

The Fifth Dwelling Places

Chapter 1 (a summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Begins to deal with how the soul is united to God in prayer. Tells how one discerns whether there is any illusion.

O Sisters, How can I explain the **riches** and **treasures** and **delights** found in the fifth dwelling places? ... **Send light from heaven**, my Lord, that I might be able to enlighten these Your servants ... for some of them enjoy these delights...

2. ... Indeed there are **only a few** who fail to enter this dwelling place...where there are **various degrees**, ... thus I say that most enter these places... But **only a few** will experience some of the things in this room. If they only **reach the door**, God has been very **merciful** to them; although **many** are called, **few** are chosen. So, I say that all of us who **wear this holy habit of Carmel** are called to **prayer and contemplation**.

We are descendants ... of those holy fathers on Mount Carmel who in great **solitude** and **contempt of the world** sought this **treasure**, this **precious pearl of contemplation** ... **Yet few of us dispose ourselves** ... In exterior matters... we reach what is necessary; but in the practice of **virtues**, ... we cannot be careless in either small things or great ... In some way we can **enjoy heaven on earth**, beg our Lord for His grace that nothing will be lacking through our own fault; ... that the soul may dig until it finds this hidden treasure ... within ourselves ...

3... Bodily strength is not necessary ... Reflect, daughters, that He doesn't want you to hold on to anything ... in order to enjoy the favors we are speaking of ... **He wants everything for Himself**; in conformity with what you have given, you will receive **greater or lesser favors** ...

4. Don't think this **union** is some kind of **dreamy state** ... it **only seems** that the soul is **asleep** ... All the **faculties** (will, intellect, memory) are asleep in this state ... to the things of this world ... During the time that union lasts, the soul is left without its senses ... In **sum**, it is like one who ... has died to the world to live more fully in God.

Thus a delightful death, the soul being uprooted from all bodily operations ... The soul is so separated from the body ...that it might not have enough life to breathe ... The intellect would want to be occupied in understanding ... but it is so stunned ... that neither a hand nor a foot stirs ... so we think that a person in such a swoon is **dead**.

O secrets of God!... I will say a thousand foolish things that I might at times succeed... Give great praise to the Lord!

5. **Union is not** some kind of **dreamy state** because even if the experience in the prior mansion (4th) was abundant ... the soul remains **doubtful** that it was **union**. It doubts whether it: **imagined** the experience; was **asleep**; was given by God or the devil transformed into an angel of light. It is left with a **thousand suspicions** ... that it has them is good in fact ... because even our own nature can deceive us in that dwelling place (4th). There is not much room for poisonous things to enter (4th), yet some tiny lizards ... poke their heads in ... but they do no harm ... they are only a bother as they are **little thoughts** from the **imagination**.

But, however slender they are these lizards **cannot enter** this **fifth dwelling place**; for there is neither **imagination**, nor **memory**, nor **intellect** that can stop this good.

And I would say that if the prayer is **truly union with God**, the devil cannot even enter. His Majesty is so **joined** and **united** with the **essence of the soul** that the devil dares not approach nor will he even know of this **secret** as he doesn't know our **mind** ... It is something so **secret** that God doesn't even entrust this knowledge to our own **mind** ... Thus the soul is left with such

wonderful blessings as God works within it without anyone disturbing Him, not even ourselves...

6. Perhaps you are **confused** because I have said "**if it is union**" and that there are **other unions**. And indeed there are! Though these unions regard **vain things**, the devil will use them to transport us when they are greatly loved but not the same way God does, or with the delight and satisfaction of soul .

This union is -- **all earthly joys and delights ...**

The feeling too is very **different**. It is like feeling something on the rough outer covering of the **body** versus in the **marrow** of the bones... I don't know how to say it better.

7. Perhaps you ... thinkthat these **interior things** are **difficult** to examine, but know that what was said is sufficient for one with experience. Yet, because the **difference** between **union** and the **previous experience** (prayer of quiet) is **great**. I want to mention a **clear sign** that the union was from God ...

8. omit

9. It is the **true sign** ... During the time of union, the soul neither **sees**, nor **hears**, nor **understands**, because the union is always **short** ... God so places Himself in the interior of the soul that when it returns to itself **it cannot doubt** that it was in God and God was in it ... and though years go by without God's granting the favor again, the soul can neither forget nor doubt that it was in God and that God was in it. This **certitude** is what matters for now

10. How did the soul see or understand this truth if it didn't see or understand anything? I don't say it saw the truth then but **afterwards** it sees the truth clearly...

because of a **certitude** remaining in the soul that only God can place there.

God is **in all things**, not by grace alone but by **presence, power, and essence**.

11. ... This **certitude** concerns only the **divinity** (of God not his Humanity)... and whoever does not receive this certitude does not experience union of the whole soul with

God, but only union of some faculty or another of the many favors God grants souls ... We have to give up looking for reasons to see how they've come about. Since our intellect cannot understand union, there is no need to make the effort to grasp it. We need only see that He is almighty. We have no part to play in bringing it about but it is God alone who does so, let us not desire the capacity to understand this union.

12. As for having **no part to play**, the bride says in the *Song of Songs; He brought me into the wine cellar* ... It doesn't say she went ... I understand this **union** to be the **wine cellar** where the Lord wishes to place us when He desires and as he desires. But, however great the effort we make to do so, we cannot enter.. His Majesty must place us there and enter Himself into the center of our soul. He doesn't want our will to have any part to play, for it is completely surrendered to Him. Nor does He want the door of the faculties and senses to be opened for they are all asleep. He wants to enter the center of the soul without going through any doors, as He entered the place where His disciples were when He said, *pax vobis* (peace be with you); or as He left the tomb without lifting away the stone. You will come to see in the last dwelling place how His Majesty desires that the soul enjoy Him in its own center even more than here (in this 5th dwelling place).

13. O daughters, how much we shall see if we don't want to have anything more to do with our own lowliness and misery and if we understand that we are unworthy of being servants of a Lord who is so great ... May He be forever praised, amen.