

Frank Krause

The Ghost Town

The Secret of Evil

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CONTENTS

Introduction: The Birth of a Vision	7
1. The Ghost Town	15
2. The Tower of Babel	39
3. The Cradle of Evil	51
4. The Narrow Way, or the Secret of Simplicity	87
5. Leaps in Time	109
6. He Who Overcomes	133
7. Spring	145
Epilogue	157

INTRODUCTION

THE BIRTH OF A VISION

It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

It is important to say right from the start that the **topic of visions** is a *huge* subject about which *many* books have already been written by *very intelligent* people. Since I talk about *spiritual visions* in some of my texts, this introduction is merely intended to tell my readers something about how *I* understand and experience visions. My first book *Hirtenherz* [The Shepherd's Heart] for example, was the result of this kind of visionary seeing, and this book is as well. This refers to perceptions, intuitive pictures and inner 'films,' which many modern psychologists might describe as 'visualizing' and 'imagining' and which they might carry around with them as useful tools in their therapeutic toolbox.

Visions help us to interpret our own experiences in a larger context and to see the world from a new perspective. Many subjects and contexts are easier to understand when they are explained by means of a picture than when they are merely dealt with as abstract and analytical topics. Some theologians see this as the reason why Jesus used so many parables to explain the truth when he was preaching to people and why, in all people groups, myths and fairy tales play such a significant role in communicating universal truths.

In his book *Die Macht der inneren Bilder* [The Power of Inner Images], Dr. Gerald Hüther, a professor of neurobiology, writes:

There is scarcely anything more pleasurable than these moments in life, which, unfortunately, are much too rare, when we feel that our view on life—which has become much too narrow because of all the problems that must be solved daily—suddenly begins to widen, our heart expands, and ideas begin to bubble up inside of us. These are magic moments in which we begin to perceive what it could be like if...yes, exactly...if we could look at the world again as unselfconsciously and impartially as a child. As if someone had pulled aside an old curtain and all the rigid ideas that we, as adults, have at such moments disappeared. Suddenly our thoughts are clear again; we can take a deep breath and feel our wings beginning to grow again on the inner stage of our own imagination, which is now no longer hidden behind a curtain.¹

In my visions, Jesus invites me again and again to take this position of a child and to see and be amazed, as if seeing with his eyes.

Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:3).

I have had differing experiences of visions. Some come punctually in a special time of prayer. (Prayer, for me, is generally not limited to specific times, but is a way of life. I am 'always' praying—that is, I have integrated prayer into my life and my life into prayer. There are, of course, times reserved for special, concentrated prayer and prayer with other believers.) Some of these visions or, as we could call them, 'creative stories' also develop unexpectedly and in the middle of daily life. Others remain over a longer period of time. They take hold of me and want to be written down. The story works in me and grows. It is like a pregnancy. Even when I am pursuing my daily activities, they are continuing

¹ Dr. Gerald Hüther, *Die Macht der inneren Bilder*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2004.

to develop in my heart. Sleeping at night does not hinder them. The heart has no difficulty in continuing to be preoccupied intensively and creatively with its themes and thoughts while we sleep. Who among us has not experienced that?

I came across this little anecdote from Anthony de Mello, which describes something of the quality of this 'inward urge' which demands that a vision be put to paper:

A man who was a religious author once asked for a word of wisdom. The master said to him, "Some people write to earn their living; others to allow their readers to participate in their views and questions, and to torment them with these. Others write in order to find clarity about their innermost being. None of them will last. This privilege is reserved for those who only write because otherwise they would burst." And as a further thought he added, "These authors express the divine, regardless of the subject of their writings."²

What I write is probably a mixture of all these motivations and yet the reason for writing *The Ghost Town* was an inner urge to do it—and so I hope that the reader will gain the appropriate benefit from it.

In my experience, some visions are, however, revealed only when someone is in a *specific state*, to which God has led him in order to show him something particular. This sheds light on certain states that believers sometimes experience and which are difficult to explain. Wise counsellors will always allow for that in their diagnostic investigation.

With regard to the spiritual aspect, the Bible testifies from beginning to end to god-inspired prophetic visions. However, other spiritual literature from all over the world, from every period of time and from every religious background also speaks of the desire and ability of the human heart to *see* the things of the spirit.

The mystics of the Middle Ages sought God with fervent love and received all-encompassing and staggering revelations about

² Anthony de Mello, *Geschichten, die gut tun*, Herder-Verlag, Freiburg 2001, p. 244.

all things—whether in heaven or on earth, with regard to time and eternity—leading them to write many books which are still held in high esteem today and are the subject of religious studies research.

The Middle Ages have long passed, but God's speaking and the inspiration of the hearts desperately seeking truth and wanting to know God at all costs have not. In the church, the fascination with, and discovery of the spiritual gifts has begun anew and is driving a whole series of renewal movements throughout all denominations.

In my view, many believers do not go far enough in their search for God. They draw back from threshold experiences and do not want to appear 'strange.' But it cannot happen without risk-taking. One of the truly great promises of the Gospel is:

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you (Matt 7:7).

However, a certain quality of asking, seeking and knocking is necessary: it must be *'with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind'* (Matt 22:37); then it is right and we will receive the fulfilment of the promise—with certainty. Today, this quality is lacking and the church is drowning in superficiality, 'busy-ness,' and routine.

Jesus promises his disciples that they will receive the Holy Spirit and that he will lead them 'into all truth' (John 16:13). The sermon at Pentecost proclaims the fulfilment of this promise through the outpouring of the Spirit of God on all people, with the result that men and women, and sons and daughters, will have visions, revelations and dreams (cf. Acts 2:17-18): the eyes of their heart will be opened and they will see the invisible; the ears of their heart will be opened and they will be able to speak of the unspeakable things they have seen and heard. This is so badly needed in a 'fallen' world which has forgotten, betrayed, and sold its heart! That is evangelization.

The language of the heart

*You must understand
the language of the heart
if you wish to enter the New Time.*

*It is already beginning
to unfold and we must
steward our thoughts well.*

*Thoughts and ideas that
we see with our hearts—
they bring forth
such wonderful things
and open many a door.*

*Everyone will understand the language of the heart
if they are willing to understand what it has yet to reveal.*

*For in this language the words will resound,
humming in refined energy
until the hearts begin to sing.³*

Heaven speaks to us in the language of our heart and not in the language of the intellect. This language is direct, subjective, intimate and flowery, and full of symbols and pictures. Thus, it is uncomfortable for those who desire unambiguousness and clarity and those who reject the complexity and contradictions of life. However, the Spirit is not focused on rationality and objectivity, but on effectiveness and healing.

Furthermore, visions are not meant to satisfy human curiosity or magnify visionaries, making of them great prophets, but they are part of a comprehensive dialogue with God, in which every person may participate. They are never more than fragments, and are a part of the dealings between God and man that characterize the entire history of humanity. No one apart from Jesus has the whole truth. And he will reveal and explain to us as much as we can handle and is beneficial to us at one particular time. However,

³ © Gabriela Erber, <http://www.e-stories.de/gedichte-lesen.phtml?101495>;
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in its wholeness, it is beyond our grasp and not at the disposal of human beings. No one can simply take it; it must be given. Everyone who has read the writings of visionaries will, after a while, be able to discern whether they have been grasped or given, independent or God-dependent, manipulative or selfless.

Visions, dreams and prophetic visions are as different in their content and quality as people are in their nature and maturity. Because of my love for the church, it grieves me particularly that it finds it so difficult to distinguish between diverseness and maturity. The church always wants to define everything with *one* expression and *one* measure, so as not to have to endure the plurality to which it has, in the end, been called. It cannot cope with diversity and therefore unswervingly curtails the richness of expression both of the Spirit of God and of the hearts of the people who respond to him. It is fearful of errors and of chaos. It prefers to keep everything under control rather than to learn how to utilize errors and chaos as a way to achieve greater maturity.

My 'visions' are an expression of the knowledge and maturity that I have so far acquired and are by no means 'final' or 'truth' in a dogmatic sense.

The experiences and impressions which I have received in prayer are part of a very personal dialogue with God, in which I am inviting the reader to participate. I hope that it will not confuse or manipulate them, but will especially encourage them to *rely more closely on God and simply to expect more of him*. Lack of expectation is a cruel and treacherous enemy, as all spiritual people must constantly bear in mind.

One last remark: I do not recommend reading spiritual texts purely for the sake of entertainment. Those who are not seeking answers or desiring greater depth in their life will certainly not find them. Nowhere. Such a person will wonder what purpose such 'fantasies' serve and for whom they are of any use. Visions have been controversial throughout history: some people have been enthralled, others horrified; some have recommended them, others warned against them. This will never change as long as the world exists. But whoever seeks with a whole heart to understand

will find precious truth and will experience for themselves the miracle of conversation with God—full of inspiration, dreams and visions of hope.

This is what the Lord says...Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know (Jer 33:3).

CHAPTER 1

The Ghost Town

*You have made the city a heap of rubble,
the fortified town a ruin,
the foreigners' stronghold a city no more;
it will never be rebuilt.*

*He humbles those who dwell on high,
he lays the lofty city low;
he levels it to the ground and casts it down to the dust.
Feet trample it down—the feet of the oppressed,
the footsteps of the poor.*

Isaiah 25:2 and 26:5-6

It seems we must set out on a journey to somewhere. I can feel it in my spirit and know that Jesus himself has placed me in this state in which I now am, or he has allowed it to develop, so that I am ready to go along. And yet, my condition is anything but good. I am weak and feel ill. Still, when I feel this way, I often find it easier to find myself and to find God for the simple reason that I cannot *do* as much and can allow myself more rest than when I am feeling better.

In the spiritual life, a major and bitter war is being waged for our attention. How hard it often is for me just to be awake and be 'here' in the present moment! I continually think about everything that needs to be done. But Jesus is always calling me to put my 'doing' down and simply be 'here' to give him my undivided attention. This is the starting point for all spiritual progress. How can we follow Jesus when we have so much to do, are so distracted, and can't even find the time to listen to him?

In the vision that is beginning to unfold before my eyes, some angels approach me. They give me water to drink from a cup and then some bread to eat. I can't help thinking of Elijah lying depressed in the desert under a broom tree and the angels coming to him with water and bread. In the strength of this heavenly food



he was able to get up and make the long journey to the mountain of God (cf. 1 Kings 19). Oh yes, I too need this food and this strength in order to meet with God! If the prophet Elijah needed it, then I do all the more. God is close to us, but for a depressed soul he *seems* so far away. The soul needs comfort and encouragement to rise up from the exhaustion and continue on its way.

Thus the angels strengthen me. Their touch is encouraging and full of mercy. They choose to bear with our human weakness and to serve in this sphere of oppression and darkness because Jesus did not hesitate to go there either and build a house of meeting with us human beings.

In this vision, Jesus takes me by one hand and the angels by the other, and they lead me along a path by which we come to a desolate place in the desert that at first glance resembles a construction site—a *very* large construction site indeed. It looks to me as if a whole city is being constructed here—in the middle of a wasteland. I see towers and turrets, streets and...ruins. Many ruins. Angels stand around them like watchmen and are keeping lookout. Our procession is greeted by them with enthusiasm and we are allowed to enter. An enormous cloud of dust lies like a filthy veil over the entire city. Now that I can look more closely, everything appears very old and run down. How can that be? I thought we were coming to the city that is dedicated as a meeting place of God and Man, the New Jerusalem. But where is *this*?

“Many have begun to build and few have finished,” says Jesus, who until this moment has not spoken a single word. “Many people have started great and wonderful things in my Name, but they have given up, just as in the parable of the man who began to build a tower—when he could not finish it, he fell into disgrace and was mocked by everyone who saw it (cf. Luke 14:28-29). Here in this city there are buildings everywhere which have been begun and are now standing as unfinished ruins. They are abandoned and serve as monuments to warn those who are building at the present time.”

“But the city looks terrible!” I remark. “What is all this dust—the sunlight can barely get through.”

“That is what *you* have built. Many things have been built wrongly and many things are decaying into dust—and that’s how it must be. Dust to dust. Look at the ruins of the many churches everywhere. They are disintegrating into nothing and when I pass them by, the wind blows them away. Now my wind is blowing through the empty streets, and so much dust is being whirled around that the light of the sun is darkened. People must cover their faces in order to be able to breathe until the wind has done its work and carried the dust away. Then the dimensions of the ruined city will become apparent and the sight will be harrowing.”

“Is this...Jerusalem?” I ask as the wind and dust whirl around me.

“This is the city that *you* have built in the spirit. Unfortunately, very few ask me how to do it, or what and where they should build. So many build something that has neither a foundation nor is it a foundation for the coming generations. Do you see how the city has grown in area but has not grown higher?”

For a moment the air clears slightly and I can see the city sprawling endlessly towards the horizon. It looks eerie—abandoned and bleak. Some districts of the city appear to be completely buried in the desert sand.

“Much of what is here is built on sand, little on rock.¹ Most of this city will disappear; other parts will fall into decay and some builders will give up in despair when they see the futility of this city. However, some will search for *me*. That is the turning point, the revolution, the earthquake which will shatter and totally destroy everything here. The construction of this city is so amiss that it cannot be saved; it must be torn down completely.”

I stand there with Jesus and the angels in this landscape of ruins, feeling helpless, and I can now no longer believe that it is Jerusalem—it is more like a ghost town. It is how I imagine a city would look after the explosion of a nuclear bomb. This cannot be the ‘New Jerusalem.’ Although everything is so barren and terrible, it does seem to be strangely familiar. But I have never been here before—or have I?

¹ Cf. Matthew 7:24

Then the Lord stretches out his hand over the city and everything starts to take on layers of shape and life: the ruins acquire substance and color. It seems as if a change of dimension is taking place. Now the city looks completely different. Everywhere there are people and shops, churches and fellowships. Everyone is working and very busy, but all the people are looking down at the ground.

“Why is everyone looking down?” I ask Jesus.

“They are all so preoccupied with themselves that they cannot look up and see each other. Look, they are all busy building their own house and their own ministry. They do not ask how everything fits together or how *I* am building the world or the city.”

Unless you become like little children

Jesus, the angels, and I walk through some streets and everything there is overwhelmingly colorful and varied. The diversity, which is actually very beautiful and creative, is very chaotic because nothing matches. We suddenly turn off to one side and enter a building where a sign with the caption ‘Church of Jesus Christ’ hangs above the entrance. We go past the rows of chairs in the sanctuary, straight past the people who are moving busily to and fro. No one seems to notice us. Only a few of the children look up in surprise, but their parents turn the children’s heads away towards themselves again and some scold the children because of their inattentiveness.

Then we enter a room in which the pastor is preparing for his performance. He is examining his immaculate appearance in a mirror and performing some gestures which will enhance the sermon he is about to preach to the church. Some of the angels look down, embarrassed, and others are smiling in amusement. There is also an angel beside the preacher. He looks at Jesus, and at us, also with embarrassment and shrugs his shoulders, as if he does not know what he should do or what he should say about this pastor.

Jesus walks past him to the desk in the office and casts a glance over the pastor's notes for his sermon. I feel myself turning red as I think of how Jesus possibly also looked in the same way at my sermon while I was still a preacher. He waves me over and without saying anything points at the piece of paper. I read: "Jesus is the Lord and we are building the church. Let us do it well so that he is pleased with us when he returns and we receive our reward." Then Jesus turns the page over and we see building plans and strategies. He leafs through many more pages and we see numerous projects and plans, many organograms and statistics. Jesus takes the whole set of notes, throwing them towards the pastor as though he wanted to throw them at his head. The notes pass right through him and become part of the mirror that he is looking at. He is quite pleased with what he sees. He will tell his church how things should be run and they will become an innovative church in the city and build a church like none other before it.

Then his wife comes in and urges him to come. The service has already begun and everyone is waiting for him. The preacher likes the idea that everyone is waiting for him. He nods to his wife and takes his notes from the desk. Then his little daughter follows the mother into the room and stops right in her tracks. "There...there are lots of angels here!" she says and points at us. The pastor also likes this thought. Angels in his office—well, what greater confirmation that the work he is doing for the Lord is right and good, and that he is an important man of God, could he wish for? The pastor takes the child by the hand and leads it back into the meeting. The child looks back once more and shrugs its shoulders, just as the angel had done.

Jesus goes to the mirror with me and places me in front of it. "What do you see?" He asks me.

I see myself reflected in the mirror as a child, like the child of the preacher.

Then Jesus reaches into his robes and there is blood on his fingers, which he has taken from the wound in his side, and he writes on the mirror: "Unless you become like little children..."

Then I realize how seriously he meant these words when he said them 2000 years ago. All the pastor's plans and projects do not lead us into the Kingdom of God—instead we must become like children.

Then we hear thunderous applause coming from the nearby sanctuary and I spontaneously ask, "What did he say?"

"Oh," said the angel, "he has told them that his little girl just claimed she had seen angels in his office. The church thinks their pastor is wonderful!"

The pastor

Suddenly the outer façade disappears again and the entire church building seems to collapse at lightning speed. We race through the time-lapsed life of this church and this pastor and at last find ourselves standing again in the ruined city in front of three weathered stones lying on the ground. "This is all that this ministry has produced," says Jesus, pointing to the stones. "This is the spiritual substance which this ministry brought forth, but nothing was ever really built. These stones were intended by the pastor as the foundation of a new house, but look, they are not integrated into anything and are of no use at all."

"Could the pastor not read the writing on the mirror?"

"No, he couldn't, because he didn't become like a child. He only saw himself and his ministry. And in his own eyes, he had some measure of success. Not everyone manages to produce three stones..."

"But what will happen to these stones now?" I ask despairing at the thought that the spiritual life work of this man resembles three weathered stones—and around me here millions of such stones are lying, forming nothing more than this deserted city. "And how can I build *differently* from this man? If I am honest, I feel as if I am not producing anything at all—not even three useless stones..."

"Let's ask the pastor himself," Jesus answers to my surprise, and I can see from the look in his bright and powerful eyes that

he knows every last detail about me. I love these eyes and the feeling that he can look right through me—it makes me a child. Nevertheless, it is always humbling because it reveals every vain impulse of my ego. If we tried to hide anything from Jesus, thus separating ourselves from him, our childlikeness and our unity with him would be lost immediately. And so, faced with the eerie ruins all around me, I plead with Jesus, “Please, Lord, never stop searching my heart. Reveal every secret separation and keep me childlike so that I will always be close to you—ever more and in greater fullness, for I know all too well that there is something inside me resisting this. Something inside me cannot endure your gaze. It only wants to use you to produce another of these meaningless stones, which will then weather and be carried away by the wind or buried in the sand because it is mere vanity. Please preserve me from myself and this egomaniacal part of me. Please.”

Jesus does not answer, but his eyes speak volumes. As if he would ever abandon or forget anyone!

Then some angels lead the pastor over to us. Now that he has been dead for a long time, and has been in heaven, he looks different—more childlike—than in the vision of his church and his office. He smiles at me with acknowledgement and bows to Jesus with great joy. Jesus constantly radiates a feeling of relaxation. I sigh and the pastor looks thoughtfully at me for a moment. He knows where we are standing and looks across the ruined city with us.

“Take the fact that you are here as a good sign, my friend,” he finally remarks to me. “You wanted to know the truth and also to stay close to Jesus—more than going your own way. That is the only way that you can be here and see the ruined city in your own lifetime.”

He glances down at the three weathered stones around which we are standing. He bends down, picks one up, blows off the dust, and holds it out for me to look at. “Tell me, what is that?”

“One stone among very many stones here, something which fills me with horror and is the reason I asked the Lord how I could

build differently, so as not to add any more useless stones to this wasteland.”

“This stone is dead,” the pastor continues. “But God builds only with living stones. At all times and in all circumstances the most important thing is life. Jesus is life, and he brings life and swallows up death, and puts an end to the city of dead works. Come, I will show it to you so that you really understand it.” He looks to Jesus, who nods in agreement, and once again we are flying back through time to the ‘Church of Jesus Christ,’ of which this man once was the pastor. We arrive in the middle of the service in the sanctuary and listen for a moment to the pastor’s sermon, along with all the other people present. Naturally, I wonder what it must be like for the pastor at my side to hear himself preaching in his church. At any rate, I do not understand anything of what he is saying and have the impression that not many of the others do either. They understand—with their head. But what about the heart?

Behind the curtain

Suddenly Jesus pushes away something like a curtain in front of my eyes, and I can see the people as if I was using a spiritual X-ray machine. I can see into them and understand what is happening on the inside. On this side of the curtain, the church resembles a completely overcrowded military hospital in a war. Groaning and screaming can be heard from all directions. Almost all the people here seem to have more or less serious wounds and injuries. Their souls sit inside them like little children, rigid with fear, whimpering, and trying to hide. The air is filled with the smell of untreated wounds and swarms of flies.

While the pastor changes the subject and begins to talk about a new construction project for which a collection is to be made, the angels are hurrying about to help the suffering and to drive away the terrible flies. On the other side of the curtain, the church becomes restive, and the pastor calls for the people to concentrate on the sermon. He is afraid that now, when such an important