

## THE IMAGERY OF THE INTERIOR CASTLE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

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It is, I believe, a tenable thesis that neither the works of St Teresa of Jesus nor those of St John of the Cross can be adequately appreciated unless they are studied in close conjunction the one with the other<sup>1</sup>. If this is so, then it may be hoped that, in this year in which St Teresa has been solemnly proclaimed a Doctor of the Universal Church, a study which aims to bring her writings into still closer relationship with those of one to whom an equal honour was accorded over forty years ago will be found neither graceless nor inopportune.

There can be no student of Spanish Carmelite spirituality who does not profoundly regret the paucity of reliable information available to us concerning the exchanges which took place

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<sup>1</sup> The case is argued at length in E. W. TRUEMAN DICKEN, *The Crucible of Love*, London, 1963 (Sp. tr. Barcelona, 1966).

References throughout this article to the works of St Teresa of Jesus and St John of the Cross follow the Spanish editions of the Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, using the following abbreviations for the titles:

St Teresa:

- C = Camino (Way of Perfection, Toledo version)
- M = Moradas (Mansions of the Interior Castle)
- Med = Meditaciones sobre los Cantares (Conceptions)
- Vej = Vejamen (Judgment)
- V = Vida (The Life)

St John of the Cross:

- CB = Cántico (Spiritual Canticle, recension B)
- L = Llama (Living Flame, recension B)
- S = Subida (Ascent of Mount Carmel)

between the two saints, not only in written correspondence but, still more, in their conversations face to face in the locutories of the Convent of the Incarnation in Avila during those years (1572-77) when the younger saint was confessor to its nuns. One cannot believe other than that together they discussed and hammered out solutions to problems of Christian spirituality at the deepest level of understanding and intimacy; yet we have tantalizingly little evidence to support the assumption.

Apart from depositions whose value is hagiographical rather than theological, the sum total of our real knowledge of what passed between the two saints is reducible to a few references in the surviving letters of St Teresa<sup>2</sup>, a semi-jocular comment by her upon a contribution by St John of the Cross to a local seminar<sup>3</sup>, the equivalent of a footnote in the works of the younger saint drawing attention to the value of St Teresa's writings<sup>4</sup>, and whatever traces of literary and theological dependence we may think to find in the writings of the two Carmelite doctors. It is widely admitted that, looked at in detail, instance by instance, the alleged evidence for any close degree of interdependence between the works of the two writers remains disappointingly slender; and for most commentators, traces of literary dependence amount to no more than a few words which suggest the possibility, but by no means the certainty, that the concept of the 'mansions' through which the soul progresses to perfection may indicate an indebtedness, though of a very minor order, of one saint to the other<sup>5</sup>.

P. Crisógono de Jesús Sacramentado profited by the lack of historical evidence at this point to argue that during those five years when the two saints were continually in contact from day to day, it was St Teresa who learned from St John of the Cross rather than *vice versa*<sup>6</sup>. His view has not commended itself to other scholars, but it cannot fail to have implanted a doubt in the minds of those who had perhaps too easily assumed that the influence was wholly in the other direction. The question certainly calls for further consideration, although it has been

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<sup>2</sup> Thirty-three such letters are listed in the BAC volume of St Teresa's letters, p. 1014; few of these contain more than a passing reference, of little interest for our purpose.

<sup>3</sup> Vej 6, 7.

<sup>4</sup> CB xiii. 7.

<sup>5</sup> S II. xi. 9, 11; L i. 13.

<sup>6</sup> CRISÓGONO DE JESÚS SACRAMENTADO, *San Juan de la Cruz, su obra científica y su obra literaria*, Avila, 1929, p. 437.

difficult to see what further progress could be made towards its solution unless fresh and hitherto unknown evidence were to be forthcoming. Recently, however, an issue has been reopened by Prof Robert Ricard of the Sorbonne<sup>7</sup> in a manner which suggests that perhaps the value of the evidence concerning the notion of 'spiritual mansions' in the writings of the two saints has been hitherto somewhat underrated.

Prof Ricard poses the question, 'What are the origins of the symbolism of the seven mansions of the interior castle?' The answer given may have, as I hope to show, important and unexpected consequences for our understanding of St Teresa's theology, and for our assessment of its relationship to the theological understanding of St John of the Cross.

## I

As Prof Ricard reminds us, St Teresa tells us that the idea of the castle of the soul came to her in prayer, when she was wondering how to set about the task of writing on spiritual matters as her superiors had ordered her to do<sup>8</sup>. Yet it was not a new idea. Two passages in her *Life*<sup>9</sup>, and two others in the *Way of Perfection*<sup>10</sup>, already speak of a fortress or walled city into which we may withdraw in order to be with God, and it can hardly be doubted that the imagery remained a part of the authoress' homiletic stock-in-trade throughout the years, until in its final form it provided the allegorical framework of her most profound and mature treatise, the *Mansions of the Interior Castle*.

If we look for sources upon which St Teresa may have drawn for the original notion, once more we have not far to look. The writings of two of her favourite authors offer obvious antecedents. Francisco de Osuna's *Third Spiritual Alphabet* speaks at some length of the necessity of guarding one's soul from the assaults of its enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil, and for this purpose elaborates in detail the parallelism of the methods

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<sup>7</sup> R. RICARD, *Le symbolisme du « Château intérieur » chez sainte Thérèse*, in *Bulletin Hispanique*, Tome LXVII, Jan-June 1965, reprinted in *Etudes sur sainte Thérèse*, Paris, 1968.

<sup>8</sup> M Prologue 3; I. i. 1.

<sup>9</sup> V xviii. 4; xx. 22.

<sup>10</sup> C iii. 2; xxviii. 6.

of defending a fortified castle<sup>11</sup>. Taking a somewhat different line, Bernardino de Laredo in his *Ascent of Mount Sion* speaks of building the new Jerusalem of crystal and precious stones, setting up its walls and towers on the level plain which is the christian soul<sup>12</sup>. Both passages were certainly well known to St Teresa, and if the interior castle of her *Mansions* is perhaps to be thought of as a defenced city rather than specifically a castle, and if in the typical manner of mediaeval fortifications it has towers joined by curtain walls along each side, then St Teresa knew such a city intimately in real life. She was born and brought up in it, and spent most of her days there: Avila de los Caballeros. No less a writer than Miguel de Unamuno, as Prof Ricard recalls, was convinced that this identification must be accepted, and insisted time and again in his writings that, 'The castle of the *Mansions* is the city of Avila'.

Prof Ricard himself seems at first hesitant to accept the identification; but his article ultimately hinges upon a single quotation from the *Mansions* which asserts, that, 'in the centre and middle of all these mansions there is the most important of all, in which takes place the very secret dealings between God and the soul'<sup>13</sup>. For Ricard, this clinches the matter: surely this central mansion is the cathedral of Avila, set, to be sure, not in the middle of the city itself, but in the very centre of its eastern wall, of which its apse forms one of the towers and is an integral part of its defences. The other towers which lie along the line of the perimeter wall, completely surrounding the old city still today, are thus to be seen as the mansions by which the cathedral may be approached along the curtain wall.

Certainly the imagery of the *Mansions* acquires a new, refreshing vividness as we perceive it to be part of the daily civic and religious life of the city which was St Teresa's native background. One may nevertheless be grateful to Prof Ricard for his most stimulating article without feeling obliged to agree with his thesis. Was Unamuno really right in regarding Avila as the model for the interior castle? It can hardly be denied that the castle as presented to us *is* a castle and not a city; and the dwelling of God is in the centre, not built into the curtain wall as is the cathedral at Avila.

With these doubts in our mind, we still cannot deny that

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<sup>11</sup> *Third Alphabet*, IV. ii, iii.

<sup>12</sup> *Ascent of Mt Sion*, II. xlvi.

<sup>13</sup> M 1. i. 3.

St Teresa may well owe something to the passage from Bernardino de Laredo already cited when she speaks of her castle as being built of crystal and precious stones; but what Bernardino de Laredo describes is the actual process of building a city, explicitly the new Jerusalem, situated within or upon the soul, and each of these important features is wholly alien to St Teresa's allegory. The imagery in the passage from Francisco de Osuna is in almost every respect very much closer to what St Teresa had in mind, namely an already extant castle of the mediaeval type.

It seems to me, nevertheless, that Prof. Ricard is right to assume that we both may and should look for a real, existing structure of stone and mortar as the paradigm for the castle. Admittedly it is an odd sort of fortress which is presented to us in the *Mansions*, made of 'a diamond and very clear crystal'<sup>14</sup>, but, allowing for this one incongruity, it must be firmly said that St Teresa did know what castles look like. No country in the world has a better selection of castles to offer than hers, and even if we do not agree with the Papal Nuncio Felipe Segá that St Teresa was a gadabout, she was certainly a much-travelled woman by the time she wrote the *Mansions*.

Castles in Spain are a legend and the source of a proverb to my compatriots and to those of Prof Ricard. They are hard fact to the born Castilian; and in all respects save that of the building material, St Teresa draws a very clear and intelligible picture of her allegorical castle. It has, she says, many apartments, *aposen-tos*, just as there are many mansions, *moradas*, in heaven; and some of them are high and some low, and some are at the sides, whilst the main one of all is in the very middle<sup>15</sup>. If we look for such a castle likely to have been known to St Teresa, there is one very obvious choice, situated in a city with which both she and St John of the Cross were very familiar: the Castillo de la Mota in Medina del Campo.

The castle in question occupies a mound dominated from every viewpoint by a massive keep soaring above the surrounding towers and battlements. The foot of the keep is joined by curtain walls to four other towers which thus enclose a roughly rectangular inner ward and form a defence which must be penetrated before the keep itself can be approached. On a lower level there is a second wall, with towers at the angles and at the gate, completely

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<sup>14</sup> M I. i. 1.

<sup>15</sup> M I. i. 3.

encircling the inner wall and leaving a clear space all round it which is the outer ward. To complete the parallelism between this real castle and the allegorical one, the Castillo de la Mota has a chapel where still, as doubtless in St Teresa's day, the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, tucked away in the very heart of the keep. The place where God dwells sacramentally is thus literally surrounded by three series of apartments, some higher, some lower, some at the sides. The keep is not, it is true, at the mathematical centre of the complex, but viewed from the city it appears to be so; and to any visitor or to enemy forces it is the inmost building of the entire structure, to be reached only through successive architectural barriers.

When we look more closely at the saint's specification in the light of this tentative identification of the Castillo de la Mota with the castle of the allegory, further highly significant considerations at once emerge. We become aware, for example, that what is of primary interest to the authoress is not the fact that this building is a fortress; rather what matters to her is the general disposition of the building, with its concentric series of walls and towers places at which, when the castle was in normal occupation, all must halt and pause before going on. Literally, they are the stopping-places, *las moradas*. In the *Life*, the soul is seen essentially as a fortress where God's standard is raised<sup>16</sup> and which must be valiantly held for him against all comers<sup>17</sup>. Equally in the first of the two passages in the *Way of Perfection*, although here the castle represents the church as a whole rather than an individual soul, the castle must be defended as a fortress, *castillo o ciudad*<sup>18</sup>, against its enemies the heretics. Yet, as Prof Ricard says, none of these passages foreshadows so significantly the imagery of the *Mansions* as the second passage in the *Way of Perfection*<sup>19</sup>, the saint's last use of the allegory before it makes its full dress appearance in the *Mansions*.

In this passage it is once again the soul itself which is the castle, *un castillo fuerte*<sup>20</sup>, but this figurative concept rapidly gives way to a new one which St Teresa evidently finds more attractive and appropriate: the fortress becomes a palace sited within us, in which dwells the king, God himself, upon his thro-

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<sup>16</sup> V xx. 22.

<sup>17</sup> V xviii. 4.

<sup>18</sup> C iii. 2.

<sup>19</sup> C xxviii. 4-10.

<sup>20</sup> C xxviii. 6.

ne<sup>21</sup>. One realizes that for the Castilian of St Teresa's day the transition in the imagery goes almost unperceived, for the castle, almost any castle in Spain in fact, is by this date primarily a royal residence. The days when its defensive function predominated passed away with the fall of the Moorish kingdom of Granada a generation earlier<sup>22</sup>. The Spanish custom of referring to St Teresa's treatise briefly as *Las Moradas*, 'The Mansions', thereby drawing attention to the succession of rooms through which one passes in order to enter the royal presence<sup>23</sup>, shows a clearer understanding of the purpose of the imagery than does our English habit of speaking of the work as *The Interior Castle*.

There is a further line of thought, based on evidence apparently unnoticed hitherto, which may have still more instructive theological implications. Prof Ricard, in accepting Unamuno's dictum that the castle is Avila, is a little unhappy about the fact that Avila has rather more than the seven towers which, in his view, would make it a convincing pattern for the castle of the soul. In fact it has no less than eighty-eight! Yet I should not wish to argue that the Castillo de la Mota, with only nine main towers apart from the central keep, is for this reason alone necessarily to be preferred as the probable paradigm. Rather, it would seem, Prof Ricard's uneasiness arises from a misconception.

The main sections of the saint's treatise are headed respectively, 'First Mansions', *Moradas Primeras*, in the plural; 'Second Mansions', *Moradas Segundas*, equally in the plural; and so on up to the 'Seventh Mansions', *Sétimas Moradas*, also in the plural. Yet this practice reflects quite inaccurately what was in St Teresa's mind as revealed by the text itself. There she speaks regularly of the first six mansions in the plural: *estas moradas primeras*<sup>24</sup>, *las moradas segundas*<sup>25</sup> and so on up to the sixth mansions, *las sextas moradas*<sup>26</sup>. There are a very few exceptions in which the singular form, 'mansion', *morada*<sup>27</sup> appears, and

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<sup>21</sup> C xxviii. 9.

<sup>22</sup> Lope de Vega's play *Fuenteovejuna* exemplifies the typical concept of monarchy current in the Golden Age of Spain: the king is seen as the fountainhead of justice and order, overruling with more than human understanding and providence all human tyranny and rebellion. Interestingly, one scene of the play shows the Catholic Monarchs in Medina del Campo.

<sup>23</sup> M VII. i. 3.

<sup>24</sup> M I. ii. 12, 14; II. 2. etc.

<sup>25</sup> M I. ii. 14; II. 1. etc.

<sup>26</sup> M VI. i. 1.

<sup>27</sup> e. g. M I. ii. 1.

these may reasonably be ascribed to typical Teresan inconsistency.

With regard to the seventh mansion, on the contrary, she never uses the plural form. Always she speaks of, 'the seventh mansion', *la séptima morada*<sup>28</sup>, 'this mansion', *esta morada*<sup>29</sup>, 'the last mansion', *la postrera morada*<sup>30</sup>, in the singular. There is only one seventh mansion; there are many sixth, fifth, fourth mansions. Now clearly the uniqueness of the inmost mansion would be appropriate whether it corresponds to Avila Cathedral or to the keep or chapel of the Castillo de la Mota; but the use of the plural concerning the other mansions surely implies that they are essentially series or sets of apartments or towers, not single rooms or buildings<sup>31</sup>. Different souls travel by different ways, as St Teresa herself says<sup>32</sup>, and they therefore occupy different lodgings on the way; but if he continues his progress towards the inmost dwelling, each christian must find *some* resting place in each series.

We now see the significance of a passing comment of St Teresa's which has hardly received adequate treatment from commentators. The mansions, says the saint, are not to be thought of as 'coming one after another like things (beads?) on a string', *como cosa enhilada*<sup>33</sup>. Incidentally, I can think of no more apt description for the arrangement of the towers strung out along the perimeter wall at Avila than this phrase of St Teresa's: they remind one quite inevitably of beads on a necklace or a rosary, and for this reason alone I should wish to reject Unamuno's identification of Avila as the pattern for the castle of the soul. Rather, says St Teresa, we have to think of the castle as a *pal-*

<sup>28</sup> M VI. i. 1; VII. i. 3. etc.

<sup>29</sup> M VII. i. 1; ii. 2.

<sup>30</sup> M V. i. 12. Cf. also V. iii. 4; VII. i. 5; iii. 8; Epilogue 2.

<sup>31</sup> 'Although I have spoken of only seven mansions, there are many mansions in each of them' (*Aunque no se trata de más de siete moradas, en cada una de éstas hay muchas*) — M Epilogue 3.

<sup>32</sup> C xxiv. 2; Med ii. 5. The same teaching appears in St John of the Cross, L iii. 59.

<sup>33</sup> M I. ii. 8. P. Efrén de la Madre de Dios comments on the word *enhilada* (*Obras Completas de S. Teresa*, BAC, Madrid, 1954, Vol. II, p. 348): *Traslativamente vale por ordenado, bien colocado y continuado* ('Figuratively, the expression «threaded on a string» means, «orderly, well-arranged and continuous»). In fact P. Efrén's two contemporary examples of the use of the word, taken from Luis de Granada and from Cervantes respectively, do not bear this out. Essentially what St Teresa says is *not*, as P. Efrén asserts, that the course of spiritual progress is disorderly, but that her mansions are not to be thought of as a consecutive sequence like beads on a string.



*mito*<sup>34</sup>, a dwarf variety of palm whose fronds cluster tightly around the edible centre and must be stripped off, layer by layer, to get to the heart. Image for image, this surely describes precisely the same kind of process as that involved in entering into the centre of the castle of the soul, passing through each of the wards in turn.

Of course, the ground plan of the Castillo de la Mota is still not exactly that of the interior castle: there are only two concentric walls outside the keep; but it requires little imaginative effort to picture further concentric series of walls and towers. Plainly St Teresa's castle has six concentric walls each with several towers or apartments, the seventh 'mansion' being the one single room (the throne room or the chapel) in the keep. What the saint wishes to make clear is that, despite the infinite conceivable number of ways to the centre, the route must lie through six successive baileys through which one must pass in the order in which they come. To try to imagine a route which does not meet these conditions is quite literally absurd.

## II

To some readers the conclusion reached in the last paragraph will seem trite. There are others, especially in England and in U.S.A., who will find it highly offensive. There are many teachers of spirituality today who assert that they find the classical doctrine of the stages of spiritual progress altogether too artificial, and hold that christians should be encouraged to develop their prayer and discipline of life along radically new lines. Several exponents of the so-called New Spirituality, for example, have suggested that in the climate of the present day most christians would find it more suitable to begin with the prayer of the Unitive Way and only later to work through to the Purgative Way<sup>35</sup>.

I believe this to be a grave misunderstanding, and one which cannot but do much serious damage to those who think to follow such advice. The classical Three Ways were not devised as an optional though highly commended method of prayer. They are the three stages through which it is known that a christian will

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<sup>34</sup> M I. ii. 8.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. e. g. J. B. COBURN, *The New Mood in Spirituality* in 'Spirituality for Today', (Eric James, Ed.), London 1968, pp. 24 ff.

pass if he continues to progress in holiness. The sequence is no more capable of modification than we are capable of beginning our lives with old age and working our way back through puberty to the cradle and last of all the womb. For any who may have doubted that this is what St Teresa teaches, serious consideration of the imagery of the castle along the lines I have tried to suggest should surely be conclusive. The doctrine is, of course, in no way peculiar to St Teresa. The course of spiritual progress is of the very nature of things, and the general pattern of spiritual growth is an empirical datum known to every great Christian teacher of prayer from Clement of Alexandria<sup>36</sup> to Jean Nicholas Grou<sup>37</sup>.

There is nevertheless one important difference between natural growth and spiritual development, for as St Teresa observes already in the *Life*, in the spiritual life we can cease to develop and even regress, a phenomenon unparalleled in physical maturation<sup>38</sup>; and in the *Mansions*, the product of her own maturity, the saint has sought and found an allegory which can accommodate this fact. Truly there are many ways of reaching the keep of the castle, just as souls travel by an infinite variety of routes. We may enter by the main gate, we may sneak in through the postern, we may batter down or tunnel under the curtain wall at any point at each successive ward if we have the strength and opportunity; we can also foolishly turn back from the inner bailey to the outer, or leave the castle altogether if we are so minded. What we cannot do is to reach the keep without passing through each successive ward in order. Nor can we approach the keep by turning our back upon it<sup>39</sup>. That is why, as I have said elsewhere, all spiritual direction depends upon a proper understanding of the stages of spiritual progress and the

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<sup>36</sup> *Stromateis*, Bk VII.

<sup>37</sup> *Manual for Interior Souls*, Ch. 42.

<sup>38</sup> V xv. 12.

<sup>39</sup> St Teresa specifically notes that it is possible, exceptionally, to enter the Fourth Mansions without having spent a long time in the preceding ones. (M IV. i. 2.). If one does so, it is purely by the unmerited grace of God; and it is not clear whether the writer means that in this case one or more of the first three mansions is passed over altogether, or whether the time spent over one or more of these stages is merely greatly shortened. In any event, the fact that she carefully mentions this matter constitutes important contributory evidence that other stages cannot be so passed over or abnormally curtailed, in her view. It may be added that the division of the Purgative Way into three distinct phases (the first three mansions) is probably not of great significance, so that the elision of one of these stages hardly affects the overall pattern of progress. (Cf. Note 45 below).

correct assessment of the state of the one being directed<sup>40</sup>. No-one can expect to reach the keep who does not understand the lay-out of the castle and who does not know where he is within its precincts.

### III

The great concern of both St Teresa of Jesus and of her disciple St John of the Cross is to instruct us in the nature of the obstacles to spiritual progress and to help us to adopt at each barrier the most suitable tactics for surmounting it<sup>41</sup>. Few would doubt that the contribution of St John of the Cross is firmly based upon the findings of the mother foundress in this respect, nor that it was left to him to give expression to these findings within a framework of the teaching on the Three Ways expounded by earlier theologians. Yet our brief study of the topography of the castle of the soul has, I believe, provided a clear demonstration of what one had hitherto only suspected, namely that St Teresa, towards the end of her life at all events, had few or no doubts about the classical doctrine, nor of how her own teaching fitted into the traditional pattern.

If this is so, then we return once more to the perennial question already raised in this article: did St Teresa learn this from St John of the Cross? The imagery of the castle may have yet more to tell us here; for if the pattern of the castle is indeed the Castillo de la Mota, St John of the Cross almost certainly knew its geography even better than did St Teresa. He was brought up in Medina del Campo, and his boyhood history suggests that there was probably no building in the city, almost certainly no building with a chapel, which he did not know well. It may be instructive to look anew at the possible literary parallelisms in his works, including some which have no direct reference to the castle itself.

There are three passages in the works of St John of the Cross which contain possible allusions to the *Mansions*. The first of these, in the *Ascent*, occurs at the end of a short paragraph in which the writer tells us that those who faithfully respond to the divine grace will progress from stage to stage, and goes on to

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<sup>40</sup> *The Crucible of Love*, p. 514. (Sp. tr. p. 575).

<sup>41</sup> S Prologue 7.

explain that there are in all seven mansions, which are the seven gradations of love leading to the wine-cellar of perfect charity<sup>42</sup>.

To those who have too eagerly read into this passage a reference to the *Mansions* of St Teresa, critics have frequently pointed out that the word used here for 'mansions' by St John of the Cross is *mansiones*, whereas the mansions of the interior castle are always spoken of by St Teresa as *moradas*. One may therefore legitimately question whether the author has St Teresa's treatise in mind at all. Yet the issue cannot be so lightly dismissed. As we have seen, the imagery of the castle in St Teresa's last great treatise was not new: she had used similar imagery in both the *Life* and the *Way of Perfection*. What is new in the *Mansions* is the introduction of the number seven, not found in any of the saint's earlier works either as the number of stages of spiritual progress or in any context connected with the imagery of the city or the fortress.

The age-old predilection for the number seven in christian literature make it, of course, a fairly unremarkable choice, and St Teresa would have known of such precedents as that of Jan van Ruysbroeck's *Seven Steps of the Ladder of Spiritual Love*. Nevertheless, there are many alternative precedents in the christian spiritual tradition. St Bernard enumerates ten stages of progress<sup>43</sup>, St John Climacus thirty<sup>44</sup>, and St Teresa herself, in the *Life*, spoke of only four<sup>45</sup>. It is therefore not unlikely that, if St John of the Cross' 'seven mansions' do not indicate direct dependence upon the *Mansions*, they may derive from a common fund of teaching hammered out by the two saints in concert during their time together at Avila. The latter hypothesis would indeed have the merit of accounting plausibly for the

<sup>42</sup> S II. xi. 9.

<sup>43</sup> *Commentary on the Song of Songs*.

<sup>44</sup> *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*.

<sup>45</sup> V xi. 7. etc. From a doctrinal point of view, the number of Mansions, seven, appears itself to be somewhat arbitrary. There is, for example, no very clear distinction between the First, Second and Third Mansions, all of which belong to the Purgative Way and could have been grouped together as one or perhaps two Mansions. The Fifth Mansions are the transition from the Fourth to the Sixth Mansions (Cf M V. ii. 7.), and should logically have no separate number. This would have left us with only four or five mansions. On the other hand, if the Fifth Mansions are to have a special number, the transition described in Chapter iii of the Fourth Mansions (which actually belongs between the Third and Fourth Mansions) ought logically to have a separate number, thus giving eight Mansions in all. One is reminded of the similarly Procrustean procedure by which Scholastic theologians arrived at a list of seven vices or capital sins, where the earlier tradition (e. g. in St John Cassian) knew of eight — not always the same eight!

use of the word *mansiones* by St John of the Cross instead of St Teresa's term *moradas*. Both writers explicitly have in mind our Lord's teaching that, 'In my father's house are many mansions'<sup>46</sup>, and if the connection between their respective uses of the number seven in this context is oral rather than literary, it would not be surprising that the priest, accustomed to reading his bible in Latin, uses the Spanish word directly borrowed from that language, *mansiones*. The mother prioress, no great latinist, chooses the vernacular *moradas*.

The hypothesis of a common fund of doctrine finds further support in a passage in the *Spiritual Canticle*, in which St John of the Cross comments on the stanza of his poem, *En la interior bodega*, 'In the inmost cellar'. 'We can say', he observes, 'that there are seven of these gradations or cellars of love'. He has just explained, concerning the cellar of which he particularly speaks, that, 'This cellar of which the soul now speaks is the final and most intimate gradation of love in which the soul can find itself in this life, which is why she calls it the « inmost cellar », that is, the inmost of all'<sup>47</sup>. There is no mention here of mansions, but the underlying concept is virtually identical with that of St Teresa's *Mansions*, bearing in mind that it is the apartments, not the fortifications, which are the important feature of the allegory in that work. It may also be noted that in her own commentary on the *Song of Songs*, written in Avila while St John of the Cross was there too, St Teresa picks out for extended comment<sup>48</sup> the line, 'The king brought me into the winecellar and conferred upon me (the virtue of) charity'<sup>49</sup>. It is the line which provides the concept expressed in the younger saint's poem, and it also contains the notion of a royal apartment so important to the symbolism of the interior castle. When both writers evince marked interest in one particular verse of holy writ, and use it to similar effect, it is difficult to believe that they had not discussed it together at length to their mutual edification.

Still more suggestive, perhaps, is the fact that in the *Mansions* St Teresa once more comments on the same text, 'The king brought me into the winecellar', asserting that in this cellar the king brings us, and himself also enters, into the very

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<sup>46</sup> Jn. xiv. 2.

<sup>47</sup> CB xxvi. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Med vi. 1-3.

<sup>49</sup> Song of Songs ii. 4.

centre, *centro*, of our soul<sup>50</sup>. The soul will delight still more in this experience in the last mansions, we are told<sup>51</sup>, but the centre *is* the centre at any time: the soul already knows here a foretaste of her joys to come. Significantly, too, she associates with this situation the biblical account of the appearance of the risen Lord to his disciples in a room locked and barred<sup>52</sup>; and we recall that this same resurrection appearance is also associated with the *Song of Songs* by St John of the Cross, although in connection with a different passage from that book<sup>53</sup>.

The two remaining possible references to the *Mansions* in the works of St John of the Cross are merely passing references. The first is simply a brief reminder of the passage already quoted from the *Ascent*, and now refers to these same seven mansions as 'apartments', *aposenos*<sup>54</sup>. Yet here again is an echo of language familiar to us from the *Mansions*, and draws our attention to the fact that this very word *aposenos* is not only a Teresian synonym for *moradas*, but actually occurs in the opening paragraph of the *Mansions* and precedes the first occurrence of the term *moradas*<sup>55</sup>. 'In the castle', writes St Teresa, 'there are many apartments, *aposenos*, just as in heaven there are many mansions, *moradas*'. The indication, though a slender one, is that the saint thought of successive chambers primarily as *aposenos*, and used the word before relating the notion to the biblical text, 'In my father's house are many mansions'.

The third occurrence of the notion of 'mansions' in the writings of St John of the Cross is a simple statement that this biblical text may be understood of the stages of spiritual progress; and, once again, the Spanish word used is *mansiones*<sup>56</sup>.

#### IV

In considering this evidence we must, of course, bear in mind that the *Mansions* and the *Meditations on the Song of*

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<sup>50</sup> M V. i. 2. Cf. M VII. iv. 11.

<sup>51</sup> M VII. ii. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Jn. xx. 19.

<sup>53</sup> S III. iii. 6.

<sup>54</sup> S II. xi. 11.

<sup>55</sup> M I. i. 1.

<sup>56</sup> L i. 13.

*Songs* were the only major works of St Teresa's, apart from the latter chapters of the *Foundations*, to be written after St John of the Cross arrived in Avila as confessor to the sisters at the Incarnation, and that none of the extant works of St John of the Cross had so much as been conceived until after he was kidnapped from his lodgings alongside the convent and taken in custody to Toledo. We cannot therefore possibly speak of any literary dependence on the part of St Teresa upon St John of the Cross. The most plausible interpretation of the evidence which we have reviewed is, nevertheless, that the imagery of seven successive series of chambers, representing stages of progress in the spiritual life, is not the unaided work of St Teresa, but owes much to concerted reflection upon spiritual doctrine by the two saints during their years together. I cannot agree with P. Crisógono that during those years it was St John of the Cross who was the teacher and St Teresa who was the pupil; for, as he admits, St Teresa had long since herself arrived at no less a stage of advancement than the spiritual marriage. On the other hand, this very fact reminds one that, as P. Crisógono himself points out, the term 'spiritual marriage', *matrimonio espiritual*, does not occur in any work of St Teresa's earlier than the *Mansions*<sup>57</sup>. It is a favourite expression with St John of the Cross, and either St Teresa did not know of it, or did not feel she understood it, until the time when she also knew, and knew well, St John of the Cross. But if my understanding of the imagery of the interior castle is sound, I believe it points to an area of theological insight in which St Teresa learned more than mere technical terminology from her 'little Seneca'. Let us try to define it.

In her adumbration of the figure of the fortress in the *Way of Perfection*, St Teresa comments, in accordance with well established spiritual doctrine, that in order to find God the soul must withdraw within herself, *dentro de sí*, for it is there alone that she will find God<sup>58</sup>. The same teaching, couched in the same phrase, is found in the *Mansions*: the soul enters 'within itself', *dentro de sí*<sup>59</sup>. Now if St Teresa in adverting to this teaching had been thinking of Avila as the paradigm for her allegory, and of the cathedral in that city as the seventh mansion, then this word *dentro*, 'within', would

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<sup>57</sup> CRISÓGONO DE JESÚS SACRAMENTADO, op. cit. p. 438.

<sup>58</sup> C xxviii. 9.

<sup>59</sup> M I. i. 5.

adequately sum up the situation of the inner mansion. If, on the other hand, the Castillo de la Mota is the true model for the allegory, something much more explicit is called for. The mansion in which God dwells is not merely within, but at the very centre; and this is precisely what St Teresa says. She is emphatic as only she, with her somewhat rustic idiom, knows how to be. The final mansion is *en el centro y mitad de todas éstas*, 'in the centre and middle of all the others'<sup>60</sup>. Why the emphasis? And why the use of the faintly pedantic term 'centre', *centro*, which is, I think, fairly rare in St Teresa's writings? Is it not because this adds something of real profundity and significance to her exposition, something she was unaware of in her earlier writings? She could so easily have done what so many as great or almost as great as she have done, and written of spiritual progress under the imagery of a journey, the ascent of a mountain or the steps of a ladder. But she chooses the allegory of penetration to a secret inner apartment 'right in the middle'. There is one other writer who does so: St John of the Cross.

The topic is, in fact, elucidated with extreme care by St John of the Cross in his commentary on the *Living Flame*, where he expounds the line, *En el más profundo centro*, 'In the inmost centre'<sup>61</sup>, and I know of no other spiritual writer in whose works the extraordinarily subtle and profound metaphysical, psychological and theological concomitants of this teaching are worked out in detail as they are by St John of the Cross<sup>62</sup>. In modern times, it has required all the skill of that most perspicacious commentator, P. Gardeil, to unfold the treasures of this conception, and the reader is referred to his account of a matter which cannot possibly be adequately dealt with here<sup>63</sup>.

The crux of the issue is that God necessarily substantially indwells every single human soul, or it would have no being at all; and for this reason he is said to be the soul's own inmost centre. Of recent years Paul Tillich has talked in somewhat similar terms in speaking of God as 'the ground of our being', but he has failed signally to pursue the question in depth after the manner of St John of the Cross. What St John of the Cross is saying is that only when the soul has so far learned to enter-

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<sup>60</sup> M I. 1. 3.

<sup>61</sup> L i. 9 ff.; cf. iv. 3.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *The Crucible of Love*, pp. 366 ff. (Sp. tr. 415 ff.).

<sup>63</sup> A. GARDEIL, *La structure de la connaissance mystique*, Paris, 1924.



into itself that it knows itself perfectly can it actually reach that most perfect state of union with God which is the goal of the spiritual life; and this is so because the total self-abnegation which is a prerequisite of true self-knowledge is also that which alone makes possible a 'knowledge' of the essentially unknowable God. The soul must therefore not merely enter into itself, but must reach its own inmost centre.

The insight by which this most deceptively simple-looking conclusion is reached is typical of the saint's finest theological genius, and only hard theological thinking enables a trained theologian really to grasp the point. Yet if my analysis of the imagery of the castle is correct, then St Teresa had not merely grasped the point, but had perceived its crucial import at so deep a level that she could devise an allegory to give it literary expression. It is an allegory so finely conceived that it meets in detail to a quite remarkable degree the demands of the doctrine she aims to unfold, and does so simultaneously at the metaphysical, theological und practical pastoral levels.

Does this necessarily mean that, at least on this point, St Teresa must have been the pupil of St John of the Cross? Hardly. The commentary on the *Living Flame* dates from a period nearly a decade after the author's residence in Avila, and some four years after St Teresa's death. It could well be that St Teresa's teaching on the 'inmost centre' was known to her through mystical experience, and that the younger saint learned it from her, only subsequently providing the theological rationale which is implicit in his own teaching. On the other hand, the doctrine of the 'inmost centre' as it is understood by St John of the Cross is manifestly the outcome of protracted and well-matured theological reflection, and to me the most plausible explanation of the facts as I have tried to set them out is that the experience of being in the 'inmost mansion' came first to St Teresa, and that St John of the Cross, who had probably scarcely progressed so far before his imprisonment, supplied the theological analysis which underlies the expression of St Teresa's experience in the *Mansions*. At all events, we here seem to have evidence for a close and profound theological collaboration between the two saints which hitherto has been inferred only on *a priori* grounds.

## V

What to me, however, is quite the weightiest evidence of all that there was close and detailed collaboration between the two saints is still less easily demonstrable in a single article, although I believe that almost every serious student of Carmelite spirituality over the past ten years will fairly readily concede the point. Ten years ago, although studies of the two saints had made notable progress during the previous decade, there was still a remarkable reluctance on the part of scholars to interpret either saint's teaching by the light of the other's, and in particular correlations between the stages of progress as defined by the two saints were made only sporadically and often very hesitantly. I think it could fairly be said that this stage of the debate now lies mainly in the past.

In his recent magisterial *Introducción a San Juan de la Cruz*<sup>64</sup>, P. Federico Ruiz Salvador is able to assume a viewpoint of both wide and deep perspective concerning the distinctive contribution of St John of the Cross to the study of spiritual theology. He asserts, surely correctly, that the crucial points of the saint's researches and consequent teaching are concerned with the crises in spiritual progress, the phases in the spiritual life in which the faithful christian so nearly comes to grief and seems to find that, so far from progressing, he is falling apparently irreversibly from grace<sup>65</sup>. In fact, of course, these phases, especially those of the onset of the passive night of the sense and of the passive night of the spirit, are preeminently the points at which the soul is able to progress most signally by virtue of the direct action of God himself, into the next mansion of the love of God. Says P. Ruiz, 'St John of the Cross concentrates his best lights upon the necessity of taking advantage of those phases in which spiritual advancement takes on strange and disconcerting rhythms. They appear to be crises; they are in fact the decisive moments of spiritual growth. Scholars who have investigated the writings of St John of the Cross, on the other hand, have concentrated their efforts on the secondary task of making the stages or periods in spiritual progress correspond with the traditional divisions'<sup>66</sup> — i. e. with the

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<sup>64</sup> Madrid (BAC), 1968.

<sup>65</sup> S Prologue 5. Cf. Prologue 3.

<sup>66</sup> *Introducción a San Juan de la Cruz*, p. 475.

threifold division of spiritual progress into the Purgative, Illuminative and Unitive Ways.

There is much justice in P. Ruiz's complaint, and I must plead guilty to being one of those who has concentrated effort on the task he regards as secondary. The key-points of spiritual progress are certainly those of the transitions rather than of the three main stages, and it is of the genius of St John of the Cross that he has shown us this, defining the transitions with unprecedented accuracy. Yet I believe that the perspective by which P. Ruiz is enabled to see this could not have been achieved apart from the efforts of those scholars who, by painstaking and sometimes painful work, were themselves able to establish precisely which stages are which in the teaching of the saint, and where and how they tally with the scale or scales set out for us by St Teresa. Until that was done, the apparent internal contradictions in the writings of St John of the Cross and the apparently unresolved discrepancies between his teaching and that of St Teresa laid bare, it was impossible for anyone to say with confidence just what either of the saints were talking about at many, many obviously cardinal points in their treatises<sup>67</sup>.

Now that this work is largely done, and a generally agreed finding reached, we can agree with P. Ruiz that it is actually secondary in importance. Probably St John of the Cross, St Teresa in her later years, and many of their more perspicacious pupils, would have thought us quite infantile to make such heavy weather of elucidating what to them was altogether rudimentary. The fact remains that only over the last few years has it become possible really to see, as P. Ruiz now says, that for St John of the Cross the salient points of the spiritual life are those of entry into the successive 'nights'. For St John of the Cross the 'Ways' fall into place around these transitions and not *vice versa* as more usually seems to be the case in the earlier tradition of spirituality<sup>68</sup>.

Yet once this is accepted, one sees a far more profound si-

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<sup>67</sup> The point needs no illustration for those who are familiar with the long and at times wearisome debate carried on by such writers as Saudreau, Poullain, Arintero, Farges, Tanquery, Lehodey, Garrigou-Lagrange, Crisógono de Jesús Sacramentado. The very same key-texts were continually adduced to support irreconcilable and, indeed, diametrically opposed interpretations of the saints' doctrine. It is doubtless above all to P. Gabriele di Santa Maria Maddalena and to the present generation of Spanish Carmelite scholars that we owe our current understanding of the situation.

<sup>68</sup> *Introducción a San Juan de la Cruz*, p. 491.

gnificance in the fact to which I have drawn attention elsewhere<sup>69</sup>, that St Teresa's primary contribution to the mapping of the stages of spiritual progress lay in plotting in the 'peaks', i. e. the experiences which stand out unforgettably in the spiritual life of any christian who has passed through them. These she knew both from her own personal history, and from observation of a great many other christians of all kinds and callings: recollection, the prayer of quiet, the sleep of the faculties, union (i. e. *unión regalada*), trances, visions, locutions, raptures, spiritual wounds and the like. It was the work of St John of the Cross to fill in the gaps in that spiritual map and, as the theoretician of the Teresan school of spirituality<sup>70</sup>, to collate it with the great classical tradition — to fix the coordinates of the territory, so to say.

I still believe this to be a correct statement of the case; but P. Ruiz has shown us something which is perhaps even more important. It is, if I may pursue my own metaphor, that St John of the Cross has also taught us to interpret the map in terms of actually crossing the territory, and that this is indeed his main interest. His purpose, as he himself tells us, is 'that everyone who reads what he has to say may be able to see the road he is following, and which road he ought to follow if he wishes to reach the summit of this mountain'<sup>71</sup>. So, like any intelligent guide, he concentrates on the places where one might most easily go astray.

Who showed him these places? Who if not St Teresa, who in her own earlier works exhibits an incomparable knowledge of the pitfalls and crises? That St John of the Cross developed the instruction will hardly be questioned, nor even that he had his own contribution to make at a very early stage; for although the 'mansions' of St Teresa are in theory the stages of the spiritual life, the real interest in the book, as in the writings of the younger saint, is to be found in the transitions, the passage from each mansion to the next in the journey towards the inmost centre of the keep itself. Such was not strictly the case in any of her earlier treatises. It is a feature which appears only in the work which could, on chronological grounds, have

<sup>69</sup> *The Crucible of Love*, pp. 419 ff. (Sp. tr. pp. 473 ff.).

<sup>70</sup> 'St Jean apparaît justement comme le théoricien de l'école mystique de sainte Thérèse... il rattache le mysticisme que nous avons analysé... au grand courant du mysticisme spéculatif'. HENRI DELACROIX, *Etudes d'histoire et de psychologie du mysticisme*, Paris, 1908.

<sup>71</sup> S. Prologue 7.

gained from the authoress' daily contact with St John of the Cross.

We cannot hope to resolve at any but isolated points the problems of who learned what from whom; but the theological evidence for prolonged and profound interplay between these two great and saintly minds is overwhelming. P. Ruiz, like Henri Delacroix before him, sums the matter up in a judgment that St John of the Cross learnt from St Teresa's practical experience and in return taught her from his own theoretical knowledge of theology<sup>72</sup>. Doubtless this is true, but I believe that the foregoing discussion has shown that the statement does bare justice to the creative interplay in which these two processes went on simultaneously, the theologian compelling the more advanced mystic to analyse her experiences more precisely, whilst she in turn insisted upon a deeper probing of the theological implications of what she had to say. Neither saint could have reached their immense stature as spiritual writers without the other; and I cannot believe that in one lifetime, even of a saint and a genius, the total doctrinal achievement of the two together could have been attained. St Teresa pioneered the way, St John of the Cross perfected the results, but that which sprang from their two minds and souls acting together was crucial to the issue of the enterprise. If the one was worthy of the dignity of being hailed as a doctor of the universal church, it was impossible in reason and in justice to deny the title to the other.

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<sup>72</sup> *Introducción a San Juan de la Cruz*, p. 97.