

## Counsels on Revelations & Visions

(Ch 8)

### The Book of her Foundations

by Teresa of Avila

Some people are frightened when they hear the words “visions” and “revelations.” I really don’t understand why they consider this path along which God leads a soul to be so dangerous.

I want to talk about someone who finds herself in this situation. Most confessors will intimidate her. Indeed, it doesn’t cause as much of a stir to say the devil is tempting me as to say I saw or was spoken to by an angel or I saw the Lord Jesus Christ crucified.

2. Nor do I want to talk about the revelations from God but those of the devil designed to deceive. ... Know that he cannot deceive however where there is **humility**. Thus there is no reason to be terrified but to trust the Lord. ...

3. I know a person who suffered much at the hands of her confessors over such matters; but afterward, she realized through the **great effects** and **good works** that resulted that her experiences were in fact from God.

Because of a command received from her confessor, she had to make a **rude gesture** (the fig) and bless herself when she saw a vision. A Dominican later told her though that whenever we see an image of our Lord, it is good to pay it reverence, even if it is the devil who painted it.

When we see a good painting, even though a bad man did it, we shouldn’t fail to esteem the painted image... For the good or evil lies not in the image but in the one who sees the image and whether or not she profits by it with **humility**. For if humility is present no harm can be done, not even by the devil. If humility is not present, the vision will be of no benefit to the soul...

4. Our Lord may wish to represent Himself to a soul for it to know or love Him more, or that He might show it one of His secrets, or grant it another gift or favors. If the soul considers itself a saint because of this attention, the great good that could have resulted is converted into evil.

So let’s suppose the devil, to incite pride, causes these apparitions. The soul may humble itself, feel unworthy of such a gift and strive to serve more. It begins to force itself to do penance, prays more and takes

care not to offend God because it thinks God is the origin of this favor. It also obeys with greater perfection. If it responds like this, the devil will surely not return!

5. If given something to do or told something about the future, the nun should speak to a discreet and learned confessor and follow his instructions completely. If she however does not follow his direction, her disobedience comes from a bad spirit or dreadful melancholy (depression).

Even if the confessor is not right in what he tells her, his Majesty will enlighten the confessor or ordain how the task maybe carried out. In following this advice, there is no danger.

6. Human nature is very weak so it is necessary that we don’t immediately think that everything is a vision. We should believe that when a vision does occur it will be clearly known. When melancholy is present, greater care is needed as they think they see things that they do not see.

7. A confessor came to see me about a person he was counselling. She spoke of long talks with the Virgin Mary who sat on her bed and told her of future events. Among many absurdities, some did in fact happen but I immediately understood the nature of the experience.

I told him to wait and see if the prophecies proved to be true and to look for effects and to inquire into the life of the person. In the end, he too saw the whole thing to be nonsense.

8. It is important to wait for time to pass along with understanding oneself well before telling a confessor and deceiving him. If he doesn’t have experience of these things, he won’t be able to understand them no matter how great his intelligence.

Not long ago there was a man who spoke a lot of nonsense about these things to learned men. When he spoke to one who did have experience with these things, she saw right away that he was suffering from madness and illusion. In time, the Lord revealed her to be correct about his madness, but she had to suffer much at not being initially believed.

9. For these reasons, it is necessary that each Sister speak clearly to her prioress about her prayer. This allows the prioress to inform the confessor and choose the right one if the ordinary confessor is not sufficient for a nun’s situation.

Let the Sister be very careful that things like this, though from God, or favors recognized as miraculous, not be communicated to outsiders or to confessors unable to be silent. It is also important that the Sisters not discuss these things amongst themselves. The prioress should strive rather to praise **humility, mortification, and obedience** rather than those God leads by this path of **supernatural prayer**, even if this nun has all the other **virtues**.

If this path is from the spirit of the Lord, it brings with it the **humility to like being despised**.

Praising the virtues in this person will not harm her and will benefit others.

Let those **not** led along this path of supernatural prayer not be sad, but rather seek to have the other virtues.

God does give these virtues, but they can also be the objects of our striving and they are of great value in religious life.

May His Majesty give them to us since no one who strives for them with effort, solicitude, prayer, and confidence in His mercy will be denied by Him. Amen.