

Humility

AND THE ELEVATION
OF THE MIND TO GOD

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THOMAS À KEMPIS

Translated by
FR. ROBERT NIXON, OSB

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This TAN Books English edition is translated from the Latin edition entitled *Opera Omnia Thomae à Kempis*, originally published in Antwerp in 1601. *The Life of the Venerable Thomas à Kempis* by Heribert Roswed, SJ, is a translation of the Latin text included in the 1654 edition of *De Imitatione Christi* published in Lyon.

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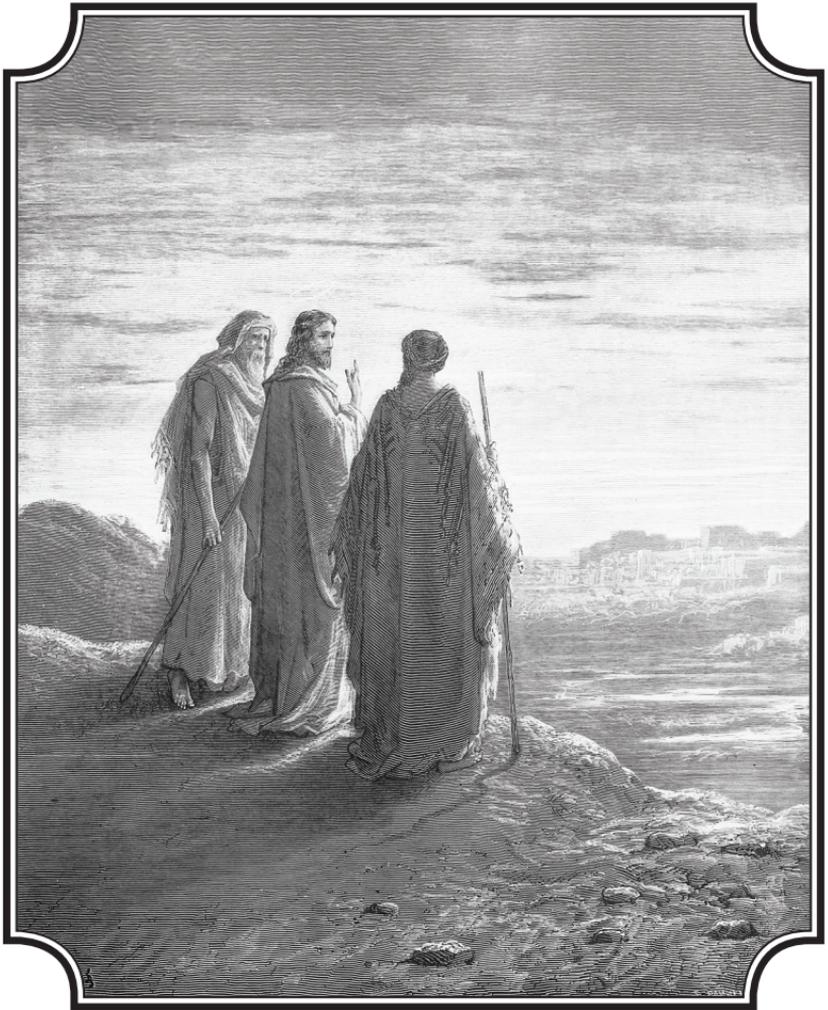
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*To the memory of John Moorehouse,
a wonderful and gifted herald of the Gospel and
dedicated servant of God, the Church, and humanity*

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Jesus and the Disciples on the Road to Emmaus



TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

It is often said that, apart from the Bible, the most influential work of literature in the entire history of Christian spirituality is *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis (1380–1470). It has been a treasured source of inspiration and guidance for followers of Christ for over five hundred years and continues to attract a wide contemporary readership. Among those who were deeply devoted to it were Sir Thomas More, Henry VIII, St. Ignatius Loyola, John Wesley, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Oscar Wilde, and countless others. There are known to be no less than two thousand editions of the work in existence.

Despite the popularity of *The Imitation of Christ*, it is not widely recognized that Thomas à Kempis was also the author of a great many other works in a variety

of genres. Indeed, the complete Latin editions of his writings run to several weighty tomes. And many of his writings, especially his shorter works, remain untranslated.

This volume presents, for the first time in English, three short but wonderful spiritual works of this great author: *Humility*, *The Elevation of the Mind to God*, and a collection of *Devout Prayers*. In these writings, many of the themes of *The Imitation of Christ* are strongly evident, such as the practice of humility, self-denial, and resignation, modeled after the teaching and example of Jesus.

But other aspects of the author's personality are also exhibited. For example, in *The Elevation of the Mind to God*, the reader encounters a passionate and mystical yearning for a God who is utterly transcendent and eternal. In the *Devout Prayers*, there are many touching instances of affectionate and personal piety and devotion, especially to the Virgin Mary and other saints whom the author held particularly dear.

Included in this volume also is an early biography of Thomas written in 1597 by the important Jesuit scholar Heribert Roswed (1569–1629). This brief history offers a fascinating insight into a gifted and passionate man whose life was characterized by faith,

humility, industry, and true dedication to the glory of God and the service of his neighbor.

The translations contained herein will certainly be of profound interest to all those who have been inspired or fascinated by the author's undoubted masterpiece, *The Imitation of Christ*. It is the hope of the present translator that these gentle and inspired writings, offered here in English for the first time, may prove edifying to all who peruse them and may generate further interest in the work of this revered and beloved spiritual author.

The humble translator,
Fr. Robert Nixon, OSB



Portrait of Thomas à Kempis