

5. THE SECOND MANSION

The whole of man's history has been the story of combat with the powers of evil, stretching, so our Lord tells us, from the very dawn of history until the last day. Finding himself in the midst of the battlefield, a person has to struggle to do what is right, and it is at great cost to himself and aided by God's grace, that he succeeds in achieving his own inner integrity. Hence the church of Christ, trusting in the design of the creator and admitting that progress can contribute to man's true happiness, still feels called upon to echo the words of the apostle: 'Do not be conformed to this world' (Rom 12:2). 'World' here means a spirit of vanity and malice whereby human activity from being ordered to the service of God and other humans is distorted into being an instrument of sin. (*Gaudium et Spes* 37)

Mansion to Mansion

Spiritual life is a dynamic journey. It cannot be static. One has to leave the lower stage and climb up to the next rung of the ladder. Often spiritual journey is compared with climbing a mountain or making progress on an upward ladder like Jacob's vision in the Old Testament. According to Teresa the Second Mansion contains those who realize the importance of leaving the First Mansion and going ahead in their search for the King.

Nobody is more capable of entering into the divine castle, nobody is less capable. There are differences, but on the whole, if you take account of the whole, everybody is equally capable of entering into the divine Castle; everybody is equally capable because this capacity for God is put into us. But there are foolish people who will always use their negative qualities then they cannot enter. And there are wise people who will use their positive qualities then they can enter deeper into the Castle. Teresa writes: "This stage pertains to those who have already begun *to practice prayer* and have understood how important it is not to stay in the first dwelling places. But they still don't have the determination to remain in this second

stage without turning back, for they don't avoid the occasions of sin.” (IC II,1,ii).

The King calling them

A man of love can enter into relationship with God and persons. The person who loves can rest. There is a fulfillment when you can rest. But a man after money can never rest because there is no end to it. And there is never fulfillment because money cannot fulfill the soul; the soul remains empty, the inner remains a void. You go on throwing things into it but they never touch your inner emptiness. The more you accumulate, the more you become aware that you are empty, your hands are empty; money is with you but you have lost yourself. Your whole effort is not to look at this fact, because this is very painful. “His mercy and goodness are so bountiful, whereas we are occupied in our pastimes, business affairs, pleasures, and worldly buying and selling, and still falling into sin and rising again. These beasts are so poisonous and their presence so dangerous and noisy that it would be a wonder if we kept from stumbling and falling over them” (IC II,1,ii). At this stage the spiritual persons hear the King calling them through sermons, conversations with good people, good books, trials, and illnesses. They can hear the King calling them from the centre of the Castle.

Moving On

Her focus in this chapter is on those who have already entered the first mansions and understand the importance of moving on, but are not yet committed enough to the spiritual life to do so. These souls, she claims, are in a very dangerous position, although less so than those not wishing to go further on their inward spiritual journey. Those wishing to move into the second mansions understand their state and hope to make their way further into the castle. The others, by way of contrast, are virtually deaf and dumb when it comes to their spiritual lives. Teresa affirms that “One always gains

much through perseverance.” (IC II,1,iii). She portrays reason as an enemy that devalues the goals of the spiritual life in favor of those of the material world.

Perseverance

Teresa points out that the evil one works very hard to confuse them with all kinds of temptations and compromising thoughts. For this reason, these people need to be all the more diligent and persevering in their prayers. They should not turn back to the prior rooms they inhabited or, worse yet, decide to leave the interior castle altogether. Instead they should listen to their God-given faculties for discerning the proper course of action. Reason, for example, points out errors in thinking; faith teaches what must be done to make up for these errors; memory reveals the transient nature of all things; the will inclines the soul to love; the understanding helps one realize that Jesus is the best friend one could ever have.

The pull of the Devil

In spite of their efforts to go ahead the devils underscores the almost eternal nature of earthly pleasures. According to Teresa, the reason, memory and the will have to depend on faith, hope and love, the three theological virtues to combat against the assails of the devil.

Often we take credit to whatever we do and expect returns immediately. This happens quite often in our spiritual life. But if we can exist for a few moments without work and still feel grateful to God, if we can be ‘a nobody’ and still feel grateful and thankful to existence, then we are a religious enough to continue our journey into the Castle. Then our worth does not come from what we do, not from there; our worth does not come from our doing, our worth comes from our being; then our worth is not in the things we have done but it is in us. Then we are worthy. The world may not recognize it, because the world recognizes riches, name and fame. The world may forget us completely. That is what Teresa insists here, when she

asks her daughters to move on in the Castle and never get back to the things of this world. According to her they should be spiritual warriors to fight back the evil one and this spiritual warrior-ship is not our doing but entirely the work of grace of God. Actually, this view of the Christian life as a struggle against evil comes from St. Paul, who interprets his entire existence as a permanent combat. “I have fought the good fight” (2 Tim 4.7). He urges Christians to put on the armor of God, do all your duty requires, and hold your ground. “Our battle is against the rulers of this world of darkness” (Eph 6.11-17). Teresa belongs to this caste of combative Christians. She situates her castle within these regions of Pauline, spiritual militancy. The spirituality she presents is not for cowards, the comfort-loving, or the lazy.

Place of Struggle

This dwelling place represents a time of struggle because of the disorder introduced into the castle through a life that was lived outside of it. A radical decision must be made at the beginning. There must be an initial and progressive sensitivity to the word of God. By meditating on the biblical word, Christians in these dwelling places become aware of their situation as prodigal children of God, who once longed to feed on the husks of swine. “So these persons are able to hear the Lord when he calls. Since they are getting closer to where His Majesty dwells, he is a very good neighbor. His mercy and goodness are so bountiful, whereas we are occupied in our pastimes, business affairs, pleasures, and worldly buying and selling, and still falling into sin and rising again. These beasts are so poisonous and their presence so dangerous and noisy that it would be a wonder if we kept from stumbling and falling over them.” (IC II,1,ii)

Teresa introduces the readers to interiority. She entreats them to enter within, insisting that they bring into their awareness this interior world, a

spiritual point of view, their “soul,” she says. You must enter the castle and remain within, going ever deeper toward the center.

Practical Conclusion

Teresa offers many valuable insights into the beginning stages of the practice of prayer, but under a slightly different format. Teresa's presentation of the various stages of prayer does not follow exactly the same pattern in all of her writings. She changed her presentation of the material as she herself matured in the spiritual life. She also felt free to use different images and metaphors to express her thinking on the subject. Because the IC represents Teresa's most mature presentation of the spiritual life, even the little she says about the life in this second stage of spiritual progress should be readily welcomed and studied with great care. Carefully trying not to repeat herself, she offers her readers the central features of her teaching on this stage of the spiritual life in a creative and innovative presentation. Of particular note in this section is her distinction between those in the first and second mansions, her presentation on how the Lord speaks to those in the latter, as well as her emphasis on perseverance in carrying one's cross. Throughout this section of her work, Teresa encourages her readers not to lose heart. Their focus, she maintains, should not be on receiving rich spiritual experiences and consolations, but on discerning and doing the Lord's will.

As we march on to the Third Mansion, we are pretty certain of the dynamic that is involved at this stage. Perseverance, prayer, accepting ones cross, humbling ourselves and listening to the call of the King are the main ingredients of this Mansion.

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