

*The* INTERIOR  
CASTLE  
*or The* MANSIONS



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*The* INTERIOR  
CASTLE  
*or The* MANSIONS

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

*Translated from the Autograph of St. Teresa of Jesus by  
The Benedictines of Stanbrook*

*Revised, with Notes and an Introduction, by the  
Very Rev. Fr. Benedict Zimmerman, O.C.D.  
Prior*

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Apostolic Minister  
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*Nihil Obstat*    Dom Michael Barrett, O.S.B.  
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Feast of St. John of God  
March 8, 2012

Dear Reader,

When Conor Gallagher, Vice President of Saint Benedict Press, first came to me and shared that the Lord had put it on his heart to assist the Poor Clares in the building of their new monastery, we had a heart-to-heart discussion. In my rather straightforward manner, I told him that I knew there were people whom the Lord had called to be a part of this work—this building up of His Church in the South by laying a foundation for a life of adoration and thanksgiving. I also told him that there were those whom God had not chosen, and that I was perfectly capable of returning donations to people who had their own agenda in mind. I think he might have been a little shocked at that point. However, there is a restlessness of the spirit when God is commanding a soul to engage in His work—and that spirit was actively working in the soul of our dear friend.

In our discussions on what would be an appropriate means to use to raise funds for the building of a monastery, the guiding light was that it would be of benefit to souls. With this in mind, we narrowed it down to a selection of time-tested classics that have been written by the saints and read by the saints. In other words: saint-makers.

In our world today, we are pulled in so many directions and we have become people of ceaseless activity. It seems we have forgotten

that the Gospel mandate is to *pray* without ceasing, not to work without ceasing.

These books are a call from the Lord to our weary souls to “come away with Me for a while”; to step aside from the hectic pace of our daily routine, and to ponder the purpose of possessing immortal souls: that we may spend *eternity* in the embrace of God.

Each soul is called to holiness. We all have different paths, but the same goal. These books are a compelling force that will direct our sight to the “one thing necessary.”

May each page enkindle in the hearts of those who read them, a love for God and a desire for heaven that will give them the strength to fight the good fight and to gain the joy of heaven.

—MOTHER DOLORES MARIE OF THE  
WOUNDED HEART OF MARY, PCPA  
Abbess  
Saint Joseph Adoration Monastery

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# NOTE

IN THIS new edition the wording has been revised and condensed, chiefly with a view to rendering the translation more pregnant. Only one passage (VI. Mansion, ch. v. 13) has been substantially changed, in conformity with an explanation received from a high authority. It is admittedly a very difficult passage which appears to have been misunderstood by nearly all translators; but it is gratifying to notice that the new French translation by the Carmelite nuns of Anderlecht agrees with our interpretation. The editor is under an obligation to that translation for several interesting facts embodied in the Introduction and in the notes to the text.

B. Z. Wincanton  
December 25, 1911



# INTRODUCTION

SAINT TERESA began to write the *Interior Castle* on June 2, 1577, Trinity Sunday, and completed it on the eve of St. Andrew, November 29, of the same year. But there was a long interruption of five months,<sup>1</sup> so that the actual time spent in the composition of this work was reduced to about four weeks—a fortnight for the first, and another fortnight for the second half of the book. The rapidity with which it was written is easily explained by the fact that the Saint had conceived its plan some time previously. On January 17, 1577, she had written to her brother, Don Lorenzo de Cepeda, at Avila: “I have asked the bishop—Don Alvaro Mendoza—for my book (the *Life*) because I shall perhaps complete it by adding those new favors Our Lord has lately granted me. With these one may even compose a new work of considerable size, provided God grants me the grace of explaining myself; otherwise the loss will be of small account.”<sup>2</sup> She never asked for permission to write anything, but waited until she received a command from her superiors, which, in this case, came from Father Jerome Gracian, superior of the Discalced Carmelites of the Provinces of Andalusia and Castille, and from Don Alonso Velasquez, canon of Toledo, afterwards bishop of Osma.<sup>3</sup> The Saint was not in good

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1. *Castle*, Mansions v. ch. iv. 1.

2. *Letters of St. Teresa*, Vol. ii.

3. The French Carmelite nuns in their new translation, *Oeuvres complètes de Sainte Thérèse*, t. vi, Introduction, p. 5, quoting the *Año Teresiano*, t. vii ad 7 July, and Father Gracian’s *Dilucidario*, as well as his additions to Ribera, show the exact share of Fr. Gracian and Dr. Velasquez in the preliminaries of this work.

health at the time; she repeatedly complains of noises in the head and other infirmities, but, worst of all, she was weighed down by troubles and anxieties resulting from the action of the superiors of the Order and of the Papal Nuncio against the nuns and friars of the Reform. Matters became even more serious when, in October, the nuns of the Incarnation of Avila proceeded to the election of a new prioress. Notwithstanding the prohibition of the provincial, fifty-five electors recorded their votes in favor of the Saint and were immediately declared excommunicated. The whole work of the Reform seemed on the brink of ruin, the Saint, as well as all her friends, was in disgrace, subject to obloquy and ill treatment.

No trace of these trials is to be found in the *Interior Castle*. Saint Teresa possessed the power of concentration of thought in a marvellous degree. The early mornings and late evenings were devoted to the composition of the book, while the rest of the day was taken up by the affairs of the Order. Mother Mary of the Nativity, a member of the community of Toledo, where the book was begun, declared afterwards,<sup>4</sup> that she often saw her writing, generally after Holy Communion, her face resplendent, with such rapidity and so absorbed in her occupation that she seemed undisturbed by, and in fact quite unconscious of, any noise that was made. Mother Mariana of the Angels<sup>5</sup> reports having heard from the same witness, that entering her cell one day to deliver a message, the holy Mother was just beginning a new sheet of her book. While taking off her spectacles to listen to the message she was seized by a trance in which she remained for several hours. The nun, terrified at this, did not stir, but kept her eyes steadily on the Saint. When she came to, it was seen that the paper, previously blank,

4. Fuente, *Obras de Santa Teresa de Jesus*. Edit. 1881, Vol. vi, p. 278.

5. *Ibid.* p. 178. A somewhat similar incident is reported by Mother Anne of the Incarnation (*Ibid.* p. 213), but it appears to be wrongly brought into connection with the composition of the *Castle*. The nun in question had belonged to the convent of St. Joseph at Segovia at an earlier period, but there is no evidence that St. Teresa visited this place in the course of the six months during which she composed this work. The Bollandists, indeed, maintain that it was commenced at Toledo, continued at Segovia and completed at Avila (n. 1541), but their sole authority for including Segovia is the passage in question, which, however, must refer to some other work of the Saint. The sister, passing St. Teresa's door, saw her writing, her face being lit up as by a bright light. She wrote very fast without making any corrections. After an hour, it being about midnight, she ceased and the light disappeared. The Saint then knelt down and remained in prayer for three hours, after which she went to sleep.

was covered with writing. Noticing that her visitor had discovered it, Saint Teresa put the paper quietly in the box.

Another nun, Mary of St. Francis, left the following declaration: "I know that our holy Mother wrote four books, the *Life*, the *Way of Perfection*, the *Foundations*, and the *Mansions*, which I have seen her writing. Once, while she was composing the lastnamed work, I entered to deliver a message, and found her so absorbed that she did not notice me; her face seemed quite illuminated and most beautiful. After having listened to me she said: 'Sit down, my child, and let me write what Our Lord has told me ere I forget it,' and she went on writing with great rapidity and without stopping."<sup>6</sup>

Mary of St. Joseph says she heard from Mary of the Nativity that Father Jerome Gracian commanded the Saint to write the *Mansions*; she, however, begged to be excused, because so many books having been written by holy and learned men, there remained nothing for a woman to write. At length she yielded under obedience. This nun (Mary of the Nativity) was frequently in the Saint's cell while she was writing and she noticed her resplendent face and the almost preternatural velocity with which her hand travelled over the paper.<sup>7</sup>

Writing to Mother Mary of St. Joseph, Prioress of Seville, November 8, 1581, St. Teresa gives her a message for Father Rodrigo Alvarez, S.J.: "Our Father (Jerome Gracian, then provincial) tells me that he has handed you a book written by me, which perhaps you do not feel inclined to read yourself. Kindly read to Father Rodrigo Alvarez, at his next visit, the last Mansion, but under the seal of Confession, as he asks this in his superior wisdom. This is only for you two. Tell him that the person he knows has arrived at this Mansion and enjoys the peace there described; that she is entirely at rest, and that some grave theologians have assured her that she is on a safe road. In case you could not read these pages to him do not send him the book, for it might lead to unpleasantness. Until I have his answer on this matter I will not write to him. Give him my compliments."

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6. Fuente, p. 223.

7. *Ibid.* p. 255.

At the end of the original manuscript, before the epilogue (marked with Ihs.) there is a notice in Father Alvarez' handwriting to this effect: "The Mother Prioress of the convent of Seville has read to me this seventh Mansion, whither a soul may arrive in the present life. Let all the saints praise the infinite goodness of God, Who communicates Himself to His creatures so that they truly seek His glory and the salvation of their neighbor. What I feel and judge of this matter is, that everything that has been read to me is conformable to Catholic truth and in accordance with Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Saints. Whosoever has read the doctrine of the Saints, such as the books of St. Gertrude, St. Catharine of Siena, or St. Bridget of Sweden, and other saints and spiritual writers, will clearly understand that the spirit of Mother Tereza (sic) of Jesus is true, since it leads to the same effects as are to be found in the Saints; and because this is in truth my judgment and opinion, I have hereunto set my name, this, the 22nd day of February, 1582. P. Rodrigo Alvarez."<sup>8</sup>

The work was copied, probably under the supervision of the Saint, who introduced many changes; when completed the original was handed to Father Jerome Gracian and to the Dominican, Fray Diego de Yanguas, for approval. Both, particularly the former, made numerous corrections, which Fuente, not without reason, calls impertinent, scratching out whole sentences and adding others. The book thus revised must have enjoyed a certain celebrity, though not to the same extent as the *Life*, to which St. Teresa herself preferred it. Scarcely a week after its completion she wrote to Father Salazar, S.J.: "If Señor Carillo [Salazar himself] came, the person in question [the Saint] thinks he would find another jewel which in her opinion is superior to the former [the *Life*]. This one reflects nothing foreign to itself, but is resplendent in its own beauty. It is enriched with more delicate enamels than the former, the workmanship, too, is more perfect. For, as the person in question says, the jeweller was less experienced when he fashioned the previous one. Moreover, the gold of the new one is of better quality than that of the former, though the precious stones are not so

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8. Autograph, fol. cx.



well set. It has been done, as might be expected, according to the designs of the Jeweller Himself.”<sup>9</sup> Later on she wrote to Father Jerome Gracian: “The book I have written since seems to me superior [to the *Life*]; at least I had more experience when I wrote it.”<sup>10</sup>

One day, speaking with Mother Mary of Jesus on spiritual matters, she said that Our Lord had communicated so much to her since she had reached what she described in the seventh Mansion—the spiritual Marriage—that she did not consider it possible to advance further in this life, in the way of prayer, nor even to wish to do so.<sup>11</sup>

The book was eagerly read by those who were able to obtain copies. At the archiepiscopal Seminary at Salamanca it was read publicly after dinner; the students, contrary to custom, sacrificing the recreation rather than miss so edifying an instruction. The result was that several entered the religious life, one becoming a Franciscan, two others, who had already taken their degrees, joining the Discalced Carmelites.<sup>12</sup> We also know of a lady who became a Poor Clare through reading the *Interior Castle*.<sup>13</sup> The process of Beatification contains the following evidence of Don Francisco de Mora, architect to Philip III: “The same prioress (of a convent of Dominican nuns) being concerned about my salvation gave me a book in manuscript, called *The Mansions*, by Mother Teresa, hoping I should derive some benefit from it. I fear this was not the case, but it made me acquainted with Teresa of Jesus, the foundress of the Discalced Carmelite nuns, of whom I had not yet heard, but for whom I now felt devotion.”<sup>14</sup>

In August 1586 it was decided to print Saint Teresa’s works, the Augustinian Fray Luis de Leon being selected as editor, as he was unconcerned in the quarrels raging round the Reform. Accordingly, the manuscript of the *Interior Castle* was handed to him. On the first leaf he wrote the following note:

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9. December 7, 1577. *Letters* Vol. ii.

10. Jan. 14, 1580. *Letters* Vol. iv.

11. Fuente, *Obras*. *l.c.* p. 275.

12. *l.c.* p. 217.

13. *Ibid.* p. 227.

14. Fuente, *Obras*. p. 190.

“Many passages of this book written by the holy Mother have been scored through, other words being substituted or notes being added in the margin. Most of these corrections are badly done, the original text being much better. It will be noticed that the holy Mother’s sentences are superior and agree with the context, which is not the case with the corrections. These improvements and glosses may therefore be dispensed with. Having myself read and considered everything with great care, it appears to me that the reader, too, should have before him the words of the author who knew best what to say; for this reason I have left out the additions, and have restored what has been changed, excepting only a few corrections made by the writer herself. I beg of the reader that he would in charity reverence the words and even the letters traced by so holy a hand, and strive to understand what has been written. He will then see that there was no need for corrections; should he fail to understand her, let him believe that the writer knew what she said, and that her words cannot be tampered with if they are not to lose their meaning; otherwise what was to the point will seem out of place. This is how books become corrupted, useless, and are finally lost.”<sup>15</sup>

When Luis de Leon undertook the editing of St. Teresa’s writings he received a long letter from Don Diego de Yepes, afterwards Bishop of Tarazona, a former friend and confessor of the Saint, in which he records his personal recollections. I shall only insert here what he says about the *Interior Castle*:

“This holy Mother desired to see the beauty of a soul in the state of grace, a thing greatly to be coveted both for the sake of seeing and of possessing it. While this desire lasted, she was commanded to write a treatise on prayer, of which she had much personal experience. On the eve of the Blessed Trinity, while considering what subject to choose for this treatise, God, Who disposes everything in due season, fulfilled her wish and furnished a suitable subject. He showed her a most beautiful globe of crystal, in the shape of a castle, with seven rooms, the seventh, situated in the centre, being occupied by the King of glory, resplendent with the

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15. Autograph. fol. 1.

most exquisite brilliancy, which shone through and adorned the remaining rooms. The nearer these lay to the centre, the more did they partake of that wondrous light. It did not, however, penetrate beyond the crystal, for everything round about was a mass of darkness and impurity, full of toads and vipers and other venomous animals.

“She was still admiring this beauty which, by the grace of God dwells in the soul, when, lo! the light suddenly disappeared, and the crystal, wherein the King of glory was still residing, became opaque and as dark as coal, emitting an intolerable odor; the venomous animals, formerly held in check outside, obtained admittance into the castle. The holy Mother wished that every one should behold this vision, for she thought that no one having seen the beauty and splendor of grace, which is forfeited by sin and replaced by such repulsive misery, would ever dare to offend God.

“She told me this vision on the same day, for in this as well as in other things she was so communicative that on the following morning she said to me: ‘How I forgot myself yesterday! I cannot think how it could have happened. Those high aspirations of mine, and the affection I have for you must have caused me to go beyond all reasonable limits. God grant I may have derived some profit therefrom.’ I promised her to say nothing about it during her lifetime, but since her death I should like to make it known to all men. From this vision she learnt four important matters.

“First, she came to understand this axiom, which in this form she had never heard of in her life,<sup>16</sup> that God is present in all things by His essence, presence, and power. As she was deeply humble and submissive and obedient to the doctrine of the Church and the teaching of the learned ministers of God, she never rested until her revelations had been approved of by her superiors and by theologians, and were shown to be conformable to Holy Scripture. She went so far as to say that if all the angels of Heaven said one thing, and her superiors another, though she could not doubt that the former were true angels, yet she would hold what was told her by her

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16. See *Life*, ch. xviii. 20. *Mansions* v. ch. i. 9. The ignorance of the priest who had told her that God was only present by His grace, made a lasting impression on St. Teresa. She was first undeceived by a Dominican.

superiors, because faith comes through these and there remains no room for deceit, whereas revelations coming from angels might be illusionary.

“With such regard for obedience, she asked me one day at Toledo—probably at the time when she saw the vision of the Castle—whether it was true that God was in all things by His power, presence, and essence, to which I replied in the affirmative, explaining it as best I could on the authority of St. Paul, particularly where he says ‘the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us.’ (*Rom.* 8:18). Laying stress on these words, ‘shall be revealed in us,’ she was so overjoyed that I was quite astonished. Though in a way it seemed to me a kind of curiosity, I could not help thinking there was some mystery about it, for she said: ‘This is the very thing.’

“Secondly, she was greatly surprised at the malice of sin, since, notwithstanding the presence of God in these various ways, it prevents the soul from partaking of that powerful light.

“Thirdly, she derived such humility and self-knowledge from this vision, that from that moment she never thought of herself in all the good she was doing; for she learnt that all the beauty of the soul emanates from that resplendent light, and that the powers of the soul and of the body are enlivened and strengthened by the Power established in the centre, whence comes all our good, so that we have but a small share in our good works. All the good she did, she from this moment referred to God as its principal author.

“Fourthly, she derived from it the subject of the book she was ordered to write on prayer, comparing the seven rooms of the Castle with as many degrees of prayer, whereby we enter within ourselves and draw nearer to God. So that, penetrating to the depths of our soul and gaining perfect self-knowledge, we reach the seventh room where God Himself dwells, with Whom we become united by as perfect a union as is possible in the present life, being made partakers of His light and love.

“I will say no more of this vision and the *Mansions*, because your Reverence must by now have seen this admirable book, and must know with what accuracy, with what majestic doctrine, with what lucid examples she describes the progress of the soul from the gate to the very centre. It is clearly

seen in this treatise how she communicated with Our Lord, and how His Majesty vouchsafed to place her in the centre and to unite her with Himself, as she puts it, by the bonds of marriage and an inseparable union.”<sup>17</sup>

After the publication of the *Interior Castle*, in 1588 at Salamanca, it became not only more widely known, but also more and more appreciated. Francis Suarez, the great theologian of the Society of Jesus, says in his deposition in the process of Beatification that he had read some of St. Teresa’s works, particularly the *Mansions*, which contain an absolutely safe doctrine and give proof of a wonderful spirit of prayer and contemplation.<sup>18</sup>

Thomas Hurtado, professor of theology at Seville, speaks as follows:

“As often as I read the books of the holy Mother, I admire the wonderful manner in which God instructed her in mystical theology for the sake of souls giving themselves truly to familiar intercourse with His divine Majesty. But where I most regret my inability of expressing in fitting terms my sentiments towards this excellent teacher is when I look at, and refresh myself in that Castle with its seven rooms; for there is seen the effect of infused knowledge such as St. Denis received from St. Hierotheus<sup>19</sup> and both from St. Paul, and which has been committed to writing in the famous book of *Mystical Theology*. Hence comes, as from a fountainhead, notwithstanding the obscurity (to our manner of thinking) of its language, the doctrine of the great masters of the spiritual life such as Hugh of St. Victor, St. Bernard, Ruysbroek, Tauler, Gerson, and many others whom I pass by.

“Nevertheless, I will boldly say that no one has given us water more limpid from that Apostolical and Areopagitical well than the holy Mother Teresa, who, in her books, but chiefly in the *Mansions*, has cleared up in simple language the most difficult questions of this divine theology, and has brought forth light from darkness, as it is written: ‘(He) commanded light to shine out of darkness.’ (2 Cor. 4:6). Who has ever been able to show as clearly as our Saint how God takes possession of the soul, how He

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17. Fuente, pp. 131–133.

18. *L.c.* 184.

19. Allusion to the famous *Mystical Theology* attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, and long considered the chief authority on this subject.

unites Himself with its substance, whence comes to the intellect the light of faith, to the will the ardor of love, and to the senses the jubilation over His works? No one has ever turned theory into practice in a more convincing or more catholic manner. The most profound secrets of this supernatural wisdom are here treated with such ease, so amiably, so delightfully, they are illustrated by such nice and homely examples, that instead of awe inspiring obscurity, we find lovely flowers and the sweetness of love, through which, as through an avenue, the soul passes onwards. When God made known His exalted doctrine to St. Dionysius and other mystical writers, He made use of their own language and pen. But St. Teresa in the *Mansions* is like the light of dawn whose rays are not intercepted by the clouds of this world; like a soft rain from above, whereby the soul grows and profits by its communications with God. Until the teaching of this great doctor became known it seemed as though God were inaccessible, being surrounded by darkness, through which Moses and some other persons had to pass when approaching Him;<sup>20</sup> but they neither explained the manner nor showed the way whereby they came to the enjoyment of the sweetness of the Spouse. Now, however, this way is clear and patent to all, having been pointed out in the *Mansions*, in language so straight and so methodical, and no longer such as could not be understood, or required further explanation. In my opinion this holy writer derived not only the substance of her teaching from infused knowledge, but even the words with which she explains it.”<sup>21</sup>

Likewise Don Alvaro de Villegas, canon of Toledo, expressed his opinion that the *Way of Perfection* and the *Interior Castle* contain “heavenly doctrine.” The weight of the subject matter, the propriety of the comparisons, the force of the expressions, the consistency of the teaching, the sweetness of her well-chosen, vivid words, the clearness of the arguments, all this proves that she was guided by her heavenly Spouse, in Whom are hidden the treasures of the wisdom of God; and that the Holy Ghost, Who more than once was seen resting on her head like a dove, was dictat-

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20. The example of Moses is scarcely to the point (cf. *Exod.* 33:2 and *Num.* 12:7, 8).

21. Fuente, pp. 330–332.

ing these works. Villegas does not believe that anyone could read them, as such books ought to be read, without becoming himself a master of the spiritual life. For they are like heavenly dew, rendering the soul fruitful in the matter of prayer.<sup>22</sup>

It would be a mistake to consider the *Interior Castle* a complete treatise of mystical theology. Like St. Teresa's other works, it is intensely personal: she describes the road by which she has been led, being well aware that others may be led in a different way. In the heavenly Father's house there are many mansions, not only seven, and many paths lead to them. What gives the work such high value is, that it is the result of a most searching inquiry into the various phases whereby a soul is gradually transformed into the likeness of God Himself. Here St. Teresa is always at her best. She takes nothing for granted, even her own personal experiences are admitted only after having been fully investigated and found to be consistent one with the other, and conformable to the teaching of the Church and the words of Holy Scripture.

Mystical theology is generally divided into three parts, respectively called the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive life. In the first, man is cleansed from sin and habitual imperfection by the use of the Sacraments and by voluntary mortification of the passions. The mind is purified by sedulous meditation on the last end and on the Life and Passion of Christ, which must ever be the great model of the Christian. This first portion of the way to Heaven can be covered by the help of the ordinary means of grace, without any direct and extraordinary intervention of divine power.

The second part differs in many ways from the first. It comprises the passive purification of the soul and the passive enlightenment of the mind. By sending it keen interior and exterior trials and sufferings, God completes the cleansing of the soul in a manner far surpassing any voluntary effort of man. By raising it to the stage of contemplation He gives it fresh light on the mysteries of our Redemption. The mind is then no longer compelled to strain the memory, the reason, and the will, in order to dwell

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22. *l.c.* p. 334. These testimonies could be easily multiplied.

upon the great truths of religion and to derive some personal benefit therefrom, for these truths are now more or less permanently before it and fill it with holy thoughts, sometimes giving it consolation in trouble, at other times striking a warning note against imperfection. Again, the subtraction of sensible consolation, and the interior aridity arising therefrom, leave a terrible blank in the soul, showing it that, without God's help, it is mere nothingness. This apparent estrangement from God is the keenest trial that can befall a soul, but also the most powerful means of cleansing it from the least, the most subtle imperfections.

Emerging from this state of probation, the soul enters upon the third stage, in which, though perhaps in the midst of severe suffering and sharp persecution, it knows itself to be a chosen child of God, to Whom it is united by perfect conformity of the will. Such phenomena as revelations, visions, locutions, and even more wonderful manifestations, like the wound of love, spiritual betrothal and nuptials, are incidental rather than essential to the second and third stages. Some great contemplatives have never experienced anything of the kind, while, on the other hand, some of these occurrences may sometimes have been merely the work of an exuberant imagination, or even the result of diabolical illusion. They should therefore never be wished for, or cherished, but rather shunned and ignored, in as far as that is possible. If they are real and come from God, they will do their work without the cooperation of the soul. The danger of self-deception is so great that a person laboring under such phenomena should offer every resistance, and the spiritual director should exercise the utmost vigilance. St. Teresa is very eloquent on this point, and undeceived many would be contemplatives, while her disciple, St. John of the Cross, is even more thorough going in the deprecation of spiritual favors. Among the numerous marks whereby the trained theologian may discriminate between real and imaginary phenomena, there is one about which Saint Teresa speaks with wonderful clearness. If they proceed from hysteria the imagination alone is active and the higher powers of the soul are torpid; if, however, they come from God, the intellect and the will are so intensely active, that the lower powers and even the body lose all strength for the time being.



It will be noticed that the first two Mansions belong to the purgative life, the third and fourth to the illuminative, and the remaining three to the unitive life. Compared with similar works, the treatment of the first stage must be called meager. True, in her *Life* and in the *Way of Perfection* St. Teresa has dealt with this subject somewhat more fully. Indeed, the last named work was designed as a treatise on Christian Ascetics, dealing with the purgation of the soul by mortification and the enlightenment of the mind by meditation. There, too, appears the first idea of the Mansions,<sup>23</sup> and Fuente remarks that the passage in question may be taken for the parting of the ways between the two works. However, this is not the only, nor, indeed, the chief reason why St. Teresa is so reticent about the preliminary stage of the contemplative life. The fact is that she herself did not pass through these experiences. By God's grace she was preserved from childhood from grievous sin and gross imperfection. Though she never grows tired of bewailing her faults and unfaithfulness, these avowals must be taken *cum grano salis*. While yet a child, she sometimes gave way to vanity in dress and wasted her time in reading romances. As a young religious, she was sought after by friends and relatives who took pleasure in her attractive conversation. This proved further loss of time and caused distractions. Owing to acute suffering, she for some years left off the practice of mental prayer, though she faithfully performed all her religious obligations, as far as her weak state of health allowed. This is all. The war of the flesh against the spirit, the insubordination of the lower parts of nature, the fickleness of the will, which so often thwart the most noble aspirations of a soul, were unknown to her. Under these circumstances, we cannot be surprised to find her entering upon the journey towards God at a point which in many cases marks but the closing stage.

As to the remaining parts of this book, it will be seen from the parallel passages that they cover much the same ground as her *Life* and the *Relations*. With her singular gift of introspection and analysis, the Saint studied her own case from every point of view, so as to make sure that her extraordinary experiences were due to no illusion, and offered no obstacle to the safety of her soul. Although the *Interior Castle* contains little that

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23. *Way of Perf.* ch. xx. 1

we do not already know from her other works, it is superior to them by reason of its logical order and the masterly treatment of the most recondite matters of mystical theology. While ostensibly dealing with general facts, St. Teresa in reality records her personal experiences. How definite these were, how little room there remained for the freaks of the imagination, will appear from the fact that she nearly always repeats the very words she had used in her *Life* and in the other reports of her interior progress, although she did not have these writings before her eyes, nor had she ever seen them since they first left her hands. Every one of her experiences must have produced a profound impression to be remembered so minutely after an interval of years.

There is that in the *Interior Castle* which reminds one of Dante's *Paradiso*. In the one and the other, the soul, purified from earthly dross, is gradually being invested with new and glorious qualities, and is being led through regions unknown until it arrives at the very threshold of the throne of God. Not even the boldest imagination could have designed so wonderful a picture of a soul adorned with graces at once so varied and so true. In one case we know, the poet has drawn abundantly from the treasury of the Angelical Doctor, putting in verse the conclusions of the scholastic theologian. In the other case we can follow, chapter by chapter, the influence of the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Teresa had never studied it herself, but her directors and confessors were deeply versed in it and solved her doubts and perplexities on the lines of the greatest of the schoolmen. The *Interior Castle* might almost be considered a practical illustration of certain parts of the *Summa* theologica,<sup>24</sup> as it describes the progress of the soul through every stage of perfection. When we have reached the second chapter of the seventh Mansion, there remains but one thing: the Beatific Vision, and this is reserved for the next life.

After the publication of the *Interior Castle* by Luis de Leon, the manuscript came into the possession of Father Jerome Gracian, who, after having made a copy of it which is still extant, presented the original, on the occasion of a visit to the convent of Seville, to Don Pedro Cereso Pardo, a

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24. *S. Theol.* 2da 2dae, qq. 171–184.

great friend of the Saint, and a benefactor to the convent. When his only daughter took the habit there, the precious manuscript was part of her dowry. Doña Juana de Mendoza, Duchess of Beguiar, a novice in the same convent, had it bound in silver and precious stones. It is still there,<sup>25</sup> and the present writer had the privilege of seeing it. It comprises a hundred and thirteen leaves in folio, but originally there must have been some more leaves which at a later period were torn out. These, it is presumed, contained the headings of the chapters. Unlike the *Life* and the *Foundations*, the text of the *Castle* is divided only by figures, without indication of the contents of each chapter, but the arguments which have come down to us are so entirely similar to those of the two works named, that it is impossible to consider them otherwise than the genuine work of the author. In the present translation they have been inserted in their proper places.

On the occasion of the tercentenary of Saint Teresa's death, a photolithographic edition of the original was published under the direction of Cardinal Lluçh, Carmelite of the old observance, Archbishop of Seville:

*El Castillo Ynterior ó Tratado de las Moradas, escrito por  
Sta. Teresa de Jesús. Litografía de Juan Moyano (Seville) 1882.*

The present translation, the third in English,<sup>26</sup> has been made directly from this autograph edition. It has been thought advisable that, as far as the genius of the language allows it, the wording of the author should be strictly adhered to, and that not even a shade of her expression should be sacrificed. For Teresa is not only a saint whose every word is telling, but

25. Bollandists, *Acta*, n. 1495. See also *Impressions in Spain*. By Lady Herbert. London, 1867, p. 171.

26. The first translation is to be found in the *Works of the Holy Mother St. Teresa of Jesus* (third part). Printed in the year MDCLXXV, pp. 137286. It bears the title: *The Interior Castle: or, Mansions*. As to the authors of this translation—Abraham Woodhead and another, whose name is not known—see my book *Carmel in England*, p. 342, note. It is stated there that the third part, containing the *Way of Perfection* and the *Castle*, has no title page. This is true with regard to the copy I had before me when writing that book. The one I have now is more complete.

The second translation, by the Rev. John Dalton, appeared in 1852 and has been repeatedly reprinted. It was dedicated to Bishop Ullathorne.

Of foreign translations it will be sufficient to mention the one by Cyprien de la Nativité, in *Oeuvres de la Sainte Mère Tère de Jésus*, Paris, 1657, and the new one in *Oeuvres* already mentioned.

she is a classic in her own language who knows how to give expression to her deepest thoughts. Having compared word for word the translation with the original, I am in a position to affirm that this program has been faithfully carried out. For the footnotes—with few exceptions—as well as for the Index, I am responsible. It seemed to me important to point out all the parallel passages from the various works of the Saint. Only by this means can it be seen how consistent Saint Teresa is in all her writings.<sup>27</sup> It would have been easy to multiply quotations from the works of other writers on mystical theology. Thus, the influence of the *Imitation of Christ* and of the *Life of our Lord* by Ludolphus the Carthusian can be distinctly traced in the *Interior Castle*. Both these works, as well as some Spanish books, were held in such esteem by St. Teresa, that she ordered the prioress of each convent to keep them at the disposal of the nuns. As there is a limit to footnotes, I have contented myself with such references as seemed to me conducive to the elucidation of the doctrine laid down in this treatise.

In conclusion I venture to express the hope that this new translation will be found helpful by those who feel called to a higher life.

BENEDICT ZIMMERMAN

*Prior, O.C.D.*

ST. LUKE'S PRIORY WINCANTON, SOMERSET

*July, 1, 1905,*

*and December 25, 1911.*

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27. The present translation ought to dispose of the reservations expressed by an able critic in his otherwise valuable appreciation of the works of the Saint. See *Santa Teresa*, by the late Alexander Whyte, D.D. London, 1898, p. 32.

Criticisms which have appeared in various papers, or have been privately conveyed, have been gratefully received and acted upon in the second and the present edition.

# THE INTERIOR CASTLE

*or The Mansions*

*by St. Teresa of Avila*

*IHS*



## P R E F A C E



*This Treatise, Styled The Interior Castle,  
Was Written by Teresa of Jesus, Nun of Our Lady of Carmel,  
for Her Sisters and Daughters, the Discalced Carmelite Nuns*

RARELY has obedience laid upon me so difficult a task as this of writing about prayer; for one reason, because I do not feel that God has given me either the power or the desire for it, besides which, during the last three months I have suffered from noises and a great weakness in my head that have made it painful for me to write even on necessary business.<sup>1</sup>

However, as I know the power obedience has of making things easy which seem impossible, my will submits with a good grace, although nature seems greatly distressed, for God has not given me such strength as to bear, without repugnance, the constant struggle against illness while performing many different duties. May He, Who has helped me in other more difficult matters, aid me with His grace in this, for I trust in His mercy. I think I have but little to say that has not already been put forth in my other works written under obedience; in fact, I fear this will be but repetition of them. I am like a parrot which has learnt to talk; only knowing what it has been taught or has heard, it repeats the same thing over and over again. If God wishes me to write any thing new, He will teach it me, or bring back to my memory what I have said elsewhere. I should be content even with this, for as I am very forgetful, I should be glad to be able to recall some of the

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1. "I am always suffering from my head." Letter of June 28, 1577. *Letters*. vol. ii.

matters about which people say I have spoken well, lest they should be altogether lost. If Our Lord will not even grant me this, still, if I weary my brains and increase my headache by striving to obey, I shall gain in merit, though my words should be useless to anyone. So I begin this work on the Feast of the Blessed Trinity in the year 1577, in the Convent of St. Joseph of Carmel at Toledo, where I am living, and I submit all my writings to the judgment of those learned men by whose commands I undertake them. That it will be the fault of ignorance, not malice, if I say anything contrary to the doctrine of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, may be held as certain. By God's goodness I am, and always shall be, faithful to the Church, as I have been in the past. May He be forever blessed and glorified. *Amen.*

He who bids me write this, tells me that the nuns of these convents of Our Lady of Carmel need someone to solve their difficulties about prayer: he thinks that women understand one another's language best and that my sisters' affection for me would make them pay special attention to my words, therefore it is important for me to explain the subject clearly to them. Thus I am writing only to my sisters; the idea that anyone else could benefit by what I say would be absurd. Our Lord will be doing me a great favor if He enables me to help but one of the nuns to praise Him a little better; His Majesty knows well that I have no other aim. If anything is to the point, they will understand that it does not originate from me and there is no reason to attribute it to me, as with my scant understanding and skill I could write nothing of the sort, unless God, in His mercy, enabled me to do so.



# THE FIRST MANSIONS



## CHAPTER ONE



*This Chapter Treats of the Beauty and Dignity of  
Our Souls and Makes a Comparison to Explain This.  
The Advantage of Knowing and Understanding This  
and the Favors God Grants to Us Is Shown, and  
How Prayer Is the Gate of the Spiritual Castle*

1. *Plan of this book.* 2. *The Interior Castle.* 3. *Our culpable self-ignorance.*  
4. *God dwells in the center of the soul.* 5. *Why all souls do not receive certain  
favors.* 6. *Reasons for speaking of these favors.* 7. *The entrance of the Castle.*  
8. *Entering into oneself.* 9. *Prayer.* 10. *Those who dwell in the first mansion.*  
11. *Entering.* 12. *Difficulties of the subject.*

1. WHILE I was begging our Lord today to speak for me, since I knew not what to say nor how to commence this work which obedience has laid upon me, an idea occurred to me which I will explain, and which will serve as a foundation for that I am about to write.

2. I thought of the soul as resembling a castle,<sup>1</sup> formed of a single diamond or a very transparent crystal,<sup>2</sup> and containing many rooms, just as in Heaven there are many mansions.<sup>3</sup> If we reflect, sisters, we shall see that the soul of the just man is but a paradise, in which, God tells us, He takes His delight.<sup>4</sup>

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1. *Way of Perfection*, ch. xxviii, 9.

2. In her *Life* St. Teresa likened God to a diamond (ch. xl, 14); and elsewhere (ch. xi, 10) the soul to a garden wherein Our Lord takes His delight.

3. *John* 14:2: “*In domo Patris mei mansiones multae sunt.*” St. John of the Cross uses the same comparison: “If the soul shall overcome the devil in the first combat, it shall then pass on to the second; and if it shall be victorious there also, it shall then pass on to the third; and then through the seven mansions, the seven degrees of love, until the Bridegroom shall bring it to the ‘cellar of wine’ of perfect charity.” (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, bk. ii. ch. xi. 7.)

4. *Prov.* 8:31: “*Deliciae meae esse cum filiis hominum.*”

What, do you imagine, must that dwelling be in which a King so mighty, so wise, and so pure, containing in Himself all good, can delight to rest? Nothing can be compared to the great beauty and capabilities of a soul; however keen our intellects may be, they are as unable to comprehend them as to comprehend God, for, as He has told us, He created us in His own image and likeness.<sup>5</sup>

3. As this is so, we need not tire ourselves by trying to realize all the beauty of this castle, although, being His creature, there is all the difference between the soul and God that there is between the creature and the Creator; the fact that it is made in God's image teaches us how great are its dignity and loveliness. It is no small misfortune and disgrace that, through our own fault, we neither understand our nature nor our origin. Would it not be gross ignorance, my daughters, if, when a man was questioned about his name, or country, or parents, he could not answer? Stupid as this would be, it is unspeakably more foolish to care to learn nothing of our nature except that we possess bodies, and only to realize vaguely that we have souls, because people say so and it is a doctrine of faith. Rarely do we reflect upon what gifts our souls may possess, Who dwells within them, or how extremely precious they are. Therefore we do little to preserve their beauty; all our care is concentrated on our bodies, which are but the coarse setting of the diamond, or the outer walls of the castle.<sup>6</sup>

4. Let us imagine, as I said, that there are many rooms in this castle, of which some are above, some below, others at the side; in the centre, in the very midst of them all, is the principal chamber in which God and the soul hold their most secret intercourse.<sup>7</sup> Think over this comparison very carefully; God grant it may enlighten you about the different kinds of graces

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5. *Gen.* 1:26: "*Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram.*"

6. *Way of Perf.* ch. xxviii. 5.

7. St. John of the Cross on the words of his stanza: "In the inner cellar of my Beloved have I drunk." "Here the soul speaks of that sovereign grace of God in taking it into the house of His love, which is the union or transformation of love in God . . . The cellar is the highest degree of love to which the soul can attain in this life, and is therefore said to be the inner. It follows from this that there are other cellars not so interior; that is, the degrees of love by which souls reach to this, the last.

He is pleased to bestow upon the soul. No one can know all about them, much less a person so ignorant as I am. The knowledge that such things are possible will console you greatly should Our Lord ever grant you any of these favors; people themselves deprived of them can then at least praise Him for His great goodness in bestowing them on others. The thought of Heaven and the happiness of the Saints does us no harm, but cheers and urges us to win this joy for ourselves, nor will it injure us to know that during this exile God can communicate Himself to us loathsome worms; it will rather make us love Him for such immense goodness and infinite mercy.

5. I feel sure that vexation at thinking that during our life on earth God can bestow these graces on the souls of others shows a want of humility and charity for one's neighbor, for why should we not feel glad at a brother's receiving divine favors which do not deprive us of our own share? Should we not rather rejoice at His Majesty's thus manifesting His greatness wherever He chooses?<sup>8</sup> Sometimes Our Lord acts thus solely for the sake of showing His power, as He declared when the Apostles questioned whether the blind man whom He cured had been suffering for his own or his parents' sins.<sup>9</sup> God does not bestow these favors on certain souls because they are more holy than others who do not receive them, but to manifest His greatness, as in the case of St. Paul and St. Mary Magdalen, and that we may glorify Him in His creatures.

6. People may say such things appear impossible and it is best not to scandalize the weak in faith by speaking about them. But it is better that the latter should disbelieve us, than that we should desist from enlightening souls which receive these graces, that they may rejoice and may endeavor to love God better for His favors, seeing He is so mighty and so great. There is no danger here of shocking those for whom I write by treat-

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These cellars are seven in number, and the soul has entered them all when it has in perfection the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, so far as it is possible for it. . . . Many souls reach and enter the first cellar, each according to the perfection of its love, but the last and inmost cellar is entered by few in this world, because therein is wrought the perfect union with God, the union of the spiritual marriage." *A Spiritual Canticle*, stanza xxvi. 13. Concept. ch. vi. (*Minor Works* of St. Teresa.)

8. *Matt.* 20:15: "Aut non licet mihi quod volo, facere? an oculus tuus nequam est, quia ego bonus sum?"

9. *John* 9:2: "Quis peccavit, hic, aut parentes ejus, ut caecus nasceretur?"

ing of such matters, for they know and believe that God gives even greater proofs of His love. I am certain that if any one of you doubts the truth of this, God will never allow her to learn it by experience, for He desires that no limits should be set to His work: therefore, never discredit them because you are not thus led yourselves.

7. Now let us return to our beautiful and charming castle and discover how to enter it. This appears incongruous: if this castle is the soul, clearly no one can have to enter it, for it is the person himself: one might as well tell someone to go into a room he is already in! There are, however, very different ways of being in this castle; many souls live in the courtyard of the building where the sentinels stand, neither caring to enter farther, nor to know who dwells in that most delightful place, what is in it and what rooms it contains.

8. Certain books on prayer that you have read advise the soul to enter into itself,<sup>10</sup> and this is what I mean. I was recently told by a great theologian that souls without prayer are like bodies, palsied and lame, having hands and feet they cannot use. Just so, there are souls so infirm and accustomed to think of nothing but earthly matters, that there seems no cure for them. It appears impossible for them to retire into their own hearts; accustomed as they are to be with the reptiles and other creatures which live outside the castle, they have come at last to imitate their habits. Though these souls are by their nature so richly endowed, capable of communion even with God Himself, yet their case seems hopeless. Unless they endeavor to understand and remedy their most miserable plight, their minds will become, as it were, bereft of movement, just as Lot's wife became a pillar of salt for looking backwards in disobedience to God's command.<sup>11</sup>

9. As far as I can understand, the gate by which to enter this castle is prayer and meditation. I do not allude more to mental than to vocal

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10. *Imitation*, bk. 11. ch. I: "*Regnum Dei intra vos est.*" Luke 17:21. The *Imitation* is one of the books which according to St. Teresa's *Constitutions*, (§ 7) every prioress was bound to provide for her convent.

11. *Gen.* 19:26: "*Respiciensque uxor ejus post se, versa est in statuam salis.*"

prayer, for if it is prayer at all, the mind must take part in it. If a person neither considers to Whom he is addressing himself, what he asks, nor what he is who ventures to speak to God, although his lips may utter many words, I do not call it prayer.<sup>12</sup> Sometimes, indeed, one may pray devoutly without making all these considerations through having practiced them at other times. The custom of speaking to God Almighty as freely as with a slave—caring nothing whether the words are suitable or not, but simply saving the first thing that comes to mind from being learnt by rote by frequent repetition—cannot be called prayer: God grant that no Christian may address Him in this manner. I trust His Majesty will prevent any of you, sisters, from doing so. Our habit in this Order of conversing about spiritual matters is a good preservative against such evil ways.

10. Let us speak no more of these crippled souls, who are in a most miserable and dangerous state, unless Our Lord bid them rise, as He did the palsied man who had waited more than thirty years at the pool of Bethsaida.<sup>13</sup> We will now think of the others who at last enter the precincts of the castle; they are still very worldly, yet have some desire to do right, and at times, though rarely, commend themselves to God's care. They think about their souls every now and then; although very busy, they pray a few times a month, with minds generally filled with a thousand other matters, for where their treasure is, there is their heart also.<sup>14</sup> Still, occasionally they cast aside these cares; it is a great boon for them to realize to some extent the state of their souls, and to see that they will never reach the gate by the road they are following.

11. At length they enter the first rooms in the basement of the castle, accompanied by numerous reptiles<sup>15</sup> which disturb their peace, and prevent their seeing the beauty of the building; still, it is a great gain that these persons should have found their way in at all.

12. *Way of Perf.* ch. xxi. 6; xxix. 4. 13. *John* 5:5: "*Erat autem quidam homo ibi triginta et octo annos habens in infirmitate sua.*"

13. *John* 5:5: "*Erat autem quidam homo ibi triginta et octo annos habens in infirmitate sua.*"

14. *Matt.* 6:21: "*Ubi enim est thesaurus tuus ibi est et cor tuum.*"

15. Many an ancient castle was provided with a beargarden where rare animals were kept for the amusement of the inhabitants. This may have supplied the material for St. Teresa's comparison.

12. You may think, my daughters, that all this does not concern you, because, by God's grace, you are farther advanced; still, you must be patient with me, for I can explain myself on some spiritual matters concerning prayer in no other way. May Our Lord enable me to speak to the point; the subject is most difficult to understand without personal experience of such graces. Any one who has received them will know how impossible it is to avoid touching on subjects which, by the mercy of God, will never apply to us.