

# 8

# PLENITUDE AND CREATIVITY

## A Writer in Granada

### Biographical Narrative: FEDERICO RUIZ

Granada witnessed in John of the Cross a burst of concentrated energy. We have been observing a continuing crescendo of growth on different planes: in his personal vocation, formation work, responsibilities in government, literary creations, and travels. Forty years of life, intense and varied, reached their overflowing culmination during the six-year period in Granada

(1582-88).

Seeing his desire to return to Castile go unfulfilled, John immersed himself ever more deeply in the heart of Andalusia. From the time he was taken captive in Avila, his transfers kept obliging him to move further along the road south: Toledo, El Calvario, Baeza, and Granada.

He entered Granada at the end of

*Joris Hoefnagel. View of Granada from the southwest, 1563 (G. Braun-F. Hogenberg, Civitates Orbis Terrarum, I Cologne 1572, table 4). Granada when John of the Cross was prior of Los Mártires (1582-85, 1587-88) and vicar provincial of Andalusia (1585-87). This period in Granada was the richest and most complete for John.*







◀ *J. Hoefnagel. View of Granada from the southwest, 1565 (Braun-Hogenberg, Civitates Orbis Terrarum, V Cologne 1598, table 13). The Albaicín, the Alhambra, the Antequeruela and, above all, the marzmorras for Christian captives during the Moslem occupation, and the shrine of Los Mártires (14) in honor of the Christians martyred there. The shrine is the first Christian church that Queen Isabella ordered to be built in the Granada reconquered from the Arabs in 1492. This outcome of the struggle for Granada marked a new era for Spain.*

January in 1582, almost a century after the reconquest. The six years that John lived in Granada amounted to his longest stay in any one place with the exception of Medina del Campo (13 years) and Fontiveros (7 years). Despite his initial feelings about Andalusia, he did not show any signs of frustration in his new post. On the contrary, he found there an environment that motivated him to complete his greatest projects. Granada brought out rich treasures in his life and work as the mystical doctor. Fray John was 40 years old, at the best moment of his life. He felt a fullness, a determination and readiness for everything: contemplation, government, spiritual direction, business, solitude, construction, fraternity, and endless travel. In the midst of much commotion, he was able to create a mystical and literary work of the highest quality.

His activity reached beyond the city. Granada became the epicenter of his movements, activities, and encounters in the regions of Andalusia, Murcia, and Castile. The facts, the anecdotes, and the contacts with persons and places multiply. As a result the photographic and biographical material multiplies.

We have broken down this intense Granada period into three sections so as to allow space for its rich content. We begin, first, with the city of Granada. The two following sections will follow the Saint's steps in his long journeys through Castile and Andalusia.

## Arrival with the Discalced Nuns

The circumstances of his arrival involved some initial facts that had important and long-lasting consequences. John had returned from Avila to Beas with empty hands. He could not enlist Madre Teresa for the foundation of nuns in Granada. Furthermore, he still did not have permission from the archbishop. The entry into Granada to establish the foundation took place with little solemnity.

Fray John and the nuns spent a long month in Beas preparing and hoping. Finally, they received news from the vicar provincial, Diego de la Trinidad, and they set out on the road January 15. The contingent was numerous: Anne of Jesus with six nuns, John of the Cross, and Pedro de los Angeles. On the 19th they arrived in Albolote, about four miles from Granada. The vicar provincial came out in alarm to meet them and give them the bad news: absolutely nothing could be done about the foundation. The archbishop did not give permission, and the one who was selling them a house changed his mind.

They thought matters over quickly and decided to continue on. Some solution would be found. Two doors had been closed on them, but then another was thrown wide open. It was the house of Doña Ana del Mercado y Peñalosa. This noble woman, a

widow, lived in Granada with her brother Don Luis del Mercado, a judge at the chancery. It was a last minute arrangement. When the group arrived demoralized at 3 A.M. on 20 January 1582, it received a warm welcome. Anne of Jesus recalled the scene: "When we arrived, the noble lady was waiting for us at the street door where she received us with tears and much devotion." Early in the morning, with the approval of the archbishop, Don Juan Méndez de Salvatierra, they celebrated the first Mass. The archbishop sent his

▶ *J. Hoefnagel. Detail of the marzmorras and shrine of Los Mártires from the west, 1564 (Braun-Hogenberg, Civitates Orbis Terrarum. I Cologne 1572). The shrine chapel, dependent on the church of Los Reyes Católicos, passed into the care of the discalced Carmelites in 1573 through the intervention of their benefactor Don Luis Jurtado de Mendoza, the count of Tendilla.*



vicar general to preside, with Fray John serving as deacon and Fray Pedro as subdeacon.

In the morning, Don Luis del Mercado and a friend visited the archbishop to thank him for the permission. He notified them that he almost regretted having allowed the foundation. He had indeed used force with himself to give in "because I can't bear the sight of nuns; nor am I thinking of giving them anything, for I can't even provide for those I am now in charge of." With these words, the archbishop indicated where the sore point lay. He had no objection to the contemplative life. His problem was not canonical but economical. "To provide" for the cloistered monasteries was one of the greatest burdens for ecclesiastical authorities. The permission was obtained and the nuns had a house. Doña Ana was almost confined to a corner in her own home so as to leave some rooms free for the nuns. The annoyance of these crowded quarters that was seemingly to last for only a few weeks lasted for months, until August 29 when the community moved to a new house on Elvira street.

These initial facts left a lasting impression on John during his years in Granada and afterward. Three groups appear on stage and play key roles in the following years: John of the Cross and his community of discalced friars; Anne of Jesus and her community of discalced nuns; and Doña Ana and her family.

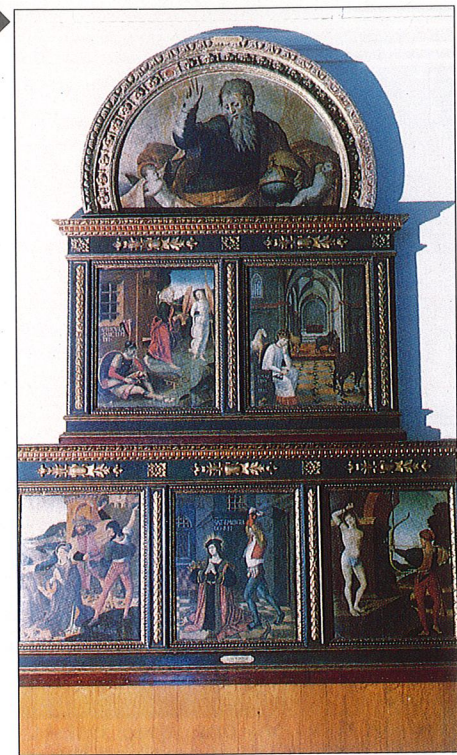
▶ *Granada. Museum of Fine Arts. Painting on wood with martyrs, attributed to Juan Ramírez, 16th century, belonging to the altarpiece of the old shrine chapel of the discalced Carmelites at the time in which John of the Cross was staying at Granada. The original chapel, with this altarpiece, later became the monastery chapter room.*

## The Monastery of Los Mártires

Fray John had still not reached his true destination. He came to Granada as prior of the discalced Carmelite friars. Accompanying the nuns on their journeys was an occasional service he rendered. Thus, after the nuns got settled and the liturgy was celebrated in Doña Ana's house, he set out in haste for the Gomeles hill in the direction of the Alhambra where his monastery was situated.

His welcome by the community was a simple and happy one. They had elected him as their prior in June of the previous year. Agustín de los Reyes, the former prior, had been appointed rector of the new college in Salamanca, which was inaugurated on 1 June 1581. In the community of Granada there were a number of religious whom John already knew from Baeza and El Calvario. It was a poor community, small and in need, awaiting him anxiously.

During the first days, he got to know them at close hand and glanced over



the history and physical features of the house and property. During the nine years that the discalced Carmelites had lived in Granada, they had gone through quite an odyssey; the foundation was still not established firmly and with recognition. John was interested in learning this history so that he could properly direct his attitudes, activities, and relationships.

In the spring of 1573, Baltasar de Jesús and two other friars came to Granada with the intention of making a foundation there. The prime mover for the foundation was Don Luis Hurtado de Mendoza, the Count of Tendilla, the governor of the Alhambra, and the commander-in-chief of the kingdom of Granada. He received the religious as his guests in the palace of the Alhambra for a time, until they could find a place in the city suitable for their foundation. Here is where the troubles began. For reasons relating to the recent war over the revolt of the moriscos, a declared rivalry existed between the count and the two other great authorities in the city, the archbishop and the president of the chancery. The discalced friars suffered from the consequences.

It was enough that they be favored by the count for the archbishop to deny them permission for a foundation in the city district of the "old Christians." He would only allow them to make a foundation in the Albaicín district, which was inhabited mainly by moriscos of unauthentic conversion to Christianity. The discalced friars ac-





◀ *Deifontes (Granada). Obligatory route of passage for the roads that reached Granada coming from the north. John of the Cross left Avila with two nuns 29 November 1581. He gathered others along the way from Malagón, Beas, and Torreperogil. At Deifontes he was surprised by news that the archbishop of Granada would not permit the foundation.*

again with a solution to the problem. He offered them a church and monastery within his jurisdiction, on the hill where the Alhambra was situated. The little shrine that Isabella the Catholic constructed in memory of the Christians that were martyred there could serve as the church. They could use the little house at the side of the shrine constructed for the chaplain as their living quarters. Accepting the offer, the Carmelites quickly moved their few belongings.

## A Desolate Hill

You would have to take away all the trees, gardens, water, and constructions from the actual site of the Carmel of Los Mártires in order to have an



▶ *Granada. The Cathedral. Pedro de Raxis (16th-17th c.). Portrait of the archbishop Juan Méndez de Salvatierra. A lightning bolt that struck his palace while the discalced Carmelite nuns were waiting at Deifontes caused him to change his mind and allow them to make their foundation. He grew to esteem Fray John of the Cross.*

▶ *Granada. Entrance to the Palacio de Abrantes, 16th c. Detail with the coats of arms of the Bobadilla and Peñalosa families to whom it belonged. It is the only palace in Granada on which the latter coat of arms remains. It calls to mind the house of Ana de Peñalosa who hosted the discalced nuns from the 20 January to 29 August 1582.*



idea of the early foundation. The spot was first called “the captives’ corral,” the captives being the Christian prisoners of the Moors. Later it was called the “martyrs field” because many Christians had been put to death there.

During the reign of the Arabs it was a barren and colorless hill. When Münzer, the German, visited the place, there still existed enormous “dungeons” that were open hollows in the

rocky ground, each one having a capacity for 100 or 200 prisoners. “These underground pits reproduced in engravings of the 17th and 18th centuries were shaped like a funnel. The entrance was through a round hole, not too large. They were about 24 feet deep, and the floor was level and circular with radial divisions (some 12 for each dungeon) made of stone blocks and destined to serve as beds.” In the desolate surroundings of

## ANNE OF JESUS (LOBERA) “Captain of the Prioresses”

Anne of Jesus, because of her strong personality and influence, was one of the more outstanding figures in the early Teresian Carmel. Her 76 years of life (1545-1621) were rough ones; 51 of them were lived in Carmel. She kept up an intimate and extended communication with both Saints Teresa and John of the Cross.

Extremaduran on her father’s side and Biscayan on her mother’s side, Ana Lobera de Torres was born in Medina del Campo. While she was still a small child both her father and mother died. A vivacious and attractive girl, she lived in Medina for 15 years (1545-60), residing there at the same time as John of the Cross, who was three years her senior. She then moved with the family to Plasencia (Cáceres). Making a break from everyone and everything, she one night, at age 25, disappeared from her house. She had gone to the monastery of St. Joseph in Avila, where she was received with open arms by St. Teresa into the community of discalced nuns. The Mother Foundress soon discovered the value of this new vocation.

From this first meeting in 1570 until her death in 1582, Madre Teresa reserved her greatest praise and demonstrations of con-

fidence for this favorite daughter. She went so far as to assert that she could very well let Anne of Jesus take her own place to everyone’s advantage. When Anne was but 30 years of age, in 1575, Teresa appointed her prioress in Beas. Anne’s desire for a confessor was what prompted a letter from Teresa extolling the virtue and talent of John of the Cross. Commissioned by Teresa herself and accompanied by John of the Cross, Anne made the foundation for the nuns in Granada.

Her first meeting with John took place in the same year that she came to know Teresa. She had hardly entered as a novice at St. Joseph’s in Avila in August 1570, when, in November of that same year, she moved with the foundress to Salamanca. On their journey they stopped to visit the discalced friars in Mancera-Duruelo.

The two Carmelites got to know each other and began collaborating in Beas

▶ *Avila. Monastery of St. Joseph’s. Anonymous, 17th c. Portrait of Anne of Jesus. First prioress of both Beas and Granada by the choice of St. Teresa, she was the recipient, at her own request, of John of the Cross’s commentary on the Spiritual Canticle, written in Granada.*

where Anne of Jesus and the whole community found in Fray John a true spiritual father and director. One nun recalled that at times, when the Saint was present, Anne of Jesus delegated her powers as prioress to him and arranged that each one ask for their permissions from him. In this way he had the opportunity to learn more about the real life of the Sisters, the needs and desires of each one. In Granada, the exchange between John of the Cross and Anne of Jesus became more frequent and intense. The dedication appearing in the Spiritual Canticle represents a guarantee of John’s love and esteem for Anne of Jesus.

In 1586, she moved to Madrid to make the long-desired foundation in the capital city. John accompanied her also on this journey. Two years later, he was made a



member of the general government of the order and prior of Segovia. He kept up his communication with her.

While in Madrid, she won Fray Luis de León to her side and prompted him to prepare an edition of the works of St. Teresa (1588). She also enlisted his support for her request of a brief from the pope that would guarantee the legislation received from St. Teresa. Fray Luis, on the other hand, dedicated his commentary on Job to her.

She showed Fray Luis the writings of John of the Cross, which drew from the Augustinian maestro words of praise, as we have seen. To provide a guarantee of the Teresian heritage, Anne strove by every means to have John of the Cross appointed vicar for the nuns, the one who in the order’s general government would be in charge of matters concerning them. Her intention was good, the result of her endeavors proved a disaster.

She received from Teresa the title Capitana de las prioras (captain of the prioresses) because of her steady initiatives and her capacity to lead and always be the first in difficult and risky matters.

Later she again became prioress and let her habitual dynamism come to the fore; the punishments seemed only to have increased it. She organized foundations in Spain, until in 1604 she set out for France charged with the responsibility of planting the Teresian Carmel in that land. She founded monasteries in Paris and Dijon. To defend the heritage of her two spiritual

parents and teachers, she had to confront Cardinal Bérulle and then leave France for Flanders. There she made new foundations, received new duties, and made new efforts to have the works of both Teresa and John of the Cross published.

She declared in the process for the beatification of St. Teresa: “I spoke familiarly with Teresa of Jesus, and she did so with me, either in person or in writing. . . I knew almost everything about her.” She could have said just as much and even more in the process for Fray John of the Cross that was carried on some years later. She did not speak; she did not want to speak. Her confessor and director during her final years, Hilario de San Agustín, insisted with her, but obtained nothing. He declared: “The interrogators went to Anne of Jesus that she might respond in regard to the sanctity and mystical graces of our Venerable Father John of the Cross. Although it was evident that she knew many admirable things about him, she refused to

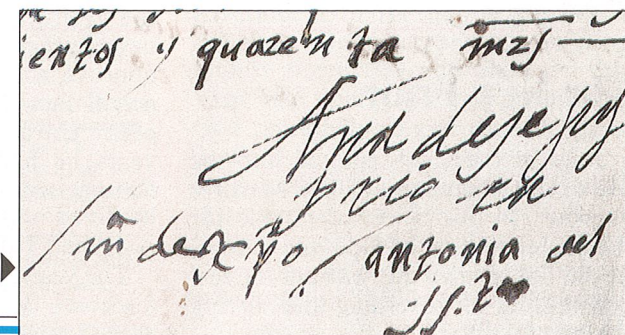
inform us about them and acted as though she were ignorant of everything”.

Her confessor asked her why she didn’t tell everything she knew since it would redound to the glory of God and of the Church and to the honor of the order and the venerable Father whom she had so loved in Christ. Mother Anne answered that she didn’t dare speak of such matters for fear that by doing so she would be exalting herself and manifesting something of the graces she had received. She gave him to understand that when she went to confession to the Venerable Father John of the Cross, God often revealed secrets that he had communicated to them.

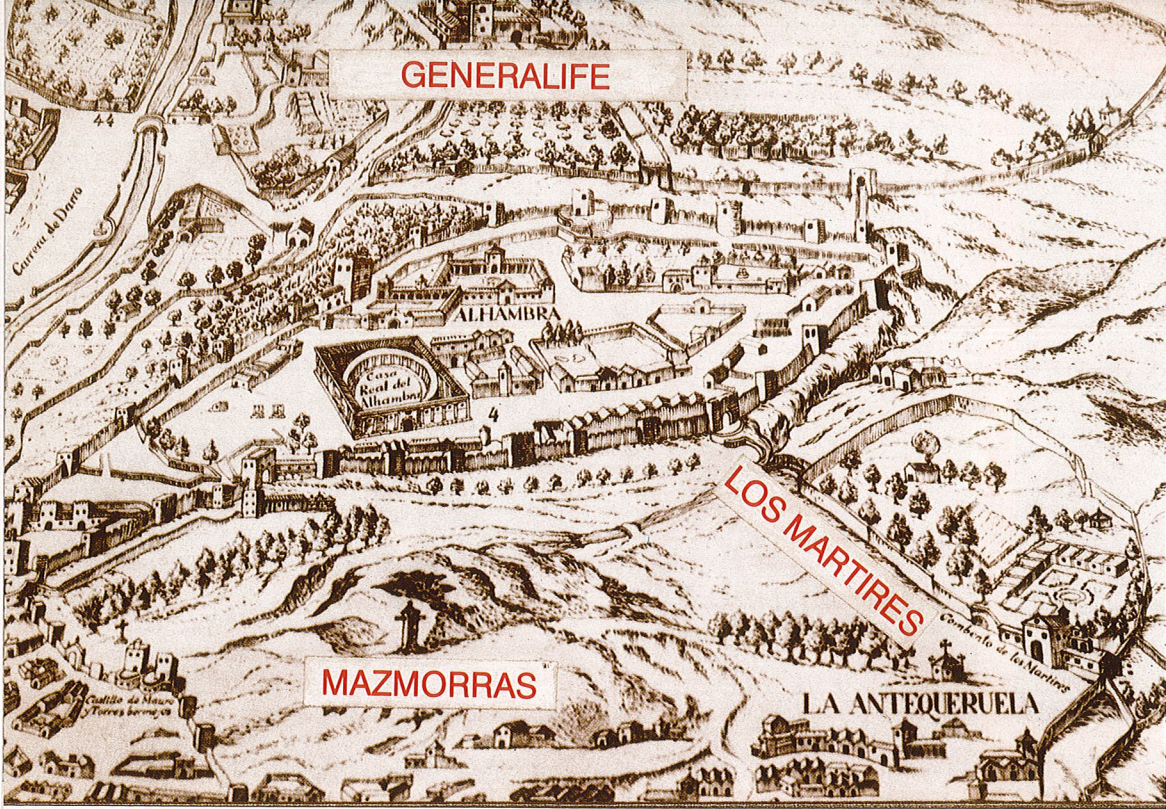
As in the case of Duruelo, we meet here an intense spiritual experience along with a deliberate intention to live it for God alone. Probably, they made a pact between themselves to be silent since they had so freely and trustfully spoken to each other of the Lord’s graces.

Federico Ruiz

▶ *Granada. Discalced Carmelite nuns. Book of Receipts, signatures of Anne of Jesus, María de Cristo, and Antonia del Espíritu Santo, members of the group that founded the Carmel of Granada. Fray John, the new prior of Los Mártires, was charged with establishing a Teresian “dovecote” in the city of the Alhambra.*

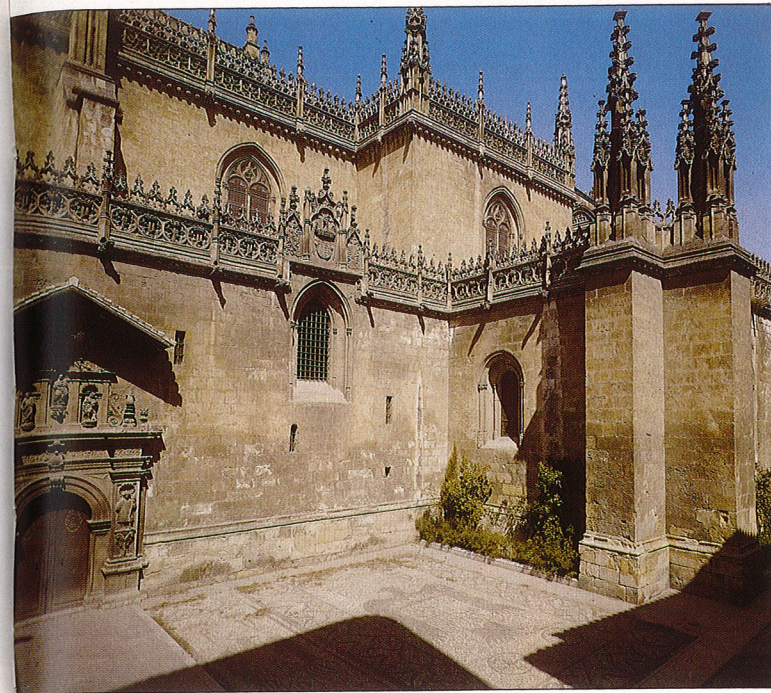






◀ *Ambrosio de Vico. Plan of Granada seen from above, 1590. Detail with the hills of the Alhambra and Los Mártires. On the latter was the the monastery in which John of the Cross lived from 1582-88. On the former was the royal house, or palace, of Charles V, then still under construction and later abandoned by his son Philip II.*

▶ *Granada. Royal Chapel, 16th c. The royal chapel became a part of the intense movement for unification that began around Granada by the Catholic Monarchs and their nephew Charles V. The emperor wanted to make it the capital of his empire.*



▶ *Granada. Façade of the cathedral begun by the Catholic Monarchs on the site where the great mosque had stood. Fray John saw the construction that, begun in 1523, was carried forward by Master Ambrosio de Vico.*



the property, things went from bad to worse for the friars since they had little initiative. At the shrine the worship was reduced to August 2, the patron's day, St. Peter in Chains. Nor did the friars take on other apostolates. They received no alms, they didn't have water, and the garden was unproductive. At the worst moment of the crisis, Gracián passed by and decided to suppress the foundation and send the religious to other monasteries.

When they were gathering their essential belongings in preparation to leave, the count of Tendilla came to pay a casual visit. Being a determined and generous man who esteemed the disclaled friars, he convinced them to stay and provided all the means. He himself supplied seven daily rations of food for them and promised to furnish water from the Alhambra for their house and garden. The arrival of Agustín de los Reyes as prior lifted their spirits. He enlarged the monastery, cultivated the garden, and brought prestige to the house through his activities in promoting the spiritual life.

## The New Prior

John of the Cross entered into the life of the community of Los Mártires as prior. In this place so suitable for the contemplation of God and nature, he did not spend a day without the responsibilities of governing and serving the community.

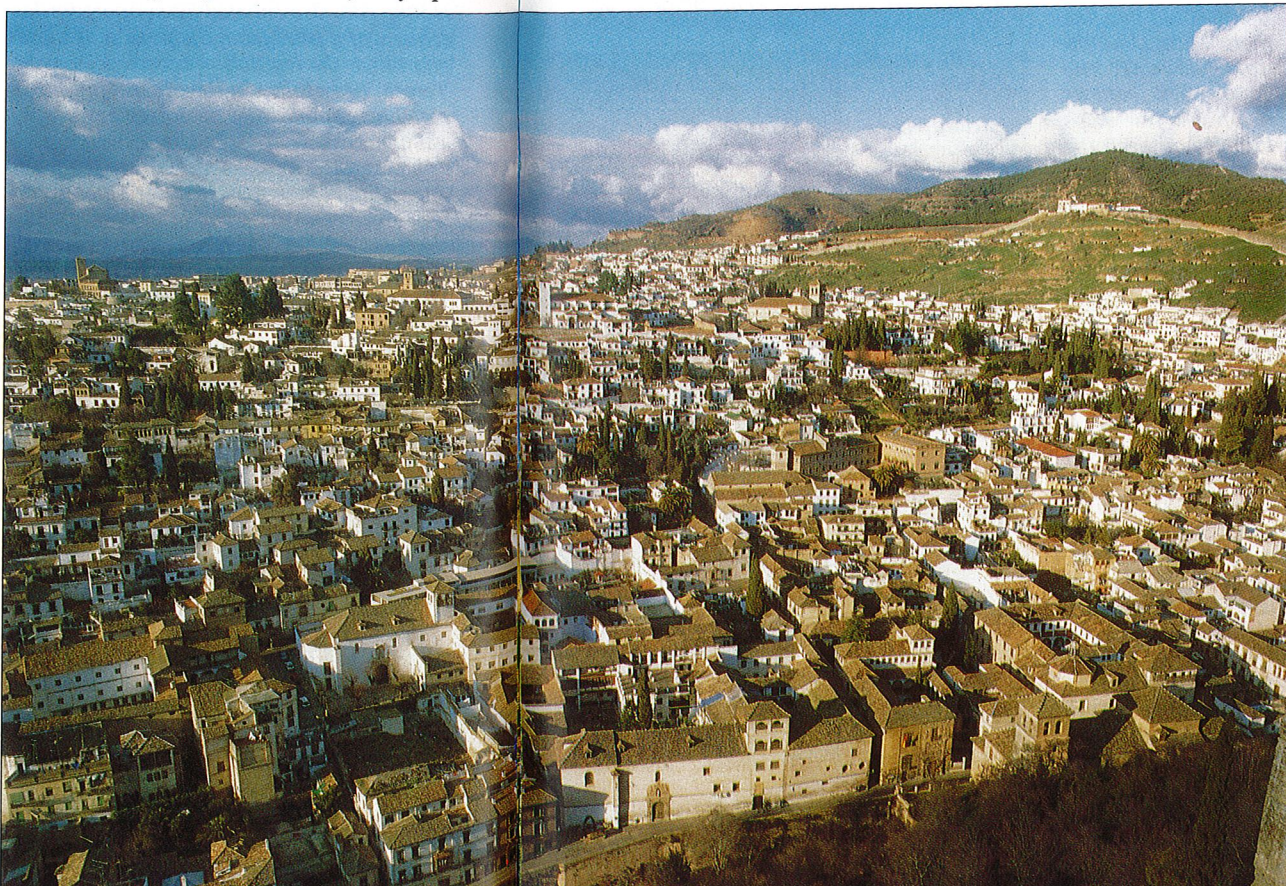
From the first days, the new prior observed and took stock of the needs and possibilities presented by the monastery. The community was small, the house confining, and the garden poor. On the other hand, the monastery was in a city where there was ardent faith, and the view they had was of incomparable beauty, with villas and the fertile plane in front of them and to their back, the Alhambra and the Sierra Nevada.

From this first investigation John worked out a plan of action. Granada needed much dedication and energy on his part. He had to inspire the community, fix up the house, and improve the garden; the nuns, too, were in need of his assistance. Situated in the midst of so much beauty, the property in Granada promised him fruitful moments of contemplation; it would stimulate him to expand his aesthetic sensibilities. The facts even surpassed all these expectations. He was to have the time and opportunity to bring his many plans to completion.

In the legislative meetings of the order, he often raised his voice against the reelection of superiors. But he never succeeded in getting the group to approve a law of non-reelection. In actual fact, he had always had some office entrusted to him during the 23 years he had been in the reformed Carmel, with the exception of the time he lived outside his community in Avila and Toledo.

The years in Granada came close to a record. Within the six years, he was elected prior three times and appointed

vicar provincial once. Here is the sequence: 1) prior: in the middle of 1581, he was elected prior of Granada while still residing and active in Baeza; 2) prior: he was elected prior of Granada a second time, in the chapter of Almodóvar in May 1583; 3) definitior: in May 1585 in Lisbon, he was elected second definitior (councillor to the vicar general) and terminated his office as prior; 4) vicar provincial: in October of the same year, in Pastrana, they ap-



▶ *Granada. The Albaicín, a hill that along with that of the Alhambra provides a profound and essential portrait of Granada. A rich and populous Moslem quarter until the reconquest, it then became a morisco quarter. Of the almost 5,000 houses confiscated by the Crown from the rebellious moriscos in 1568, only half were occupied in John of the Cross's time.*

pointed him vicar provincial of Andalusia; 5) prior: in April 1587, in the chapter in Valladolid, his term as vicar provincial was terminated and he was reelected prior of Granada.

We have already seen how John managed his office of leadership. He did the same in Granada as prior. It meant many things for him: fidelity to the Carmelite life; spiritual formation of the community; responsibility for the construction work and the garden;

confessor and spiritual director for both the disclaled Carmelite nuns and all those who had recourse to him; alms for the poor; care of the sick; and sharing in manual labor. He carried out his responsibilities with his own personal style and according to the needs of the house and of individuals. As we go along, we shall look at some examples of these characteristics.

## Building Community

On taking over his position, John impressed the community favorably by frequently recalling and praising the prior who had preceded him in the government of the house. He did so sincerely. One member of the community noted this and observed that "He said that superiors should beg God repeatedly to give them religious souls under their care and in guiding them to heaven. He highly praised Fray Agustín de los Reyes for this virtue that he possessed to such an excellent degree" (Eliseo de los Mártires, *Dictamenes* 20). John found for his



task a cell that suited his style and was to his liking. It was a poor and small room in the old part of the house where the novitiate was located and which had formerly been the chaplain's residence. He avoided the new, recently constructed wing of the monastery. Not having any other conveniences, the little cell did have a small window that looked out on the garden; such contact with nature was in itself a great gift for John.

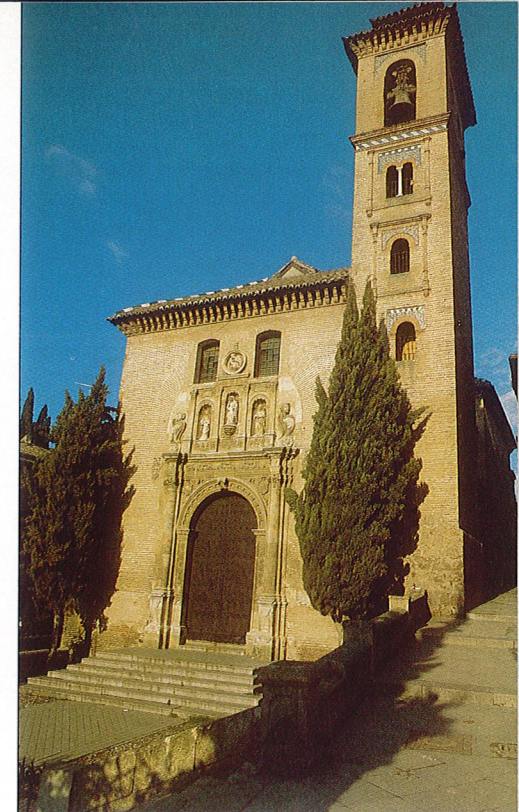
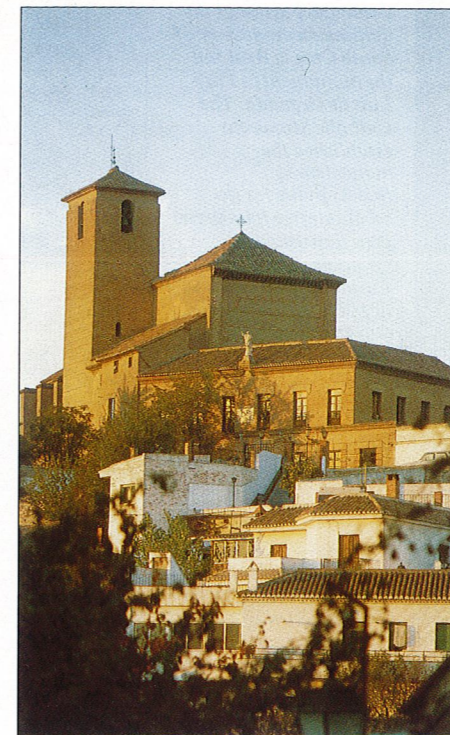
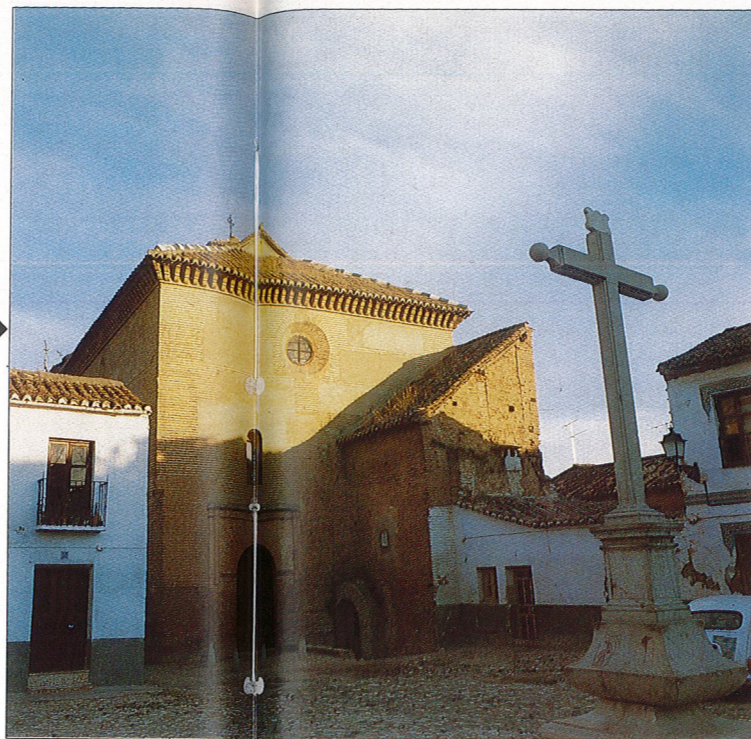
We also know through various witnesses how he furnished his room. For furniture, he had boards for sleeping, a shelf attached to the wall for a table, and a stool on which to sit. The decorations were a wooden cross and an image of our Lady. His books consisted of the Bible, the breviary, a *Flos sanctorum* (Lives of the Saints), and a book by one of the Fathers of the Church, or on theology, that he took from the library as needed. These were the things the friars observed, for they entered his room often to speak of

spiritual matters or other business with their superior.

When John took charge at the monastery of Los Mártires, the community was small but in the process of growing. It was moreover a varied community. There was Pedro de los Angeles who had joined him in accompanying the Carmelite nuns; Jerónimo de la Cruz, his traveling companion in the years at Baeza, who had collaborated with John in the burning of Teresa's letters; and Inocencio de San Andrés who had entered the order while John was rector in Alcalá, and who had also been John's friend and member of the community in Baeza.

In those times the majority of monasteries also had a novitiate. This brought life to the community and inspired the friars to give an example of fidelity. During Fray John's years in Granada, many novices entered. On occasion as many as 10 or 12 would join. Each one had his experiences and

Granada. From left to right, churches of San Bartolomé, San Cristóbal in the Albaicín, and Santa Ana in the Plaza Nueva. They were among the first Christian parishes established after the reconquest — all three in 1501 — on sites where Moslem mosques had stood. This was the Granada of the 16th century as John of the Cross knew it.



## WATER FROM THE ALHAMBRA

Still today we contemplate Granada under the symbol and reality of water, as do our contemporary poets; for example, M. Machado and García Lorca. Water from spouts and cisterns; down from the Sierra Nevada that flows down into the fertile plain.

In the 17th century, Francisco de Santa María, a native of Granada, speaking of

the monastery of Los Mártires in his *Historia de la Reforma* quoted from an author of those times: "The flower and vegetable gardens that grow in the bounty of so many rivers . . . gardens, so many, so beautiful, so varied, especially around the outer circle of the city, that those who gaze on them from this hill are reduced to silence for a long time, even if they have beheld them often." No one could imagine that in this paradise, where water abounded everywhere and for everyone, the Carmelites would suffer so much from its scarcity; and they were only a few steps away from the Alhambra. It had been the greatest problem of the monastery of Los Mártires. The long difficult story is worth recounting to comprehend better the contemplative joy of Fray John, and also his efforts to benefit from the water around him, up to the last drop, by constructing a costly aqueduct. We present the story of conflict in successive scenes:

1. A waterless hill. When the Carmelites arrived, the hill was barren, uncultivated, without groves. They transported water badly through small irrigation ditches, uneven and surrounded by weeds. They couldn't continue like that and decided to abandon the place.

2. An offer of water. The count learned of the scarcity and offered them water in abundance in a document dated 4 August 1573. In it he arranged "that Juan de Orea,

our man in charge of the maintenance of this Alhambra, and Pedro Peraleda, administrator of the water channels, will designate the place from which to take it and that a reservoir be made there so that water can be conducted to the monastery."

3. Their water is cut off. Because of rivalries, Don Pedro de Deza, president of the chancery, ordered that the supply of water to the Carmelites be cut off and that the conduits be destroyed.

4. Philip II intervenes. Unwilling to ag-

Granada. El Generalife. The arches of the aqueduct and the channel (right) that John of the Cross constructed to carry water from the Generalife to the monastery. John also built a beautiful cloister that served as a model for other monasteries of the reform.



gravate the conflict, the count advised the Carmelites to go directly to the king for help. Gabriel de la Concepción was charged with the task of speaking personally to the king since he was already known to the king and had made a good impression on him in a previous meeting. His mission was accomplished. On 27 December 1576, in Guadalupe, Philip II gave his authorization in an expressive document worth quoting: "Since the site is for devotional purposes and for the com-

mon good, outside the said city and near the Alhambra and Generalife, which are our royal houses, and since their main resource would be in having a garden, for their recreation as well as their ordinary sustenance; and since they do not have water and the count of Tendilla gave them four reales of it from the canal that goes from the Generalife to the Alhambra, and since they have been impeded from using it because they do not have our permission and have stopped channeling the said water and are in great need, and since it is appropriate to favor them and give them in alms a certain quantity; and because the said monastery is new, and because of the devotion I have to the said order, and so that the religious who reside and will reside in the said house with less labor and inconvenience, I have considered it good to grant them the gift and alms, as I hereby do, of two reales of water from the said canal . . . so that they may enjoy it as long as it is our will."

5. The water channels are redone. Water was brought from the Generalife in roundabout ways, very slowly and with much waste. This went on for some years. A reservoir was built.

6. An aqueduct is built. John of the Cross saw that as the community grew the needs for the vegetable garden and the recreation garden also grew. He saw that the method for bringing the water from the Alhambra to the monastery was a sloppy one, so he decided on a more efficient, although more expensive, way of getting the water. As is so often the case, it soon became the more economical and lasting way. He constructed an aqueduct that solved the problem of the uneven terrain and brought

the water directly without any waste to the reservoir in the garden and to the monastery itself.

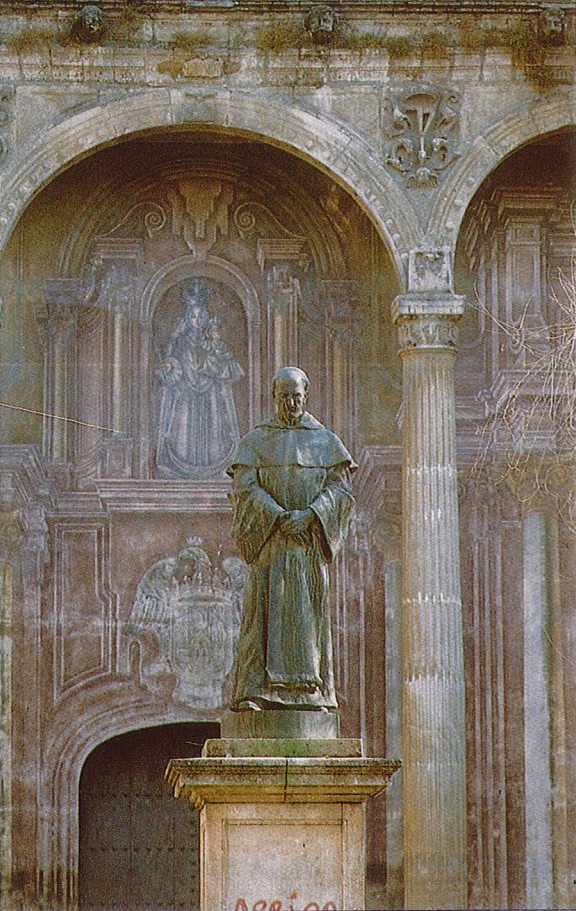
In its present state, which does not seem to have been altered, the aqueduct is about 242 feet in length, with a maximum height of about 17 feet, and a minimum of about 7 feet. The width of the wall is about 2 feet. The length is divided into 12 arches, each one having an opening of about 15 feet. The arches are held by supports of two different alternating lengths: about 20 by 10 feet and 10 by 3 feet.

What is most important is that we have an aqueduct still standing, a silent and eloquent witness to St. John of the Cross's stay at Los Mártires and to his desire to bring water from the Alhambra to the monastery for both contemplation and sustenance.

Luis Ojeda







Granada. Façade of the dominican monastery of Santa Cruz la Real and the monument to Fray Luis de Granada. The Catholic Monarchs established the monastery in thanksgiving for the reconquest. Monasteries then flourished in Granada. The discalced Carmelite friars arrived in 1582; the nuns accompanied by John of the Cross, in 1582.



Granada. Monastery of Santa Isabel la Real. A detail of the presbytery with its splendid ceiling. It was a foundation of the pious Queen Isabella in the heart of the rebellious morisco quarter, an example of the Christian and monastic Granada known by John of the Cross.



Granada. Imperial and pontifical university founded by Charles V in 1526. Clement VII in 1531 granted it the faculties already possessed by Alcalá, Salamanca, Paris, and Bologna. In John of the Cross's time, Granada was also the seat of the archdiocese, the royal chancery, and the military authority.

stories to tell about his dealings with John of the Cross.

One of the novices was Alonso de la Madre de Dios, a nephew of the archbishop, who was going to enter the Carthusians. When he came to say goodbye to the Carmelites, the prior caught his attention in such a way that he chose to enter the Carmelite novitiate.

Another of his novices in Granada was Juan Evangelista, one of the religious with whom John maintained a more confidential relationship, taking him for his confessor. Juan Evangelista also became procurator and secretary. The trust between them had to come about the hard way since the prior put the procurator to the test. Juan Evangelista more than once had to go and complain to the prior that there was nothing to eat, no money, and no reserves, and that the community was large. He would then ask to go out to see if he could find something. The peaceful prior at those times would respond, "Be calm, Father,

don't get nervous; trust a little more in God." Leaving the house, the procurator would then get help from some benefactor who was coming to the monastery. This friar obtained permis-

sion from his superiors to live in whichever community John of the Cross lived in because of the great good his soul derived from the companionship.

Despite his consistent style of governing, John realized that Granada was not Baeza. The circumstances were very different. Baeza was a college for students of the order who

studied at the university; it had a large church with many services, was within the city precincts, and had no garden. The monastery in Granada was in the country, at a distance from the city, having only a small church and no services, and without students attending study centers. It was a rather isolated monastery, and John had to organize its life and community keeping this circumstance in mind.

before he saw them" (P. Crisógono).

In fact, he gradually put to rest the anxiety in the mind of many that he would be severe with them because he was austere with himself. It seems strange that a person as recollected as he was should grasp and intuit with so much solicitude the needs that were around him, and he accepted any lack of sleep or inconvenience so as to help others in need.

Luis de San Angelo had an experience that he recounted. He had just arrived from Baeza where he had finished his studies at the university. He was wearing a torn, worn out tunic. He didn't say anything and tried to keep it concealed by his habit; no one noticed. That is, no one but the prior who was very careful and considerate about such things. He at once made a new one and gave it to him. Fray Luis was taken by surprise and didn't tire in thanking him. The prior interrupted: "You needn't bother thanking me; this was a matter of justice between brothers and it was my duty to provide for you." The sick were the object of his manifest predilection. He began showing this from the time of his childhood. In Baeza he gave them every kind of attention providing direct care, cleanliness, entertainment, and alleviation for their suffering. He also accepted whatever cost these things might involve. At the time of the plague he outdid himself.

Another group that concerned him

## The Art of Governing

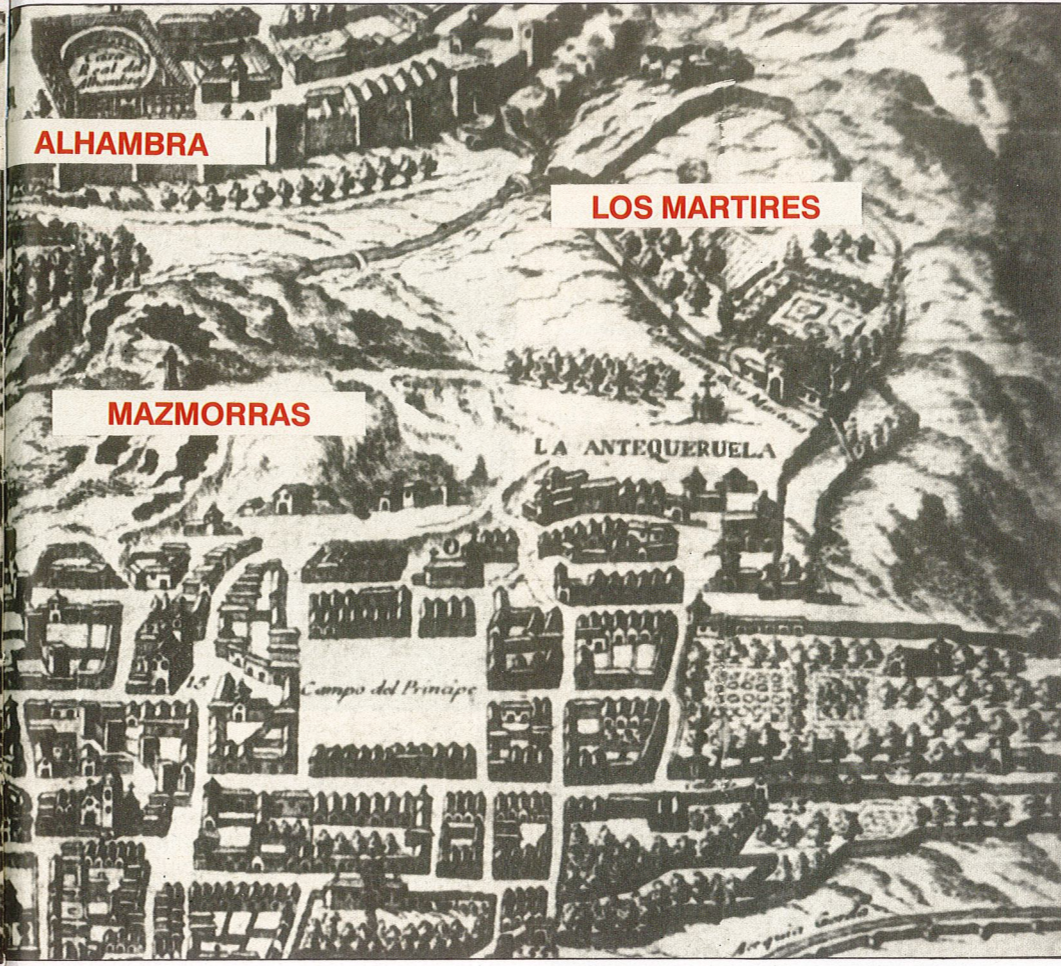
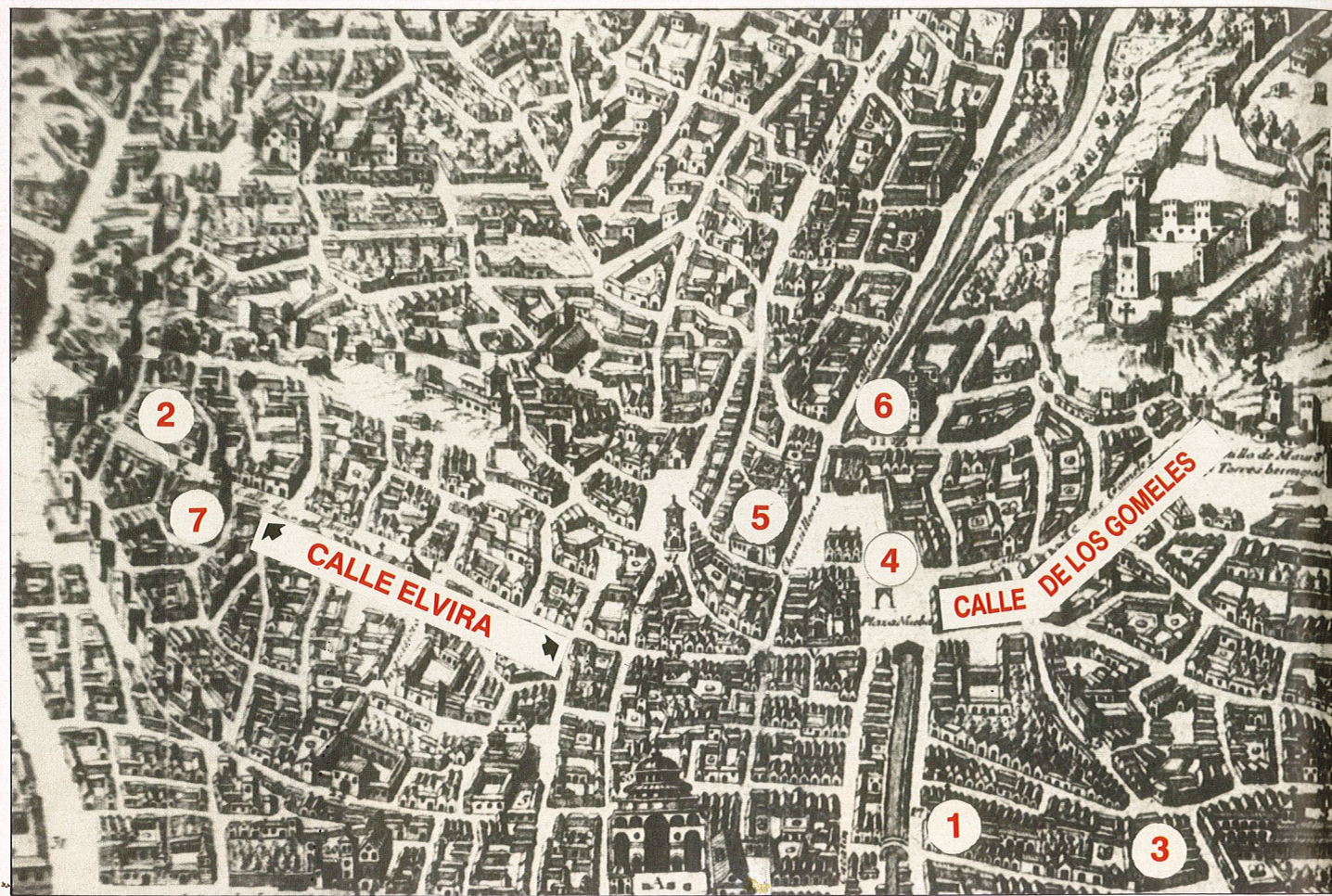
In coming to a new community as superior, the first thing he did was to create a relaxed and trusting atmosphere. He used to say: "Who has ever observed that virtue and the things of God can be fostered by harsh and severe means?" He strove in every way that the friars would be enthusiastic about their religious life and live it seriously and gladly.

His mode of procedure contributed to this. He did not pry. "The friars of Granada asserted that he did not interfere in the duties given to each one or go about scrutinizing their work. Far from trying to catch someone breaking the rule of silence, they would hear him cough as he came or make noise with the large rosary that hung from a belt at his side. He would do so that the religious who were talking outside the proper time and place could retreat



Granada. Monastery of San Jerónimo. Cloister and church. It was founded in 1492 by the Catholic Monarchs. One of the monks, Fray Hernando de Talavera, was the queen's confessor and first archbishop of Granada. In front of the presbytery, the Gran Capitán of that kingdom, Gonzalo Fernández de Cordoba, is laid to rest.





Ambrosio de Vico. Plan of Granada, 1590. Detail. Site of the monastery of Los Mártires at the side of the Alhambra and the successive sites of the community of Carmelite nuns of which John of the Cross was confessor: the palace of the Bobadillas y Peñalosa, calling to mind the house of Doña Ana de Peñalosa (1), from 20 January to 29 August 1582; the house rented from Don Alonso de Granada y Alarcón in the Calle de Elvira, near the gate of the same name (2) from 29 August 1582 to 8 November 1584; the former palace of Don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, the gran capitán (3) from November 8 until our own day. Also indicated are the Calle de los Gomeles; the Plaza Nueva (4); the palace of the chancery (5) (in front of which there was raised an ever-ready gallows); the Calle Elvira, principal artery of Moslem Granada, the churches of Santa Ana (6) and San Andrés (7).

Granada. Calle de los Gomeles that ascends from the city toward Los Mártires. Here stood the first house of the discolored friars. John often went to and fro along this street. One day, a disturbed woman tried to make him believe he was the father of the baby she carried in her arms.

were the religious who appeared sad or depressed over some suffering. Here the cure did not lie in something to eat but in an interior liberation, rest, and distraction. With these he preferred to go out into the country and to clarify the motive of their worries.

Life in community at Los Mártires, as in any other community, was not always idyllic since there were people with difficult temperaments; disagreeable situations arose calling for intervention by the prior. John did not refuse this painful part of serving. The same prior who gave the new tunic to Luis de San Angelo on a different occasion had to give orders to another friar to take off some "elegant" things he was wearing at recreation and turn them in.

What drew more attention in the community was another case in which John had to firmly intervene. A religious came to recreation one day dressed in fine style, and what is more began presenting historical and theological arguments in his favor. He said that he himself had seen a tunic that was worn by our Lord and that the cloth was of choice quality. John reprimanded him dryly: Our Lord didn't have disor-

dered passions as we do; and this is so even if we suppose that the tunic was in fact our Lord's. So the religious was made to turn in what he had been wearing.

Strict with the unruly and gentle toward the sick, the prior usually followed a middle course according to the need. He was not eager to apply the punishments required by law. This bothered him, but he had to do so. The friars recalled a reprimand he gave one day to the whole community. Because of a fault committed, the prior one day had to make a religious undergo a punishment, which was that he go to his cell and not leave it. Before the religious was free to come out, Fray John addressed the community as though displeased: "I was obliged to apply this punishment according to our law; but is it possible that no one in the community came to ask me to lift the penalty of their brother and allow him out?"

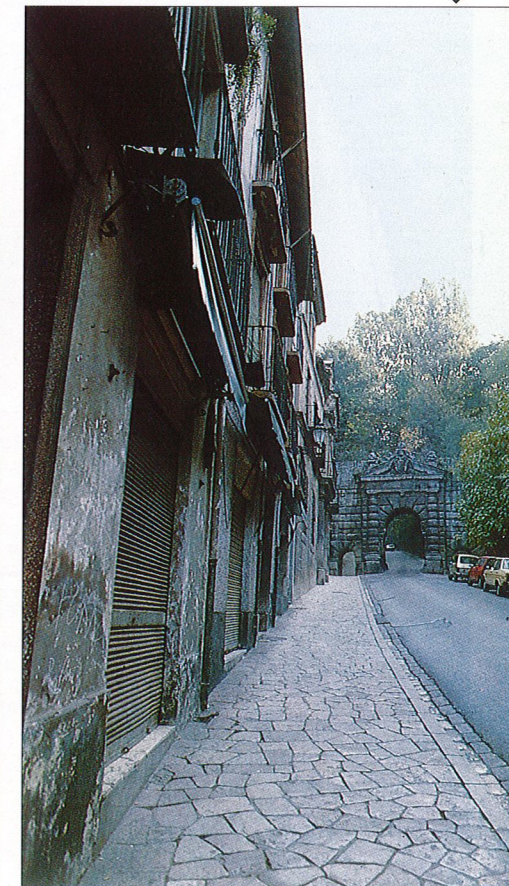
## One Who Inspired

In all the offices that he filled, the mystical doctor was by vocation and talent a great spiritual educator. Whatever he did, whether he spoke or was silent, he made a strong impact on his surroundings. As has already been seen, he was not one to be concerned only about the prayer and mortification of the religious. On the other hand, the very facts just mentioned about his style of governing also had a bearing on spiritual formation. The witnesses mixed examples of times when he showed sensitivity and times when he made corrections. He made use of innumerable occasions and resources to nourish and build the community spirit: community meetings to discuss and apply the laws, community recreations, daily reflections after supper, celebration of the liturgical mysteries, walks in the country, explanations of his books to the community, and private meetings with each one.

Father Eliseo de los Mártires, in his "Dictámenes" lists the subjects that the Saint spoke of most frequently in his



Granada. Calle de Elvira and the church of San Andrés (1528). In the background at the right, near the ancient Elvira gate, the most important of Granada, was the second house of the discolored Carmelite nuns inhabited by them from 29 August to 8 November 1584. Their confessor John of the Cross frequently passed along this way.





oral teaching. He highlights three lines of thought as dominant themes: 1) contemplation, recollection, and the anagogical acts which raise the heart and mind to God; 2) the apostolate, to cooperate with God in the salvation of souls; 3) human virtues, such as loyalty, detachment, prudence in governing, sensitivity, magnanimity, and sincerity in dealing with the religious and their formation.

These *dictámenes* reflect the themes he touched on and his method of procedure; they are corroborated by facts from his biography. "When he gathered with the religious at noon and in the evening he usually sat on the ground with them, and often with the novices. And there for recreation he gave them spiritual food for their souls, and in a peaceful and humane way he would say to them: 'Come here, sons, let us decorate our brothers'" (Alonso de la Madre de Dios). Each would suggest a particular virtue desired for someone.

Granada. A present-day view (from the Barranco del Abogado) of the Carmel and gardens of Los Mártires, the former site of the Carmelite monastery. John lived here from 1582 until 1588 as prior, definitor, or vicar provincial. During that time he directed souls, taught, wrote, and governed.

At other times he asked questions and allowed them to speak, or he commented himself on the answers. The response of one kind-hearted Brother who was unlettered became famous. During the common recreation, the prior asked him: "Brother Francisco, what is the nature of God?" The Brother answered: "God is what He wants to be." The answer made a deep impression on John for its informality and transcendence. The community for its part were also impressed by the commentary the Saint made for several days on Brother Francisco's response.

Sometimes John asked, sometimes he made others ask by arousing their curiosity through some puzzling



Granada. Los Mártires. A cedar that according to tradition Fray John planted. Though now damaged by the elements, it is, together with the aqueduct, the most popular symbol of John's presence in the monastery of Granada. It's circumference is about a man's height is nearly 12 feet.



Madrid. National Library. Ms. 12738, p. 1447. Signature of Alonso de la Madre de Dios, John of the Cross's first novice in Granada. In information work and government, John was an example of charity and affability, of retirement and penance. He was attentive to the personal welfare and the interior life of his subjects.



gesture. Perhaps what follows was not done intentionally, but the religious noticed it. The biographer Father Alonso tells about it: "While he was in the garden one day with his religious, they saw him diverting himself by making a pile out of gravel and dividing it into parts, of which one was very small; then he stopped and kept looking at the little pile. Seeing this, the religious wondered what he was pondering. He then said to them: 'My thought in seeing this was that our Lord, true Lord of the whole world, is not known by the large multitude but only by a small group; and that even out of this small group His Majesty said, *Few are chosen.*'" In his private conversations with each one, the tone is more interior and personal. Almost on a daily basis he met individually with one of the religious. When he did so during the time of prayer, his interest was only in spiritual matters, prayer, sufferings, and desires. When he met with them at other times, he spoke of their health and of other different topics. What the friars noticed most in these talks with their prior is that he listened attentively and with pleasure. He preferred that first each one speak about what he was going through and feeling, what God was giving or asking

Puerta de la Justicia, the main entrance to the Alhambra. John would pass in front of it on his way to and from the city. At that time the seat of the military authority of Granada, the Alhambra had its own jurisdiction and a special garrison. In 1587 it housed 180 families.

of him, about what he desired to do. Only afterward did John begin to speak, briefly summing up what the religious had said and giving light and encouragement.

## "A Rose or a Carnation"

"Placing a rose or a carnation before the Blessed Sacrament was pleasing to those who did so, and he taught them how much they pleased God with such gestures." The sacristan remembered that he had often received help and appreciation from his prior. If John could, he placed the flower there himself; if not, he expressed his appreciation to the one who did: a rose or a carnation; a man refined, sensitive, and attentive to detail.

With the soul of an artist, he must have been more than once on the edge of aesthetic rapture, contemplating nature: trees, flowers, rivers and fish, the mountain range, and the valley. He himself was happy to record the impression made by the local color of flowers and costumes that Córdoba unfolded in receiving the discalced friars: "All the streets were beautifully decorated, and the people acted as though it were the feast of Corpus Christi" (Letters June, 1586).

As prior he introduced the custom of allowing the religious to go out and make their community prayer in the

Madrid. National Library. Ms. 12738, pp. 857 and 236. Signatures of two other of Fray John's subjects at Granada: Martin de San José, who for 30 years wore a cincture given him by John and declared that the friars loved John more than if he were their own father; and Juan de San Angelo, to whom John gave the habit in 1587.



garden. The spaciousness, the colors, the fresh air, the sky are factors that when used moderately assist toward interior encounter with the Lord.

Even though there was ample space and a view of the countryside on the monastery property, he enjoyed bringing the friars into the country in search of greater freedom and solitude; it provided a stimulus for contemplating the beauty of nature and of God. They went along the shore of the Genil River or took the way ascending toward the Sierra Nevada. In reaching the open country, he would give instructions: "Today you must go alone through the mountains so that each of you can spend the day in prayer and in calling out to our Lord." Such times of spontaneity prevented the community prayer from becoming depersonalized and boring.

At times he called out to them: "Come here, brothers, and see how these little creatures of God are praising Him." And he pointed to the fish moving about in the water.

## The Construction Projects

Each facet of what Fray John was doing would seem in itself sufficient to occupy all his time and boundless

*Granada. Part of the woods and gardens of Los Mártires (foreground). In the background the imposing profile of the Sierra Nevada. Fray John liked to take his friars on walks as far as its slopes for recreation, prayer, and so that they might praise the Creator for the beauty that surrounded them. He was not fond of sadness and tried to help wherever there was need.*

energy. Next to each task, another rose up and then another. His contact with nature was not merely one of an aesthetic admiration of scenery. In dealing with it he used all his senses, his whole self. Earth, water, rocks, trees, flowers, vegetables, cold, and heat; they were all objects of his direct, intense, and repeated experience.

The previous superiors had already begun projects in the monastery and garden, but the needs were increasing as the community grew in number. They needed cells, common rooms, more space in the garden for growing food and for recreation. Each year some little thing was done. But it was now time to think of something more solid and lasting.

The new prior thought the time had come to build on a larger scale, and he assumed the difficult task. It meant the nuisance of having work projects going on in the house, the problem of finding the money, and the inevitable dealings with different classes of people that would be involved. The



*View from Los Mártires looking toward the Alhambra with the palace of Charles V (left). While Fray John lived in Los Mártires, work was being done on the second floor of the palace. Juan de Herrera, architect of the Escorial, modified the original plan of Pedro de Machuca. From 1583 his assistant Juan de Minjares directed the work.*



ease with which he undertook large and costly construction works is surprising for one with his reserved and interior temperament. Duruelo, Baeza, Granada, Segovia were resources for the talents of this mystic, poet, and workman, who we frequently find with his hands in a mass of mud.

He did not limit himself to supervising the work and expenditures. He participated directly at all levels: design, organization, and masonry work. It was an extensive project and there were many things to be anxious about in terms of fund raising. One ought not forget that in 1584 he was helping the discalced nuns financially and a great number of needy poor people. He was also at this time writing his commentary on the *Spiritual Canticle* and the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*.

A future chronicler of the Carmelite reform, Francisco de Santa María, while still a layman observed how the prior of Los Mártires carried out the project of transforming the monastery and grounds. Some years later he joined the discalced Carmelites and became prior of Los Mártires. Later still, he became the official chronicler of the order. In his chronicles he did not hide

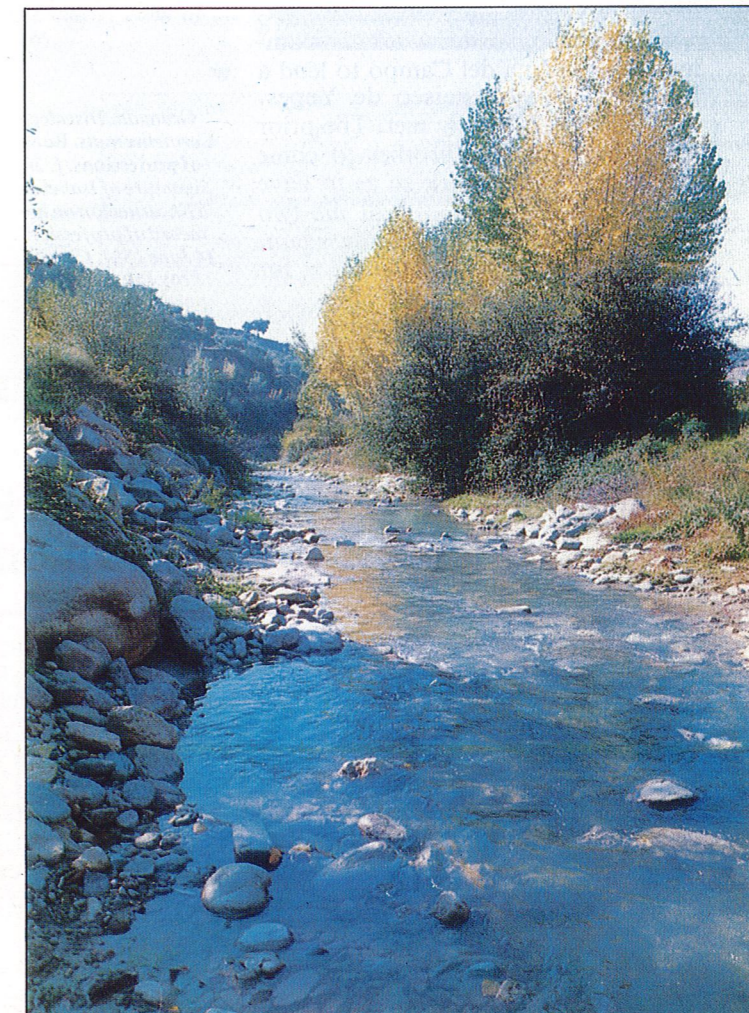


*Granada. A view from the hill of Los Mártires toward the plains and the Sierra Nevada.*

his love for Granada (his native city) or his admiration for the Saint's work. He writes: "The love the venerable Father had for the city of Granada-and that the city had for him in return-was a fervent one, and he manifested it whenever he could. Two of his most important projects remain. The first is the aqueduct; the second, the cloister, the best to this date of all our monasteries in Spain. He united sturdiness of stone, architectural elegance, and beauty of light with a decorum, devotion, and frugality that attracted the eyes . . . because it seemed ever new. It became the model for all the other houses of the order."

To the construction properly speaking was added the decoration: the chapel was pointed, the sanctuary gilded, and the cloister quadrangle adorned with paintings. Once finished, this great work brought him esteem among Granada's elite. But he had previously been more than once treated with disdain because he had gone about all muddy and poorly dressed while working on the construction. A high-ranking ecclesiastic who used to visit him one day found him in this condi-

*Granada. The Genil River and its surroundings. On one of his excursions with the friars, John of the Cross was seen sitting on its banks intently observing the fish that swam in its current in praise of God.*







Granada. Monastery of the discalced Carmelite nuns, their definitive site from 8 November 1584 to our own day. Don Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, "el gran capitán," had lived there; he also died there 2 December 1515. His nephew sold it to the discalced nuns who still have it for their monastery.

Granada. Discalced Carmelite nuns. Book of professions, f. 5r. Signature of Catalina de los Angeles on her record of profession. She was the first to make her vows (6 June 1584) at Granada, on Elvira Street. She was with the group led by John to Granada, having come from the monastery of Torreperagil, between Beas and Ubeda.

ion and said ironically, "Your paternity must be a worker's son; you like the garden so much we never see you over yonder." The "over yonder" referred to paying social calls. Fray John answered: "I am not even that much, for I am a poor weaver's son."

During those days in which the construction work was at its most intense, he got reinforcement from an "extraordinary" unskilled worker. Coming from Medina del Campo to lend a hand, he was Francisco de Yepes, whom we have already met. The prior had sent asking his brother to come and help with the work so as to have some employment; above all the two could be together for a while again. John had an undisguised affection for his brother, as will be seen.

Francisco arrived in Granada with his usual simplicity. When the religious saw him they were somewhat embarrassed by the clothes he was wearing and his general appearance, for he was the prior's brother. "He came with his shabby cloak and his worn out suit," the biographer reported. John gave him an enthusiastic welcome; he didn't look at the clothes but at the face and heart. Francisco was an ideal companion for intimate conversation and a strong and amenable worker.

The prior did not resist the temptation to show his love for his brother and happiness in having him there. He had to introduce him to visitors, friends, and people in high places: "Sir, meet my brother; he's the treasure I esteem most in this world."

## Father and Educator of the Discalced Nuns

Fray John of the Cross looked after the discalced Carmelite nuns in Granada as if the community were entirely under his charge. He assisted them with care in their spiritual and material needs. He went down to console or hear confessions as often as they asked; sometimes he anticipated their asking. He sent them vegetables, fish, bread, and oil from Los Mártires.

They felt he was like a real father and remarked among themselves: "Our Lord sends our Father, who is really like a father to us, food for his community and ours. And saint that he is, our Father sees our needs and assists us. May God reward him" (Alonso de la Madre de Dios).

The friendship developed out of the vicissitudes of the travel from Beas and the arrival in Granada; these events occasioned strong and close bonds. But it dated back still further. He had already known Anne of Jesus and several other nuns from Beas, when he

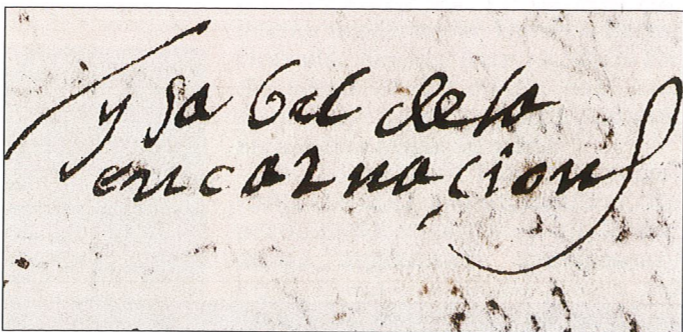
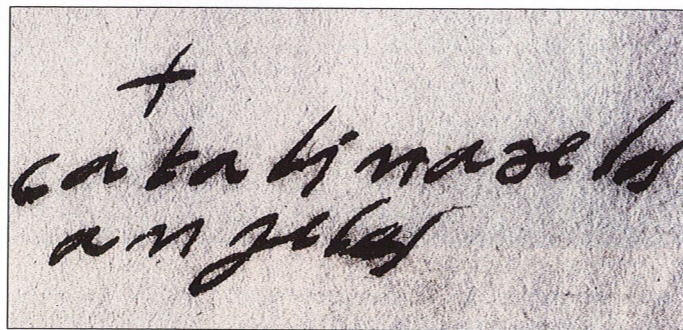
resided at El Calvario or Baeza and visited them frequently. He had also accompanied on their journey those who had come from Avila.

There was as well a group of young nuns who had entered Carmel directly in Granada. John had known almost all of these before their entrance. Some he had helped in the difficulties that arose with their families or with the community in following their vocation. Almost all in this group left remembrances and stories about the Saint's relationships with them and the community in Granada. One of them was Agustina de San José who later received the duty of conserving John's letters and notes. It was she also who in regrettable circumstances, which will be mentioned later, burned them all. Her sister, Isabel de la Encarnación, while still in the world, took the initiative of having a portrait painted of John while he was in prayer, without his knowing it. María de la Cruz, a young vivacious girl, obtained permission from the nuns, with John's help, to enter their community without a

dowry.

The prior was not content with leaving them half settled in the house of Doña Ana. He continued, along with them, to look for a house until they found something better on Elvira street, where they moved on 29 August 1582. He also helped them in the choice and purchase of the final house, that of the Gran Capitán, where they established their residence on 8 November 1584 and have remained up to this day.

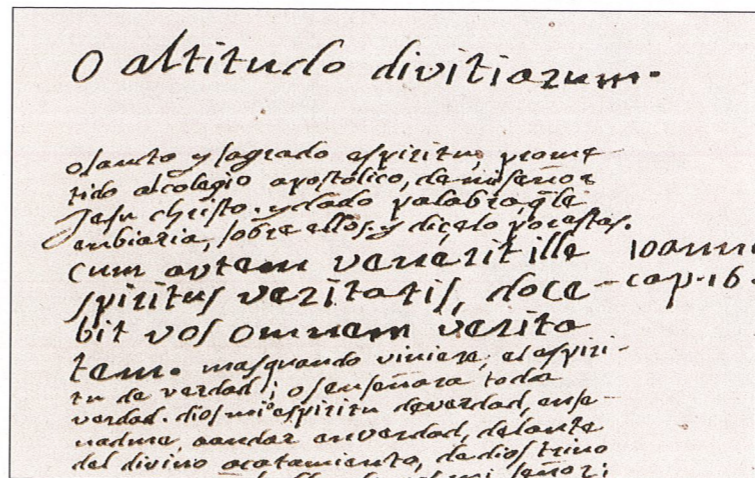
Six years of continual contact on both an individual and community level left its trace. To assist the sick nuns, he often entered the monastery. Especially during the first months of their life in the final house, they had the opportunity to observe him and speak with him at close hand. The enclosure had not yet gone into effect because of renovation work that had to be done on the house. María de la Cruz noted the way he celebrated Mass in the their oratory during those months: "He said Mass with a great spirit of reverence, not too quickly or too slowly, at a very



Granada. Discalced Carmelite nuns. Book of professions, f. 2r. Signature of Isabel de la Encarnación on her record of profession, 14 June 1584. Close to Fray John, she had a portrait done of him. She became the foundress of Baeza and then Jaén, where she died.

Granada. Discalced Carmelite nuns. Book of professions, f. 10r. Signature of María de la Cruz (Machuca) on her record of profession 9 October 1586. Ubeda. Discalced Carmelite nuns. Archives. Original manuscript of María's treatise *Del amor y riquezas de Dios*; fragment, vol. I, f. 132r. Endowed with rich mystical experience, this disciple of John of the Cross "was the most fruitful writer among the discalced nuns in Spain" (Silverio de Santa Teresa).

Granada. Discalced Carmelite nuns. Corridor (right) and the stairway (below) providing access to the rooms that were used during adaptations of the house bought from Don Luis Fernández de Córdoba in 1584. During the complicated process of adapting the building, John of the Cross helped as an overseer.





Granada. Discalced Carmelite nuns. The early upper cloister in the part the nuns occupied for some time. John of the Cross used to go up there to minister to them.



prudent and devout pace." Being in familiar surroundings, he could express his devotion spontaneously. There was on the altar in the choir a small, beautiful statue of the Infant Jesus asleep and with his head resting on a skull. They placed it there during the Christmas feast days. When John would enter the monastery to visit a sick nun, they would lead him by way of the choir so that he could visit the Infant Jesus. He would kneel down, venerate the image, and leave the choir. One day, after rising, he took the statue in his hands and exclaimed with an enkindled heart: "Lord, if love is going to slay me, this is the time and place." Yet they knew him also in moments when he was dangerously ill. He once nearly died in the church at the foot of the altar. It was the year of the epidemic in Seville, in 1582, which also reached Granada. Within the same week two of the friars in Los Mártires died. On one of these days John was celebrating Mass in the church of the discalced nuns when an intense pain and fever came over him. They placed him on a mattress and took him out of the church to the guest room in the nun's monastery. The doctors prescribed complete isolation. The whole community anxiously prayed that he would not die or spread the contagion. Anne of Jesus sent a relic of St. Teresa to be placed on the sore. At once he began to get better, and then went back up to his monastery at Los Mártires.

As a result of his many trips down to the monastery, that monastery still speaks today with living memories of St. John of the Cross: the chapel, the sacristy, stairs, speakroom, statues, paintings, and other objects. The pres-

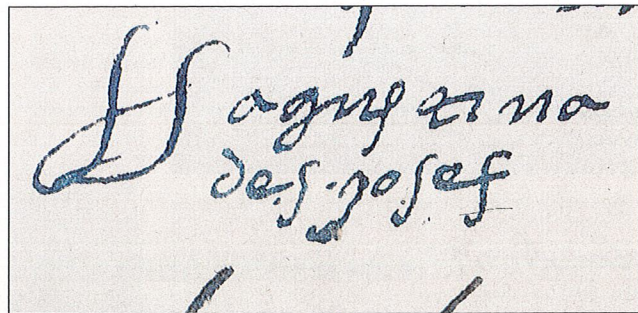
ervation of this edifice compensates to a certain degree for the total demolition to which the monastery of Los Mártires was irrationally condemned.

## Spiritual Educator

The predominant motive for which John of the Cross maintained his relationship with the community of the discalced nuns was their spiritual formation. There were many strictly religious moments: the Eucharist, profession of vows, confessions, spiritual direction, and so on. He also read his poems for them and comment-

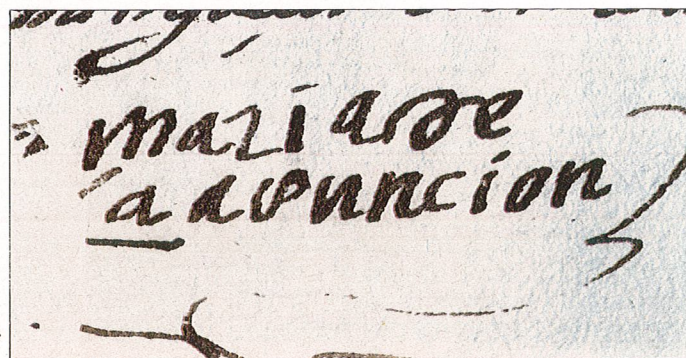
ed on them and on his other writings.

He gave equal attention to all and showed a readiness to serve them. The nuns noted this as did also the friars. One of them tells us: "He looked only at the need that he felt the souls had, and did not consider whether one was a novice, professed, lay, or choir Sister. And this is the way I saw him act in Granada. And the said holy Father used to call for the one who among the nuns seemed to understand less so as to instruct her. This made the nuns realize that he understood the need of souls and according to this need called for them" (Agustina de San José). The testimony and the details abound in this matter of the content



Granada. Discalced Carmelite nuns. Book of professions, f. 15r. Signature of Agustina de San José on her record of profession 17 May 1588. One of the young women directed by John of the Cross at Granada, she was the sister of Isabel de la Encarnación and went with her on the foundations of Baeza and Jaén.

Granada. Discalced Carmelite nuns. Book of professions, f. 11r. Signature of María de la Asunción on her record of profession 19 October 1586. Having given her the habit, John had later to exorcise her. It was not the only exorcism he performed in Granada.



and style of his oral teaching.

In the midst of so much care and thoughtfulness, he reserved the freedom to change his style when he thought it necessary. In his method, mortification occupied an important place. On Ash Wednesday, without previous warning, he left the whole community without Communion. He continued on with the Mass as though he had forgotten. They made signs to him, and he acted as though he hadn't noticed. At the end of the Mass, they made explicit mention of this to him. He clarified the matter and gave a reason for the omission: "Today is a day to spend in the ashes, exercising yourselves in self-knowledge." The nuns were convinced that these times for mortification or freedom on the part of John of the Cross had a particular efficacy for breaking monotony in spiritual things.

Commentaries, instructions, letters, notes, sayings, points written down from community and personal talks, portraits; these were all a part of a real treasure received directly from St. John of the Cross that the nuns in Granada possessed. Sister Agustina de San José was the guardian of it all. "She considered, looked after, and esteemed them as she would the letters of St. Paul." Her personal notes from John's talks and counsels made a pile about an inch high.



Granada. Discalced Carmelite nuns. A cell dating back to the time when John used to assist the community inside their definitive monastery. This was not the only community of women that he assisted. Two groups of Carmelite beatas located near Los Mártires also enjoyed his spiritual direction.

Unfortunately almost everything was lost or had to be destroyed in 1591 when an impassioned visitor demanded the papers and mementos with the intention of calumniating Fray John. They preferred to burn them rather than let them fall into his hands.

## Ah, Don Rodrigo!

In this open relationship with the community, as already mentioned, each nun had her special reasons for confiding and trusting in the Saint. All of them loved him and felt loved by him.

There was, nonetheless, a special friendship between himself and Anne of Jesus that originated in Beas. In her office as superior, she also had a greater need and occasion for speaking about different matters with Fray John. The community knew this and was happy about it. John explicitly dedicated his commentary on the *Spiritual Canticle* to her, and in it praised her highly. Here were two great and free souls. One simple story makes manifest the freedom with which the Saint reprimanded her, and the gracious manner in which Anne of Jesus related the occurrence to the whole community.

One day Fray John came to the speakroom and asked for Anne because of a certain matter they had to discuss. She came and began the conversation. She told him about how she had been speaking a moment before

Granada. Discalced Carmelite nuns. First oratory on the upper floor of the monastery where John celebrated Mass for the nuns while the church was being prepared. His ministry in their regard was always marked by charity and discretion. He made no distinction of persons; he was not in a hurry with any soul. His capacity to discern spirits was impressive.





with a gentleman from Granada, whose name was Don Rodrigo. She had just said goodbye when Fray John arrived. Because of Don Rodrigo's human and religious gifts, perhaps because of a donation, Anne of Jesus was "delighted." The prior introduced his topic and began to explain. Each time he said something, Anne turned the conversation in the direction of her feelings: "Yes, Don Rodrigo also told me this." The Saint would then go on with the subject, and Anne would then change to her channel: "Don Rodrigo told me." Fray John of the Cross saw what was happening and intentionally changed the subject. She again slid back into her thought pattern.

Finally, Fray John, "smiling," noted: "Ah, Mother Anne, your head is filled with Don Rodrigo!" This was enough and more than enough for the prioress to become aware of her distraction.

The Saint's words in their context seemed both amusing and enlightening to her, and she herself told the story to her nuns naturally, confessing her own weakness. It became a proverb in the language of the community. When some Sister spoke a great deal about the world and things she was fond of, the others would say: "Ah, Sister, your heart is filled with Don Rodrigo!"

## In the Service of All

The special attention given to the communities of both friars and nuns did not absorb all John's time and energy. Many people came to the monastery, and he visited others outside of it. Because of its being in an isolated area, the church at Los Mártires was not much frequented by the people, as in Baeza, and thus did not lend itself to an apostolate by the friars. Nonetheless, the Carmel gradually became known as a spiritual center especially after John's arrival. The wealthy came to the monastery to give alms; the poor came to seek alms. Both groups came for the sacrament of penance or for spiritual conversation.

The same attitude of welcoming and helping all without distinction of persons that John showed in dealing with the friars and nuns was repeated with the laity. The friars noted this. "In the city of Granada he used to hear the confession of a mulatto whose name was Potenciana and another whose name, I think, was Isabel de Jesús, and other poor people who had nothing in the world with which to serve his self-interest. He listened to them with so much zeal that no distinction could be made between the poor and the influential people who came to him for confession" (Baltasar de Jesús).

To many simple, recently converted people who hardly knew the catechism, he devoted weekly hours of spiritual direction. This was a surprising attitude for a writer in John's class who had at hand a number of works written by masters that he had not finished reading. He left them aside to attend to living persons who were seeking him in some need.

Also the poor and the beggars in Granada had learned that the new prior of Los Mártires seemed to have an abundance and was generous. They lined up at the monastery. In the years of the general famine, almost everyone belonged to the poor. The monastery porter received orders not to turn anyone away without help, little or much, according to what was possible. He was surprised that the store was not depleted, especially the grain that the people were asking for. We already mentioned that Fray John did not give only from the monastery surplus, but from what the monastery had for itself. More than once, he gave from what the community needed for itself. This solicitude for helping everyone, even when they didn't ask, if he saw a need, led him at times to act on impulse. When he finished meeting with some of his directees and it happened to be time to eat, he would invite them to eat at the monastery rather than go down to the city. There was a priest

who used to come frequently for confession to the prior. He was Maestro Nuñez. The one who noticed the worn out tunic on Luis de San Angelo, observed that the old cassock the priest was wearing would have served better as a relic than as clothing. He made a rough calculation of the measurements and sought money to buy him a new one. When Maestro Nuñez came to the monastery one day, Fray John gave it to him tactfully wanting to surprise him. The surprise was on John when the priest refused the gift explaining to the prior, "Don't think I go around like this out of need, but I really want to serve God." John of the Cross had found a twin soul with the same likes as himself. More than once he reminded his friars of this lesson in poverty and humility.

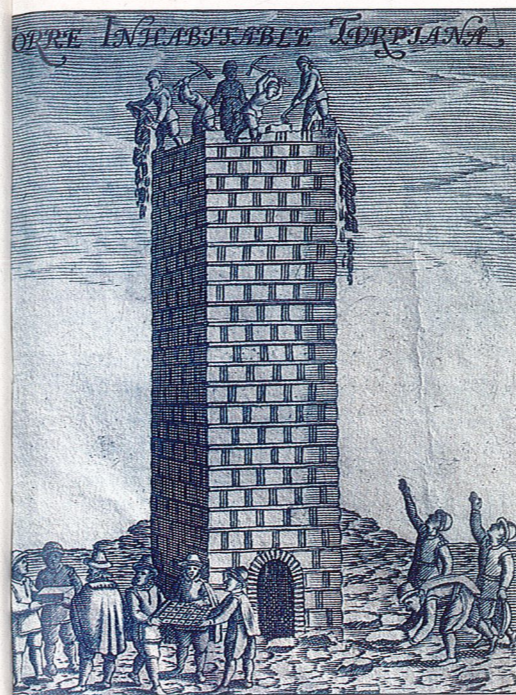
Among the persons with whom John had a special friendship was Juana de Pedraza, a young, 25-year-old woman who went to him for spiritual direction. So many little things surprised her: before she would speak to him, he would understand her, what she was undergoing, what she wanted. There were external things too. One day when she finished her confession, he told her to wait in the church or at the monastery entrance for a specified time. Thanks to this precaution she did

not get caught in a terrible storm.

## Public Relations

This man, so given to long spiritual conversations, so ready for journeys through the countryside, experienced a kind of allergy toward official relationships. It wasn't because he felt he had to stay in the monastery; he went out for many other reasons. However, he resisted social calls; especially if paid to curry favor or receive alms. This attitude in another religious could have aroused admiration if done in humility and for the sake of recollection. In the case of a superior, it was looked on as a serious omission that would have serious, negative repercussions on donations to the monastery.

Fray John was questioned officially a number of times about his method of procedure. In one instance at the chapter in Almodóvar (1583), he was accused for not visiting enough with benefactors. Kneeling in the center of the room, John sought permission to speak and explained to the chapter members: "If the time spent in visiting and seeking alms were spent with our Lord, seeking him for the good of

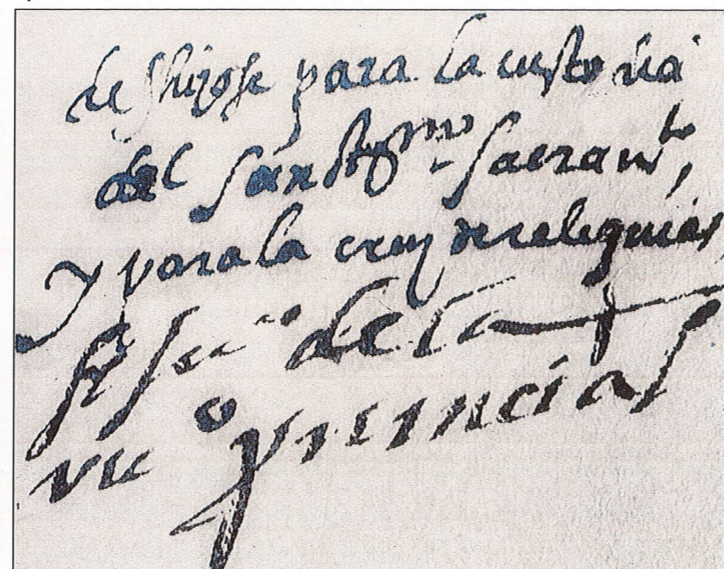


Francisco Heylan, 16th-17th c. Engraving of the Torre Turpiana, a minaret destroyed in 1588. During the demolition, important relics and sheets of lead were found with cabalistic inscriptions. Archbishop Mendez de Salvatierra named John of the Cross a member of the commission of theologians charged with studying the question.



Ubeda. Discalced Carmelite friars. Statue of the infant Jesus that John, in an impulse of divine love, took in his arms and began to dance with on Christmas of 1585.

Granada. Discalced Carmelite nuns. Book of Inventories, John of the Cross's handwriting. As vicar provincial, he took part in the administration of the community. Referring to a precious object he noted: "used for the Blessed Sacrament monstrance and for the cross of the reliquary. Fray John of the Cross, vicar provincial."



Granada. Chancery or Royal Audience Hall. The beautiful mannerist façade by Francisco del Castillo, which Fray John saw under construction and completed in 1587. Though he was little inclined to visit seculars, in 1582 or 1583 he did go, at his superiors counsel, to visit the president — a powerful man of the time — Don Pedro Vaca de Castro y Quiñones.





◀ *Granada, Abbey of Sacromonte. Anonymous. 17th c. Portrait of Don Pedro de Castro y Quiñones. In 1590 he succeeded Méndez de Salvatierra, as archbishop of Granada. During his episcopate the discovery of evidence analogous to that of 1588 shook the religious world of the time. John of the Cross, already dead, was confirmed through error as a consulting theologian to examine the new discovery.*

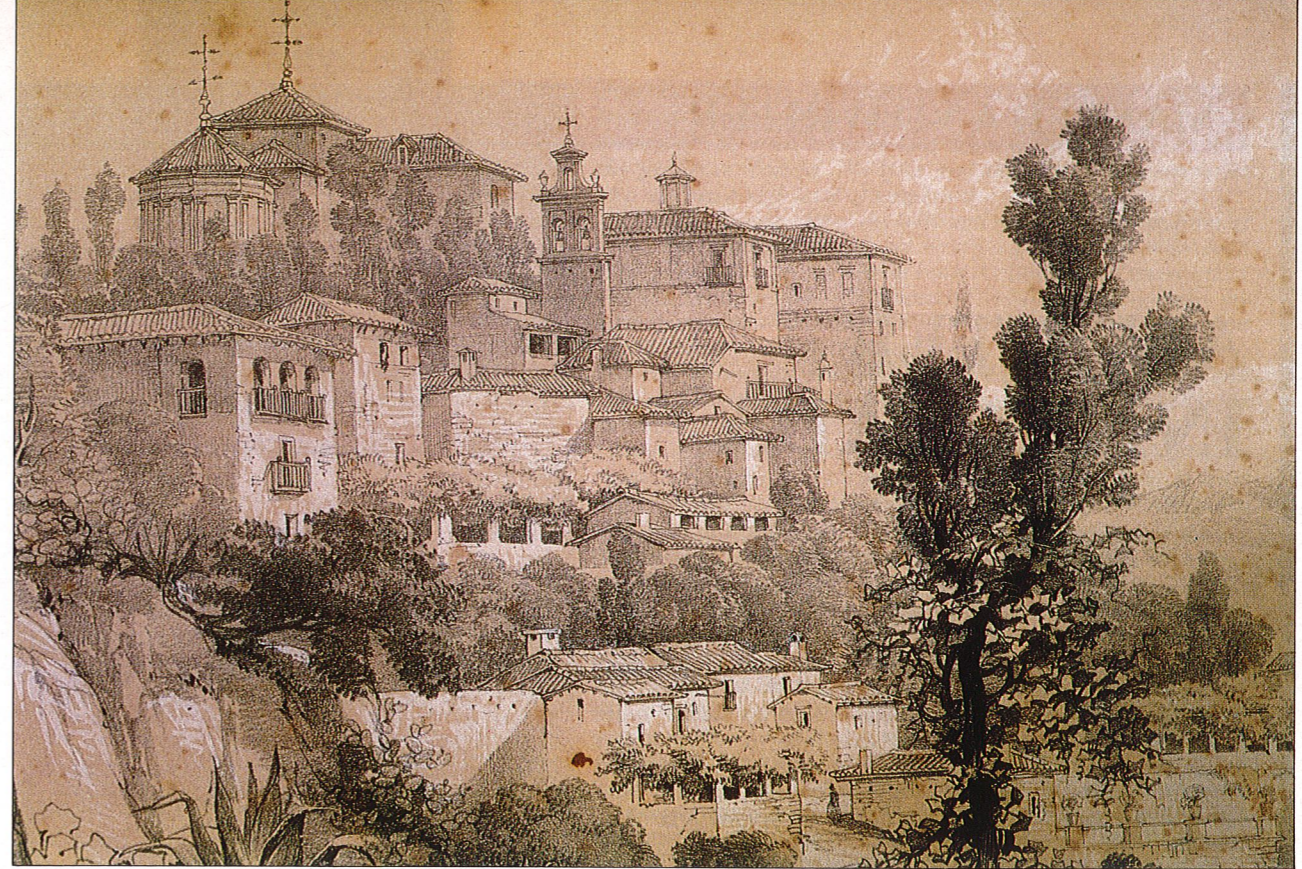
ILUSTRÍSIMO Y VENERABLE SEÑOR DON PEDRO DE CASTRO Y QUIÑONES. FUNDADOR MAGNÍFICO DE ESTE SACRO-MONTE; PRESIDENTE INTEGRÍSIMO DE LAS DOS CIUDADES DE ESPAÑA; DIGNÍSIMO ARZOBISPO DE GRANADA Y SEVILLA; DEL CONSEJO DE CASTILLA &c. &c.

investigation of the authenticity of the relics of the Torre Turpiana. When it was torn down, bones and remains were found that some claimed belonged to ancient saints. The matter became unexpectedly complicated, and it dragged on for centuries. We don't know what the mystical doctor's opinion was. All that is known is that he was appointed a member of the commission by the archbishop.

During those years a strange incident in John's life took place. The city authorities invited the poet Luis de Góngora for the inauguration of the grand palace of the chancery in the Plaza Nueva. John passed by it as often as he went to and from the city. He saw the façade of the palace as it was being built. In 1586, when the building was substantially completed, the inauguration took place.

For this occasion Góngora composed and declaimed his *Romance a Granada*. The poem concluded: "Granada of celebrities/ Granada of seraphs/ Granada of antiquities." He never suspected that among the people, or only a short distance away, at that very time there was a seraph, both mystic and poet, who in time would become one of the glories of the city. They were two intense poets; both were surely seen, but they did not know each other.

Federico Ruiz



George Vivian, *Spanish Scenery*. London, P. & D. Colnaghi & Co. 1838, table IV. Monastery of Los Mártires in 1833-37. Lithograph. This was one of the last representations of the Carmel of John of the Cross. Lost to the order in 1835, it was demolished in 1843. In its place arose the celebrated Carmen de los Mártires, today the property of the city.

these persons and that he might move them to help us, and through this prayer these persons provide help, why does one have to visit them, unless they have a particular need or as a work of charity?" The Saint's reasoning convinced the chapter and it did not insist any more. But the complaints continued in the province, and the vicar provincial gave him orders to resume the visits, especially to the president and judges of the chancery whose almsgiving was the more frequent and substantial. There was nothing else to do. The prior chose Jerónimo de la Cruz for his companion and told him: "Get your mantle, for they say we have to make the visits." This time he was lucky. They first visited some judges and went to the president's house. Fray John begged pardon for not having come more frequently and did so most graciously. The president thanked him for the visit and also had some forgiving words: "We consider your obligations to us taken care of if you fulfill, as you do, the obligations you have toward our Lord; indeed, with the many things to be done here, we hardly have time to rest." John learned his lesson and drew his conclusions: "Our Lord has shown that he doesn't expect us to be visiting and

paying our compliments to people in the world, for there are so many who look after those things; he wants us to be for himself alone." That was the last courtesy call made by the prior. He went straight back to his monastery. No one brought the subject up again.

When any persons of authority came up to visit Los Mártires, he received them with esteem and friendliness. But he made no special preparations. He received them in whatever condition he was in. If he was working, he didn't change his clothes before meeting guests. He wore the same habit he did for work in the garden.

This was not meant to flaunt the spirit of poverty, but he was merely being natural. The community and those who were close to him already knew his style. The painter Francisco Ruiz who worked for the disalced friars frequently ate in their house. He went to the refectory with everyone. Usually he received the unexceptional food the religious did. One day he also witnessed their extreme poverty. The table was blessed and grace was said but nothing was on the table. Everyone then left.

Among the official tasks that John received was to serve on a committee of theologians entrusted with an in-

## EL CARMEN DE LOS MARTIRES

Famous in Arab and Christian culture and in the history of Granada and of St. John of the Cross, the site of Los Mártires underwent numerous changes in the past five centuries. A brief overview of its history is enlightening:

**1492:** Isabella, the Catholic Monarch, gave orders for the construction of the shrine of Los Santos Mártires.

**1526:** Charles V in his visit to Granada annexed the shrine to the Royal Chapel.

**1573:** The disalced Carmelites made a foundation there and took charge of the site.

**1582:** St. John of the Cross arrived in Granada. He lived at Los Mártires for six years. As prior, he enlarged the monastery by adding cells and a quadrangle cloister, he cultivated a garden, and constructed an aqueduct. He wrote his major works there.

**1620:** The church was reconstructed and enlarged. Work began to enlarge the monastery building and to build a wall around the garden.

**1835:** The Carmelites were expelled from their monastery in the secularization ordered by the liberal government. The government destroyed the building a few

years later (1843).

**1846:** Don Carlos Calderón y Vasco acquired the property. He began constructing the Palacete (little palace) del Carmen and cultivating the gardens.

**1891:** A Belgian financier, Hubert Meersmans de Smet, bought the property, beautified the gardens, and collected works of art.

**1943:** By royal decree the Carmel of Los Mártires was declared a national garden.

**1956:** The city government became the owners of the property. It opened the gardens to the public and turned the *palacete* into a restaurant.

**1972:** Steps were taken for the construction of a large hotel on the site where the Carmel had been.

**1983:** The city council withdrew permission for further construction. It commissioned the study of a plan for the restoration of the house and gardens in the style of the 19th century. The work was brought to completion.

**1986:** The inauguration of the restored Carmen de Los Mártires with its gardens and its palace took place.



Granada. A present-day view in the park of Los Mártires.



# A WRITER IN GRANADA

Fray John had already shown his valuable gifts as a teacher, writer, and poet on previous occasions, but they came to full flower and produced fruits of the highest quality in Granada. All the riches accumulated through so many years of interior contemplation, arduous living, bible reading, and spiritual teaching are on display in the mature and brilliant writings done in Granada. The achievement resembles what he himself described in regard to the fullness experienced by saintly souls: "The soul's riches gather together here, and its rivers of love move on to enter the sea, for these rivers, because they are blocked, become so vast that they themselves resemble seas. The just one's first treasures, and last, are heaped together." (Flame 1. 30).

Granada was St. John of the Cross's writing desk. It was there that he wrote his four great prose works, some poems, letters, and other documents. He felt an overflow of inspiration. Granada was for the writer what Toledo was for the poet.

His occupations and schedule would not seem to have provided a situation favoring creative work, both literary and

intellectual: responsibilities of government, financial concerns, manual labor, spiritual formation and direction, an acceptance of all who came looking for spiritual help or alms, spiritual assistance to the Carmelite nuns, Doña Ana, and other groups. And it should be taken into account that this list represents only the first part of what this man accomplished in Granada. There are still two more chapters dealing with this period. Thus John of the Cross's writings came into being; they were lived, thought out, and written in intimate contact with daily existence. The result is dazzling. Within only four years, in his spare time, he produced a series of works of permanent doctrinal and literary value. He composed the second half of his poetry and practically the totality of his four great prose works. He was between 40 and 45 years of age.

## The Great Commentaries

Fray John had written a series of poems in Toledo and some sayings or brief writings in El Calvario. Not until this time in



Aguilar de la Frontera (Córdoba). Discalced Carmelite nuns. Anonymous. 18th c. Statue of St. John of the Cross, the writer.



Granada did he give any signs of special capacity for producing long expositions of his thought. As a result, the fruitfulness and quality of this new, creative step takes us by surprise. As with the poems in Toledo, the lyric and theological commentaries also reached a high level of excellence.

For information about the time and manner in which John of the Cross wrote his works, we have no better guide than Juan Evangelista who helped him in both the business of government and the transcription of his books: "As for what concerns my having seen our venerable Father write his books, I saw him writing all of them, because, as I have said, I was the one who was ever at his side. He wrote the Ascent of Mount Carmel and the Dark Night here in this house in Granada, little by little, for he wrote it only with many interruptions. He wrote the Living Flame of Love also in this house, while he was provincial, at the request of Doña Ana de Peñalosa; and he wrote it in 15 days while he was here with many other occupations. Where have you hidden, Beloved was the first that he wrote, and he was also here; and he wrote the stanzas in the prison in Toledo."

Continuing on, he makes some further clarifications: "I found that the Ascent of Mount Carmel had already been started when I came to receive the habit . . . ; and it could be that he had brought the beginning of it with him from there (El Calvario or Baeza). But the Dark Night was definitely written here because I saw him writing part of it; and this is certain because I saw it."

The secretary saw him composing the four great works: The Ascent of Mount Carmel, The Dark Night, The Spiritual Canticle, and The Living Flame of Love. He confirmed what other witnesses also clearly asserted: John had previously developed some pages or fragments of material that made up a part of these great works.

The witness's observations about the unequal rhythm with which the writing took place is interesting: "little by little," "with many interruptions," "with many other occupations." This fact explains the limited amount of time the mystical doctor gave to his writing, and it explains as well certain defects in his

## John writes

# THE POWER OF LOVE

### In Search of the Beloved

The soul at the beginning of this song has grown aware of her obligations and observed that life is short [Jb. 14:5], the path leading to eternal life constricted [Mt. 7:14], the just one scarcely saved [1 Pt. 4:18], the things of the world vain and deceitful [Eccl. 1:2], that all comes to an end and fails like falling water [2 Sam. 14:14], and that the time is uncertain, the accounting strict, perdition very easy, and salvation very difficult. She knows on the other hand of her immense indebtedness to God for having created her solely for himself, and that for this she owes him the service of her whole life; and that because he redeemed her solely for himself she owes him every response of love. She knows, too, of the thousand other benefits by which she has been obligated to God from before the time of her birth, and that a good part of her life has vanished, that she must render an account of everything — of the beginning of her life as well as the later part — unto the last

penny [Mt. 5:26], when God will search Jerusalem with lighted candles [Zeph. 1:12], and that it is already late — and the day far spent [Lk. 24:29] — to remedy so much evil and harm. She feels on the other hand that God is angry and hidden because she desired to forget him so in the midst of creatures. Touched with dread and interior sorrow of heart over so much loss and danger, renouncing all things, leaving aside all business, and not delaying a day or an hour, with desires and sighs pouring from her heart, wounded now with love for God, she begins to call her Beloved and say:

Where have you hidden, Beloved, and left me moaning? you fled like the stag after wounding me; I went out calling you, but you were gone.

### Thoughts on Beauty

St. Paul says: *the Son of God is the splendor of his glory and the image of his substance* [Heb. 1:3]. It should be

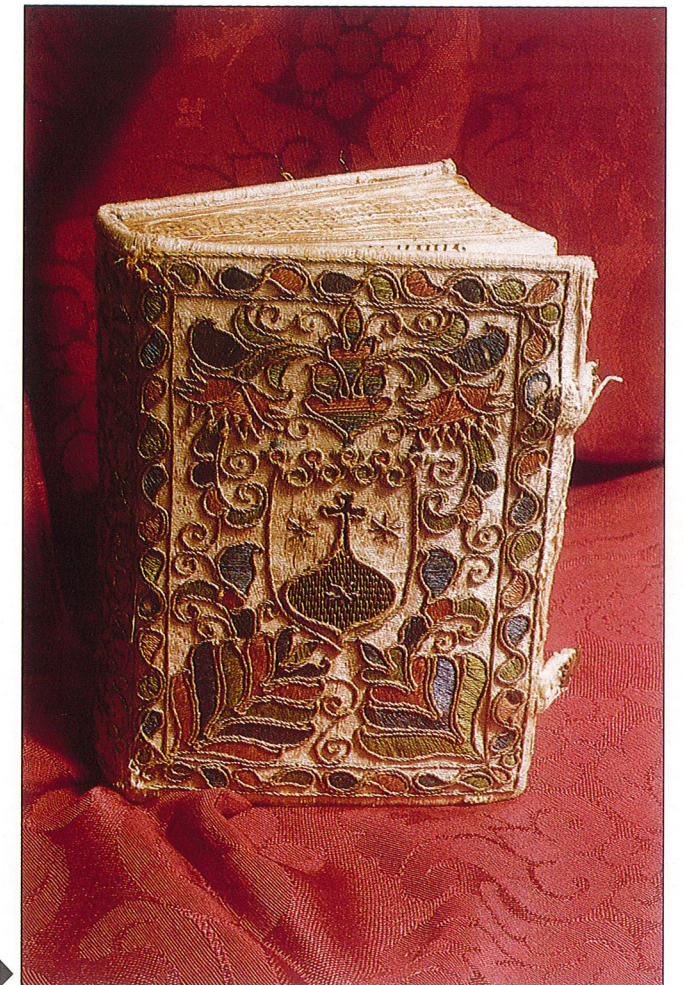
known that only with this figure, his Son, did God look at all things, that is, he communicated to them their natural being and many natural graces and gifts, and made them complete and perfect, as is said in Genesis: *God looked at all things that he made, and they were very good* [Gn. 1:31]. To look and behold that they were very good was to make them very good in the Word, his Son. Not only by looking at them did he communicate natural being and graces, as we said, but also with this image of his Son alone, he clothed them in beauty by imparting to them supernatural being. This he did when he became man and elevated human nature in the beauty of God, and consequently all creatures, since in human nature he was united with them all. Accordingly, the Son of God proclaimed: *Si ego exaltatus a terra fuero omnia traham ad me ipsum* (If I be lifted up from the earth, I will elevate all things to myself) [Jn. 12:32]. And in this elevation of all things through the Incarnation of his Son and through the glory of his resurrection according to the flesh not only did the Father beautify creatures partially, but, we can say, he clothed them entirely in beauty and dignity.

## The Tenderness of God

In this interior union God communicates himself to the soul with such genuine love that neither the affection of a mother, with which she so tenderly caresses her child, nor a brother's love, nor any friendship is comparable to it. The tenderness and truth of love by which the immense Father favors and exalts this humble and loving soul reaches such a degree — O wonderful thing, worthy of all our awe and admiration! — that the Father himself becomes subject to her for her exaltation, as though he were her servant and she his lord. And he is as solicitous in favoring her as he would be if he were her slave and she his god. So profound is the humility and sweetness of God! In this communication of love, he exercises in some way that very service that he says in the Gospel he will render to his elect in heaven; that is, girding himself and passing from one to another, he will minister to them [Lk. 12:37]. He is occupied here in favoring and caressing the soul like a mother who ministers to her child and nurses it at her own breasts. The soul thereby comes to know the truth of Isaiah's words: You shall be carried at the breast of God and upon his knees you will be caressed [Is. 66:12].

Granada. Discalced Carmelite nuns. Anonymous. Spanish school, end of the 17th c. Portrait of John of the Cross, among the first of those representing him as a writer.

Sanlúcar de Barrameda. Discalced Carmelite nuns. Codex of The Spiritual Canticle. Granada represents a period of fullness for John as a writer. There he wrote almost the Ascent of Mount Carmel, the commentary on the Dark Night, some further stanzas of The Spiritual Canticle and a commentary, and The Living Flame of Love.





work, which could have been corrected by a new, more careful draft.

The original works have not been conserved. The reason for this doesn't seem to be that they were lost, but that John himself did not want to conserve them. None of the destinées received the original copy of the work that was dedicated to them. All of them had to have a copy made. What is strange is that the author himself did not keep the originals. Where, then, did the autograph manuscripts end up? As an hypothesis, one might construct this process of composition. Fray John composed the respective work with a certain freedom; then he completed it, with annotations and corrections indicated in the margin. He next dictated it to some secretary or scribe who wrote it up in a definitive form. Then he tore up the initial draft as no longer necessary.

## The Dedication

It seems to be a simple detail, but in reality it was a gesture full of meaning. The four works all have an explicit dedication in the prologue. The most explicit and general of these dedications is seen in the formula used in the Ascent: "Nor is it my main intention to speak to everyone, but to some persons from our holy order of the primitive observance of Mount Carmel, both friars and nuns, since they have asked me" (Prol. 9).

He dedicated his writings to persons with whom he lived. They were the very ones who received his oral teaching and for whom he had his material concerns. Not only did he dedicate his works to them, but he dedicated his own self entirely to them. The writing was a continuation of his living contact and conversation with his brothers and sisters. It is seen that his tasks, more than being a trial and worry, served him as a source of experience and inspiration. He wrote the way he spoke and lived.

A certain bustling activity developed around the new writings of John of the Cross. The community learned of them and

collaborated. Tomás de la Cruz copied the Canticle; Juan Evangelista the Ascent. Notebooks were taken to the discolored nuns so that they could make copies. For several days a servant of Doña Ana de Peñalosa was there transcribing the Flame.

Still more, these very books were the subject of the prior's conferences to his community. One of the subjects, Baltasar de Jesús, recalls this: "I saw that he explained the book of the Ascent of Mount Carmel to the religious since it was so difficult to understand." He may have done the same with some pages from the Spiritual Canticle or the Dark Night.

The dedications have a religious quality about them, but at the same time a human one that reveals Fray John's sensitivity. As was just mentioned, the dedication and commentary of the Ascent-Dark Night were for the friars. Inocencio de San Andrés testified that it was he who most insisted that this work be written. It is a solid work of thought and analysis in systematic language and content.

On the other hand Anne of Jesus and Ana de Peñalosa, the two to whom the Canticle and Flame, respectively, were dedicated were women. These works are more lyrical, affective, and experiential. They were undoubtedly more suited to the sensitivities of the recipients.

One may even suspect that there was a certain friendly emulation between the two women. By 1584, Anne of Jesus already had her poem and commentary of the Canticle, dedicated to her by the author. Doña Ana de Peñalosa had received nothing similar. This placed her at a disadvantage from the viewpoint of the friendship that united the three. Fray John apologized, and in the end wrote the poem and commentary of the Flame with a very explicit dedication.

The dedication of the Canticle was the occasion of a small incident. It is clear that the name Anne of Jesus appeared in the subtitle of the work. A problem arose because in the prologue John alludes to the abundant mystical graces the destinée enjoys without repeating her name. Some editors or superiors thought that saying these things about Anne of Jesus was too much and applied the praises and experiences to St. Teresa. To do this they had to change the name that appeared in the subtitle and place

## THE POETRY OF ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

On the basis of a very limited production, St. John of the Cross has found his way to the top of the list of Spanish lyric poets. "Oh, the most poetic of all the saints . . . and the most saintly of all the poets!" (Manuel Machado). In places where his spiritual message has not reached, his incomparable verses are savored. Tied to the deepest religious experience, they are a supreme expression of mystical experience. The poetry and the mysticism fuse into a vitally unique piece, while the prose writings are but a remote translation of the deeply intimate, mystical experiences. Whereas these prose writings have an obvious pedagogical purpose, the poetry is a simple lyric song heavy with symbolic resonances.

### The Process of Composition

The years at Los Mártires in Granada were the occasion for a second string of poems similar to that of Toledo. It is distinguished above all by Fray John's use of what was called "vuelto a lo

divino" (giving to profane poetry a religious turn). This was the fashion in certain religious environments, and John did not frown on its possibilities. He raised this genre, in general uninspired, to artistic levels never before reached. Belonging to this class are "I went out seeking love," "Without support, yet with support," "Not for all of beauty," and the most celebrated, "A lone young shepherd." During this period in Granada Fray John cultivated his chosen and favorite techniques. He completed the *Spiritual Canticle* and composed *The Living Flame of Love*. First, he wrote the final five stanzas of the *Canticle* (1584), and then the stanza that became number 11 in that same work; secondly, he wrote *The Living Flame of Love*. His poetic output was completed by some short works for particular occasions. Despite the modest size of the production, John's poetic work offers a notable variety of stanzas, rhymes, and verses. He also knew perfectly well all the technical means one might use in literary and rhetorical composition. His poems can be easily grouped in different categories:

#### Poems or Canticles:

*The Spiritual Canticle*

*The Dark Night*

*The Living Flame of Love*

*The spring that runs and flows*

*The lone young shepherd*

#### Rhyming Verse or Commentaries

*I live but not in myself*

*I entered into unknowing*

*I went out seeking love*

*Not for all of beauty*

*Without support, yet with support*

#### Romances

*On the Trinity On the Incarnation On the psalm "Super flumina Babylonis"*

#### Carols

*The Word of God*

*The Sum of Perfection*

There are 15 compositions in all. They are relatively short, with the exception of the *Spiritual Canticle* and if the romances are taken as separate pieces.

### Characteristics

Indeed, it is not the size that matters. Nor is it the technical perfection in the use of means that has brought John of the Cross high recognition as a poet. The secret must be sought in the creative impulse of his genius and the lyric rapture of his inspiration. These were the decisive factors conditioning the artistic effects that were obtained in the



Granada. Discolored Carmelite nuns. Anonymous. Early portrait of John of the Cross. If not the one that Isabel de la Encarnación and Fernando de la Cruz testify was painted for them by an artist in Granada, it could be a copy. The original may have been destroyed during the persecution mounted against John in the last months of his life.

color of the images, the rhythm of the language, the cadence of the accents, and the intuition of the rhymes.

With respect to John of the Cross's poetry everything imaginable has been said. To sum up the reasons for the universal admiration of the poetry, we might note the following: The musical spell of his verse, which is due to the accentuation, the euphony produced by the alternating heptasyllables and hendecasyllables, and the exceptional rhythmic cadence.

The rapid movement of lyric narration driven by the accumulation of substantives in contrast to the reduced use of qualifiers.

The elimination of a complicated use of hyperbaton, a characteristic of those times, and a consequent simplification of the syntax.

The exquisite use of certain means that are more artistic than rhetorical: oximorons, syntagms, and alliterations.

In a special way, the inexhaustible symbolism that confers on the verses a special magic and renders them unmistakable. Rightfully, the poetry of St. John of the Cross is considered to be the first symbolist poetry in the Spanish language from both a chronological and technical viewpoint.

Eulogio Pacho

Teresa's name there. This is found, for example, in the translation printed in Rome (1627). Others, realizing that this was an injustice and falsification opted to omit the name. In this way, praise for any particular one was avoided: "It seemed fitting to leave out both of the names, our holy Mother's and venerable Anne's, as was done in the last printing in Madrid, 1630, leaving it as though it were addressed to all the friars and nuns of the order in common" (Jerónimo de San José). It was an elegant way of depersonalizing the creative works of John of the Cross.

## Poetry and Prose

St. John of the Cross's four great works come in a special form: each consists of poetry and prose closely connected. The same experiences or ideas receive simultaneously this twofold expression. His best literary and mystical creations keep this unbreakable unity of poem-commentary.

He wrote wonderfully in both forms. However, this duality of expression was not the result of a literary virtuosity. With recourse to this twofold expression, he sought in the best way possible to bring into relief the indescribable richness of the divine communication and at the same time, pedagogically, bring the reader close to it. He was mystic and master at once.

Previously these two qualities were seen separately. In Toledo he wrote the naked poems, the symbolic and evocative poetry alone. During the El Calvario-Baeza period, he wrote sayings, maxims, precautions, and other brief things, all in prose. When he arrived in Granada with his thought fully matured, he fused these two means of expression in a synthesis of poetry and prose. It is a genial synthesis that continues to cause both admiration and uneasiness in the theologian as well as in literary people.

The poem reflects the mystical experience more directly; it does so in a personal, affective, and evocative way. It presupposes in the reader some idea of the dogmatic and spiritual reality to which it alludes. It makes abundant use of symbol, which has the power of being more emotional, universal, and living.

Equally valid and useful are the commentaries. Thanks to the commentaries John wrote, we can penetrate into the secret of these verses. Explaining summarily the mystery and work of divine grace, the commentary also elucidates the gradual and rugged itinerary in the transformation of the human person. John makes use of theological, devout, and lyrical language according to the subject matter.

How should one read these composite works? As did the first readers: in a kind of circular reading. First, they knew and recited or declaimed or sang the poem. Later they read the commentary by the same author. Then they returned to the poem, which offered them new reflections on the basis of the commentary.

## Complete Works

With his expository writing efforts in Granada, the mystical doctor brought to completion all his literary work.

Only his letters extend beyond this period, and not more than a third of the 30 letters that have been conserved represent it.

An overall view of his writings can be presented as divided into two groups: the brief writings (1-4) and the larger works (5-8):

1. Poetry
2. Sayings of Light and love
3. Precautions; Counsels to a Religious
4. Letters
5. *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*
6. *The Dark Night*
7. *The Spiritual Canticle* (with two redactions (A and B))
8. *The Living Flame of Love* (with two redactions (A and B))

This is all that we conserve of the writings of St. John of the Cross: less than a thousand lines of poetry and less than a thousand pages of prose. We have a work that is deep, exalted, and relatively short.

Federico Ruiz



## TIME, SPACE, PERSONS

# GRANADA: A city in process of transformation

Granada, around 1582, was an exceptional city within the European urban system and among cities under the Castilian Crown. It always had a special charm; travelers, from the beginning of the 16th century, made an effort to highlight the peculiarities of this last Christian city of the West, magnified in fantastic ways by romantics. When John of the Cross arrived, Granada was not what it had been; but neither had it yet taken on the shape of what it was to become. It was an unfinished city in process of transformation.

### Population Changes

In the reconquest of Granada in 1492, the Catholic Monarchs encountered a city with the highest population of their realm. Contributing to its growth were the refugee Moslems who were in retreat during the long war to conquer the whole Granada

territory in southeastern Andalusia. Prescinding from estimates that were almost always a mere work of the imagination, reaching as high as 200,000 inhabitants toward the end of the 15th century, it seems more probable that the number was around 70,000. The more or less inexact estimates reflect the impression produced: a colorful variety of people and a burst of activity.

Yet toward 1580 the number of inhabitants was reduced by about one half. Natural disasters, such as floods and earthquakes, were partly the cause. There were also other crises, such as famines and plagues. John of the Cross's years in Granada were marked by an influx of poor people seeking alms and by the epidemic of 1582, which also struck him down but from which he escaped, according to Anne of Jesus, through a relic of Madre Teresa.

The European populations in those times customarily underwent such erosions, and

the people defended themselves as best they could. Granada was drained in other ways from which it never recovered: the loss of large numbers of Moslems who emigrated to North Africa at the time of the reconquest and the more painful and substantial loss of the moriscos (baptized Moslems, legally Christians) who dispersed after the great rebellion of 1568-70 in the surrounding area. One of the decisions made in that climate of fear was to uproot the moriscos crowded in El Albaicín, the most populated urban sector. Their conspiracy and complicity with the Mediterranean Berbers and Turks were always a possibility.

Granada was reduced to 33,000 inhabitants. El Albaicín, with its scores of houses piled on top of one another, swarming with people like a beehive, began to empty out. The new Christian proprietors allowed spaces, formerly filled with people, for "carmenes" (from the Arab word *karm*, meaning garden). The hill then in Fray John's time began to look more like the green countryside.

### The Christianization of a Moslem City

This change of El Albaicín, the Morisco enclave par excellence, was a symbol of the Christianization that was taking place in the Moslem city. The depletion in numbers was not total. Under one title or another, a number of moriscos remained in the city, especially the very old or the very young, those necessary for specified services, those who preferred to remain as slaves rather than be uprooted. In the end, there remained in 1580 a token minority, scarcely significant.

In accord with the political and religious convictions of the time, the Christianization of this important Moslem center required in the first place Old Christians from around Andalusia, from Castile, and even further distant Galicia, Asturias, and so on. As a result, from the moment of the reconquest to the end of the 15th century, new people came to the Granada kingdom stirred by promises of privilege and fortune. Some found their dreams fulfilled; others never got out of their poverty, as happened—to cite only one case—with the Galician Sarria family, poor beggars and parents of the one who was later to be known as Fray Luis de Granada. His social origins resembled those of Juan de Yepes. This immigration, always insufficient, was repeated in 1570 to make up for the consequences of the deportation of Moriscos. It was at this time that the discalced Carmelites founded their monastery next to the Alhambra on a somewhat inhospitable spot.

The massive baptism of the early inhabitants, who were legally converted from Moslems to moriscos around 1500, required another symbolic baptism, a baptism of edifices and their purposes. The Christianization of places of worship was hastily begun. First, taking advantage of the spaces, a well defined system of parishes

was established, more complete and modern than in Castilian cities. Among the churches with medieval titular patrons, there appeared in the mosque of Murabitín a parish church dedicated to St. Joseph — probably the first so dedicated in the history of Christianity. Gradually, the mosques took on the appearance of churches; the minarets, bell towers. At the same time, next to the parishes of El Albaicín, next to those in the plane, the lower and Christian part of the city, monasteries of religious orders were established; the old orders, right after the reconquest, and then, after the Council of Trent, the new and reformed orders.

St. John of the Cross went to Granada on one of these post-Tridentine foundations giving witness to the transformations that were taking place in an unfinished city. Among the more representative edifices were the Royal Hospital, which wasn't finished until the 17th century, the cathedral, finished in the 18th century, the palace of Charles V, and the chancery, both of which needed some finishing touches. The main mosque gradually disappeared, until in 1588 the resistant minaret collapsed.

The urban appearance, nonetheless, reflected the painful situation of the Moslem religion in the process of disappearing before the relentless imposition of the Christian religion. Yet, Christianity did not manage to erase completely the personality of the Moorish enclave of El Albaicín or extinguish the embers of a secular culture until the definitive expulsion of "all" the moriscos from Spain in 1609-14. In the meantime, and during John of the Cross's

years there, scores of moriscos lived more or less secretly in Granada.

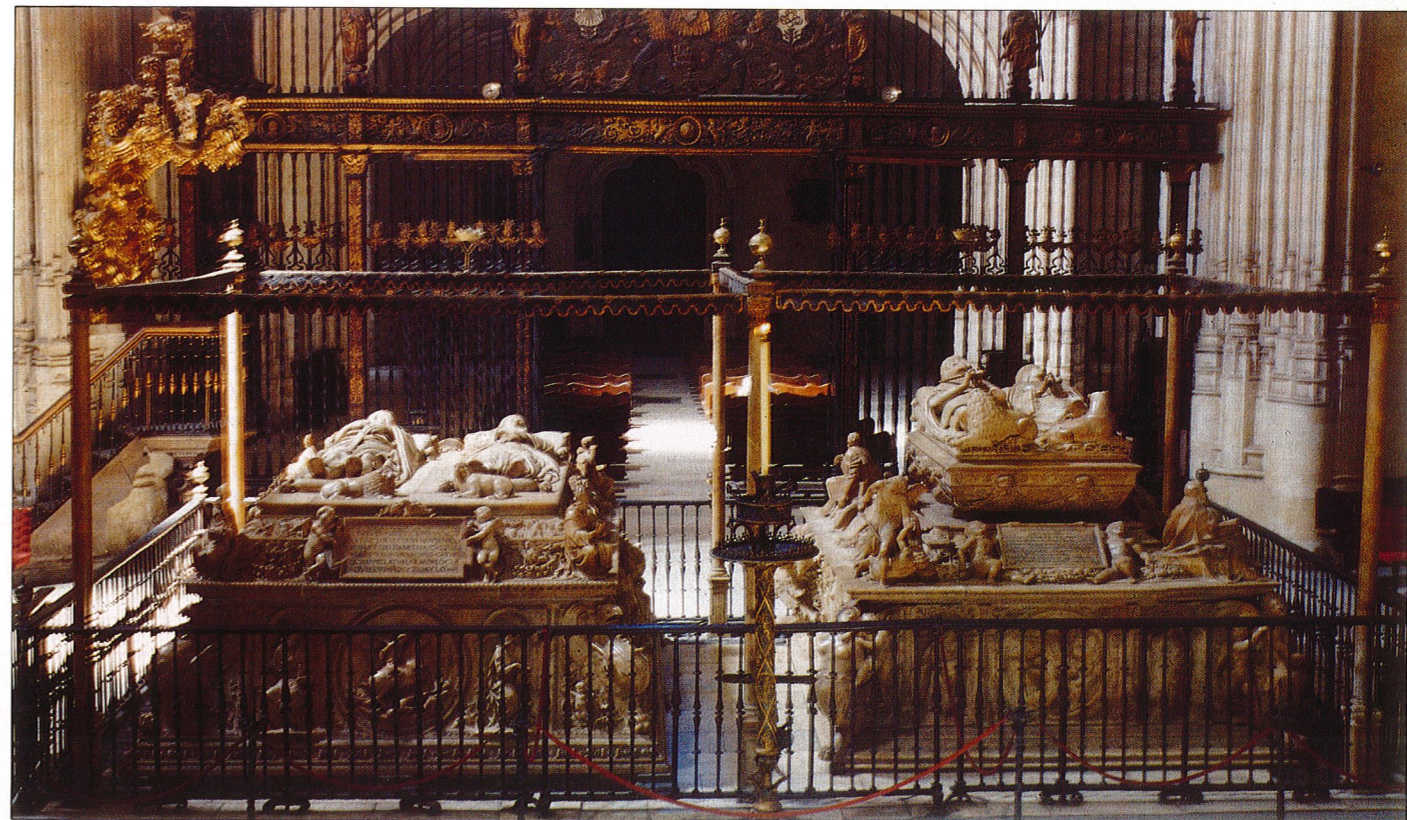
Almost all of them, protected by the Koranic *taqiyya* (external acceptance of baptism without interior and sincere conversion) and nourished by their *alfaques* (teachers), resisted popular hostilities and official offensives (from civil authorities and the Inquisition) to despoil them of their cultural identity. They kept this identity in their way of dressing, their dietary taboos, their names (in public, the name given in Christian baptism; in private, the name bestowed in Moslem baptism — *fada*), their religious practices, such as the *ablution* bath (*guada*), the prayer (*zala*), the recitation of the Koran (*fatihá*), the language (Arabic), and the use of Arabic characters in writing. After the great *rebellion* of the Alpujarras, in the demolition of El Albaicín, there was found in the "hole of a wall more than 60 volumes of books dealing with the Koran and the entire Moslem sect." Many moriscos, in their houses or in their clothes, hid books denounced by the Inquisition in 1570.

Speaking of the Inquisition is equivalent to insinuating many things about the climate of intolerance between the two religions, of the absolute incompatibility of two cultures, and of the impossible survival of the weakened minority. Historical sources of every kind reflect the myths and fears that were sewn and that germinated relative to the morisco "danger." It was not strange that the Cortes in 1580 demanded the radical expulsion of the moriscos from the Spanish realms.

In spite of all, one still found the air filled with Moslem elements; above all in



Granada. The Royal Chapel, 16th c. Coat of arms and tomb of the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella. After the conquest of the city, a process of total transformation began of which John of the Cross was a witness. The Moslem, Christian, and morisco components gave rise to a unique religious, social and cultural environment.



Granada. The Alhambra. Patio de los Leones, one of the most classic expressions of the Arab civilization that left its mark on Spain. It would not have been unusual if John of the Cross had more than once walked along the patios of the Alhambra. It was close to Los Mártires and linked to the Hurtado de Mendoza family, benefactors of the discalced Carmelites.





◀ *Granada. The Royal Hospital founded by the Catholic Monarchs in 1504. The classification of the important places in Granada, as deduced from the plan of Ambrosio de Vico (1590), represents the basic structural standard then in vogue: gates of the city, parishes, monasteries, colleges, and hospitals.*

Granada where the city and its culture could not be despoiled of a long and deeply rooted tradition.

## A Bureaucratic City

Like its land, Granada was a city pampered in a certain sense by the Monarchs. Convinced that their conquest would confer on them special rights, they became patrons, that is, proprietors of large jurisdictions that were not purely spiritual. The Granada church (like that in the Indies) was ruled by what was called the "royal patronage," a kind of quasi pontificate. As a result, the Catholic Monarchs and Charles V endowed Granada with a structure that controlled, in their name, the civil, military, and religious administration, converting Granada into the most bureaucratic city in their kingdoms.

From the time of the reconquest, the military power established itself in the bas-

tion of the Alhambra, residence of the commanders and captains charged with the security of the Moorish city, the mountains, and the coasts of the kingdom threatened by Islam. It was a duty and a most high honor that was passed on in the Mendoza family, the marquises of Mondéjar (Don Luis Hurtado de Mendoza, the fourth marquis, was the captain general during John of the Cross's years near the Alhambra).

The religious power belonged to the archbishop. The first was the well known Fray Hernando de Talavera (1492-1507), very sympathetic toward the Moslem population, placed there by his penitent Isabella the Catholic. Don Pedro Guerrero (1546-76) was the Tridentine bishop committed to impressing a new, reformatory stamp on his diocese. Don Juan de Salvatierra (1576-88) was the ninth prelate, whose successor was Don Pedro de Castro, known among other things for his burning defense of the monumental falsification of documents, relics,

engravings, and books found in the Torre Turpiana or in the Sacromonte and claimed by the falsifiers to be from the most remote times.

A city like Granada could not be deprived of the district tribunal of the Inquisition, specializing in the control of the moriscos, punishing the many followers of the Mohammedan sect, reconciling them, or sending them to the stake according to the seriousness of their crime against the faith. Throughout the whole of south-eastern Andalusia the case of the English Carmelite, Fray Alberto de la Cruz, was passed on by word of mouth. He was a "Lutheran" lay brother, condemned to the flames for his "heresy" and his provocative propositions: "that the devil would cause Spain and everyone in it to sink because if a man says one word they immediately cast him into hell." Echoes of the eight most solemn autos-de-fé celebrated between 1582-88 in the Plaza Nueva or in the church of Santiago must of re-sounded in the monastery of Los Mártires.

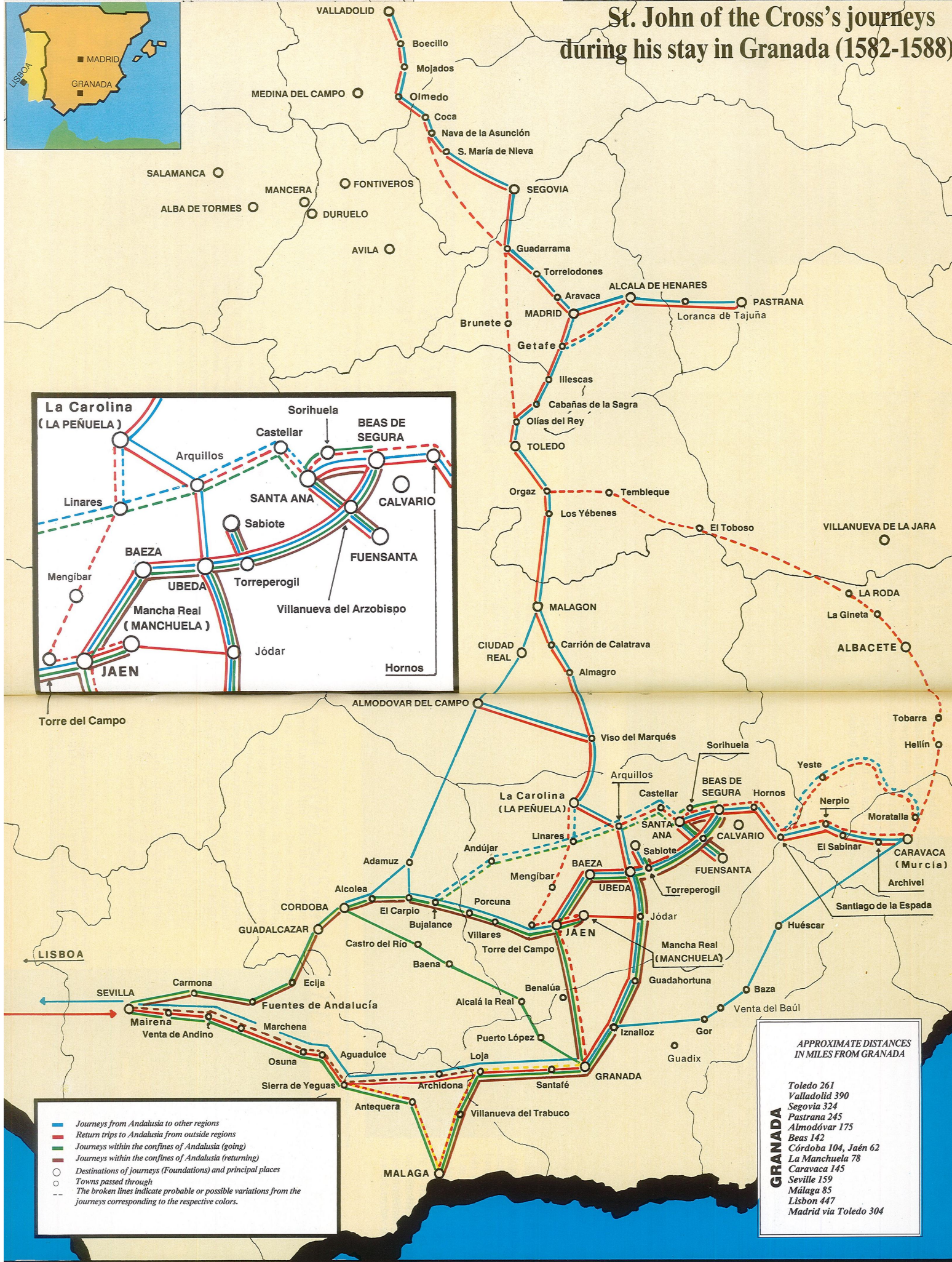
The university did not then have great prestige or high enrollment if compared with the three major ones in Castile: Salamanca, Valladolid, and Alcalá. The most prestigious and best paid offices were the high positions in the chancery, the Spanish justice tribunal for the region south of the Tajo river, which moved from Ciudad Real to Granada in 1505. Not until 1587 was the chancery able to establish its seat in the palace of the Laza Nueva, an edifice suited to its dignity. Its presidents-representatives of royal power-were usually ecclesiastics who ended by being archbishops or cardinals. The biography of St. John of the Cross during his Granada years, the concern of some that as prior he pay a visit to the president of the chancery, the beneficent action of judges and counsellors at law indicate the social weight of the urban oligarchy.

Granada, a Moslem and Christian city, and Fray John of the Cross, prior of Los Mártires next to the Alhambra and who lived in Andalusia for 10 years, are factors that have induced some to think of possible Moslem influences on the mystic. (Some even suspect morisco origins on Juan de Yepes's maternal side.) Nonetheless-without entering into the discussion-what Castilian, Aragonian, Valencian, and, above all, Andalusian in that 16th century would not have shared in the components of the assimilation? Would not the images and words from that mental universe that perdured after so many centuries, in which Moslems and Christians encountered each other, lived together, and also experienced each other's rebuffs, have left their mark?

Teófanés Egido



# St. John of the Cross's journeys during his stay in Granada (1582-1588)



The itineraries of John of the Cross during his years in Granada, from 1582 to 1588, are sketched here keeping in mind the biographical data and the travel books of his time (Colón, Navagero, Villuga, and Meneses). In addition to Fontiveros, the names in capital letters indicate places where there were monasteries of the Teresian reform. In general, current names are used for the towns, to which are added in parentheses and in capital letters the names used in the 16th century. In sum, these are the known journeys: 1583: Granada - Almodóvar - Granada. 1585: Granada - Málaga - Granada; Granada - Lisbon - Málaga - Granada; Granada - Caravaca - Baeza - Pastrana - Granada. 1586:

Granada - Córdoba - Seville - Córdoba; Córdoba - Madrid - La Manchuela - Granada; Granada - Málaga - Granada; Granada - Caravaca. 1587: Caravaca - Beas de Segura - Bujalance - Madrid - Caravaca - Baeza - Madrid - Segovia - Valladolid - Granada. 1588: Granada - Málaga - Granada; Granada - Madrid - Segovia, and perhaps Segovia - Granada - Madrid - Segovia. According to trustworthy witnesses, there were other journeys during those years: Málaga - Seville. Jaén - Bujalance - Córdoba - Jaén. Granada - Jaén - Granada. In addition, it is known that, as vicar provincial, he visited the monasteries once a year.