

Seeing the will of God in all those events, which may disturb our composure, is indeed an efficacious safeguard to tranquillity. Once we learn to give our *fiat* in answer to the 'Fear not, it is I' of every trial, we shall most surely possess that peace which surpasseth all understanding.



### 'IN ME YOU HAVE PEACE'<sup>1</sup>

ST THOMAS AQUINAS

*These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you shall have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world.*—John 16, 33.

**O**UR LORD unfolds to his disciples the hidden depths of his teaching, and by these words shows how important and helpful it will be to them.

The value of his teaching lies in the peace that it brings to man. In this context, it is as if our Lord were saying: I know well that very soon you will all leave me; but I know that if you really understand my doctrine you will not harden your hearts in desertion. The reason for every thing I have spoken about in my sermon, all that I have taught you throughout the Gospel, is this: that if you do return to me, *In me you may have peace*. For the whole purpose of the Gospel is that we should find peace in Christ alone. 'Much peace have they that love thy law' (Ps. 118, 165). Now true peace of heart is wholly opposed to the disturbance of mind caused by all the threatening evils around us. If sometimes we experience a grief or joy greater even than those evils, our restlessness naturally disappears. Thus men of the world, who are not united to God by charity, endure these trials, but without peace of soul. The saints on the other hand, who possess God in their hearts by charity, are immersed in the peace of Christ even though the world may cause them great suffering. 'Who hath placed peace in thy borders' (Ps. 147, 14).

<sup>1</sup> Translated from St Thomas's commentary on St John by T.

The goal of our life ought to be the enjoyment of perfect peace in God. 'My soul refused to be comforted.' By this we understand that our world gives no comfort to him who truly loves God. But 'I remembered God and was delighted' (Ps. 76, 4).

In living our life in the world we must try to maintain this peacefulness amidst all the constant trials and contradictions, for our Lord tells us: *In the world you shall have distress*. Christ foresees the grief of his beloved disciples at the trials they will have to undergo in the future and he reassures them, inspiring them with confidence in himself. Clearly the warning is given where it is said: *In the world you shall have distress*, which shall be brought upon us by worldly men who know not Christ. 'Wonder not if the world hate you' (1 John 3, 13). 'I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you' (John 15, 19). He reassures them, saying: *Have confidence, I have overcome the world*. For is it not Christ himself who delivers those who trust in him? 'Thou hast delivered me according to the multitude of the mercy of thy name . . . from the oppression of the flame which surrounded me' (Eccl. 51, 4 & 6). It is as if our Lord were speaking to us thus: Return to me and you shall find peace because *I have overcome the world*, from which you suffer so much.

Now Christ overcame the world in three ways. The first way was by setting it free from all those sinful passions which make war on the soul of man. 'For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life' (1 John 2, 16). Riches he overcame by poverty. 'I am needy and poor' (Ps. 85, 1); 'The Son of man hath not where to lay his head' (Luke 9, 58). Honours he overcame by humility. 'Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart' (Matt. 11, 29). Pleasure he overcame by his suffering and labours. 'He was made obedient unto death, even the death of the cross' (Phil. 2, 8). 'Jesus therefore being wearied with his journey sat thus on the well' (John 4, 6). 'I am poor and in labours from my youth' (Ps. 87, 16). And so whoever overcomes these things has overcome the world. Faith gives us this tremendous power. 'And this is the victory which overcometh the

world, our faith' (1 John 5, 4). Now we know that faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, and these are the spiritual and eternal goods which make us despise all that is merely carnal and transitory.

And the second way in which Christ has overcome the world is this. He cast forth the prince of this world. 'Now shall the prince of this world be cast out' (John 12, 31). 'Despoiling the principalities and powers, he hath exposed them confidently in open shew, triumphing over them in himself' (Col. 2, 15). So in the strength of Christ's victory man is able to defeat the devil. 'Shalt thou play with him as with a bird or tie him up for thy handmaid?' (Job 40, 24). We can take this to mean that since the passion of our Lord, even young Christian maidens and little children have scorned and derided the devil.

Lastly, Christ converted men to himself. And this is the third way in which he overcame the world. The world actually rebelled against its Saviour, but Christ drew all to himself. 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself' (John 12, 32). 'Behold the whole world is gone after him' (John 12, 19).

Let us then never fear tribulations, because Christ himself has come forth victorious. 'But thanks be to God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 15, 37).



## OF NEED IN TIME OF WAR

### MECHTHILD OF MAGDEBURG

**I** WAS commanded to pray very earnestly for the need there now is in Saxony and Thuringia. As I gave myself to prayer with praise and longing, our Lord would not receive me but kept solemn silence. I had to endure that for seventeen days in patient waiting. Then I said: 'Ah, dear Lord! when will the appointed hour come when Thou wilt that I pray for this need?' Then He appeared to me and said: