

The Sixth Dwelling Places

Chapter 9 (summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Treats of how the Lord communicates with the soul through an imaginative vision; gives careful warning against desiring to walk by this path and the reasons for such a warning.

The chapter is very beneficial.

Now let us come to **imaginative visions**, for the devil seems to meddle more in these ... But when they are from our Lord, they seem more **beneficial** because they are in greater **conformity with our nature** ...

2. ... It is as though we had in a **gold vessel** a **precious stone** having the highest **value** and **curative powers**. We know it is there though we have never seen it. But, the powers of the stone do not cease to benefit us if we carry it with us.

... **Experience** has shown this stone to cure certain illnesses. We do not dare... open the reliquary, nor can we, because the manner of opening this reliquary is known solely by the one to whom the jewel belongs.

Even though he lent us the jewel for our own benefit, he has kept the **key** to the reliquary and will open it ...when he desires to show us the contents. And, he will take the jewel back when he wants to ...

3. Well, let us say that sometimes he wants to open the reliquary ...to do good to the one to whom he has lent it. Clearly, a person will be much happier afterwards when he remembers the splendor of the stone ... deeply engrained in his memory.

And so here: when our Lord is pleased to give more delight to this soul, He shows it His most **sacred humanity** ...**either** as He was when He went about in the **world** or as He is after His **resurrection**. And though the vision happens so quickly, like a streak of lightning, this image remains engraved on the imagination ...

4. Although I say “**image**” ... it is not a painting but **truly alive**, and sometimes the Lord is **speaking to the soul** and even **revealing great secrets**...

But, the soul is no more able to **fix its gaze** on the vision than it can on the sun. Hence this vision always **passes very quickly** ... It is the **inner eye** that sees all of this ... The brilliance of this inner vision is like an infused light coming from a sun covered by something as transparent as a properly-cut diamond. The garment seems made of a fine Dutch linen. **Almost** every time God grants this favor the soul is in **rapture**, for in its lowliness it cannot suffer so frightening a sight.

5. I say “**frightening**” because although the Lord’s presence is **beautiful** and **delightful**, this presence bears such **extraordinary majesty** that it causes the soul **extreme fright**.

Certainly it’s not necessary to ask how the soul knows, without having been told, who the Lord is, for it is clearly revealed that He is the **Lord of heaven and earth**...

6. O Lord, how we Christians fail to know you! What will that day be when You come to judge, and although you come with much friendliness, your bride ...when she looks at you experiences such fear? Oh, daughters, what will it be like when He says in so severe a voice, **depart you who are cursed by My Father?**

7. ... All we **suffer** in the strict observance of the religious life will seem to us nothing; ... it lasts but a moment in comparison with eternity ...

I have never had **fear** of the torments of hell, for they would be nothing if compared to what I recall the condemned will experience seeing the **anger** in the **eyes** of the **Lord**, so beautiful, meek and kind. The person to whom the Lord has represented Himself will **fear** this sight even more, for the experience of seeing the Lord is so powerful it carries the person out of his senses...

8. If a soul is able to remain a long while gazing upon the Lord, I don’t believe the

experience but an intense reflection where a likeness is fashioned in the imagination; compared with a vision this likeness is similar to something dead.

9. Some persons become so absorbed in their imagination that all they think about seems to be clearly seen. Yet, if they were to see a real vision, they would know their mistake, for they are composing what they see with their imagination. This imagining has no effect ... and what was seen is forgotten much more than a dream.

10. The vision we are dealing with ... is **suddenly represented** and stirs the faculties and senses with fear and tumult. It places them afterward in that **happy peace** ...

In the interior world, there is a great stirring; and in a moment ... all remains **calm**, and this soul is left so **well instructed** about so many great truths that it has no need of any other master.

Without any effort on the soul's part, **true Wisdom** has taken away the mind's dullness and leaves a **certitude** which lasts for some time. This **favor** is from **God**.

However much the soul is told the contrary, others cannot cause it fear ... The devil can stir up doubts ... yet the soul remains **certain** that the devil could not have left it with so many **blessings** ... for he cannot do so much in the interior of the soul ...

11. Since the confessors cannot witness this vision ... they fear and rightly so ... It is necessary to proceed with caution, wait for the time when the apparitions will bear fruit, and move along little by little looking for the humility they leave in the soul and the fortitude in virtue ...

If the confessor has experience ... he needs a little time for **discernment** ... especially if His Majesty has given him the **gift of discernment of spirits** ...

12. What is necessary, Sisters, is that you proceed openly and honestly with your confessor ... in giving an account of your prayer ... God ... is very fond of our speaking truthfully to the one who stands in His place ... If you do this you don't have to

go about disturbed or worried. Even if the vision is not from God, it will do you no harm if you have humility and a good conscience. His Majesty knows how to draw good from evil.

... Thinking that God grants you such wonderful favors, you will force yourselves to please Him more and be always remembering His image ...

13. ... As for the advice given to make the fig when seeing a vision, a learned man was strongly opposed; he said to always reverence a painting of our King...

We must always have respect for any crucifix or portrait we see of our Emperor ... My counsel is that even though a confessor gives you advice to **make the fig** (sign of disrespect), you should humbly tell him this reason and not accept his counsel.

14. A wonderful **benefit** the soul draws from this favor is that when it thinks of Him or of His life and Passion, it **remembers** His most **meek and beautiful countenance**.

This remembrance is the greatest **consolation**...

Many are the other **blessings** these visions bring, but since so much has been said about such **effects**... let me advise you strongly that when you learn or hear that God grants these favors to souls, **never beseech or desire** Him to lead you by this path.

15. ... Desiring this path is inappropriate for certain reasons:

First, the desire to be given what you have never deserved is a **lack of humility**... I believe that these favors will never be given to those who desire them ...

Second, such a person will certainly be deceived as the devil needs nothing more than a little door open to play a thousand tricks on us.

Third, the imagination itself ... makes a person think he sees and hears what he desires ...

Fourth, it would be bold to want to choose a path ... it should be left to the Lord who knows me ... and so that in all things I might do His will.

Fifth, do you think the trials suffered by those to whom the Lord grants these favors are few? No, they are extraordinary and of many kinds. How do you know you would be able to bear them?

Sixth, by the very way you think you will gain, you will lose...

16. In sum, Sisters ... the **safest way** is to want only what God wants ... Let us place ourselves in His hands so that His will may be done in us ...

...Recipients of these favors are obliged to serve more since they have received more.

There are many **holy people** who have never received one of these favors; and, others who have received them but are not holy.

For each time the Lord grants a favor, there are **many trials**. The soul doesn't think about receiving more but about **how to serve** for what it has received.

17. It is true that this vision must be a powerful help toward possessing the **virtues** with **higher perfection** ... They are very **beneficial** and to be **highly esteemed**...

18. ... These desires, in my opinion, are **supernatural** and characteristic of souls very much **inflamed in love** ... They would want the Lord to see that they don't serve Him for pay. They never ... think about receiving glory of anything they do. Their desire is to **satisfy love**, and it is love's nature to serve with deeds in a thousand ways ... If it were necessary to be always annihilated for the greater honor of God, love would do so very eagerly. May He be praised forever, amen. For in lowering Himself to commune with creatures, He wants to show His greatness.