

WILLIAM OF SAINT-THIERRY ON A GUARDIAN SET AT THY CELL

THE GOLDEN EPISTLE
THE EPISTLE TO THE BRETHERN OF MONT DIEU

SECTION 27
FOUR GUARDIANS ARE SET AT THY CELL

MOREOVER that thou mayest thank me, I will give thee a fourth [guardian] also [the others being God, thy conscience and thy ghostly father]; and for so long as thou art a little child, and until thou learn more fully to think on the presence of God, I will get thee a schoolmaster. Choose to thyself—so I bid thee—a man the example of whose life so entered thy heart, and reverence thereof so stuck to thee, that so often as thou callest him to mind thou mayest rise to the reverence of him thou thinkest on and compose and order thyself. Let him, being thought on as though he were present with thee, amend to the affection of mutual charity in thee everything that ought to be amended; and yet shall thy solitude suffer no loss of its secrecy. Let him be present to thee as often as thou wilt; let him often appear before thee even when thou wouldest not. His holy severity when thou considerest it shall speak his rebukes to thee; his piety and lovingkindness, his consolations; the sincerity of his holy life, his example. For when thou considerest that all thy thoughts are seen of him, thou wilt be forced to the amending them as though he saw and rebuked them. In this manner, as the Apostle biddeth, do thou guard thyself (1 Timothy 5:22).

—William of Saint-Thierry (between 1070 and 85–1148), Cluniac Abbot of Saint-Thierry or Theoderic, later (from 1135), Cistercian monk at Signy, from section 27 of his *The Golden Epistle (The Epistle to the Brethren of Mont Dieu*, composed probably in the year 1145), translated by Walter Shewring, with an introduction by Abbot Justin McCann, OSB, and published by Sheed and Ward, London, in 1930 (reprinted in 1980), page 49.

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