

## The Sixth Dwelling Places

### Chapter 3 (summary)

#### Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Deals with the same subject and tells of the manner in which God, when pleased, speaks to the soul. Gives counsel about how one should behave in such a matter and not follow one's own opinion. Sets down some signs for discerning when there is deception and when not. This chapter is very beneficial.

God has another way of **awakening the soul** ... It can be more **dangerous** and seem like a **greater favor** than those mentioned ... There are **many kinds of locutions** given to the soul. Some seem to come from **outside** oneself; other from **deep within** the interior part of the soul; others from the **superior** part; and some are so **exterior** they come through the sense of hearing ... Sometimes, and often, the **locution** can be an illusion especially in persons with a **weak imagination** or who suffer from **melancholy**.

2. **No attention** should be paid to these latter **two kinds of persons** ... only listen to them as **sick persons**. The prioress or confessor should tell them to **pay no attention** to such experiences as they are **not essential** to the **service of God**, and that the devil has deceived many by such means ... This counsel is given not to aggravate the melancholy, for there will be no end to the matter if the soul is told the locution is the results of melancholy ... She will swear that she sees and hears, for it seems to her she does.

3. It is necessary to be **firm** in **taking prayer away** from her and to **insist strongly** that she pay no attention to the locutions ... For both the sick and the healthy, there is reason to fear these things until the spirit of such persons is well understood. In the beginning it is always better to free these person from such

experiences, for if the locutions are from God, doing so is a greater help towards progress ... It is important not to proceed in a way that would be **distressing** to a soul because it truly cannot help it if these locutions come.

4. All the **locutions** I mentioned can be either from **God**, the **devil** or one's own **imagination**. With God's help, I will give the **signs** when they come from these **different sources** and when they are **dangerous**; for there are many souls among prayerful people who hear them. My desire, Sisters, is that you realize you are doing the right thing if you refuse to give credence to them ... It doesn't matter where they come from ... One thing I advise you: do not think, even if the locution is from God, that you are better because of them, for He frequently spoke to the Pharisees. All the good comes from how one **benefits** by these words; and pay no more attention to those that are not in **close conformity** with Scripture ... Treat them as if they were **temptations** in matters of faith, and thus **resist** them always. They will then go away...

5. Returning to the **first of different kinds of locutions**; whether the words come from the **interior** or **superior** part of the soul or from the exterior part doesn't matter in **discerning** if they are from **God**. The **surest signs** they are from God are these: the **first** and **truest** is the **power they bear**, for locutions from God effect what they say. Let me explain. A soul finds itself in the midst of **tribulation**, in darkness of the intellect and in dryness. With **one word** of these locutions from the Lord, the soul is left calm and free from all distress, with great light ...

6. The **second** sign is the **great quiet** left in the soul, the **peaceful recollection** and the readiness to engage in **praising God**. O Lord, if a word sent to be spoken by one of Your attendants (for the Lord does not speak the words—at least not in this dwelling place—but an **angel**)... what will be the

power You leave in the soul attached to You, and You to it, through love?

7. The **third** is that these words remain in the **memory** for a very long time ... The **certitude** is so strong that ... even if there is doubt as to whether they will or will not happen and the intellect wavers, there is an **assurance in the soul** that cannot be overcome ... and that in the end the words will be accomplished; and so they are. But, the soul still **suffers** when it sees the many **delays** ... and the **certitude** about their being from God have **passed** ... and so **doubts** take place. The soul begins to **wonder** whether the locutions might have come from the devil or its imagination ... The devil is able to weaken faith, for it does great **harm** not to believe that God has the power to do things that our intellects do not understand.

8. Despite all these struggles ... there remains a **spark of assurance** so alive ... that the words will be fulfilled ... The spark stays alive. And in the end, the words of the Lord are fulfilled. And the soul is **consoled** ... that what He had told it was fulfilled ...

9. I don't know why it is so important to the soul that these words turn out to be true ... In sum, since the spirit is from God, it is right that the soul be faithful in its desire that the words be considered true, for God is the supreme truth. And so its happiness is great when ... it sees them fulfilled ... The soul would rather suffer great trials than the **trial** of seeing what the Lord told it **fail to happen**.

10. If the locutions come from the **imagination**, there are **none** of these **signs**: neither **certitude**; nor **peace**; nor **interior delight**. But, it could happen that if the soul is very absorbed in a **deep recollection**, as in the **prayer of quiet** and **spiritual sleep**, that it thinks as when it is **asleep** and **dreaming** ... that these locutions are spoken to it ... And it thinks that these things are from God; but, in the end, the **effects** are like those of sleep ... Anyone who has had much **experience** of God's locution will not

be deceived by these that come from the imagination.

11. With locutions from the devil there is more to fear. But if the **signs are present** ... there can be **certainty** that the **locutions** are from **God**. However, the **certainty** shouldn't be so strong that if the locution concerns something serious ... one doesn't solicit the **opinion** of a **prudent confessor** ... His Majesty wants the soul to **consult** in this way ... for He has told us, where the words are undoubtedly His, to **hold the confessor in His Place**. These words of His help to give **courage** if the task is a difficult one, and our Lord, when He so desires, will make the confessor believe that the locution comes from His spirit ... to do otherwise, and follow nothing but your own opinion is very **dangerous**.

12. The **intellectual vision**, the nature of which will be explained further on, is another way the **Lord speaks** to the soul. The **locution** takes place in the **intimate depths** and the person hears those words clearly and so in secret with the **ears of the soul** ... Wonderful **effects** are left so that the soul may believe and have assurance the locution doesn't come from the **imagination**.

If the soul is attentive, it can always have assurance for the following reasons; **First**, there is a **difference** because of the **clarity of the locution**. It is so **clear** that the soul **remembers every syllable** ... A locution fancied by the **imagination** will not be so clear or distinct but like something **half-dreamed**.

13. **Second** ... these locutions comes **unexpectedly** and even sometimes while one is in conversation. It is many times a response to what passes quickly through the mind ... It often refers to something about the **future** ...so the **imagination** could not have fabricated it ...

14. **Third**, one locution is the soul who **hears**; with the **imagination**, the soul gradually **composes** what it wants to hear.

15. **Fourth**, the words are very different. One is understood; our intellect, on the other hand could not compose the words so quickly.

16. **Fifth**, together with the words, much more is understood than is ever dreamed possible without words.

... In regard to these different kinds of locutions ... the greatest **doubt** in the beginning was whether she had **imagined the locution** ... as the devil knows well how to **counterfeit** the **Spirit of light**. The devil says the words clearly but is unable to counterfeit the effects ... or leave **peace** or **light** in the soul. He only leaves **disturbance**. If the soul is humble, he can do little harm.

17. If the locution contain words of **favor** and **consolation** from the Lord ... The more it hears words of favor the more **humble** it should become ... One thing is **certain** is that when the spirit is from God, the soul esteems itself less ... is more **aware** of its sin and is more forgetful of its own gain. Its **will** and **memory** are employed in seeking only the **honor of God**. It does not think about its own **profit**, and walks with **fear** that its will deviate in anything. It also has a **certitude** that it never deserved these favors but rather hell.

Since all the favors and things it experienced in prayer produce these **effects**, the soul does not walk fearfully, although this is always good, it walks with **confidence** in the **mercy** of the Lord, who is **faithful** ...

18. Souls whom the Lord does **not** lead along this path think they could **refuse to listen** to or could **distract** themselves from these words spoken to them. To this I reply, that it is **impossible**.

In locutions from the Lord ... the very Spirit that speaks puts a stop to all other thoughts and makes the soul attend to what is said ...

In the locution ... there are no ears to stop, nor is there the power to think of anything but what is said to the soul. For He ... can make the faculties and the whole interior **stop** for the soul to see clearly that another

greater Lord than itself governs the castle. This brings great **devotion** and **humility**. There is **no remedy** for this kind of locution

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Please God ... that this may be helpful to whoever has had such experience. Amen