

Between Time and Eternity

JOHN OF THE ANGELS ON *The Conquest of the Divine Kingdom*

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"You will also know that the spirit is in this world midway between time and eternity, and if you elect to walk with exterior things and are converted to time, that is, if you become temporal by loving temporal things, you will, without doubt, forget eternity".

JUAN DE LOS ANGELES was born Juan Martinez in Oropesa, near Avila, in the year 1536, some twenty-one years after the birth of Avila's most famous personage, Saint Teresa of Jesus. The conspiracy of silence which enveloped John of the Angels after his death in 1609 has removed any certainty from statements concerning the time and place of his birth and from those concerning his early years. But circumstantial evidence points strongly to the Avilan beginnings.

It appears that Juan Martinez entered the University of Alcalá at the age of seventeen to study Greek and Hebrew and to perfect his knowledge of Latin. After the University, he joined the Franciscan Order, probably in the Province of San Gabriel, and by 1562 we find him professed as one of the Discalced Franciscans under the name of "de los Angeles". The following ten years were spent under the severe disciplines of monastic life, although he was permitted to further his studies by visits to masters, including Friar Luis de Leon at Salamanca. By 1572 he was delivering his first addresses as a Professor of the Order and preacher in the Royal Court in Madrid, having been named Confessor to the Royal discalced the previous year. By his mid-thirties, Fray Juan de los Angeles was already a power in that world which was to count Saint John of the Cross, Saint Teresa of Avila and Luis of Leon as contemporary products of the Spanish mystical genius.

Shortly after the founding of a new Franciscan monastery in the city of Zamora in 1578, John of the Angels was sent as Official Preparator or Preacher. It was in the quiet of this monastery that he composed his first writings—a series of devotional poems; and he seems to have at least begun here his first published work: *Triunfos del Amor de Dios* (Triumphs of the Love of God). In spite of favorable notices this work did not become popular and it remained for another study to establish him as a major writer of his period.

This latter work is associated with his life in Seville. He was sent in 1589 to found a house in this bustling city on the Guadalquivir river, then a major port for the trade of the Indies and a place which so reeked of wealth and fleshpots that Saint Teresa was appalled by the atmosphere. But Fray Juan was much taken by the walled gardens, the orange blossoms, the fishing fleets anchored beside tall galleons returned from Mexico and

Panama. He entered his duties as Provincial Commissary of the Province with great skill and energy. Soon the new foundation was completed and he was invited to speak in the major pulpits of Seville. But such was his eloquence and popularity that in time he aroused the envy and jealousies of the established clergy there and he found himself the object of ill-will, slander and petty persecutions. For the next three years he continued his Seville assignment, bringing to a successful conclusion the development of the Church of San Diego de Sevilla. During this time, he began work on his *Diálogos de la Conquista del Espiritual y Secreto Reino de Dios*. A selection from this work has been chosen for the present English translation.

Not long after the celebrations marking the completion of San Diego de Sevilla, John of the Angels left the Andalusian capital—probably late in 1592 or early the following year. The violent arguments which had marked his stay involved not only other Franciscan groups but his own discalced brothers and concerned principally matters of jurisdiction and precedence. It was the sort of bitter experience shared by Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross in Andalusia. The Franciscan father fled Seville to the comparative peace of Portugal where he was welcomed by the friars there and by the Archduke of Austria, then governor of the territory. He now had opportunity to complete the *Dialogues*. Some time during 1593, he returned to Madrid and received approval of his new work by his superiors. It was another two years, however, before the book could be published because Juan de los Angeles was immediately called upon to make visits of inspection to five provinces as distant as Valencia. Most of this visitation was upon foot and under the most difficult and fatiguing circumstances that left no time to attend to matters of writing or publication. By 1595 he was again in Madrid where he saw to the printing of the *Dialogues*. They were dedicated to Cardinal Alberto, Archduke of Austria, who had welcomed him so cordially to Portugal after his tribulations in Seville.

The new publication was accepted by the public and, in contrast to his earlier *Triunfos*, sold so well that all the early editions were quickly exhausted. If Juan de los Angeles had written nothing but the *Dialogues*, his position among sixteenth century religious writers would have been assured.

Three more years of administrative responsibility in Madrid and Guadalajara ended when he was appointed to the office of General Visitor. Ironically, we find him by the middle of the year 1598 again in Seville. But this time those who had caused him such grief six years before were now bound to render him respect and obedience and to accept him as judge and arbitrator in questions involving the Provinces of Andalusia. Those same brothers who had quarreled over jurisdiction of the house established by Fray Juan on his first visit, now accepted an agreement which he forwarded to the Pope. Other disputes between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of Seville were also resolved. After a period of rest in the convent of San Bernardino, during which he worked on his *Comentarios sobre el Cantar de los Cantares* (Commentaries on the Song of Songs), he left for Rome on matters concerning the Order in the spring of 1599. He then travelled throughout Italy and France, returning to Madrid in 1600.

He resumed charge of his Franciscan house in that city and devoted himself to revising his *Triunfos* for republication. This consisted largely in condensing and clarifying the earlier work and the result was that three editions were made within a few years and it was translated into French. The revision was brought out under the title

Lucha Espiritual y Amorosa entre Dios y el Alma (Spiritual Battle between God and the Soul).

In the next two years, events occurred which, though they brought the highest honors and responsibilities to Juan de los Angeles, were to prove disastrous to his personal life and peace of mind in the last years. In June of 1601 he was elected Minister, Predicator, Definitor and Guardian of his Province, with his residence in Madrid. The notice refers to him as "a man of great note, of fine letters and prudence".¹ He quickly set about the work of his new office, travelling constantly throughout the large area under his administration, and adjudicating disputes, particularly those involving the secular and regular clergy. Then, early in the year 1602, he was given special honors. He received appointment as Confessor to the Royal Discalced of Madrid with a special commission to attend the Princess, Sister Margarita de la Cruz. At the same time, Empress Maria of Austria made him Predicator of her royal chapel. For all his abilities, the combination of offices placed an impossible burden upon his time and energy. He found it necessary to make a choice of responsibilities. Pressed with obedience by his superiors not to offend the Royal Family, he renounced his office as Provincial Head.

His clerical brothers were outraged and left the following record in the official Chronicles of the Province: "The Provincial Friar Juan de los Angeles, did not carry out nor even begin to complete his three-year term of office because the most serene Empress, sister of the King, Don Felipe II, made him her Predicator and the Most Reverend General Friar Francisco de Sosa instituted him as Confessor to the discalced ladies of the Royal and very religious convent of Madrid. He had more liking for preaching and confessing than for walking on long journeys. He renounced his Provincial office after a year and a half".² A later biographer defends him, however, in these terms: "Had he not given repeated proof of sacrifice in the many journeys he had made?... Great men, such as captivate and are admired by those of noble heart, awaken jealousy and envy in timid souls... Although they did not resort to imprisoning him, as with Friar Luis de Leon... it was not insignificant the injury they did him by painting him an unworthy when he was so very virtuous... Were not too many honors heaped upon this one Friar, leaving other prelates and men neglected in their convents? The envious then tried to break this great cedar tree, stripping from it even the foliage. And since they could not compete with him for earthly honors, they contested those of heaven so that his virtue might be clouded with slurs of imperfection and none would kneel before his image nor venerate him as a saint. And in part they realized their objective... With a conspiracy of silence they concealed all that could have exalted him, concealing with such a mask that none could know him nor honor him for his virtues".³

Fray Juan de los Angeles remained with the Royal Discalced and the Empress in his declining years, devoting himself to the completion of some of his finest mystical studies. To the Empress he dedicated his *Tratado Utilisimo de Consideraciones Espirituales sobre el Can tar de los Cantares de Salomon* (Most Useful Treatise on Spiritual Considerations concerning the Song of Songs of Solomon). Although the work dealt only with the first two sections of the Song of Songs, it was a long text. After two years of sale in Spain it was brought out in a French edition and held in great esteem in Europe. He also wrote a series of essays to complete the full text of his *Manual de Vida Perfecta* (Manual of the Perfect Life), which forms the second part of his *Conquista*. In his last

days he was working on a Treatise on the Mass, *Tratado sobre la Misa*, editing *Vergel del Anima Religiosa* (Orchard of Religious Enthusiasm) and revising works which the Royal Board wished to print.

We are told that, despite his Royal patronage, Fray Juan led no life of ease. While he was confessor to many of the aristocracy of Madrid, he devoted himself tirelessly to the poor and his door was always open to the most humble peasant at all hours. He continued to accept, even in his last illness, much of the hard work and obedience of the monastic life. His last writing, *Libro de la Pasion de Jesus* (Book of the Passion of Jesus) was written for a father of the Franciscan Order. Only the first of its four parts was printed, the remainder being lost. He died in the house of the Royal Discalced in December of 1609, beloved of all whom he had served, but somehow never forgiven by his contemporary religious.

What can be said of his place in history? Though he was rejected in his day, the 18th century Franciscans considered him a most venerable man and proposed setting in motion the machinery of beatification in Rome. The Spanish critic Pablo Rouselot hails Juan de los Angeles as the psychologist and moralist of the Spanish mystics. Menéndez y Pelayo in the nineteenth century wrote, "I confess that he is one of my favorite authors: it is not possible to read him without loving him and without being pulled along by his marvellous sweetness, as angelical as his name".⁴ The Franciscan scholar, Mir, in his foreword to the *Dialogues* described Fray Juan as "one of the most illustrious theologians of his age... He exhibits all the greatness and sublimity of... the mystic doctrine of the Franciscan school".⁵

Considering the high estimates of his life and work, how can we account for the obscurity which has enveloped the man since his death? Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross were themselves involved in the most bitter disputes and knew the humiliation of rejection and persecution. Saint Teresa, at least, was also on familiar terms with royalty and nobility. Was it that John of the Angels exhibited no miracles? One of his biographers, however, refers to his "miraculous deeds".⁶ Was it that he was not tested and refined by the type of hellish suffering endured by the Carmelite saints? Yet we are told of his arduous journeys, his severe illness, his tireless devotion to the poor. Or was it that the Franciscan order did not suffer the terrible and dramatic upheaval that characterized the Carmelite reform in sixteenth century Spain, bringing both disgrace and fame to the leaders? Juan de los Angeles had no advocate after death like P. Crisóstomo who spent his last years praising and preserving the name of that same John of the Cross whom he had so cruelly persecuted in life. Nor was Fray Juan asked under penalty of obedience to write his "Life" as happened with Saint Teresa of Avila.

Whether Juan de los Angeles remains an unheralded saint or simply another distinguished member of his order, his place in the literature of Spanish mysticism is assured. The noted scholar and authority on the religious writings of sixteenth century Spain, Allison Peers, says, "In him, better than in any of his contemporaries, may be studied the psychology of mysticism".⁷

Fray Juan is thoroughly conversant with the various currents of mystical thought of his day, including, of course, the lives and writings of his distinguished countrymen, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross and Luis de Leon. He discusses fluently the works of

the Flemish Ruysbroeck, the German Tauler and others.⁸ In common with these mystics, he stresses contemplative disciplines leading to Divine Union.

It may seem to modern readers that he devalues love and service to the world and mankind by his advocacy of the interior life. Such argument might well seem to him to be beside the point. Service to mankind is, he would hold, an inevitable and natural expression of the virtue of Charity which he so stresses. But Charity is not to be found in that heart or mind bound by or obsessed with creatures, as creatures. Only when fellow creatures are recognized as not different from oneself (because they share the same Divine presence) is it possible to serve them truly and without hypocrisy. And as John of the Angels sees it, this recognition comes only through Divine grace working in the heart which has been emptied of all contrary concerns and competing loyalties. "In order that God may dwell in a soul He asks that it first be emptied of the love of all creatures, including itself". His conclusion on works: "It is not possible for me to be essentially and genuinely good and yet for God not to be pleased and proud of my works... nor, if I were of bad and leprous interior could my works avoid being themselves leprous and therefore not pleasing to God".⁹ Thus it seems clear that, although his enemies denounced him for choosing to serve as Confessor to the Royal convent of Madrid in preference to the administrative activities of the Provincial office, Fray Juan does not reject the active life—which would indeed be contrary to the tradition of his own Order. He insists rather that all works be offered to God and judged not by their apparent outer qualities but rather, whether large or small, by their inner motivation. He holds that without a continuous inner awareness of divine imperatives, the actions of the natural man are soon conformed to the ends of the Devil.

The Conquest of the Divine Kingdom is possibly the best single source for the theology of Juan de los Angeles. And the message and the content of the ten dialogues of the treatise are summarized in the first. Of it the author says, "I advise the religious and devout reader that in this one dialogue is the sum of all mystic theology and that it will serve as the fountain of everlasting life and the true road to perfect union with the Divine".¹⁰

* * *

*Concerning the interior or centred life of the soul or
Kingdom of God. On the harmony of Man and the true
understanding of the commandment of love.*

(A dialogue between friar and master, beginning with the friar alone inside the monastery. The conversation later moves to the walled garden.)

Friar: If the desire to be perfect were perfection, I would be perfect in every kind of virtue—for I spend all my life in good intentions and desires. In the secular state my desires and intentions were to enter into the religious life where God might be served and my soul might benefit. His Majesty heard them, in his infinite mercy, as he usually hears the desires of his poor, and made me one of them in the clergy. And although I confess to be, up to the present, lacking in works, I am not lacking in those earlier desires, and other

new ones—and the foremost of all is to be inwardly that which I appear to be on the outside. I am ashamed and confounded greatly that the world should judge me to be perfect and holy, when in the eyes of God there is more in me to be pitied than to be envied. Indeed, how many persons have desired the same thing in the same manner as I, but surprised by sudden and unexpected death, now burn and will burn forever in hell? And why shouldn't one who, like myself, with his hands clasped piously to his breast, consumes and ends his life in mere desiring, fear the same end? In truth I must be that unfortunate type of soul of whom Solomon spoke, "The lazy man wants but does not achieve".¹¹ I say unfortunate, because from wanting and not having is formed and solidified a desire which, far from causing to happen that which is desired, invites the penalty of the indifferent, which is to have God belch them from his stomach and expel them as vomit.¹² This is the state that the Saints refer to as "insensibility"—in which neither the consideration of heaven delights, nor that of hell frightens, where neither beneficences inspire, nor wounds pain... But, God of my soul, what do I see? Is it by chance my Master who comes here? It is he without doubt. I am not sorry, although I would be just as glad, had he not heard me.

Master: God save you, Friar Desirous.

Friar: Your health be equally enduring.

Master: What soliloquies are these which you have been carrying on with yourself, all alone, this afternoon? It pleases me to see you so desirous of your spiritual improvement, and to realize that it is not by accident, but by divine inspiration and the command of heaven that you were given the name, "Friar Desirous". Indeed, upon careful consideration, we see that a great part of good health is in desiring it. The holy Prophet said, "My soul desired to obtain your judgments at all times".¹³ The Angel called Daniel a "man of desires".¹⁴ Ejaculatory prayers, which, as the Saints say, penetrate the heavens, also are desires. The church celebrates those desires, which the Virgin, swollen with God, had of seeing Him already born into the world and in her arms. We celebrate these on the day of the "O", and all the prayers in those seven Antiphons, before the birth of the Lord, signify the desires which the Holy Fathers had that God would send the Desired One to the people.¹⁵ If this is true, as it is, why are you so disconsolate, since your desires are so many and so good?

Friar: Because those saintly desires grow within me along with countless imperfections. A thousand good intentions are accompanied by innumerable faults. No sooner has a healthy thought burst forth in my soul, than conversation and association with friends cast it aside. And following the course of the insensible ones (who are numerous) I recognize myself as a man of religion only in my robe, for in other respects I am a man of the times. The profession that I have adopted is very rigid, and I am very lax¹⁶; it announces me as dead to the world, yet I live only for the world; it denies me and prohibits all that is flesh and blood, yet I am a carnal man given over to sin; it commands me to be poor, yet I flee from poverty; and finally, all my good desires disappear in flower, and at each step I find myself caught up in bad deeds.

Master: Do not continue with this conversation, for it appears that today you are overcome by melancholy. Let us go out a while, if you like, into the garden.

Friar: We leave at an opportune time. Do you perhaps have something you wish to

discuss privately with me?

Master: Yes I have, and I want your complete attention; because that which I wish to explain does not permit divided attention, nor a man distracted and beside himself.

Friar: You have always spoken to me with honesty and without flattery, but you never cautioned me as you do now.

Master: You have probably never heard from my mouth that which I wish to say to you today.

Friar: It seems that you come as one sent by God in response to my desire, which has been to find someone who might speak to my heart and teach me things that are substantial, interior, and spiritual; for that which is commonly discussed in these clays, even among great men of saintly repute, is for the greater part exterior and of very little satisfaction to the soul.

Master: We are of the same thought, except that I am more concerned with the barbaric talk that prevails in the world on the subject of virtue than you, who were born yesterday. If you examine the matter carefully, every effort is devoted to forming the exterior man and to fulfilling the wishes of those who are so formed. He who remembers the interior and divine man is rarely found. Those who waste their time in wrong efforts should realize that the completed interior man, without any effort composes and orders the exterior man, and not the other way around. I have read that Plato made this prayer regularly to God: *Amice Deus, da mihi, ut intus pulcher efficiar; et quae exterius sunt, intimis sint arnica;* which is to say, "Friend God, make me appear beautiful to you in the interior, and make my exterior correspond and be in harmony with my interior".¹⁷

Friar: That truly is a most devout prayer and more fitting for a Christian than for a philosopher.

Master: What the holy prophet says of the soul as the wife of Christ in the 45th Psalm also applies here directly and is of even greater authority. The prophet, having described with elegant metaphors the beauties and virtues of the celestial husband, of his admirable disposition and dignity, turns to the wife and says: "That which the husband has by nature, the wife has, in the same greatness, by grace, but in her it is hidden, there within, where only the eyes of God see it and approve; although not so hidden that it fails to give some outward signs".¹⁸ In the Song of Songs, it is written that the wife, who is described as dark-skinned and slovenly, while not denying her slovenliness and dark skin, confesses that with her walks the beauty of the wife of Christ.¹⁹ "I am", she says, "like the tents of Cedar and the curtains of Solomon, on the outside black and lacking brilliance (through exposure to the sun and the buffeting of the seasons), but in the secret and interior parts filled with great riches and soft and precious fragrance". This interior should in all ways be good, as Saint Paul says.²⁰ Essentially we should seem fragrant to God.

Thus there are men who are wanton, sensual and profane yet wherever they go they leave the soft odor and fragrance of amber and musk in which they seem to be embalmed. But if you happen to examine them closely they are vile in their persons. Just so, you will find many whose sole business is to give a good odor of virtue and holiness to men, while forgetting that principally they owe this to God. These men teach themselves to bow the head, compose the hands, to be modest and lower the eyes, incline the shoulders, speak

evenly and in a devoted tone, measure their steps, and hang the rosary with its skull from the waist, and other things of this kind. They do not try to develop the interior man nor to mortify the passions, nor walk within themselves in the truly virtuous life. How little Saint Paul cared if the outward man became corrupt and was slovenly!²¹ He knew very well that from this very corruption and discomposure came the reformation and adornment of the inward man. They who really try to be perfect, imitate nature, which, not forgetting to form the exterior parts of the animal, attends first to the formation of the heart. False saints, like fraudulent works of art, are of such nature that they are not concerned with the interior substance but only with that which can be seen: the emaciated face, weeping where they can be seen, sighing in Church and making gestures (a thing loathed by God), and confessing and taking Holy Communion often because of pride and even because of the temporal benefit that is found in these exercises.

II

Friar: Then is it not good to do these things which you denounce?

Master: I do not condemn the good exterior example, nor the works in which are sought only the glory of God and edification of one's fellow man: because God wanted works to be such that men should see them and that they should glorify the Father who is in Heaven.²² What I criticize is the detaining of oneself in these things and giving all one's attention to them, not because they are for the glory of God, but rather because they are symbols of holiness. At times such works are so full of self interest that His Majesty would be better honored if we should abandon them for he is not honored by our doing them. In Amos, these fearful words are written: "Loathsome and detestable I consider your celebrations. Those perfumes and incense that you offer to me in your assemblies offend me and serve as stench to my nostrils. Do not bother to burn animals nor make other offerings to me, for I do not care to see them nor turn my eyes to them; I absolve you of the vows you have made for me that you might remain in my memory, because they do not please me. Clear away this confusion of voices and the notes of your violins, for you torment me with them".²³ These are the admonitions of God our Lord, who reproves all the services made in his church if they do not hold life, if they lack the essential thing, which is the spirit and truth with which he wishes to be served and adored.²⁴ Saint Caesarius recounts that, while musicians sang in a church with great talent and harmony, a saint present at that time saw a demon high up in the main chapel, who, with the left hand, held an open sack and with the right was catching the voices and putting them in it until he had filled it. When the service was finished, the musicians (as they were accustomed) began among themselves to praise their motet and the organ music. "How beautiful was the cornet!" said one; another, "How well so-and-so sang; what rich trills he made with his throat!" etc. The servant of God, who heard the conversation, approached them and said: "You have sung very well, for the sack is full". Surprised at this, and having learned why he said it, they were very confused and ashamed at how much they were bragging.²⁵

Friar: Was there nothing else in which to capture such soft voices than a sack?

Master: No, because the most harmonious voices in the world, if they are without spirit, are as straw in God's eyes; and so he commanded that they be put in a sack as

straw is collected for beasts²⁶. And I want you to know that the same thing which happened with those voices will be true for all corporal exercises if they lack the life which God bids that they have.

Friar: And what is that life?

Master: Listen, not to me, but to the divine contemplative Ruysbroeck whose carefully chosen words are these: "We must not so much attend to that which we do as to that which we truthfully are; because if we were good inwardly, in the intimacy of our souls, so would our works be good, and if in our most intimate interior we were just and right, so would our actions be just and right. Many attribute sanctity to doing; but they are not correct. If it can be explained in the following way, sanctity consists only in being, because no matter how saintly our works appear, they do not sanctify in themselves but only in as much as we are saintly and our works come from a holy interior or center. So much only are they holy, and no more. Therefore the holy center sanctifies all that we do, be it eating, drinking, sleeping, praying, talking, macerating the flesh with fasting and other similar things which in themselves are not wrong, but good and natural. And he has the most saintly interior and center who has the greatest love of God in his soul, and his works are more highly esteemed when the glory of God is more purely seen in them. Therefore, we should work with all care to make this intimate center good and noble and to make our actions originate in it; because, without any doubt, in it is constituted the essence and blessedness of man. Those works which are virtuous are so only because of originating there, since the good spirit exalted through the love of God in turn exhorts and perfects our works and makes them pleasing to His Majesty".²⁷

These are the views of Ruysbroeck, who, in my judgement, wanted to say that God does not look at the quantity of our works nor does he care if they are grand, but that what God heeds is the spirit from which they come. This spirit gives them their quality and character and uplifts them in the extent to which the spirit itself is uplifted and elevated by the love of God and no more. Thus in the measure that this intimate part of our spirit is greater and more saintly, and that which we do comes forth essentially and with true concern from it, so much and no more is the deed agreeable and acceptable to God. This is what the divine Scripture signified when it said: "God looked at Abel and at his gifts, being first pleased with the person who made the sacrifice, and the sacrifice was accepted in accordance with the degree of acceptance of him who offered it".²⁸ And that which was true of Abel is the same with all men of the world, whose works (in as much as they are a part of them) are accepted or not by God according to the degree to which they themselves are or are not accepted by the same God. In my soul divine love is planted, which is its life and that of all that I do. Therefore it is not possible for me to be essentially or genuinely good and yet for God not to be pleased and proud of my works, however few they may be, if, as has been said, these works carry as their end and goal, purely and without any consideration for my own benefit or comfort, His glory and honor. Nor, if I were of bad and leprous interior could my works avoid being themselves leprous and, therefore, not pleasing to God. For it is written: "The gifts of evil men are not accepted by his Highness".²⁹

III

Friar: What is this that you call the intimate part of the soul, which according to what Ruysbroeck has said should be the principal thing in us and to which we should always aspire?

Master: My answer to you is that until you have found within yourself that center or intimate part you will not have known what the interior or essential life is, which is indeed what I desire you to know and experience; since afterwards there is no necessity of rules or documents in the spiritual life. All cease at that point; and the soul once there, God takes one's hand and teaches one himself, which is the greatest blessing which can come to you in this life. As the Prophet said: "Blessed is he whom you, Lord, teach and to whom you give an understanding of your law".³⁰

Friar: But, in the end, you have still left me with my ignorance.

Master: For the time being, yes. My intention in this bit of conversation is only to inspire you to walk within yourself and towards an essentially good life—one not built upon toothpicks, nor tied to the eyes of men, but regulated according to the consent of God and guided by his interior voice. Saint Gregory says: "He who does not hide and withdraw from exterior things, never penetrates the interior ones".³¹ And he says moreover, that it is necessary to hide oneself in order to hear, and to hide oneself after having heard; because the soul which is separated from visible things perceives and contemplates invisible ones. Filled with the invisible, it scorns completely the visible and hears secretly the whisperings of the divine word, because it knows softly and secretly the occult ways of its inspiration. All of which cannot be done by him who is not accustomed to living within himself in this divine and essential center of his spirit, which properly speaking is the Kingdom of God, where He dwells in all His magnificence.³² And if I do not deceive myself, by this Kingdom is understood that which Christ says according to Saint Luke: "My kingdom is within' you".³³ And this was compared by Saint Matthew to the hidden treasure, which was hidden again by the one who found it, who after selling all his possessions, bought the field where it was hidden in order to dig in it in more privacy and in order to enjoy it more freely.³⁴

Friar: How can it be truthfully said that he hid the treasure, if it was already hidden?

Master: You know very little if you do not know this. It is clear that for the fortunate one who found the treasure, it had been hidden from him as from all, but after being found it was known to him and remained secret to the rest. And it is said that he hid it in order to conserve it, and that he renounced all he had in order to enjoy it.³⁵ This great good holds so much joy and consolation for him who finds it that putting aside with ease all those things that appear to give satisfaction in this world, he enters into solitude to mine and withdraw the gold which alone can enrich souls and liberate them from all misery and want. Oh, how few come upon this treasure which is so hidden! But this does not disturb me, for in the end it is a result of grace and no one by his natural efforts can attain it. Nor are you likely to find, even among many, anyone who can be persuaded that there is so much good within us. The holy Blois, Ruysbroeck, Tauler and others say that this center of the soul is more fundamental and of greater measure than any of the three faculties or superior forces in it, because it is the origin and beginning of them all.³⁶ In itself, it is simple, essential and unchanging. It has no multiplicity, only unity. But within it are those faculties of understanding, memory and will.

Friar: You seem to be close to telling me what I desire so much to know.

Master: You would reasonably have expected that, by what has been said. Since we have arrived at that point (advising you first that it is the highest point that there is in spiritual life and is what you must keep in mind in order to go forward) you should know that the interior part of the soul is the simplest essence of it, stamped with the image of God, and called by some saints the center, by others the intimate, by others the apex of the spirit, by others the intellect. Saint Augustine called it the sum. More modern men call it the depth because it is the most interior and secret part, where there are no images of created things, but (as has been said) only the presence of the Creator. Here there is absolute tranquillity and absolute silence, because no representation of a created thing ever reaches to this center, and according to Augustine we are thereby godly or divine, or so conformed to God that wisdom considers us gods.³⁷ This bare interior plain, without figures, is elevated over all created things, and over all the feelings and forces of the spirit. It transcends time and place, and here the soul remains in a perpetual union and bond with God, its source. When this intimate part (which the eternal and non-created light continually illuminates and makes clear) is manifested and revealed to man, it greatly inspires him and makes him compassionate. This was said of him who found the treasure, who as a result of the ecstatic joy which he received sold all his possessions and bought the land. Oh noble and divine temple, from which God never leaves, where the holy Trinity dwells and one enjoys eternity! One single perfect conversion to God in this intimate place is of greater importance than many other exercises, whether interior or exterior, and it can restore ten or more lost years. Here bubbles forth a fountain of live water which leaps toward eternal life.³⁸ It is of such virtue and efficacy and of such great softness, that it easily banishes all the bitterness of vice and conquers and surmounts all the rebellion, contradiction and pangs of the vicious and ill-inclined nature. Because, after this water of life is drunk, it flows through all the regions of the body and the spirit, and gives and communicates to them a marvellous purity and fecundity.

(To be continued)

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

It is related that in the time of Abu Muslim, the head of the ('Abbasid) propaganda, an innocent dervish was seized on suspicion of theft, and was imprisoned at ChaharTaq. On the same night Abu Muslim dreamed that the Apostle came to him and said: "God has sent me to tell you that one of His friends is in your prison. Arise and set him free". Abu Muslim leapt from his bed, and ran with bare head and feet to the prison gate, and gave orders to release the dervish, and begged his pardon and bade him ask a boon "O prince", he replied, "one whose Master rouses Abu Muslim at midnight, and sends him to deliver a poor dervish from affliction—how should that one ask a boon of others T' Abu Muslim began to weep, and the dervish went on his way.

Kashf al-Muhjub.

¹ Quoted in Sala's Introduction to the 1912 Madrid edition of *Dialogos de la Conquista del Espiritual y Secreto Reino de Dios* . xxix).

² *Ibid* (p. xxxi).

³ *Ibid* (p. xxxii).

⁴ *Ibid* (p. liv).

⁵ *Ibid* (p. 1v).

⁶ *Ibid* (e.g. p. xlv).

⁷ *The Mystics of Spain* (p. 19).

⁸ Angel Gonzalez Palencia, in his prologue to the 1946 Madrid edition of *Dialogos de la Conquista del Reino de Dios* has a detailed analysis of German and other influences upon the thought of Juan de los Angeles (pp. 24-30).

⁹ *Dialogos* 1 : 2.

¹⁰ *Dialogos* 1 : 6.

Text : The scriptural citations in parentheses are precisely as given in Sala's 1912 edition of the 1595 original text. Citations which follow the parentheses are those of the translators, indicating more precise references to the King James version of the *Bible* unless otherwise indicated. Other notes, identifying personages, etc. are by the translators.

¹¹ (Eccles. 4 ; Prov. 13), Ecclesiastes 4 : 5 ; Proverbs 13 : 4.

Although some of John of the Angels' quotes are paraphrases of his sources, the translators, here and in the rest of the text, have indicated them all with quotation marks for the sake of clarity.

¹² (Apoc. 3). Apocalypse 3:16.

¹³ (Psal. 118). Psalm 119: 20.

¹⁴ (Dan. 7). The Vulgate has *vir desideriorum* in Dan. 10 : 11 and 19.

The Douay version has "man of desires", the King James version has "a man greatly beloved", the Jerusalem Bible has "a man specially chosen". Modern Spanish versions of the Vulgate have "muy agradable (a Dios)". Juan de los Angeles' point is that the Bible speaks of a man's *desires* for the spiritual vision. If he is correct, later translations have missed the point.

¹⁵ The Seven "O"s or great antiphons are responses sung during Advent at vespers from 17 December to 23 December.

¹⁶ (Rom. 7). Romans 7 : 14.

¹⁷ The passage referred to is apparently from the end of Plato's *Phaedrus*, which in Jowett's translation (279) reads : "Beloved Pan, and all ye other gods who haunt this place, give me beauty in the inward soul ; and may the outward and inward man be at one ...".

¹⁸ (Psal. 44). Psalm 45 : 13.

¹⁹ (Cant. 1). Song of Solomon 1 : 15

²⁰ (II Cor. 2). II Cor. 2 : 15

²¹ (II Cor. 4). II Cor. 4 : 16 - 18

²² (Math. 5). Mathew 5 : 16.

²³ (Amos 5). Amos 5: 23 Douay: "Take away from me the tumult of thy songs : and I will not hear the canticles of thy harp". King James Version: "Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols". Jerusalem; "Let me have no more of the din of your chanting, no more of your strumming on harps". Modern Spanish version of Vulgate: "Lejos de mi vuestros tumultuosos himnos ; yo no escucharé las canciones al son de vuestra lira".

²⁴ (Ioan. 4). St. John 4 : 24.

²⁵ "Cesario" refers to Caesarius of Heisterbach (1180-1240) a Cistercian monk of Cologne, who published a collection of stories, titled *Dialogus Miraculorum*, a work widely read during the Middle Ages.

²⁶ (Isai. 58).

²⁷ Jan Van Ruysbroeck (1293-1381) the Flemish mystic, was well known in Spain, where his works had been translated and published in 1552. The passages quoted here are from chapter IV of *The Book of the Twelve Virtues*.

²⁸ (Genes. 3). Gen. 4 :4.

²⁹ (Eccl. 34). Ecclesiasticus 35 : 12, Douay: "The most High approveth not the gifts of the wicked".

Modern Spanish version of Vulgate: "El Altísimo no acepta los dones de los impíos".

³⁰ (Psal. 93). Psalm 94 : 12.

³¹ Saint Gregory the Great (540-604), Pope from 590 to 604, established the papal system that prevailed through the Middle Ages. He wrote prolifically and his *Dialogues* appeared in several Spanish editions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

³² (Rom. 14). Vulgate, Ps. 144 : 12 : "Gloria magnificentiae regni tui". Douay : "The glory of the magificence of thy kingdom".

³³ (Luc. 17). Luke 17 : 21.

³⁴ (Math. 13). Matthew 13 : 44.

³⁵ cf. St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, II, 16 : 13.

³⁶ Francois Louis de Blois (Franciscus Ludovicus Blosius) (1506-1566) was a Benedictine whose works were widely translated and read in 16th century Europe. His *Institutio Spiritualis*, a book of spiritual instruction, was especially well known. Jan Van Ruysbroeck (see above note 17) expresses this thought in his *The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage* (Ch. II). John Tauler (1300-1361), the Dominican of Strasbourg, deals with the same subject in his *Spiritual Conferences* (Ch. IV).

³⁷ Juan de los Angeles may refer here to the *Confessions*, especially VIII-XXV on "Memory". Vulgate: Ps. 81: 6 "Ego dixi dii estis, et filii excelsi omnes". Douay: "I have said: You are gods, and all of you the sons of the most High". John 10:34. "Jesus answered them: Is it not written in your law: I said you are gods ? " "Wisdom" is a common word used for "Holy Scripture" in the Slav and Greek rites.

³⁸ (Ioan. 4). St. John 4 : 14. Following Teresa, Fray Juan uses the water image.