



BARBARA MUJICA¹

Georgetown University - mujica@georgetown.edu

Artículo recibido: 28/12/2017 - aceptado: 20/01/2018

MARÍA DE SAN JOSÉ IN PORTUGAL: LIFE IN THE LISBON CARMEL

RESUMEN

Hasta el momento, poco se ha sabido sobre la vida en Portugal de María de San José, con la excepción de sus conflictos con Nicolás Doria, vicario general de los Carmelitas Descalzos. Ahora el descubrimiento de la *Crónica de Carmelitas*, escrita por Belchior de Santanna en 1628, ha arrojado nueva luz sobre las actividades de María en São Alberto, el convento que fundó en Lisboa. Aunque María creía que convenía gobernar a las monjas con suavidad, bajo su dirección, las hermanas guardaban un gran rigor en su observancia de la regla y las prácticas penitenciales, aguantando flagelaciones, humillaciones y extrema austeridad. Sin embargo, encontraban la paz y la felicidad en la oración y la contemplación. El rigor de sus ejercicios les sirvió bien cuando las fuerzas inglesas atacaron en 1589, obligándolas a huir de su convento y sufrir verdaderas penurias.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Carmelitas Descalzas—conventos de la temprana edad moderna—conventos portugueses—Convento de São Alberto en Lisboa—gobernanación de conventos—María de San José—prácticas penitenciales—Belchior de Santanna—Nicolás Doria—rebelión de las monjas—Teresa de Jesús—Teresa de Ávila—monjas en la temprana edad moderna

ABSTRACT

Until now, little has been known about the life of María de San José in Portugal, other than her conflicts with Nicolás Doria, vicar general of the Discalced Carmelite order. However, the discovery of Belchior de Santanna's 1628 *Chronica de Carmelitas* sheds new light on María's activities in São Alberto, the Lisbon convent she founded. Although María believed

¹ **Barbara Mujica** is a Professor of Spanish Emerita at Georgetown University. She specializes in Spanish mysticism, early modern women, and early modern theater. Her latest books are *Women Writers of Early Modern Spain: Sophia's Daughters* (Yale); *Teresa de Ávila, Lettered Women* (Vanderbilt); and *A New Anthology of Early Modern Spanish Theater: Play and Playtext* (Yale). She is founder and editor of the journal *Comedia Performance*. In addition, she is a novelist whose works include *Frida*, *Sister Teresa*, and *I Am Venus*.

that nuns should be ruled with *suavidad* [gentleness], under her guidance, the sisters were extremely rigorous in their observance of the rule and their penitential practices, enduring flagellation, humiliation, and extreme austerity. Yet, they found peace and happiness in prayer and contemplation. Their rigorous training prepared them well for the attack by English forces in 1589, which forced them to flee their convent and suffer real hardship.

KEYWORDS: Discalced Carmelites—early modern convents—Portuguese convents—São Alberto convent in Lisbon—convent governance—María de San José—penitential practices—Belchior de Santanna—Nicolás Doria—the nuns’ revolt—Teresa de Jesús—Teresa de Ávila—early modern nuns.

María de San José (1548-1603) was one of Saint Teresa de Ávila’s closest friends, the one who Teresa hoped would succeed her as Foundress of convents and head of the Carmelite reform. On March 17, 1582, months before she died, Teresa wrote to María: “if my opinion were followed, they would elect you foundress after my death. And even if I were living, I would be eagerly in favor, as you know much more than I do” (*Letters* 2, 435; 522).² However, María did not become Teresa’s successor. She died at age 55 in a remote convent in Spain and, until recently, almost disappeared from Carmelite history. In *The Mirror of Carmel*, the nearly 800-page digest of his earlier works on the story of the Carmelites, the Calced historian Joachim Smet makes no mention of her.

Teresa met her future friend and prioress at the palace of Luisa de la Cerda, where as a child, María Salazar had entered into service. The thirteen-year-old María was fascinated with the famous holy woman, who reputedly had visions and levitated. Educated by Doña Luisa, María knew French and Latin and was an excellent poet; in one of her letters Teresa jokingly refers to her as a *letrera* (roughly, “brain”) (28 March 1578: *Letters* 2, 237:4, 46).³ After Teresa founded a convent on Doña Luisa’s estate in Malagón, María took vows and in 1572 became prioress. She accompanied Teresa to Beas, where both women met Jerónimo Gracián, who was to become another of Saint Teresa’s close associates and eventually, the first Discalced Carmelite provincial. When Teresa founded in Seville at Gracián’s urging, she named María prioress of the new convent.

In 1584, two years after Teresa de Avila died, María de San José left Seville, where she had been prioress off and on for nine years, for Portugal. At the time she founded São Alberto, the first Portuguese Discalced Carmelite female convent in Lisbon, María

² Unless otherwise indicated, translations of Saint Teresa’s letters are from *The Collected Letters of Saint Teresa, Volumes 1 and 2*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh. *Letters 1 or 2* refers to the volume. The number immediately following the volume name refers to the number assigned to the letter by Kavanaugh and the paragraph number following the semi-colon refers to the page.

³ Kavanaugh does not translate the word *letrera*.

seemed to be destined to fulfill Teresa's dream that she would succeed her as foundress. However, María soon ran into difficulties with the Discalced Carmelite hierarchy.

The story of María's persecution at the hands of the Discalced Carmelite provincial, Nicolás Doria, is well known, but it would be worthwhile to review it here. In 1585 Doria, Teresa's former finance manager, succeeded Gracián as provincial and soon clashed with him over the issue of convent governance. Like Saint Teresa, Gracián favored a policy of *suavidad*, or gentleness, when dealing with nuns, while Doria promoted strict adherence to the rules. Teresa had given prioresses considerable power over their convents. For example, they controlled their own finances, selected their own novices, and had the freedom to choose confessors for their nuns. Doria did not approve of women's exercising such power and therefore took steps to reverse Teresa's policies.

At the chapter meeting in Valladolid in 1587, Gracián took a stand against Doria and was supported by the chapter. The following year, Doria had Gracián charged with moral laxity and forbade María to write or speak to him. Because Doria thought that Gracián indulged prioresses and encouraged nuns to resent priestly authority, he modified Teresa's Constitutions to limit the power of female prelates and bring them under clerical control. In 1590, with the support of Gracián and John of the Cross, María de San José and Ana de Jesús, prioress of the Madrid Carmel, audaciously went over Doria's head and appealed directly to Pope Sixtus V to preserve the 1581 Constitutions, in what came to be known as "the nuns' revolt." The Pope acceded to their request and issued a brief upholding the Constitutions, but Doria used his connections at court to appeal to Philip II to block approval of the brief. Sixtus V died later that year, and the next Pope, Gregory XIV, imposed a compromise that largely reversed Sixtus V. Doria retaliated against the rebels and their supporters, depriving María de San José of voice and vote and placing her under house arrest for nine months in the Lisbon Carmel in 1593.

Months earlier, in January 1593, Juan de Quintanadueñas de Brétigny had arrived from France to secure permission from the Carmelite authorities to take eight nuns to Paris to found a Discalced Carmelite convent and make María the prioress. Although Doria promised to cooperate, he procrastinated. Carlos Ros speculates that Brétigny told Doria his plan, and in order to prevent María from taking a leadership role in this important project—a role in which she might be able to influence Doria's superiors—he had her locked out of sight. After Doria died in 1594, the Discalced Carmelite vicar general, Francisco de la Madre de Dios, had María sent to a remote convent in Cuerva. By the time Brétigny returned to Spain ten years later to make his dream a reality, it was too late. María died in 1603, at the age of 55. Ros suggests that the real reason María was imprisoned was to get her out of the way. After all, the question of the Constitutions had been resolved two years earlier (326).

Aside from this demoralizing episode, relatively little had come to light about María's activities in Lisbon until, in 2003, Isabel Morujão⁴ brought Belchior de Santanna's *Chronica de Carmelitas* to the attention of scholars. Completed in 1628 by a friar who claimed to be María's personal friend, the work contains a wealth of information on María's activities in Portugal. Because María's challenge to authority has been seen as an embarrassment, most chroniclers of the order—for example, Joachim Smet—hardly mention her. However, the Portuguese author of *Chronica* exalts her as the foundress of the first Discalced Carmelite convent in his country. Fray Belchior's account of María's life in Lisbon is certainly biased. In fact, it is clearly meant to advance the cause of María's beatification. Yet, Fray Belchior provides much valuable information on María's years in Portugal. Furthermore, important archival work by María de la Cruz Pérez García and Ildefonso Moriones in Rome helps to complete the picture.

When Teutonio de Braganza became Archbishop of Evora in 1578, he requested that Teresa found a Discalced Carmelite convent there, but at the time she was too entangled in the controversies with the Calced Carmelites to direct her attention to Portugal. In 1581 Fray Ambrosio Mariano, one of Teresa's close associates, founded São Felipe, a Discalced Carmelite friary, in Lisbon. In 1584, Gracián and Mariano, now prior of the new Portuguese monastery, took up the project to found a female convent in Portugal, but in the capital, not Evora. María's little band of reformers left Seville 10 December 1584 and arrived in Lisbon on 24 December. As their house was not yet ready, they stayed at the Dominican convent of the Anunciada, famous as the domicile of María de la Visitación, the "prioress of the wounds." María de la Visitación claimed to have the stigmata, but many clerics were skeptical. María showed little enthusiasm for this popular holy woman, who went around with bloody bandages on her limbs and, in fact, turned out to be a fraud (Pérez-García 162-165). Finally, the Convent of São Alberto was founded on 19 January 1585.

Fray Belchior gives a detailed account of the routine of these first inhabitants of the Lisbon convent in order to encourage future generations to remain as true to the unmitigated rule as those who founded it:⁵ María and her followers showed "brio mais que varonil em corpos fracos de mulheres," [determination stronger than men's in the fragile bodies of women] he writes (II 154). They provide a "clear mirror" from which future generations of Discalced Carmelites can learn. Not only were the São Alberto sisters rigorous in their

⁴ "Entre duas memórias: Maria de San José (Salazar) O.C.D., fundadora do primeiro Carmelo descalço feminino em Portugal." (*Revista de Estudios Ibéricos* 1:1 (2003). 241-260).

⁵ "Escrevo com goſto as virtudes, & obſeruácias das Religioſas do Moſteiro de S. Alberto, porque eſpero que a relação dellas, ha de ſer hum eſtimulo docíſſimo a todas as que vuerem elle nos tempos vindouros [...]" (*Chronica I* 154).

penance and observance of the rule, they were experts in mental prayer, contemplation and interiority (Belchior II, 155). Fray Belchior displays considerable talent for metaphor when he describes their virtue as a fusion of aromatic herbs that continues to give off a sweet fragrance no matter how old it gets (Belchior II, 155).

Fray Belchior sheds light not only on São Alberto, but on sixteenth-century Discalced Carmelite life in general. Both male and female convents were governed, at least in theory, by the 1581 Constitutions, and, of course, María followed the rules and routines established by Saint Teresa. Contacts with family and friends were strictly controlled to prevent the nuns from contaminating their spiritual practice or wasting time. When they did have visitors, they were to speak with them only of spiritual things and always in the presence of a *Terceira*, or chaperone (Belchior II, 156). In order to achieve rigorous obedience, essential to spiritual perfection, they were to cultivate poverty, sleeping on straw beds or hard planks with coarse woolen blankets, spurning fine linen and ornamentation (Belchior II, 156). A simple cross and perhaps the image of a saint drawn on paper might hang on the wall of a cell, where a nun could keep two or three spiritual books and an oil lamp. No other personal belongings, no matter how insignificant, were permitted. The nuns ate frugally. They worked in their own cells, not in a common room, to avoid succumbing to the dangers of gossip (Belchior II, 159). Their work consisted of sewing and spinning, excluding fancy needlework that might distract them from concentrating on God. They cultivated solitude and prayer in the tiny hermitages that were a hallmark of Discalced monasteries, and the silence of the house was so great that each nun understood that she could speak only with God (Belchior II, 159).

Alison Weber offers further details about the routine followed in a Discalced Carmelite convent: “The sisters normally rose at 5:00 A.M. (the day began an hour later in winter) and spent the first hour of the day in silent prayer, then recited the rosary collectively. They came together again at 8:00 for Lauds, the first of four daily sessions of liturgical prayer, and then attended mass” (Introduction 12). Afterward, they went to their cells to work. At about 11:00, they gathered for the examination of conscience, “in which they confessed to their sisters infractions in their observance of the rule” (Weber 12). Afterward, they took their midday meal. They observed vespers at 2:00 after which they returned to their cells to pray or read spiritual books of the kind Teresa recommends in her Constitutions. “Compline was said at 6:00, followed by supper [...]” (Weber 12). After another period of silent prayer, “[t]he day ended with the recitation of matins at 9:00 and a second examination of conscience; on specified days, they would exercise self-flagellation before retiring” (Weber 12). María recognized the need to lighten this heavy load of work and prayer periodically and to satisfy the nuns’ need for human contact. She therefore permitted an hour of “spiritual recreation” after lunch, dinner, and in the evening—a practice which Doria opposed. As a result of her excellent direction,

comments Belchior, the nuns treated each other with real affection and the convent flourished.

By accepting *suavidad* as her guiding tenet for governing nuns, María was following Teresa's example. "Procure ser amada para ser obedecida" [(The prioress) should be loved in order to be obeyed] is such a basic Discalced principle that Teresa included it in the Constitutions (14.1). Teresa believed that a religious house ran more smoothly when nuns or friars obeyed out of love, rather than fear, a notion reflected in María's *Avisos para el gobierno de las religiosas* [Advice for the governance of nuns]: "que este aviso sea el primero: de que con amor granjee (la priora) los corazones de sus súbditas" [my first piece of advice (for prioresses) is to earn the hearts of your nuns] (37). Fray Belchior notes that María was extremely gentle with her subordinates, and there was never a mother as kindhearted to her children as she was to her daughters, who, in turn, displayed the most tender love for her (Belchior II, 171).⁶

Following the example of Christ, she treated everyone with respect, without differentiating by rank or class, writes Belchior. She shared people's pain, crying with them when they suffered, caring for them when they were ill. If a nun's parents were going through hard times or if a nun was too homesick, María consoled her. Sometimes she had to pry a girl loose from her parents and then, in a certain sense, take their place. She was a veritable mother to her nuns, governing with prudence and attention to the needs of each one. She was so sensitive that she could guess people's needs without even being informed, insists Fray Belchior (II, 171).⁷

However, it was precisely this emphasis on *suavidad* that Doria objected to. Ildefonso Moriones explains that Teresa's gentleness was interpreted by some as laxity. He notes that those who governed with excessive severity, like Doria, often became so rigorous that they lost all sense of compassion (*El P. Doria* 92).

In her nomination for Prioress, María was praised as a good farmer who gets the best fruit from his land.⁸ The happiness of her nuns was her greatest concern, writes Fray Belchior. She governed with love and put her own wellbeing aside for theirs. Her greatest desire was to free her nuns of all unhappiness, and so she did her best to remove them

⁶ The number printed on the page is 171, but this is a printer's error. It should be 169. Someone has handwritten the correct page number above the printed number.

⁷ As above.

⁸ "Mas como lodo, & esterco se engrõssa a terra fraca para dar fruto, que taes fomos, & postos os olhos em o fim, a que isto se ordena, he bem que Vossa Reuerencia, que he horteloa, aploque hum pouco deste lodo a seus tempos, para frutificarem melhor as plantas no seu jardim." (170)

from dangerous situations—sometimes fortuitously. Once a sister named Mariana dos Santos was not feeling well and didn't want to go to the recreation, but María insisted that she go. Her decision was providential, as a bullet suddenly pierced the convent wall and ripped through Mariana's cell, and the nun would have been killed if she had been there. Everyone thought María was God's handmaiden, for she kept the nuns safe and cured the sick with her own hands (Belchior II, 171).

When she had to punish, she did so judiciously, sometimes refraining from reprimanding a nun in public to spare her embarrassment. Although the nuns practiced mortification and obedience with great attention, María took care that the atmosphere in the convent should be warm, not threatening, and that spirituality, sanctity and modesty prevailed. While with others she was gentle, with herself she was rigorous. She understood that it was up to the prioress to set an example of good behavior. Even when she was ill and in pain, she pretended to be in robust health, so she could do her chores and care for the others (Belchior II, 171).

María's own spiritual life flourished during those first years in Lisbon. Whenever she could get away from her administrative tasks, she would retire to a small cell that functioned as a hermitage to pray, or else to the choir to kneel before the Crucifix. She had mystical encounters, communicating directly with God or with choirs of angels, according to Fray Belchior. Sometimes she would go into trances so deep that if anyone came in, she would not even notice. She not only taught humility, but she herself was inordinately humble, considering herself the lowest of the sisters and behaving more like an underling than a prelate. In the morning, she was the first to rise and go to work in the kitchen. She lit the candles and took the nuns to the choir for matins. She attended to the sick, washing them and removing their dirty garments. Most of the time she kept silent, speaking only when absolutely necessary. When she did speak, she set an example for the nuns, denigrating herself and begging others to point out her faults. In this way, she helped her daughters advance in humility.

Naturally, she also cultivated poverty, the sister of humility, writes Fray Belchior. In her clothing, cell, and food, she always chose the poorest. If another nun had a habit that was shabbier than hers, she exchanged hers for her sister's. Her breviary, rosary, and *disciplinas* (instruments of mortification) were always the scruffiest of all. She was never concerned with her surroundings, as her eyes were focused on God, and He always protected her. On one occasion, a man to whom the convent owed 60,000 *reis* demanded them back. María begged God for help, and within the hour a person appeared who gave her the 60,000 *reis*. Another time, the nuns had nothing but amaranth to eat. Unexpectedly, the extern brought in a pot of flounder, fresh, fried, and hot, which was enough for the whole community. As an act of thanks, the nuns carried the fish from the refectory to the

Choir, where they sang *Te Deum laudamus*. And when she needed money to pay some workers, she prayed to Our Lady, and the money appeared miraculously.

Given the importance María placed on *suavidad*, her methods of teaching obedience and discipline are somewhat surprising. At times María put the nuns to tests of obedience, commanding them to perform tasks that seem blatantly unreasonable. Yet, says Fray Belchior, the sisters were so dutiful that they carried them out without hesitation. Once she tested a very meticulous novice by ordering her to make a habit. When the novice produced a perfectly sewn garment, María ordered her to take it apart and reconstruct it, which the girl did with great joy. This demonstrated the extent to which the girl had mastered obedience, writes Belchior. Another time, a novice who worked in the refectory had tidied up as she was supposed to, but the nun in charge messed it up and then reprimanded her for the disorder. Being a beginner in virtue, the novice protested, defending herself with the truth. To teach the girl a lesson, María told her to take off her habit and not to talk to anyone except the cats in the courtyard, with which she was to eat on all fours. She had to perform that penance for eight days, which served as a mortification for her. As a result, the love the other nuns had for her grew, for they saw that she had learned to obey with pleasure (Belchior II, 172).

Every Friday and sometimes Thursdays as well, and all during Lent, and every day on other particular occasions, the nuns were whipped as a form of mortification. As Teresa and John of the Cross⁹ had done, María staged scenes of martyrdom so that her daughters would understand the meaning of sacrifice, and what Christ had sacrificed for them. Although these harsh practices would seem to conflict with the notion of *suavidad*, Teresa and many other early modern religious believed that because the humanity of Christ was at the very center of their devotion, both physical and emotional suffering were blessings that brought them into communion with Him.

Although modern Christians may find such graphic displays of martyrdom horrifying, mortification of the flesh was a common devotional practice in medieval and early modern Europe. In her writings on female somatic asceticism, Caroline Walker Bynum notes that “torture of the flesh [...] was a horrible yet delicious elevation” that gave the individual “access to the divine” (182). Both men and women engaged in self-torture, including whipping, in order to experience the Crucifixion psychosomatically. Heinrich Seuse, the fourteenth-century German Dominican, wrote that “if suffering brought with it no other gain than that by our griefs and pains we grow in likeness to

⁹ José Vicente Rodríguez describes reenactment of scenes of martyrdom in John’s convents in *San Juan de la Cruz: La biografía*. 385, 402.

Christ, our prototype, it would still be a priceless benefit” (Qtd. Bynum 184). Convent chronicles are filled with descriptions of extreme asceticism. David Fletcher Tinsley and Rudolph Bell discuss cases in Germany and Italy. Bell notes that the woman who engaged in such self-imposed affliction “rebels against passive, vicarious, dependent Christianity; her piety centers intensely and personally upon Jesus and his crucifixion, and she actively seeks an intimate, physical union with God” (*Holy Anorexia* 116). Similarly, Barbara B. Diefendorf, writing about seventeenth-century French nuns, notes that “Les Filles de Sainte-Elisabeth, for example, scourged themselves three times a week during Advent and Lent and twice a week at other times of the year” (146). Sometimes nuns carried self-mortification to an extreme. Ulrike Strasser mentions Clara Hortulana, a Poor Clare in Munich, who on 14 October 1689, committed suicide by plunging from the choir in order to die “like a true martyr, shedding her blood for Christ” (39). Thus, María’s use of diverse types of exercises in mortification at São Alberto were not out of the ordinary.

María also prepared her nuns spiritually and intellectually by teaching them doctrine, explains Fray Belchior. She wrote several texts for the edification of her nuns, including a dialogue between a Teacher and a Disciple in which she stressed that the best means of warding off the devil were devotional exercises as well as the study of God’s Commandments and the Articles of the Catholic Faith. She taught meditation and contemplation, and, like Teresa, may have been influenced by Ignatian methods, which stress the mental recreation of scenes in the life of Christ.¹⁰ However, according to Fray Belchior, although María instructed her nuns to meditate on the life and death of Christ, she advised them to refrain from allowing the imagination to go to the places where He suffered, but rather to concentrate on their immediate surroundings (Belchior II, 170ff).

By making her nuns tough and knowledgeable, explains Fray Belchior, María prepared them for adversity. Their training proved particularly useful during the Anglo-Dutch War. On 25 May 1589, the English invaded Peniche, fourteen leagues to the north of Lisbon, and threatened the Discalced Carmelites with martyrdom. The enemy forces included 120 galleons, of which sixty were Drake’s. María herself wrote a chronicle of the assault, fragments of which Fray Belchior includes in his book. According to Belchior, the city’s lay population tried to escape or find safe harbor, and many encouraged the sisters to flee their monastery. However, the Carmelites opted to stay put, for, Belchior explains, they were so inflamed with devotion to God that their Seraphim-like love made them immune to fear (II, 269-70).

¹⁰ See Mujica, “Three Sisters of Carmen: The Youths of Teresa de Ávila, María de San José, and Ana de San Bartolomé.”

But the enemy continued to advance. The English finally came so near that the Cardinal sent orders for them to leave. Fray Belchior explains that María could hardly stand, as she had caught a terrible chill and had been ill all night. Before vacating the convent, the nuns hid the sacred images and ornaments of the altars to protect them from the heretics. Then they marched out of the building. Belchior explains that the procession animated the people, who marveled at the nuns' courage. He says that when the sisters passed in front of the Royal Palace, the company captains rejoiced, for they were now certain of victory. Finally, the women arrived at the house that would be their temporary quarters, settled in as best they could, ate, set up an altar, and took communion.

Doña Ana de Velasco, wife of Nuño Orejón, the captain of artillery, generously allowed the nuns to stay in her home. Shortly after they settled in, María was apprised of a nearby vacant church that, due to the tumultuous times, was sadly neglected and very humid. She went to see it and found it full of spiders and insects. Nevertheless, she felt relieved to have a church to stay in and went to get the other sisters. Because there was nowhere in the building to sleep, that night they lay down fully dressed on mats on the floor. Then, in the morning, they cleaned up the building so that they could comfortably pray, sing, and practice mortifications (II: 271).

When word spread that the English had mined the nearby castle, there was so much screaming and confusion, especially among the women, that it seemed like Judgment Day, writes Fray Belchior. However, María managed to calm everyone down. The next night, they heard banging at the door of the church, and the nuns were told to put out all the lights because they were surrounded by explosives and in great danger. Father Balthazar de Jesús joined them, and as he was old and weak-hearted, his affliction upset the nuns. One young sister named Alberta da Madre de Deos chided him, saying that she was surprised he was afraid to die, being that he was so old, while she, who was not yet eighteen, was ready to accept whatever God willed (II_271). She raised everybody's spirits with her valor, says Belchior, and the old man never again showed fear.

After the enemies had withdrawn, the nuns returned to their monastery. They found it ravaged, but were thrilled to be back. María was amazed that it hadn't been burned down, since the enemy destroyed many other houses. The convent of the Anunciada was less fortunate, and the daughters of the Conde de Linhares, who wanted to join that house as novices, wound up staying with the Carmelites for eight days. The regimen of acts of martyrdom and mortification that María had prescribed for the convent turned out to be excellent preparation for the challenges the nuns would face, explains Fray Belchior. María had conditioned her nuns both in mind and body to endure challenges. Because of their training, they were not frightened when English ships threatened the coast of Portugal, although the general populace was terrified.

The nuns had not been unaware of political events leading up to the invasion, notes Fray Belchior. They knew about Protestant incursions into Holland and Belgium, for in 1586, Cardinal Alberto, later governor of the Low Countries, commanded Gracián to receive some Flemish nuns who were being threatened by the “maluados Hereges Luthero & Calvino” [evil heretics Luther and Calvin] (II 232). Nine of them fled to Rouen with the intention of entering a convent of their own order, but they were rebuffed by the French nuns and so had to continue their journey. Finally, they arrived in Lisbon, which, says Fray Belchior, has always welcomed those persecuted for their faith.

In the meantime, the Cardinal ordered Gracián, then Provincial Vicar, to accept the Flemish nuns into the Convent of São Alberto. When the nuns arrived, they were greeted with elation and joy, writes Belchior. They not only combined modesty and humility, but also easily formed a “perfeita amizade” [perfect friendship] with the “anjos” [angels] of São Alberto (II, 233). María was so competent, notes Fray Belchior, that when the Cardinal needed to get houses in Alcántara ready for the Flemish nuns so that they could live with proper decency and enclosure, he entrusted the task to her, and of course she performed it with great perfection (II, 234).

During this period María was being harassed by Doria and struggling to make peace among the Discalced Carmelite factions. Doria’s followers accused Gracián, among other things, of sleeping in the beds of the nuns, of kissing them, and even of fathering a child with María. Once, Gracián writes in his *Peregrinación de Anastasio*, when a very old nun fainted from the heat and he put his arms around her to support her head, he was accused of hugging her (*Anastasio* 74). In March 1588 Gracián was deprived of voice and vote and sent to Madrid to face further disciplinary actions. María wrote numerous letters in his defense, but after Gracián had been formally charged with moral laxity, Doria forbade her to write or speak to him again and most of her papers were destroyed.

María’s 1590 appeal to the Pope to preserve Teresa’s Constitutions initiated a period of frenzied letter-writing. Struggling to defend herself and her collaborators, especially Gracián, she wrote not only to the Pope, but to religious authorities in Avila; to Teutonio de Braganza, Archbishop of Evora; and to the Cardinal Alberto. It is a testimony to her self-confidence that she seems to have had no qualms about addressing these powerful men. However, in spite of her efforts, Gracián was expelled from the order. The following year, María was incarcerated in the convent jail. On Good Friday of 1593 she wrote her “Carta que escribe una pobre y presa descalza,” in which she appeals to her sisters to remain strong in the face of terrible adversity.

Around this time, the French were accelerating their efforts to bring the reform to France, and Barbe de Acarie petitioned Rome to bring nuns from the Lisbon province

for that purpose. Acarie was a well-connected French noblewoman who attributed her spiritual transformation to Saint Teresa of Avila, whose works Brétigny had translated into French. María de San José was enthusiastic about the project (Pérez García 341). But by 1603 she knew she would never make that foundation (García Pérez 360).

The Discalced Carmelite vicar general, Francisco de la Madre de Dios, had ordered María to go to a different convent. She was spirited out of Lisbon with no opportunity to say good-bye to her sisters. Boats waiting on the beach near São Alberto carried her up the coast. From there, she went to Evora, and then to Talavera. The news of María's departure soon spread through the city, causing great sorrow, according to Fray Belchior (II: 418). Dom Affonso de Castello Branco, Bishop of Coimbra, ordered a *Corregedor da Corte* (Court Magistrate) to send a galley to bring María back to her convent, but when the officers reached her, she turned them away, saying that her departure had been ordained by God (II: 418).¹¹ María was worn out from the struggle.

Finally, she arrived at Cuerva, where, according to Fray Belchior, she won over the nuns despite the vicar general's order to shun her. He adds that after María died, her body was found to be incorrupt and emitted a sweet and delicate perfume. Furthermore, relics from María performed many miracles, even raising a young man from the dead.

Fray Belchior's *Chronica* gives us a first-hand, although biased, account of María's nearly twenty years in Portugal. His portrait of María de San José in Portugal, along with recent studies of the subject, fleshes out the image of a controversial and dynamic early modern woman whom Carmelite authorities had for centuries hidden from view.

¹¹ Que he isto, senhor? Tanto ruido por uma pobre Desfalça? [...] Ao senhor Visorrey agradeço a mercê, que me faz, & a boa vontade, que me mostra; & a todos os senhores Portuguezes dou as graças pollo muito fauor, com que sempre me tratarão, mas peçolhes, que me nam impedão a ida, que faço com boa vontade, por ser traçada pella de Deos, expreßada na voz da obediencia. Deixemme ser obediente, que mais estimo ferlo, que a vida [...] (II, 482).

WORKS CITED

- Belchior de Santanna (1570?-1635). *Chronica de Carmelitas descalços, particular do reyno de Portugal, e prouincia de Sam Felipe / pello P. Fr. Belchior de S. Anna, leitor de theologia no seu Collegio de Coimbra; chronista, e indigno filho da mesma Prouincia, & natural do lugar do Grajal (Chronicle of the Discalced Carmelites, in particular of the Kingdom of Portugal, province of Saint Philip)*. Lisboa: Officina de Henrique Valente de Oliueira, 1657- [1753]. Print.
- Bynum, Caroline W. *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*. New York: Zone, 2012. Print.
- Diefendorf, Barbara M. *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Gracián, Jerónimo. *Perigrinación de Anastasio*. Rome: Teresianum, 2001.
- María de San José [Salazar]. *Avisos para el gobierno de las religiosas*. Rome: Instituto Histórico Teresiano, 1977. Print.
- *Escritos Espirituales*. Ed. Simeón de la Sagrada Familia, O.C.D. Rome: Postulación General O.C.D., 1979. Print.
- Moriones, Ildefonso. *El P. Doria (1539-1594) y el carisma Teresiano*. Roma: publisher not identified, 1994. Print.
- Morjuão, Isabel. *Entre Duas Memórias: Maria de San José (Salazar) O.C.D., Fundadora do Primeiro Carmelo Descalço Feminino em Portugal*. Universidade do Porto, 2003. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/28121658_Entre_duas_memorias_Maria_de_San_Jose_Salazar_OCD_fundadora_do_primeiro_Carmelo_descalco_feminino_em_Portugal. Internet resource.
- Mujica, Barbara. *Teresa de Ávila, Lettered Woman*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2009. Print.
- “Three Carmelites, Three Youths: Teresa de Jesús, María de San José, Ana de San Bartolomé.” *The Youth of Early Modern Women*. Ed. Elizabeth Cohen and Margaret Reeves. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018. Print.
- Pérez García, María de la Cruz. *María de San José Salazar: La humanista colaboradora de Santa Teresa perseguida*. Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2009. Print.
- Ros, Carlos. *La hija predilecta de Teresa de Jesús: María de San José*. Seville: Cultivalibros, 2008. Print.
- Smet, Joachim. *The Mirror of Carmel: A Brief History of the Carmelite Order*. Darien, IL: Carmelite Media, 2011.
- Teresa of Ávila (de Jesús). *The Collected Letters of Saint Teresa of Ávila*. Trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. 2 vols. Washington D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2001, 2007.
- *The Collected Works of Saint Teresa of Ávila*. Trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodríguez, O.C.D.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1980-1987.

- Tinsley, David F. *The Scourge and the Cross: Ascetic Mentalities of the Later Middle Ages*. Paris: Peeters, 2010.
- Weber, Alison. Introduction. María de San José (Salazar). *Book of the Hour of Recreation*. Intro. Alison Weber. Trans. Amanda Powell. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002. 1-32.