

A MEDITATION FOR PRIME

By

GUY I⁽¹⁾ THE FIFTH PRIOR OF THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE

(Migne: P.L.153)

Concerning Truth and Peace: and how Peace is Obtained through Truth Alone

TRUTH must be placed in the centre of your life as something beautiful.

Yet you must not sit in judgment on anyone who hates her, but have compassion on such a one.

Look at yourself too, why—since you desire to come to her—do you refuse to receive her when she reproves you for your vices? For see how many things Truth reveals. . . .

Without beauty or comeliness, and nailed to a cross, Truth must be adored.

The nobler and more powerful a created being is, so much the more freely must he subject himself to Truth. Indeed it is because he is subject to her that a man is powerful and noble.

The unstable things of time vex and weary you: why then do you not flee from them to others, that is to Truth?

Yet you must know that beyond all bitter and contrary things, Truth is to us most bitter and contrary, because separate adversities fight against one or more worldly pleasures; but Truth attacks them all at one and the same time. . . .

You cannot hate anyone without committing sin. For the work of holy men is to desire the welfare of sinners. It is your duty to love Truth only: and Peace which proceeds from Truth.

Let the servant of Truth love what he serves and him to whom it is ministered. And when that same thing is ministered to himself by another, let him receive it with thanks as something which he loves.

The cause of your speaking the truth (as of healing) is charity. And if anyone does not accept it, either you compassionate him, otherwise you do not love him, or you deplore the fact that he

(1) Guy I (Guigo), known as the Venerable, was the fourth Prior after St Bruno. When he took the habit only two houses existed—the Grande Chartreuse and Squilace. When he died in 1137 there were fifteen. Among his friends he counted St Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter the Venerable of Cluny. His practical works of repair after the avalanche of 1132, and building (bringing water to the new site in wooden conduits from the fountain of St Bruno) were many. His spiritual building is shown by the growth of the Order; the *Consuetudines* which he wrote down to establish uniformity of custom in the Houses, his *Life of St Hugh of Grenoble* written by order of Pope Innocent II in 1134, and in the 'Meditations' of which a French Dominican has said, 'Leur mérite les a fait souvent réimprimer'. The translation here printed is made by M. R. Wildy.

spurns it, as you would if a sick man should spit out some healing medicine.

Peace unending follows Truth—such peace as the angels know. Labour and grief follow lies, and bring us to share in the misery of Satan. Truth is not driven away except to your own loss.

Truth is indeed bitter and harsh to your fallen nature, not on account of its own nature, but of the evil tendencies of yours. It is as the strong light of the sun to our weak eyes. See therefore that you do not make her more bitter by not speaking the truth as you should—that is, with charity. The good doctor who gives to the sick man a draught both wholesome and bitter, smears the rim of the cup with honey, so that, since the taste is sweet the potion may be the more willingly received, and what is healthful may also be easily taken on account of this sweetness. Thus, too, let all your care be for the betterment of men.

But if you speak the truth, not out of love of truth but out of desire to injure another, you will not receive the reward of speaking truth, but the penalty due to one who reviles.

If a man, to whom with one word you show something of his own faults, suffer such anguish thereby, think how great a punishment you will suffer when the true light shows you yourself perfectly. For then the counsels of the heart will be laid open.

You sin equally also when you blame another, or are blamed by another [resenting the blame]: for in the one case you inflict truth as an evil, in the other you receive it as an evil. He therefore that would wish to injure you takes your life (that is, truth) from you. Through this he wounds and tortures you.

Truth is life and safety eternal. You ought therefore to compassionate him to whom it is displeasing. For in this he is a dead man and lost. You however in your perversity would not speak to him the truth unless you thought it would be bitter and displeasing to him. For you measure others by yourself. But this is the most grievous fault of all, when in order to please men you speak the truth (which they love and admire) just as you would speak lies and flattery [if these were acceptable to them].

Not because it is pleasing or displeasing must truth be spoken: but because it is right. Silence must also be kept at times, lest truth should do injury, just as light would injure weak eyes.

Bread—that is, truth—strengthens man's heart lest he succumb to the clamour of the body.

Blessed is the man whose mind is moved only by the knowledge and love of truth; and his body only by that same mind. For thus also is the body moved by truth alone. If no movement occurred in the mind except that of truth, and no movement in the body except that dictated by the mind, then the body would be moved only by the dictates of Truth—that is, of God.

All you do, you do with peace as your end. And the way to peace may only be found through truth who is your adversary in

this earthly life. Therefore either do you subject her to you, or yourself to her. For no other course is open to you.

Adversity teaches you to desire peace. But you are blind. You desire that which, as long as you love and desire it, makes it altogether impossible for you to possess peace.

Why do you snatch for yourself that very thing which would so displease you in another? You should not admit such a thing, but should flee from it. This could only be done by holding fast to peace.

The lake does not glory because it abounds in water, for its water comes from the spring. So is it with your peace. For always something else is the cause of peace. By how much therefore your peace is weak and false, by so much is the source whence it arose also variable and uncertain. How wretched then is that peace which only arises from joy at beholding some human face.

Every man seeks his own safety, but the more he disquiets himself, the less secure he is. The more he disquiets himself, the more ready are those things which he prizes to be other than he wishes. And because of this, some one will say to you, 'I will do you evil. I will take away your peace from you. I will think or speak evil of you at every turn'. See then how you have laid yourself open to be mortified and distressed.

Do not let temporal things be the cause of your peace, for peace so come by would be as vile and fragile as its cause. Such peace as that is common to the brute beasts as to you. But your true peace is that which proceeds from truth and this you have in union with the angels.

Whatever earthly thing you had clung to and loved as the cause of peace and blessedness, that despise and contemn lest you lose altogether both peace and blessedness.

Peace is the good of that soul in which it dwells. It must be sought therefore for its own sake as a savour of goodness. Let it be so great in you that you will not be disturbed by evil persons.

'Let not your heart be troubled neither let it fear'. This is the true Sabbath which he enjoys who is unmoved by threats or beguilements, but who is able to rule his own spirit. Such a one gives himself as alms, so that, as seems needful for another, he can be either moved to anger or placated.

The love of temporal peace brings forth of necessity inquietude of mind: therefore he who has temporal peace of necessity lacks true peace.

If you bear no grudge towards those who do evil to you, then peace will come to you and to them.

As through concord and peace all things remain in being, so through contrariety and discord they fall into nothingness and perish.