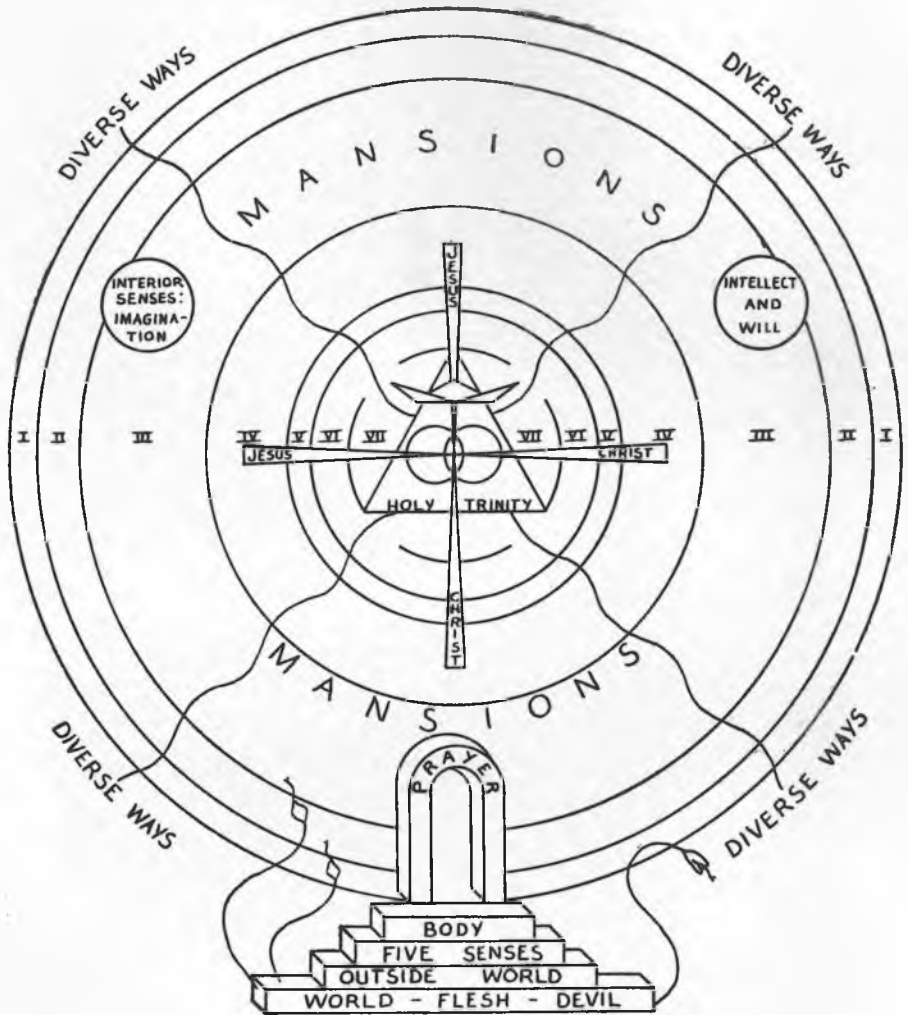


A VISUAL AID
TO THE INTERIOR CASTLE



The Interior Castle: the soul. Door to the Castle: prayer. Inside the Castle:
a) The King: the Triune God (triangle surmounted by crown). b) Jesus (cross): in the first three Mansions: our Model; in the last four: our Means to Divine Union, Spiritual Marriage. c) Spiritual Marriage (entwined rings within the triangle). d) Interior senses. e) Faculties of the soul: intellect and will (small circle to right). f) The seven Mansions: graduating degrees of perfection (spaces enclosed by concentric circles). g) Access between sixth and seventh Mansions (opened circle between the two). h) Diverse ways: various graces and attractions in the interior life (wavy lines or radii). *Outside the Castle:* a) The body. b) The five senses. c) The outside world. d) The three enemies of the soul indicated by stylised serpents).

A VISUAL AID TO THE INTERIOR CASTLE

In our times there is no denying the advance and promotion of the visual aid in education, commerce, propaganda, etc. The media of television, motion pictures, magazines and advertisements are obviously exploiting our innate desire to see and the compelling effect of what is seen upon our minds and appetites. While so much of the content of these visual media of communication is of questionable moral and cultural value we must admit to the validity of the principle that what can be seen by the eye forcibly holds our attention and clarifies, easily, whatever concepts are under observation. It is often true, as adage has it: one picture is worth a thousand words.

The visual as an aid to understanding and a potential moving force to desire is, of course, not a new idea. From the beginning of man's recorded existence there is abundant evidence of the artist who appeals to the eye to facilitate understanding or to quicken appreciation.

No wonder, then, that students and devotees of the spiritual master, St. John of the Cross, are grateful for his foresight and ability in providing the celebrated visual aid « The Mount of Perfection ». ¹ It is significant that St. John wished his drawing prefixed to all his works: a pictorial summary of the body of his teaching. ² Evidence exists, too, that the Saint did not consider the drawing a mere artistic embellishment, for, we are told, he used his picture in giving conferences and spiritual direction to the Discalced Friars and Nuns. ³

Unfortunately, in the case of the companion Saint of Carmelite spiritual doctrine, St. Teresa of Jesus, we possess no such visual aid. Particularly would a pictorial demonstration of the magnificence and intricacy of the content of the Saint's *Interior*

¹ We refer to the Saint's autograph, not to the somewhat gaudy substitute made by the first editors of his works, which has unfortunately pre-empted the rightful place of the former.

² General Introduction, p. xxxii, *The Complete Works of St. John of the Cross*, Vol. I, translated & edited by E. Allison Peers, The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1951.

³ *Ibid.*, p. xxxiii.

Castle (Las Moradas), be of visual help to understanding and comprehensive assimilation. However, we are certainly not bereft of pictorial detail in this masterpiece, for its author displays one of the outstanding talents for graphical description in the wide range of spiritual and mystical writers. With a draftman's eye for structure and design in the use of the analogy of a Castle to describe the soul's progress toward union with God she has furnished us with a blueprint for such a drawing, or visual aid.

From the Saint's own directives, then, *A Visual Aid to the Interior Castle*, which accompanies this text, has been constructed. It would be completely presumptuous to consider the drawing offered as definitive; consequently, it is more appropriately presented as, « A », not « The », *Visual Aid to the Interior Castle*. It is hoped that the drawing will not prove an inaccurate representation of the Saint's analogical figure, or thought. In the IV centenary year of the foundation of the Discalced Reform by St. Teresa of Jesus it is a pleasure to offer this attempt in her honor.

The Analogy of a Castle.

Daughter of *Avila de los Caballeros*, St. Teresa quite expectedly shows herself conversant with the analogy of a Castle,⁴ which she employs to reveal the wonders of the interior life and the means that lead to the perfection thereof. Successfully, she is able to invest the principal elements of her thought with the features of her comparison; even the enemies of the soul provide a clever, integral detail, for they are « the reptiles and other creatures to be found in the outer court of the castle. »⁵

⁴ St Teresa told Fray Diego de Yepes of a vision she had received on the eve of Trinity Sunday, 1577. The substance of this vision is surely the basis for her analogy. However, the supernatural suggestion for the Saint's analogy does not preclude her natural and contemporary familiarity with it. So does grace employ the elements of individual experience, knowledge and background. For Fray Diego's account of the Saint's vision: Cf., *Introduction*, Vol. II, pp. 187-188, *The Complete Works of St. Teresa of Jesus*, 3 Vols., translated & edited from the critical edition of P. Silverio de Santa Teresa, C. D., Sheed & Ward, London, 1951. All references in our article to St. Teresa's works are made to the Peers' edition.

⁵ *I Mansions*, i: Peers, II, p. 203. In ancient times castles often were equipped with bear-gardens of rare animals for the entertainment of family and guests. Also, it was customary to fill the castle moat with vicious and poisonous creatures as added deterrent to enemies.

There is an added interest to this Dantean comparison of the Saint's when we recall that she was warned off worldly and dangerous conversa-

The *locus classicus* for the architectural lay-out of the Interior Castle is found in Chapter Two of the First Mansions — which merits quotation in full:

«Let us now turn to our castle with its many mansions. You must not imagine these mansions as arranged in a row, one behind another, but fix your attention on the centre, the room or palace occupied by the King. Think of a palmito, which has many outer rinds surrounding the savoury part within, all of which must be taken away before the centre can be eaten. Just so around this central room are many more, as there also are above it. In speaking of the soul we must always think of it as spacious, ample and lofty; and this can be done without the least exaggeration, for the soul's capacity is much greater than we can realize, and this Sun, which is in the palace, reaches every part of it.»

From this fine description of the Castle we can deduce the following:

1. The Castle itself is the soul. This is clearly implied in the text under study.⁶

2. The King, Who dwells in the center chamber of the Castle of the soul⁷ is the Triune God;⁸ for the Most Holy Trinity inhabits the soul in the state of grace.

3. The Castle is lighted from within. God is as a sun, whose rays (grace) radiate outward. The chambers nearest His own are the most fully lighted; those more distant, proportionately darker.⁹ So, souls who are closest to God partake most perfectly of the life of divine grace.

4. If we were to use a solid object to illustrate St. Teresa's Castle it conveniently could be a globe or ball. Such a spherical object would serve to demonstrate the structure and arrangement of the Castle's rooms, as explained by a) the comparison to the palmito,¹⁰ and b) the statement: «around this central room are many more, as there are also above it».¹¹ The idea behind this glob-

tions by the sudden and inexplicable appearance of a large, ugly toad in the parlor of the Incarnation. Cf. *Life*, vii: Peers I, p. 41.

⁶ For explicit statements, Cf., *I Mansions*, i: Peers, II, pp. 201, 203.

⁷ Cf., *I Mansions*, i: Peers, II, p. 202; *VII Mansions*, ii: Peers II, p. 337.

⁸ Cf., *VII Mansions*, i: Peers, II, pp. 331-333.

⁹ Cf., *I Mansions*, ii: Peers, II, p. 210.

¹⁰ The palmito is a very dense shrub, with leaves resembling those of a palm tree, hence its name. It is common in the South and East of Spain. The kernel tastes somewhat like a filbert.

¹¹ For the third dimension, depth, Cf., *I Mansions*, i: Peers, II, p. 202; *VII Mansions*, iv: Peers, II, p. 351.

ular arrangement is that, as there are « many mansions » extending from (and toward) the central chamber from every point of the compass, so there are diverse approaches to God and diverse graces which He uses to attract souls, even within the same state, or mansion, of perfection.¹² Because of the two - dimensional restrictions of our drawing we have had to take an aerial, cut-away view of this spherical arrangement of the Castle's rooms. However, we have indicated this important point of the Saint's teaching on the diversity of graces and attractions by means of wavy lines or radii on our drawing.

Other pertinent data which ought to be added to what we have already learned from St. Teresa's composite description are:

5. The fabric of which the Castle is fashioned is crystal:¹³ by which we may understand that as crystal marvellously receives and reflects the light of the sun so the soul, made in God's image and inducted into the divine life by baptism, is eminently well-suited to receive and be transformed by divine grace. « ... it (the soul) is as capable of enjoying Him as is the crystal of reflecting the sun », our Saint tells us.¹⁴ Unfortunately, there is no simple way to represent the Castle's fabric on our drawing.

6. There are Seven Mansions, or states, or degrees of progress toward divine union. St. Teresa, accordingly, divides her book into seven parts. She entitles each degree of perfection in the plural, First Mansions, Second Mansions, etc., another way of reminding us that even within the same degree of perfection there are varieties and diversities of graces. « Although I have spoken here only of seven mansions, yet in each there are comprised many more... »¹⁵

7. The door of the Castle, i. e., the means of entry into the interior life, is prayer.¹⁶

8. The inhabitants of the Castle of the soul (besides God and the soul itself) are: the interior senses, the practically important one of which to be remembered is the imagination;¹⁷ and the su-

¹² Cf., *I Mansions*, ii: Peers, II, p. 210; *III Mansions*, ii: Peers, II, p. 229; *V Mansions*, iii: Peers, II, p. 260; *VII Mansions*, iv: Peers, II, p. 351.

St. Teresa's insistence that « the soul's capacity is much greater than we can realize » (from text quoted in this article), would also seem to affirm that there is a diversity of graces and approaches in the interior life. Also, Cf., *I Mansions*, i: Peers, II, p. 201.

¹³ Cf., *I Mansions*, i: Peers, II, p. 201; *I Mansions*, ii: Peers, II, p. 206.

¹⁴ *I Mansions*, ii: Peers, II, p. 205.

¹⁵ *VII Mansions*, iv: Peers, II, p. 351.

¹⁶ Cf., *I Mansions*, i: Peers, II, p. 203; *II Mansions*: Peers, II, p. 218.

¹⁷ Cf., *IV Mansions*, i: Peers, II, p. 233ff.

perior faculties of the soul, which are the intellect and will, called variously: guards, governors, butlers, and stewards.¹⁸

9. Outside the Castle are the world, the media of contact with it — the five external senses — and the body.¹⁹

10. Also outside the Castle are the soul's three enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil. As we have noted above, St. Teresa calls these enemies and the temptations that ensue from them, « snakes, vipers and poisonous creatures ». ²⁰ Either by God's permission for the soul's merit, or because of the soul's folly and neglect of vigilance these enemies may enter into the Castle, exclusive of the last Mansions.²¹

Their access to the first Three Mansions is particularly dangerous.²² As the union between God and the soul becomes more personal, intimate and loving, it is to be expected that the devil will display a more personal interest and hatred toward this creature rising so near his lost place in God's affection. By his intervention the devil demonstrates his unspeakable personal hatred for God, Who so loves, and the soul, who is so beloved.²³

Explanation of the Visual Aid Drawing.

From the foregoing materials of St. Teresa's analogy we are now ready to view the construction of our Visual Aid to the Interior Castle and to explain its representative features.

The Castle of the soul is depicted by a series of concentric circles, the peripheral one of which designates the bounds of the Castle of the soul. Using concentric circles, which enclose the sides.

¹⁸ Cf., *I Mansions*, i: Peers, II, p. 203; *I Mansions*, ii: Peers, II, p. 206.

¹⁹ Senses, Cf., *I Mansions*, i: Peers, II, p. 210; body, Cf., *I Mansions*, i: Peers, II, p. 202.

²⁰ *I Mansions*, ii: Peers, II, p. 210. St. Teresa does not explicitly call the world, flesh and the devil by these names in any one place, but throughout her work when writing about the snakes, vipers, etc., she plainly conveys this interpretation.

²¹ Cf., *IV Mansions*, i: Peers, II, p. 235; *VII Mansions*, ii: Peers, II, p. 338.

²² First Mansions: Cf., *I Mansions*, i: Peers, II, p. 204; *ibid.*, ii, pp. 209-212. Second Mansions: Cf., *II Mansions*: Peers, II, pp. 213, 215, 217. Third Mansions: Cf., *III Mansions*, i: Peers, II, pp. 219, 226.

²³ Cf., *IV Mansions*, iii: Peers, II, p. 245; *V Mansions*, iv: Peers, II, p. 265; *VI Mansions*, ix: Peers, II, p. 319; *ibid.*, x, p. 321.

various mansions, we can bear in mind that the mansions, as St. Teresa has told us, are not arranged in a row, one behind another, but rather surround the central chamber of the King on all

The Most Holy Trinity dwells within the centermost depths of the soul in the state of grace, as King of the Castle of the soul, so within the innermost concentric circle we see a triangle, symbol of the Holy Trinity, surmounted by a crown, symbol of God's kingship in the soul. Within the triangle are two overlapping circles, indicating the *terminus ad quem*, or ultimate goal of the interior life, Spiritual Marriage — the most perfect union between God and the soul in this life.

Although not put into an analogical term by the Saint, we have included in our drawing a most important premise of St. Teresa's teaching: the mediation of Christ in the interior life.²⁴ So, by a cross, emanating from out the triangle and the entwined circles within it, we show the mediation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ, through His Incarnation, in the interior life of the soul.²⁵ In the first Three Mansions the soul must work, with the aid of ordinary grace, to become Christlike in virtue, thought and desire. These Three Mansions, or degrees of perfection, are dispositive. But in the Fourth Mansions the grace of the God-Man intervenes more directly, discernibly and gratuitously to introduce the soul to a wholly supernatural knowledge of God (experiential knowledge). This knowledge, and consequent love, is the beginning of the transformation of the soul, by which it will be led through the succeeding Mansions to the most perfect divine union — Spiritual Marriage.

The Seven Mansions of the Castle of the soul, which are the varying degrees of inner intensity of the supernatural life of union with God, are portrayed in our drawing by the seven spaces encl-

²⁴ We may rightly consider Jesus Christ to be figured in the analogy as King of the Castle, as well as the Holy Trinity. The meaning of our statement is that no specific analogical term is assigned under the figure of the Castle to designate His mediation in the interior life, of which the Saint has a great deal to say.

²⁵ St. Teresa substantiates her thought with Jesus' words: « No one comes to the Father but through Me », St. John XIV, 6; Cf. *II Mansions*: Peers, II, p. 218; and later in her book she recalls the first half of the same Gospel verse: « I am the way, the truth, and the life », Cf., *VI Mansions*, vii: Peers, II, p. 308. As sample of her teaching on the mediation of Christ, both as an efficacious model and as an indispensable means to divine union, Cf.: *I Mansions* ii: Peers, II, p. 205ff; and *VI Mansions*, vii-ix: Peers, II, p. 302ff.

sed by concentric circles. Perfection consists in entering into ever deeper contact — the progressively higher Mansions — with God dwelling in the soul.

A controversial element of our visual aid, perhaps, may be the various sizes of spaces allotted to each of the Seven Mansions. Bearing in mind a general and relative intent, these space sizes (Mansions) give us some idea of the time that must be spent in each of the Mansions before the soul is ready to progress onward. St. Teresa herself has given us clues to the length of time for each of her Mansions.²⁶ From the drawing it will be noted that the first Two Mansions may be traversed the most quickly, granting that the soul is faithful and does not turn back, or dawdle on the way. Because the Third Mansions is a state in which the soul must become rooted in well-regulated habits of virtue to achieve Christlikeness, it is reasonable to suppose that this will entail the longest period of time. The Fourth Mansions are a time of transition from a disciplined and constant spiritual life to a supernaturally interior one. A fair share of time, therefore, must be expected to elapse before the soul, previously guided by reason, convert to a life which is led by the higher guides of faith, hope and charity. The most difficult Mansions for which to determine even relative time periods are, as one would expect, the last three, the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Mansions, since in these the Divine is so completely the master. The time periods (spaces) which are assigned to these Mansions in our drawing will best be thought of as in relation each to the other, rather than to those of the first Three Mansions. Following not only St. Teresa's clues (see footnote),²⁶ but also the analogy which the Saint makes to human love and union in these Mansions, we may reason that the Fifth Mansions, Spiritual Courtship, would be the shortest period of the three; the Sixth Mansions, Spiritual Bethrothal, the longer; and the Seventh Mansions, Spiritual Marriage, the longest.

The wavy lines or radii in the drawing remind us that there are diverse ways to God and diverse attractions of His grace, in keeping with the individual call and nature of each soul.

Two small circles within the Castle or the soul, in the drawing report the information that rooted in the soul are the in-

²⁶ First Mansions: Cf., *I Mansions*, ii: Peers, II, pp. 208, 209, 210. Second Mansions: Cf., *II Mansions*, the general tenor of the Saint's thought, but especially: Peers, II, p. 221. Fourth Mansions: Cf., *IV Mansions*, iii: Peers, II, p. 246. Fifth and Sixth Mansions: Cf., *V Mansions*, ii: Peers, II, p. 255; *VI Mansions*, i: Peers, II, p. 269; *ibid.*, iv: pp. 287-288; *ibid.*, xi, p. 324. Also, Cf., *VII Mansions*, iv: Peers, II, pp. 350-351.

terior senses, and the soul's higher faculties of intellect and will. The interior senses are lower faculties, but with a rational or human principle of operation. The interior senses bridge the gap between the outside, material world, cognizance of which the external five senses furnish to them, and the spiritual, non-material nature of the soul. They are processing powers which transform and reproduce the material experience from without into non-physical, non-material terms, which can then be used by the soul's spiritual faculties of intellect and will. Chief of these interior senses, and the most importantly to be considered in the interior life, is the imagination, both as to the problems its disorder often engenders and also, as to the use of it which may be made in divine communications, such as imaginary visions, locutions, etc.

At the bottom of the visual aid we see the door of the Castle of the soul, which is prayer. In the first Mansions prayer is the labor of the soul, assisted by God's grace. From the Fourth Mansions onward, prayer becomes a supernatural mode of communication of knowledge and love to the soul.

Beneath the door of the Castle, and outside it, we have inscribed the following details of St. Teresa's analogy: the body, the outside world, the five senses, and the three enemies of the soul. Rising from the step entitled by the soul's three enemies are stylized serpents projecting into the Castle, by which we know that the enemies of the soul may penetrate within.

Notice that the concentric circle between the Sixth and Seventh Mansions is opened in several places, for St. Teresa tells us: « ... this (VI Mansions) and the last (VIIth) might be fused in one: there is no closed door to separate one from another ».²⁷

Synopsis of the Explanation.

We conclude with a synopsis of the explanation of *A Visual Aid to the Interior Castle*.

The Interior Castle: the soul.

The door to the Castle: Prayer.

Inside the Castle:

- a) the King: the Triune God (triangle, surmounted by crown).
- b) Jesus (Cross): in the first Three Mansions: our model; in the last Four: our means to Divine Union, Spiritual Marriage.

²⁷ *VI Mansions*, iv: Peers, II, p. 287.

- c) Spiritual Marriage (entwined rings within the triangle).
- d) the interior senses (small circle to left).
- e) the faculties of the soul: intellect and will (small circle to the right).
- f) the Seven Mansions: graduating degrees of perfection (spaces enclosed by concentric circles).
- g) access between the Sixth and Seventh Mansions (opened circle between the two).
- h) diverse ways: various graces and attractions in the interior life (wavy lines or radii).

Outside the Castle:

- a) the body.
- b) the five senses.
- c) the outside world.
- d) the three enemies of the soul: (their entry into the soul indicated by stylized serpents).

« I think it will be a great consolation for you to take delight in this Interior Castle, for you can enter it and walk about in it at any time... Once you have been shown how to enjoy this Castle, you will find rest in everything, even in the things which most try you, and you will cherish a hope of returning to it which nobody can take from you » (*Interior Castle, VII Mansions*, iv: Peers, II, pp. 350-351).

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