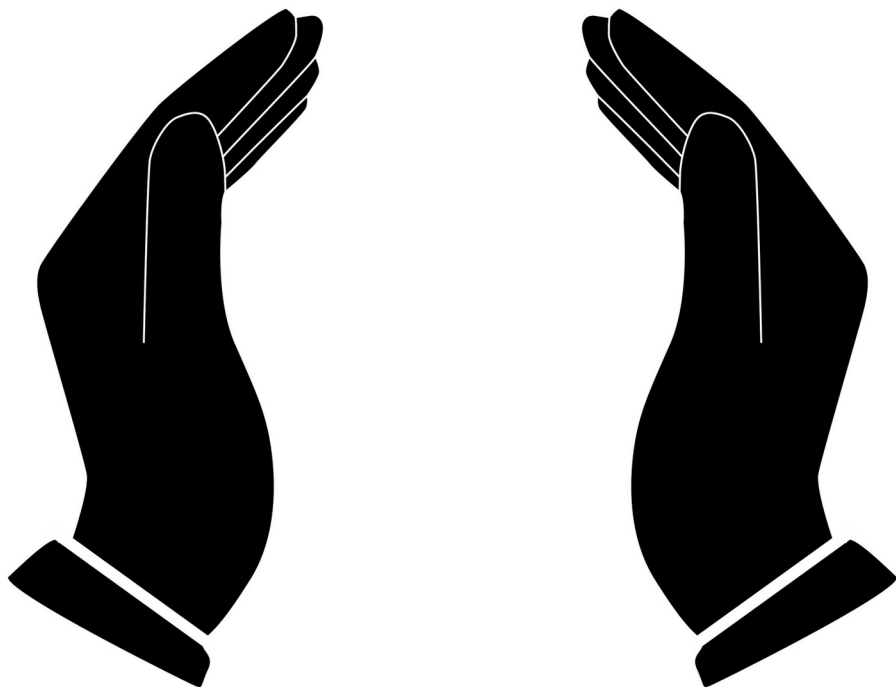


On The Manifest Human Power of Peace



*A pamphlet by the Axou scholar Theodosia,
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the Gates of Ipotavo*

An Introduction and Statement of Purpose

I set these words to paper to try to communicate my own understanding of the spiritual force I call Understanding, which others call Peace or Harmony, and which is sometimes in ignorance called Apathy or Tranquillity. First, a little about my own beliefs: my name is Theodosia of Ipotavo, and I am a citizen of the Gates of Ipotavo, a citadel of the Victorious Axis, called the Axou. The different spiritual forces in the world are of interest to my people primarily because they are a powerful tool to resist the evils of the world the Creator has imprisoned us in. I myself believe in a view known as "homeostatic spiritual equilibrium", which in general is the belief that a well-chosen set of spiritual forces, and the veneration of appropriate spirits of the revered dead who can provide guidance and tutelage in their natures, can provide a stable guide in one's life, guiding your actions to good outcomes and providing a firm basis on which to live in defiance of the maker's hand. I am a member of the Order of the Sage Trialectic: I cleave to Vigilance, Wisdom, and Understanding. The first two of these are of as much importance to me as the third is: but it is on the third I wish to write, because it is of this that there is much misunderstanding.

Having read the above, you have received your first lesson. The essence of understanding is about internalising the perspectives and viewpoints of others, and feeling their feelings as if they were your own. It is the radical choice to empathise with those who would be hostile to you, and to seek compromise and consensus even when your heart screams for conflict and restitution. The Druj invaded my home, and killed many that I love. We resisted them, and this was right, and I think they are an evil upon the world. Nevertheless I have spent long hours considering what it must be to be of the Druj - how they must feel, how fear must dominate their lives, even those that live in power. Over time, through contemplation of their hearts, I have understood my enemy. If it were possible to find a way forward in diplomacy with them, absent destruction, I would certainly pursue it: but it is clear that their current society cannot allow such a thing.

Peace does not mean being naive: it means doing the hard work of trying to understand that from which you revile. In this way it is often in direct opposition to those who advocate for the spiritual force of Purity: I am content with this. In my own view, that force is a trap - one that gives access to easy power but which leads only to self-destruction.

It is my sincere hope that by sharing my perspective in this work, you, the reader, are moved towards the curious and open-hearted state necessary to utilise Understanding as a spiritual weapon against the Creator's evils effectively. Go in peace, learn in wisdom, act in vigilance.

Maxims of Peace and Understanding.

I present here a few maxims of the force of Peace as passed down to me through my own tradition. I think they speak for themselves, and in any case they deserve careful thought and contemplation.

Do not be apathetic in the face of conflict: face it head on, and seek harmony where there is strife.

The source of all discord is a lack of perspective. The source of all harmony is the true sight of understanding.

You have a kinship with every living thing. You do not need to like your kin - but you must recognise your kinship.

Suffering and anger, fear and despair: all these are transient, and pass away in the face of love and an open heart.

Despise those that sow the poison seeds of conflict, and who cannot see a world beyond their own.

The Wonders of Peace

I shall now move on to an examination of the various ceremonial ways in which Peace can be used, such as can be performed by anyone competent in the use of the bone dust of the blessed ancestors, (or in more esoteric substances such as the drug known as *liao*, produced from the sap of the vinum tree and cultivated in both the Casinean Empire and the Sumaah Republic). I also provide, naturally, my own commentary and perspective.

On the Consecration of Peace

Under the effects of a consecration of Peace, one experiences a deep and profound understanding of the way others feel: it feels natural to empathise with them, and you feel a keen importance of seeing things from their perspective. It is often given the poetic name of "the Passage to Remorse", as it is not uncommon to be overwhelmed by tears when considering the largeness of the world, the interconnectedness of living things, their own thinking, loving lives... and the things you have done that have damaged their own harmony. Guilt is not a necessary part of Peace - but I find it can often arise (and it is one to be vigilant for, for indulging in guilt rarely helps anyone).

I find this to be invaluable when conducting any kind of difficult negotiation or conflict-ridden meeting. I am simply a scholar of ethics and religion - not even a proper priest, and not any kind of magician who can represent my Ile in the things that truly matter. Still, you may be surprised to learn that I still encounter heated situations: for instance, I had a difficult matter

with a student who had cheated on an exam. We had to have a personal conversation about it, the outcome of which was likely to be her expulsion from my tutelage. Under a consecration of understanding, I began to see why she had made the decisions she had. Past my annoyance at her disrespect of my tuition, and at the insult to her own family and to her ancestral dead who would surely be angered by her actions, I could see that she was simply scared, and too proud to admit that she needed help until it had become too late and she had become mired in deceit. For her part, she understood why I was so angry - it is easy for students to excuse themselves when they cheat, in my experience, but she began to understand why I find it so reprehensible. As such, much of our defensiveness in the conversation was lowered, and we could have an honest conversation about what had transpired. In the end we managed to come to an outcome that did not result in her expulsion, but in which she did face appropriate punishment and a degree of public chastening. As it is she returned to her studies and is now an able assistant to my own research. Her family is proud of her and her grasp of the power of Wisdom begins to exceed even my own!

On the Anointings of Peace

The power of the anointings of Peace, like many auras which sit upon the self, is sufficient to be drawn on as a source of spiritual strength. Personally I find a quiet prayer to the ancestors of my Ile effective to draw on the anointing as it sits upon me, but I am certain that any considered approach would work.

The names given to the four anointings of Peace are varied, but the four that I know name them as the *Armour of Peace*, the *Sword of Peace*, the *Shield of Peace*, and the *Scabbard of Peace*.

The Armour of Peace creates a strong desire to find common ground with those you disagree with, for the specific end of mutual benefit. While it leads one towards mutual compromise, this is with the end of, both emerging better from the situation. This is an important facet of Understanding: the Creator has made a world in which it can often seem as if every situation with a winner must have a loser, in equal measure. But this is not so. Through the spiritual expression of Peace we can find resolutions that are to everyone's mutual benefit. In doing so, we refute the ways of the cruel hand of the maker.

The Scabbard of Peace is, in my experience, the most generally useful anointing of Peace, the one most applicable to the everyday situations I face. It drives the bearer to remain calm in the face of threats and insults, and grants them the certain knowledge that they can choose to rise above such pettiness. Having the grace to simply smile and nod when someone is being awful is very hard. This anointing makes it easier. It will not make you like such people any more... but it will make it easier to be a better person and not inflame the conflict.

The Sword of Peace is an aura whose nature is somewhat guided by the one that receives it, who when they are anointed will name a conflict - which could be large or small in nature, either directly violent or a conflict of words or beliefs. The anointing gives the bearer the empowerment necessary to resolve that conflict, driving them to action. If they do not act, they will feel complicit in the discord that will inevitably follow the failure to resolve a conflict. Note that *conflicts may have violent resolutions*. It is a misconception that Peace is about non-violence and inaction, but while it is true that those who dedicate themselves to this spiritual power to the exclusion of all others often preach pacifism, this is exactly why I moderate my understanding with Vigilance. Sometimes the Sword of Peace is necessary. Of course, it is preferable to find a non-violent resolution: but this anointing will help you resolve the conflict by whatever means you judge proportional and necessary.

The Shield of Peace is the counterweight to the Sword of Peace. This aura creates a powerful urge to bring an end to violence in all its forms: an end to cruelty, an end to savagery. It is an exceptionally powerful aura, but not one I would recommend using overlong, for it also drives the belief that no sacrifice is too great if it brings greater harmony. As such, it can lead to a somewhat "ends justifies the means" approach. There was once, it is said, a powerful Winter ritualist of the Halls of Maykop who devised a ritual which would cause the inhabitants of a territory to pass away peacefully if they were overly suffering or were victims of violence and cruelty. It was called Mercy's Shield, and it is believed they were inspired by the effects of this aura on their spirit in their research. Their intentions were noble - I do believe this. But the effects were not. The ritual in question has long been considered a truly taboo manifestation of magic. I am writing this down as a gentle warning: do not mistake the urge to bring an end to violence as an urge to do general good. It can be good. I have used this aura to great effect myself. It is a dizzying experience, and more than many auras I have experienced, it is easy to lose yourself in it.

On the Hallowings of Peace

As with the anointings, the names I give here are simply common ones that I know. I will also say a little about what sort of object I often use for such a hallowing.

Hallowing of the Righteous

This hallowing creates an urge in the bearer to *confront the violent* and demonstrate the futility of bloodshed. I find it is often an effective hallowing on magical items that assist with paralysing or repelling the foe.

Hallowing of the Martyr

The hallowing gives the bearer the strength *and the inclination to endure suffering* in order to bring an end to the suffering of others. It can be a little dangerous to give this to the foolhardy! It would certainly make an excellent hallowing for a shield, I think, or on certain items that grant the user heroic endurance.

Hallowing of the Hero

This hallowing drives the bearer to save the lives of others, regardless of how they personally feel about them. This hallowing was invaluable in unifying our people during the fight that broke us out of the siege of Ipotavo. It allows petty dislikes to be left aside. This is a great hallowing to use on a primary weapon, borne by one who leads the fight.

Hallowing of the Pastor

This hallowing drives the bearer to *mediate peaceful solutions* between those in conflict. I find it can often be very apt as a hallowing on a robe, and I have often given hallowed robes as a gift to my most valued students.

Hallowing of the Preacher

This hallowing creates an urge in the bearer to chastise the self-centred and encourage them to see other points of view. This is an excellent hallowing for anyone who works in a role where others look to them for guidance, though it can be difficult for those in leadership roles to bear in my experience. It works quite well as a hallowing on headwear, as it means it can be easily taken off when it gets a little much.

Hallowing of the Ambassador

This hallowing allows the bearer to more easily tolerate the beliefs of others, even when they challenge their own convictions. Absolutely essential for diplomatic and ecumenical work - I would not go anywhere unfamiliar without something hallowed using this, as it really is extremely useful. I find it works excellently on a discreet piece of jewellery.

Hallowing of the Victor

This hallowing gives the bearer the strength to step aside from needless strife. Sometimes the only path to victory is not to participate in the conflict at all. This Hallowing can be a useful one to have when conducting peace treaty negotiations (not that we've had to do that in Axos for many years, as we barely bother with the Druj for obvious reasons, and Skoura are fast if distant allies). Quite nice as a hallowing on a pen, to help with writing letters that are... not going to inflame things. I understand Illarch Maxtaious, who is the Axou representative to the Casinean Empire, particularly favours the use of these in his diplomatic writing.

Hallowing of the Diplomat

This is a somewhat odd one, as it gives the bearer an urge to speak to their enemies in order that they might better understand them. But it's a little odd to be doing that all the time! So this works well as a Hallowing on an item you will only pick up at times of weighty import, rather than something for the everyday. However, in the right circumstances, choosing to pick up the quill and be the first person to speak when things are riven by conflict can be very powerful. I

know of a few treatises on the Druj which are hallowed with this hallowing.. which seems a little unwise to me, but I appreciate the thought.

On the Dreams of Understanding

Giving guidance to another (or helping their own ancestral spirits guide them in turn) is a key part of the role of any dedicand of Understanding, as I am at least a third of the time. When you act as a guide to another, and share in the dust of the most beloved ancestors with them, then in their dreams they will experience a vivid experience relating to those they are in conflict with. This will help them move that conflict to a place of resolution, so that it no longer hangs heavy on their heart. Often the officiant of the ceremony who acts as a guide will also dream of the self-same conflict, as if they were in the place of the one they have guided: this will often give them their own perspective on the situation. In both dreams, it is often the case that I experience my own revered ancestors also guiding me, giving me their own thoughts on the conflicts and relating them to incidents from their lives: this appears to be a cultural lens, however, and it is unlikely I think that someone not from the culture of Axou who does not have our same intimate understanding of death and ancestral guidance would have the same experience.

In general, the dream will show them things that they have in common with the other side of this conflict: the fundamental similarities between them as thinking, feeling beings, the reminders that we share so much more than that which divides us. It will also often provide insight into the motivations behind their actions - the why of why they do what they do. In my experience, this insight is most puissant when it points towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict between you. For instance, I was once in a bitter argument with my second cousin, Illarch of my own Ille and indeed the Grand Illarch of Ipotavo, over a political matter. I thought him arrogant and his position without merit, but of course he was the Grand Illarch: his word was, ultimately, law. I just did not know how to oppose him without causing myself much and many problems. In the dream, I finally saw his arguments without the filter of my own beliefs, and why he was making them, and what drove his position. On waking I still believed him to be wrong, but much of the anger had passed. I was able to convince him to try a different approach by appealing, gently and with love, to the very reasons and hang-ups I had had insight into in the dream. Such is the power of understanding.

Sometimes, the dreams will cause people to reconsider their convictions, allowing them to find a new perspective. However, you must not think that it is in the nature of Peace to always compromise and abandon one's beliefs. Much of what one believes is an inviolate part of who one has come to be, after all. It is simply that when one gains greater understanding and a different perspective, it can be easier to recognise that the thing you thought you believed so strongly wasn't the true thing you cleaved to at all - often there are deeper truths, and they can be found by considering the perspectives of others. Often, in the dreams the dreamer will be someone else, and encounter (possibly symbolically) a representation of how they seem to others: this can be a difficult experience because often the worst parts of our personalities are not things we want to admit. But recognition is the first path to improvement and healing.

Final Thoughts

I hope this has been an interesting introduction to the most fascinating and profound power of Peace.

As of writing this pamphlet, I am beginning a journey to the Casinean Empire - quite probably this is where you are! For the next year (I believe by the Casinean dating system, from the winter of 385 to the following winter of 286) I will be staying at Myfanwy's Rest, Fishguard, Necropolis. Winged Messengers will reach me there. After that I plan to return to Ipotavo. My intent during my stay is not to preach my beliefs, but I think in making this pamphlet I have made things a little more transparent in terms of the spiritual forces I revere.

In vigilance, wisdom, and understanding,

Theodosia of Ipotavo