

**The Imitation of Christ, Thomas A Kempis,
Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich.; softcover, 266 pp.**

Thomas Hamerken A Kempis was born in Kempen near Cologne, Germany, around 1380. At the age of 12 he went to Deventer, Holland, where he received his education in the school run by the Brethren of the Common Life. There he became acquainted with a new mystical revival movement called the New Devotion. Later he entered the Augustine Convent of Mt. Saint Agnes near Zwolle. He was ordained as priest in 1413. His life was spent in quiet prayer, contemplation, routine monastery labours, and writing. Some have considered him as a forerunner of the Reformation. However, the nature of his spirituality was still strongly influenced by the beliefs and practices of Medieval Catholicism. His asceticism is clearly evident.

All his writings – biblical subjects, letters and mystical topics – are of a devotional nature, but his fame rests primarily on his spiritual manual known as the imitation of Christ. There is doubt, however, that Thomas wrote the book. Since the 17th century until today, there have been scholars who denied his authorship. The imitation of Christ has been a best seller ever since its first publication in 1418, going through over 2,000 printings.

The Imitation of Christ was written as a manual of devotion, an aid to achieve communion with God. What makes this book acceptable for both Roman Catholics and Protestants is its Christ-centeredness, its spirit of humility and adoration of God. It is a companion for the pilgrim on the way to the Eternal City of God.

The Imitation of Christ shouldn't be read in one sitting. It is a book you want to experience, concentrate on in small portions. Only through quiet meditation on the book will you be encouraged to pray, to work and to praise the Lord.

Johan D. Tangelder