

THE MANTLE OF ELIJAH: CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY IN ENGLAND IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

Dr. Valerie Edden
University of Birmingham

Who would doubt that what the prophet [Elijah] preached on Mount Carmel referred specifically to Mary? For when the fire (which is the love of God) descended on Mary - about which it says 'I have come to send fire on earth' [Luke 12:49] - it utterly consumed with fire the errors of idols and afterwards through Mary showers of pity and grace fell on what had been dried up and in this way restored it all. And so the fire of Divine Love came upon Mary and in this way her womb was on fire. And just as Elijah was swept up in a fiery chariot, so the Son of God was taken up in the Virgin's womb as in a fiery chariot. In this way the House of God is on fire, as the prophet says: 'The house of Jacob is a fire and the house of Joseph is a flame' [Obadiah 18]. Therefore behold on the mountain the feet of one who brings good tidings and announces peace (that is Elijah); that is to say, through Mary, through whom the showers of grace fell from heaven. [1]

IN THIS COMMENTARY on the contest between Elijah and the priests of Baal, John Baconthorpe [2] goes to the heart of Carmelite spirituality: a special relationship to the Virgin and a strong sense of the heritage of Elijah. An appreciation of the Elian heritage and of the Order's sense of its own history is essential for any understanding of the nature of Carmelite spirituality. In one of the earliest accounts of the Carmelites, Jacques de Vitry, bishop of Acres, describes a group of hermits living in simplicity and contemplation on Mount Carmel. [3] In the thirteenth century, when Saracen incursions into the Holy Land forced these men into migration to the West, they established settlements in Cyprus, Sicily, Italy, France, and England.' Very quickly these establishments were given official recognition as religious houses; this as well as the change in climate prompted changes within the Rule which necessitated a search for identity and led to their distinguishing themselves from other religious orders by an appeal to their roots. These changes included the fundamental change from an eremitic to a cenobitic life-style, a number of mitigations of the Rule, the establishment of houses in and near urban areas and the involvement of Carmelite friars in an active apostolate, theological controversy and public life, not just as bishops but also as confessors to the House of Lancaster, for example. The fourteenth-century Carmelite friar had a very different life-style from his forebears in their desert cells.

This paper analyses the two linked strands in Carmelite spirituality in England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, their reflection on their origins with Elijah on Mount Carmel and secondly their claim that Mary was their patron. The Elian heritage with its emphasis on silence and solitude as a prerequisite for God's revelation of himself reinforced the Carmelites' sense of being different from other religious Orders. Similarly, their devotion to Mary was distinctive; whilst much late medieval Marian devotion is affective and focuses on her humanity, the Carmelites venerated Mary as one whose obedience, silence and solitude provided the means by which the Word was made flesh and revealed to mankind; her divine motherhood made her a powerful intercessor and mediatrix for her faithful servants. These two emphases within Carmelite spirituality are further linked because Carmel is Mary's mountain as it is also Elijah's mountain. In this way the Order found its roots and gained its sense of identity, an identity which is embodied in the name of the Order: *Fratres Beatae Mariae de Monte Carmeli* (Brothers of the Blessed Mary of Mount Carmel), a title first used officially by Pope Innocent IV in a papal bull of 1252, though its usage among the brothers may well predate this. [5] Unlike the other fraternal orders, this name defines the Carmelites with reference not to their founder but to their patron (the Virgin) and to the place of their origin. These emphases are not explicitly present in the primitive Carmelite Rule, the *Rule of Saint Albert*, [6]

which was written between 1206 and 1214, but give a clear indication of the direction taken by the Order shortly afterwards.

The Albertine Rule prescribes an eremitic life of silence, solitude, poverty and obedience. It is distinctive in a number of ways: by enjoining daily celebration of the eucharist, in the prescription that each brother lives in a separate cell and in the long silence (from Vespers until Tierce). Whilst the Rule subsequently underwent a number of modifications, these features did not lose their centrality but provided the seeds from which grew the devotion to Elijah and to the Virgin. Later the separate cells (individual hermitages) were replaced by separate rooms, but not by dormitories. Similarly, though the length of the long silence was modified, silence remained one of the distinctive features of the Order, and was considered to include an attitude of mind (quietness) as well as control of the tongue. As Rudolf Hendriks remarks, [7] the key to the Rule is obedience: 'Hold your prior in humble reverence, your minds not on him but on Christ who has placed him over you; ... if you remain so minded you will not be found guilty of contempt but will merit life eternal as fit reward for your obedience. [8] As later Carmelite writers are quick to point out, the supreme model of human obedience to the will of God is the 'ecce ancilla dei' ('Behold the handmaid of the Lord') of Mary at the Annunciation. [9] Indeed, as we will see, Mary came to exemplify other aspects of the eremitic life. It is clear too from Albert's description of the hermits 'sub eius obedientia iuxta fontem in Monte Carmelo morantur' ('who live in obedience to him near the spring on Mount Carmel'), [10] that they quite literally imitated Christ's sojourn in the wilderness, a point well understood by their later medieval successors with their particular devotion to that other voice crying in the wilderness, John the Baptist.

The changes and mitigations did not go unopposed. In 1270/1, Nicholas of Narbonne wrote his *Flaming Arrow*, a polemic designed to call a halt to the changes taking place within the Order, changes with which he felt so uncomfortable that he resigned as prior general in 1271. However, as so often in disputes, later readers can learn as much from the assumptions shared by those in dispute as from their differences. Whilst clearly Nicholas differed from his peers in thinking that urban living and any involvement in an active apostolate were completely incompatible with the Carmelite ideal, there is a shared acknowledgement that contemplation and solitude are the essence of the Carmelite way. It is in the solitude of the mountain that God reveals himself to those who 'receive his consolation'. Nicholas reminds the brothers of Abraham's obedience 'on the heights', where he was prepared to sacrifice Isaac, of Lot's escape to the solitude of the mountain, of Moses' receiving the Law on Mount Sinai, of God coming to Mary in the solitude of her chamber, of God's revelation of himself on the mount of the Transfiguration and of Christ himself ascending the mountain and entering the solitude of the desert to pray.' [11] Carmelite identity and spirituality are forged somewhere between their consciousness of a new fraternal role (which included preaching) and a constant reference to a history symbolised by Mount Carmel.[12]

Snippets of information about the early history of the Order are included in its earliest documents. The first real narrative history is Jean de Chemineto's *Speculum* (1337).[13] John Baconthorpe, with whom we began, combines history with a commentary on the Order in his four tractates: *Speculum de Institutione Ordinis*, *Tractatus super Regulam*, *Compendium Historiarum et Iurium*, *Laus Religionis Carmelitarum*. [14] A more recent history of the Order is written by William of Coventry (fl.1360) who, writing from an English perspective, also includes an account of the arrival of the first Carmelites in England in his *Chronica Brevis*, *De Duplici Fuga*, and *De Adventu Carmelitarum in Angliam*. [15] A French Chronicle is that of Jean de Venette (1307/8-c.1369). [16] From the 1370s the histories covered the same material, but with a change in emphasis, for as the Order grew, it became increasingly involved in controversy; John of Hildesheim (*Dialogus*, 1374) [17] and John Hornby wrote primarily in defence of the ancient origins of the Order. [18]

As this history is gradually formulated, the emphasis shifts from the eremitic life in the Holy Land to a more distant past found in the scriptures. Biblical texts both attest the origins of the Order and prophesy its future. The crucial claim is that the Order originated at the time of Elijah, but there are attempts to go back even further. Baconthorpe writes of the band of prophets mentioned in 1 Kings 10 and cites Vincent of Beauvais as the source of the idea that Samuel was the first to establish an assembly of religious ('conventus religiosorum'). [19] The Vulgate has 'grex prophetarum' ('company of prophets'; 1 Kings 10:5) and does not suggest that Samuel was their founder or leader. When, later, the Dominican Stokes argues that the early origins of the Carmelites may be equalled by the claim that Samuel founded the Dominicans, the Carmelite Hornby counters this by arguing that what Samuel founded was an Order of cenobites and that what Elijah and Elisha founded was the first Order of hermits. [20] If initially the claim was only that there were hermits living on Carmel in Old Testament times, by the fourteenth century the claim is the larger one, that of a continuous succession of hermits on Mount Carmel:

We declare, bearing testimony to the truth, that from the time when the prophets Elijah and Elisha dwelt devoutly on Mount Carmel, holy Fathers both of the Old and New Testament, whom the contemplation of heavenly things drew to the solitude of the same mountain, have without doubt led praiseworthy lives there by the fountain of Elijah in holy penitence unceasingly and successfully maintained. [21]

The opening sentence of *De Duplici Fuga* makes the continuity unequivocal: 'Religious brothers remained on Carmel from the time of the prophets Elijah and Elisha right up to the incarnation of Christ and from the year of his death up until the year 1099 AD'. [22] In the *Chronica Brevis* Elijah is called the father and founder of brothers of Mount Carmel. Interestingly, FitzRalph, bishop of Armagh, accepts the Carmelite claim to derive from Elijah, writing in the early part of his career when he was still very much a friend of the Carmelites. [23]

Medieval Carmelite texts repeatedly recount the details of Elijah's life and ascent into heaven as recorded in 3 Kings 17-19 and 4 Kings 2. Elijah's little cloud of rain (3 Kings 18:44), which restored the dry land to fruitfulness carries with it both literal and spiritual significance. It signifies the streams of divine mercy, 'in joy you draw water from the wells of the Saviour' (Isaiah 12:3). In his account of the hermits on Carmel, Jacques de Vitry speaks also of a fountain which has flowed continuously since the time of Elijah. [24] Both fountain and cloud signify the fountain of divine grace, foretold by Joel: 'A fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord' (Joel 3: 18) and be given to all who thirst (John 7:37). [25] In 4 Kings 2:21-22 Elisha purifies a fountain of water. William of Coventry tells how the fountain on Carmel dried up when the Carmelite brothers were forced by the Saracens to leave, fulfilling the prophecies 'I looked and behold Carmel has become deserted and all its cities destroyed in the presence of the Lord and in the presence of his fierce anger' (Jeremiah 4:26), [26] and 'the spoiler has made his attack; joy and gladness are taken from Carmel' (Isaiah 16: 10). When the brothers were allowed to return, the fountain was restored, as foretold by Jeremiah: 'I will restore Israel to his dwelling place and Carmel will be grazed' (Jeremiah 50:19). The destruction of Jerusalem by the Saracens, its restitution and its renewed fertility were thus foretold by Old Testament prophets. [27]

The history of the period between Elisha and the birth of Christ is rather scant in the histories. The life of contemplation and of poverty was maintained by the Rechabites (see Jeremiah 35) who abstained from wine and lived a monastic life, with no settled possessions. FitzRalph spoke of the continuity of the communal life on Carmel and is followed by many Carmelite writers. All speak of a communal contemplative life on Carmel at the time of the apostles and as a response to their preaching and of the building nearby of a chapel in honour of the Virgin. That these early hermits were solitaries is shown by the prophet Micah: 'O graze your flock, the flock of your inheritance, who dwell alone in a forest pasture on Mount Carmel' (Micah 7:14); Hornby glosses *solos* ('alone')

as 'i.e. solitarios'. [28] *The Laus* speaks of Christ himself teaching his apostles on Mount Carmel and gathering them together there 'just like a religious community'.

Baconthorpe draws parallels between the lives of Elijah and Elisha and the life of Christ. Significantly these parallels occur in a passage arguing for the importance of Mary to the Order and are designed not so much to link the Old Testament prophets with Christ as with his mother, since they are designed to prove that Elijah and Elisha deserve to be called 'Carmelites of blessed Mary'. Christ fasted forty days and forty nights in the wilderness just as Elijah fasted forty days and forty nights on Mount Horeb; Christ raised the widow's son just as Elijah raised the widow's son at Zarephath; Christ ascended bodily into heaven just as Elijah was taken up bodily into heaven; Christ sanctified the waters of the river Jordan just as Elisha cleansed the waters of Jericho; Christ multiplied the loaves when he fed the five thousand just as Elisha multiplied the widow's oil; Christ raised the dead to life as Elisha did at Shunem. And so the list goes on. [29]

These parallels reveal a habit of mind which, whilst doubtless nurtured by the practice of reading the scriptures typologically, is not itself strictly typological. The two prophets are not presented here as prefiguring Christ; if incidents in their lives foreshadow incidents in the life of Christ, the significance of that foreshadowing seems to be that in performing these Christ-like deeds they are honouring Carmel and in honouring Carmel they are honouring Mary. It is the sense of continuity which is strong; generations upon generations of the followers of Elijah have honoured Mary. Indeed far from reflecting a notion of Old and New Testament scripture in one seamless, eternal present, constantly telling and retelling the story of salvation, these parallels are being put to the service of what would be called 'history' even by twentieth-century historians, that is the establishment of a chronology of events, a sequence of cause and effect, along with an understanding of their significance. It is precisely this use of historical evidence which arouses the hostility of the Dominican Robert Holcot, a contemporary of Baconthorpe's. He points out that if the Carmelites had originated in Old Testament times, then they must have belonged to the sect of the Pharisees, Sadducees or Essenes, according to Josephus, and that since these were the chief conspirators against Christ, then such an ancestry was hardly one of which to boast! [30]

Another link between Elijah and the Carmelites comes through the story of Elijah's mantle and its connection with the Carmelite Order. The story in 4 Kings 2 which relates how this mantle is handed down to Elisha is a key text for the Order. The mantle was a sensitive issue since it came to assume great importance both symbolically and in Carmelite history. From the earliest records it is clear that the brothers wore a distinctive black and white striped mantle. In 1287, under licence from Honorius IV, this mantle was replaced by a white one. It is suggested that the vivid stripes of the mantle had excited derision. This change of habit was a fact used by the opponents of the Order to argue against the continuity of Carmelite history; in response it was argued that the distinctive habit of the Order was not the mantle but the scapular [31] but that nonetheless the mantle, a rough outer garment, indicated that Elijah and his followers chose poverty from the very beginning of the Order's foundation. It was a 'vestis stragulata', a coverlet or blanket, and indeed it was referred to as a 'carpeta'.

The habit links devotion to Elijah with devotion to Mary. It is, as it were, a livery, a daily reminder of Mary's purity and of the fact that Mary's chastity provides the model for the celibate life. The striped cloak was seen to symbolise the Order's devotion to Mary, though it seems likely that this symbolism was attached retrospectively, after the change of habit. Baconthorpe moves from discussing the Elian origins of the mantle to an exposition of the three-fold symbolism of the garment. Firstly he says that it is the household of Mary (we are to understand the Carmelite brothers) which is spoken of in Proverbs 31:21-2, where 'domestici eius vestiti sunt duplicibus; stragulatam vestem fecit sibi' ('her household is clothed in a two-fold garment; she made for them a coverlet as a garment'). Secondly, the black and white stripes signify law and grace. Those who

serve Mary must obey the commandments in order to come to grace, since the fruit of her womb 'came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it'. Thirdly, the two-fold cape signifies the two-fold nature of Mary's son, who was both human and divine. [32]

The symbolism of the white mantle was widely recognised. When Richard FitzRalph preached a sermon at the Carmelite church in Avignon in celebration of the feast of the Conception of the Virgin, he remarked that the whiteness of their habit itself commemorated the feast. [33] A similar claim is made by Baconthorpe in his *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* dealing with the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, where he speaks of the choice of cape 'in honore beatae Mariae' ('in honour of blessed Mary'). William of Coventry comments in the *Chronica Brevis*: 'In 1287 the Brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel changed their striped garment, that is the mantle of Elijah, for a white cape in honour of the Mother Of Christ.' [34]

The brown scapular was also associated with devotion to the Virgin. It is linked - by legend at least - to Simon the Englishman, Simon Stock, prior general, elected at Aylesford c. 1256, who became a model of the Carmelite life, combining the contemplative life with devotion to the Virgin. From at least the late fourteenth century, there was a widespread belief that the Virgin appeared to him in a vision, commanding the wearing of the brown scapular and promising eternal salvation to all who died wearing it. [35] His feast, known as the Solemn Commemoration of our Lady of Mount Carmel (16 July) celebrated this 'Scapular Vision'. The name Stock derives from the legend that he lived for many years as a hermit in a tree trunk. What is of interest here is not the historicity of the stories but what they tell us about late medieval Carmelite spirituality.

The Elian heritage and Marian devotion were brought together also by reflections on the etymology of the word *Carmelus*. [36] Firstly, *Carmelus* is said to derive from *car* (*sponse*) and *melos* (*laus*), 'praise of the bride' (from Latin *carae melos*, literally 'song of the beloved'). Carmelus thus embodies in its very name a celebration of the Virgin, whose beauty as the bride of Christ is extolled in the Song of Song. [37] The beauty of the mountain and the beauty of the Virgin parallel and reinforce each other.

Secondly, Carmelus is derived from *carios mellis* which is said to mean *donacio mellis* ('a gift of honey'). Latin *mel*, *mellis* presents no problems; *caries* as *donacio* is obscure, but may possibly come from New Testament Greek *charisma*, 'grace, gift, or favour'. Here too the etymology links the mountain with Mary; here too there are key texts. Bees abound on Mount Carmel; Mary is a fount of honey-sweet virtues. The prophet Joel is quoted, anticipating the time when the mountain will run with wine and the hills flow with milk and honey (Joel 3:18). The Vulgate has milk but no honey though the association of milk with honey is of course proverbial. In a text which was taken to refer to the Virgin, the apocryphal Ecclesiasticus writes (24:27): 'My spirit is sweeter than honey, my inheritance sweeter than the honeycomb'. In the earliest description of the Carmelite brothers on Mount Carmel, Jacques de Vitry speaks of them as living 'in little comb-like cells, those bees of the Lord laid up spiritual honey'. [38]

The third and fourth etymologies draw upon Elijah's associations with *Carmel*. *Carmelus* is derived from *carma oleos*, that is *ebullire misericordiam*, 'to pour forth (lit. to bubble forth) pity'. If, as seems likely, *oleos* is related to Latin *oleum*, 'oil', then we move from history to scripture and from text to text via metaphor and figure. As we have already seen the fountain of Elijah was taken to signify the streams of divine grace. It also prefigures Mary through whom the springs of grace flowed to mankind and who is herself the fount of pity: 'Fons iste Carmeli Maria est'. [39] All this is also prefigured in the Book of Esther in Mordecai's dream in which a little fountain which becomes a great river is interpreted as representing Esther; Esther, who gained the love of a king and thus helped to save her people in her turn signifies Mary (as she is commonly said to do). The

little cloud of rain of 1 Kings 18 also prefigures Mary, at whose fount of pity all may drink who thirst. [40]

Fourthly Carmelus is *carm ylys*, which is said to mean *creatoris cognicio*, 'knowledge of the creator'. This is the most obscure of the four etymologies, though it appears to be indebted to Jerome's statement that Carmelus means *cognicio circumcisionis*, 'knowledge of circumcision'. [41] This refers to the knowledge or acknowledgement of God in his revelation of himself given to Elijah in the presence of the priests of Baal. The fire signifies the love of God, the same fire blessing Elijah by consuming his sacrifice and also Mary at the Annunciation. Nicholas of Narbonne also speaks of 'spiritual circumcision, [42] which suggests the mental and physical chastity of those who make a religious profession. Hornby quotes Jerome who says that there is a Greek word Carmelus which means *domina* in Latin and also argues that the name Mary means lady in Syriac. [43]

Modern scholars derive the Hebrew *Carmel* from its root in *kerem* (vineyard). This association is not of interest to these fourteenth-century writers, though it would seem they are not ignorant of it. *De Duplici Fuga* speaks of the effects of the Saracen occupation of the Holy Land thus:

The vineyard of the Carmelites of the mother of Christ would have been utterly eradicated, had the Lord God not left seed for them in Cyprus and Sicily, seed which had earlier been uprooted. [44]

But the etymologies that matter to these writers are those that authenticate the Order's associations with Elijah and the Virgin.

Mary's special relationship with the Order is well attested by the early histories. Pierre de Millau (prior general, 1277-94), in a letter written to Edward 1 in 1282, claimed that it was founded in her honour: 'Glorious virgin ... to whose praise and glory especially this order was instituted in lands beyond the seas.' [45] William of Coventry calls the brothers 'Carmelites of the Mother of Christ'. [46] Whilst the Carmelite brothers had a special devotion to her, she had a unique relationship with them as the patron of their Order, a patronage which could be said to be implicit in their very title: *Fratres Beatae Mariae* and in the dedication of their first chapel, said by Hornby to have been built in a place where she once lived. [47] Arnold Bostius, the fifteenth-century Carmelite of Ghent, entitled his book *De Patronatu et Patrocinio Beatissimae Virginis Mariae in Dicitum Sibi Carmeli Ordinum*. [48] Mary is described as 'patrona' in the earliest Carmelite documents and indeed the earliest recorded constitutions speak of her as 'beata virgo patrona nostra'. [49] Baconthorpe writes of Mary's patronage, distinguishing the Carmelites from the other fraternal Orders who are named after their founders, whereas the Carmelites were founded by Old Testament prophets but named after their patron, who was honoured 'mystically' on Carmel in ancient times.

'Patronage' suggests a feudal relationship; Jesus is 'dominus' ('master, lord'); by analogy, Mary is 'domina' ('mistress, lady'); as he is king, she is queen of heaven. Baconthorpe is the first to have described her not just as 'domina' but as 'domina loci' ('mistress of the place - Carmel'). There is in patronage also a legal sense; it suggests rights of domain. It also suggests a relationship of mutual obligation and ties of protection and honour. Mary has the right of dominion over Carmel in exchange for which she offers protection, help and counsel. The heavenly court is envisaged as a feudal court or household, with the queen of heaven interceding to her sovereign son on behalf of suppliants who are her loyal followers.

The Carmelite brothers honoured Mary also in their life-style and in their worship. The earliest Carmelite rite (based on the Rite of the Holy Sepulchre) does not survive. What we do have is Sibert de Beka's *Ordinale*, from c. 1312, which shows a liturgical usage similar to that of the Dominicans, but which contains traces of the earlier eastern rite. [50] The Constitutions of the

Order, which date from 1281 only, chart the introduction of a large number of Marian feasts during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and we learn details about how these new feasts were celebrated in England from English missals, breviaries, and calendars. The 1294 Constitutions refer to the celebration of a number of Marian feasts, including the octave of the feast of the Assumption and enforces the inclusion of the phrase 'Ideo precor beatissimam virginem Mariam' ('and so I beseech the most blessed Virgin Mary') at the beginning of the confession. The feast of the Conception (i.e. of Mary: 8 December) was introduced in 1306; the three Marias (the Virgin, Mary the mother of James, and Mary Salome: 25 May) in 1342; the octaves of the Annunciation and the Purification in 1362; the Solemn Commemoration (16/17 July) in c.1376; and by 1393 the Visitation (2 July), the Presentation of Mary (21 November) and Mary of the Snows, the dedication feast of S Maria Maggiore, celebrating the miracle in which the Virgin indicated the location of her church by a fall of snow in August (5 August). With several of the feasts, the Carmelites followed hard on the heels of the Franciscans or Dominicans; generally it was a century or so before these feasts were adopted by the whole church. The Solemn Commemoration and the feast of the three Marias were uniquely Carmelite celebrations. The Order also promoted the cult of St Anne, the mother of Mary; the first Constitutions mention her feast (on 26 July) which is thus already being celebrated in 1281.

Two of these Marian feasts excited some controversy. What the Church celebrated in honouring Mary's conception was a matter of much dispute in the fourteenth century; this dispute is reflected in the heading in Sibert's *Ordinale*, 'Concepcio sancte marie uel pocius ueneracio sanctificacionis sancte marie' ('the conception of saint Mary or rather the veneration of her sanctification'). [51] Controversy of a different sort surrounded the feast of the Solemn Commemoration of the Virgin, sometimes known as the feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel, celebrated variously on 16 and 17 July. By the fifteenth century, this feast became the principal Marian celebration of the year, in which Mary was honoured above all as the patron and protectress of the Order. The date at which this feast was introduced is still a matter of scholarly dispute, as is the date at which the feast was linked with the scapular vision.

The Carmelite liturgy reveals the Order's devotion to Mary, systematically commemorating the events of her life, from her miraculous conception to her assumption into heaven. The lives of mother and son are paralleled here in the liturgy, just as medieval lives of Mary are clearly modelled on the life of Christ, particularly in the infancy sections. The Carmelite Missal (British Library Additional MS 29704-5) highlights devotion to Mary pictorially; the six historiated initials all illustrate Marian feasts: the Conception, Annunciation, Nativity, Purification, Assumption, and Coronation. [52] Several of these miniatures are elaborate and between them they give pictorial representations of a wide variety of Marian stories and legends. For example, the initial for the assumption of the Virgin illustrates six separate narratives: the angels gathering at her deathbed, then the disciples gathering, the funeral (four disciples carry the bier), the disciples gathering round the closed tomb, her coronation, and the final story in which she drops her girdle to convince a still doubting Thomas. This last narrative illustrates well the way in which Mary's life was modelled on Christ's, for the narrative core here is a familiar enough one incorporating Thomas' absence at the crucial moment, his incredulity and the proof which is offered him. Four medallions surrounding the initial illustrate miracles of the Virgin. The feast of All Saints is illustrated with a representation of the coronation of the Virgin.

We can gain a real insight into Carmelite devotion to Mary from the record of liturgical practice in the English breviary in MS Oxford University College 9, which gives full details of the Offices, including those of a number of feasts which had been introduced since Sibert's *Ordinale* was compiled. In the daily round Mary is celebrated as queen of heaven, unique amongst women and her aid is sought for sinners both in the daily fight against the powers of darkness but also at the final judgement, when she will intercede on behalf of her followers at the Last Day. Through

Marian songs, antiphons and proses, many of which were in daily use, we catch a glimpse of the nature of the devotion felt by the Carmelite friar for Mary, the patron of his Order, source of his strength and model of his life as a religious. Some of the texts are distinctively Carmelite; others, like the *Salve regina* and the hymn *Quem terra, pontus* are found elsewhere.

The Office to commemorate the Virgin, which was in use on most days, is based on the Little Office of our Lady. Much of it is material found in the Dominican Office (for example, the choice of psalms and the hymn *Quem terra, pontus*) though the sequence of the items is different from the Dominican Office and some of the lessons are distinctive. The antiphonal readings are drawn from the Song of Songs and from the words of Wisdom in Ecclesiasticus 24:13. These words are all words of love, traditionally interpreted as speaking of the love of God for his bride (here the Virgin, though other interpretations have the bride as the soul). Woven together in this Office they could be said to create a love-song to Mary; they celebrate her beauty and abound in images of sweet smelling odours and sweet food: 'Your lips drop sweetness like honeycomb, my bride, and the fragrance of your garments is like the smell of incense.' Several of the prayers are litanies and these too emphasise her fertility ('fecundia virginitas'), combining images of fruitfulness with images of her as an abundant fountain of grace. Her help is sought in leading sinners from vice and in planting sacred virtues in their souls. She is a fountain, a well of living water. Other titles speak of her role in the redemptive process; they present her as a willing agent, a tool of the almighty rather than as a co-redemptrix. She is a temple of the living God, court of the eternal king, ladder of the world, throne of God, doorway into paradise, shrine of the Holy Spirit, marked out for a unique privilege - all these in addition to the usual titles: rose of Jericho, root of Jesse, rod of Aaron, star of the sea. Whilst there may be love language, it is not this which is dominant; she is presented rather as a distant and powerful feudal lady, 'o regina et domina' ('O queen and lady'), interceding on behalf of her followers to the all-powerful judge.

These liturgical emphases are repeated in theological and devotional texts. Over the centuries the *Flos Carmeli* acquired a special status as the central Carmelite hymn to Mary, perhaps because tradition ascribed it to Simon Stock. There is, however, no clear evidence of its use before the late fourteenth century. The earliest references are in Additional MS 29704-5, which must be before 1393, since it fails to introduce feasts introduced in that year and is dated by Margaret Rickert in the late 1380s,[53] and in a German manuscript of Sibert's *Ordinale*, written some time after 1369. [54]

Flos Carmeli,
Vitis florigera,
Splendor Caeli,
Virgo puerpera
Singularis;
Mater mitis,
Sed viri nescia
Carmelitis
Da privilegia,
Stella Maris.

(Flower of Carmel, flowering vine, splendour of heaven, childbearing virgin, peerless [art thou]; gentle mother yet chaste virgin, bestow thy favours on the [brothers of] Carmel, O star of the sea!). [55]

Here Mary is celebrated as the flower of Carmel, an image which as well as having all the more usual floral connotations of female beauty, naturalness, and fidelity, echoes a number of biblical texts, including Isaiah 35:1-2 'The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy

and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon', where the beauty of Lebanon, Carmel and Sharon signify nature's joyful response to Israel's return to Zion but also the Shulamite woman, whose head is like Carmel (Song of Songs 7:2). She is celebrated for her uniqueness as the Virgin mother of God, whose maternal love extends to all who call upon her, mediating sweetly and gently with her son on their behalf. She is 'mater mitis', 'gentle mother'; *mitis*, 'mild, soft, gentle', carries with it also associations of ripeness and maturity; Mary's maternal role is one of loving nurture, providing spiritual sustenance for her followers. 'Vitis florigera', 'flowering vine', is rich in biblical allusion. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel are presented time and time again as a vine, planted in God's vineyard but faithless and bearing bitter fruit; in the New Covenant, it is Christ who is the vine and his followers who are the branches. The fruits of the vine include eucharistic wine, the redeeming blood of Mary's son. Mary's divine fecundity is foreshadowed by the Shulamite woman whose beauty is like that of the budding vine (Song of Songs 7:12) and by Aaron's budding rod.

Flos Carmeli simultaneously praises Mary's virginity, her fertility and her splendour (i.e. her brilliance and radiance). Mary's fertile radiant purity is discussed in other Carmelite texts. It is not a negative quality, not merely freedom from sin, actual or original, not simply freedom from the taint of sexuality. The whiteness associated with her is not only that of album, 'whiteness' but also that of *candor*, 'radiance'. We move here into a culture which associated whiteness not only with absence of colour (and dirt) but with light and radiance, symbols of virtue and spiritual worth. Mary's *candor* is the radiance of the sun and the stars and links her with the angels; it speaks of her unique place amongst humans: 'splendor caeli, virgo puerpera singularis'.

Mary's relationship with Carmel is most fully explored by Baconthorpe in the *Laus Religionis Carmelitarum*. This relationship is both literal and figurative. Baconthorpe writes of Mary's visits to Mount Carmel in her girlhood, relating a legend supposedly drawn from an account by Matthew of the infancy of the Virgin. [56] In this story an angel takes Mary to Carmel whilst she is still a child and prophesies that she will become the bride of Christ. The angel disappears but Mary remains on the mountain and dedicates her life to God and to becoming the bride of God, making a vow of virginity. The angel returns and makes a second prophecy: that Mary will be known as 'Domina', 'Lady'.

Figuratively, Carmel signifies Mary because of its beauty, its fertility, its silence and its historical associations. As trees and flowers flourish on Carmel, where they are watered by fountains and streams of living water, so Mary's beauty is watered by the fountain of her virtues; like the Shulamite woman, she is a lily among thorns' (Song of Songs 2:2). In contrast to the desert places, Carmel is green and fruitful. Both Carmel and Mary are 'viridis', 'green, youthful, vigorous'. Baconthorpe says that greenness is believed a halfway colour between black and white and that, in their greenness, Mary and Carmel both provide meeting places for the radiance of the deity and the blackness of sinful humanity, since God revealed himself to man on Carmel and in Mary's womb God was made man. Isaiah prophesies a time when 'Righteousness will remain in solitude and justice will abide on Carmel' (Isaiah 32:16) and a time of grace when 'radiance will overcome the darkness'. [57]

Carmel gives off the sweet odour of fertility; it is the place which is free from the Genesis curse, 'thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you' (Genesis 1 8) and produces its fruits freely. Mary too is like a new Paradise, free from thorns and thistles (vices); her flowers and fruits are honour and honesty. Baconthorpe praises Mary's fertility in a number of different ways. As the Virgin mother of God, she is like Carmel, literally fertile. The essential paradox of her fecund virginity is a theme fully explored by Carmelite writers. Figuratively she is fertile, producing fruits of virtue herself as well as being a fertile source of virtue in others. She refreshes her followers with the sweetness of her devotion and they in their turn pray to her: 'O most beautiful of women, follow in the tracks of

your flock and pasture your kids' (Song of Songs 1:7). [58] She is the fountain of Carmel, flowing in an enclosed garden. This he interprets not only in the traditional way as signifying her virginity but to indicate that she is shut up against worldliness through her renunciation of temporal goodness; her garden is watered by a superabundance of temperance. From her fountain of pity, sinners may be refreshed; living water flows from her womb, gladdening the city of God and fulfilling the prophecy: 'With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation' (Isaiah 12:3), bringing water to the thirsty (Isaiah 21:14). Her absence from Carmel causes a withering and a drying up: 'The shepherds' pastures mourn and the summit of Carmel is dried up'(Amos 1:2).

Whilst Mary's beauty is suggested by the physical beauty of Mount Carmel and she is closely identified with the Shulamite woman, her beauty (unlike theirs) is spiritual. Indeed Mary's beauty evokes asceticism and abstinence rather than sensual delight. God's choice of Mount Carmel, that is his choice of Mary as the divine bride, is foretold by the words of the bridegroom, who says 'I will go to the mountain of Myrrh' (Song of Songs 4:6), one of the most frequently used lections for Marian feasts. Baconthorpe expounded the text, citing Gregory the Great 'Since myrrh signifies burial, Mary/myrrh signifies the burial of the flesh.' [59] Devotion to Mary provides the means of overcoming the temptations of the flesh.

Carmelite devotion to Mary sees her as a powerful patron, nurturing and supporting her followers, mediating on their behalf with her son and as the model of the Carmelite ideal. She exemplifies obedience in her assent at the Annunciation; poverty, since she is included amongst the earliest group of apostles recorded as meeting for prayer in Acts 1: 14 and is thus not excluded from the rule to have all things in common (Acts 2:44); and chastity, since she is fulfilling the prophecy 'Ecce Virgo concipiet et pariet filium' ('a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son', Isaiah 7:14). Mary had her own individual chamber (like the brothers) since the angel is recorded as finding her alone in a separate room at the Annunciation. [60]

I have written elsewhere of the Carmelite sermon cycle in Bodleian Library MS Auct. F. inf. 1.3. [61] These sermons also offer Mary as a model of the religious life. She is presented as a feudal lady, a powerful patron and mediatrix; a loving mother, effective in intercession on behalf of her children; a mother, like all mothers, caring, nurturing, but unique amongst mothers in her perpetual virginity. Her power is more important than her humility.

It is often said that the later medieval Carmelites lost sight of their contemplative origins; I have argued that this is not strictly true. Moreover, whilst it is true that there is no surviving record of mystical experience within the Order before the Teresian reforms, there is evidence of the Order promoting mysticism. It was the Carmelite Richard Misyn who translated Rolle's *Incendium Amoris* and *Emendatio Vitae* into English [62] and Thomas Fishlake who translated Waiter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* from English into Latin. [63] Carmelite Sympathy for mysticism is seen in the rather odd case of the sermons in British Library Royal 7.B.1, a manuscript written by a Carmelite scribe purporting to be the sermons of the Carmelite bishop, John Paschal. I have commented elsewhere on the explicitly mystical content of some of these texts. [64]

In many ways the urban friars of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were unable to follow the life-style of their forebears in their desert cells. Some Carmelite writing of the period reflects this new life. This would include for example Carmelite sermons and texts such as Maidstone's *Penitential Psalms*. [65] Nonetheless, the body of writing in which Carmelite friars reflected on their own history and identity suggests a spirituality much indebted to the memory of those hermits. It is a spirituality which combined the traditional elements of the religious life, poverty, chastity and obedience, with a strong emphasis on solitude and silence, which saw Mary both as a model for the religious life but also as a powerful patron and mediatrix, mother of Carmel. It is a spirituality of separation and detachment, which allowed space for contemplation even within a life which

included some aspects of an active apostolate. The aims of such a life are summarised quite clearly by Philip of Ribot (prior provincial of Catalonia, d. 1391):

In regard to that life we may distinguish two aims, the one of which we may attain to, with the help of God's grace, by our own efforts and virtuous living. This is to offer God a heart holy, pure and free from all actual stain of sin ... the other is something that can be bestowed upon us only by God's bounty: namely to taste in our hearts and experience in our minds not only after death but even in this mortal life something of the power of the divine presence, and the bliss of the heavenly glory. [66]

Footnotes:

1. 'Quis enim dubitet in hoc monte Carmeli prophetam praedictum Mariam specialiter designasse? Dum enim ignis, qui est amor Dei, descendit in Mariam, secundum idem ait: "Ignem veni mittere in terram", errores idolorum penitus combussit atque postmodum per Mariam pluvia miserationis et gratiae descendit exsiccatis, et sic restaurat omnia. Ignis igitur amoris divini in Mariam venit; unde venter eius igneus erat. Et sicut Elias in curru igneo rapiebatur, sic in ventre Virginis velut in curru igneo rapiebatur filius Dei. Sic domus dei igneus fuit, unde propheta: "Domus, inquit, Iacob ignis, et domus Ioseph flamma". Ecce ergo super montem pedes, id est Eliae, evangelizantis et annunciantis pacem, id est, per Mariam, per quam pluvia gratiae de caelo venit.' *Medieval Carmelite Heritage*, ed. Adrianus Staring, O.Carm. (Rome, 1989), p. 228, hereafter Staring.
2. John Baconthorpe (d. 1348), Carmelite friar and possibly Prior Provincial of England.
3. Jacobus de Vitriaco, *Libri Duo: Quorum Prior Orientalis, siue Hierosolomitanae: Alter Occidentalis* (Douai, 1597), p. 86. For the history of these early hermits see Elias Friedman, *The Latin Hermits of Mount Carmel: A Study in Carmelite Origins* (Rome, 1979).
4. For the history of the arrival of Carmelites in England, see Keith J. Egan, 'An Essay towards a Historiography of the Origin of the Carmelite Province in England', *Carmelus* xix (1972), pp. 67-100.
5. Some writers confuse the two elements of the title; if the grammatical rules of Golden Latin are strictly adhered to, a prepositional phrase refers to the subject of the sentence, hence 'de Monte Carmelo' must refer to the place of origin of the brothers, but the phrase was soon taken to refer to Mary, 'Mary of Mount Carmel'.
6. *The Rule of Saint Albert*, ed. and trans. Bede Edwards (Aylesford and Kensington, 1973), hereafter *Rule*.
7. Rudolf Hendriks, 'The Original Inspiration of the Carmelite Order as expressed in the Rule of S. Albert', *Rule*, p. 70.
8. 'Vos quoque, caeteri fratres, Priorem vestrum honorate humiliter, Christum potius cogitantes quam ipsum, qui posuit illum super capita vestra ... ut non veniatis in

iudicium de contemptu, sed de obedientia mereamini aeternae vitae mercedem.' *Rule*, p. 92.

9. Baconthorpe, *Tractatus*, Staring, p. 193.

10. *Rule*, p. 78.

11. Nicholas of Narbonne, *The Flaming Arrow*, trans. Michael Edwards (Dartington, 1985), chapter vi. This translates: A. Staring, 'Nicolai Prioris Generalis Ordinis Carmelitarum Ignea Sagitti', *Carmelus* ix (1962), pp. 237-307.

12. By the 'history' of the order I mean the history written by medieval Carmelites about their own past. For modern history of the order see Joachim Smet, *The Carmelites: A History of the Brothers of our Lady of Mount Carmel*, 2nd edn, vol. 1 (Rome, 1975).

13. *Speculum Fratrum Ordinis*, Staring, pp. 115-46.

14. Staring, pp. 184-253.

15. *Chronica Brevis, De Duplici Fuga, De Adventu Carmelitarum*, Staring, pp. 272-78, 278-82, 282-86.

16. *Speculum Status Ordinis*, Staring, pp. 154-75. (This text is always referred to by modern scholars as his 'Chronicle'.)

17. *Dialogus*, Staring, pp. 336-88.

18. J.P.H. Clark, 'A Defence of the Carmelite Order by John Hornby, O. Carm.', *Carmelus* xxxii (1985), pp. 73-106.

19. *Laus Religionis Carmelitarum (hereafter Laus)*, book i, ch. vi, Staring, p. 223. The claim is repeated by Peter Comestor: 'Nota quod Samuel primo instituit conventus religiosorum iugiter psallentium Domino, et dicabantur conventus eorum cuneus.' *Patrologia Latina* CXCVIII, 1304.

20. Clark, 'A Defence', *op. cit.*, p. 86.

21. *Analecta Ordinis Carmelitarum* xv, p.208. Translated by Smet, *The Carmelites, op. cit.*, in n. 12, p. 19. Baconthorpe also writes about the Order's origins in antiquity from the time of the prophets of Elijah and Elisha and about how contemplative men succeeded them on Mount Carmel. *Compendium, Secunda Particula*, Staring, p. 202. As Staring points out, it is only in the *Laus* that Baconthorpe claimed that Elijah and Elisha actually founded the Order.

22. 'A tempore Eliae et Elisci prophetarum usque ad incarnationem Christi et ab anno passionis eius ad annum Domini 1099 manserunt fratres in Carmelo', Staring, p. 279. For an account of the evolution of the belief in the Elian succession, see Rudolf Hendriks, 'La succession hereditaire', *Etudes Carmelitaines* xxxv (1956), pp. 34-81.

23. Benedict Zimmerman, ed., 'Ricardi Archiepiscopi Armacani Bini Sermones de Immaculata Conceptione *Analecta Ordinis Carmelitarum Discalceatorum* iii (1931), pp. 158-89.
24. Jacobus de Vitriaeo, *Libri Duo*, *op. cit.*, in n. 3, p. 86.
25. *Laus*, book 1, ch. ix, Staring, p. 226.
26. In dealing with the various interpretations of scripture which will be discussed, it is important to understand that the Vulgate makes no attempt to distinguish between the Hebrew proper noun *Carmel* and the common noun meaning 'garden, plantation'; so in the Vulgate the number of texts apparently featuring *Carmel* is somewhat larger than in the Hebrew scriptures or in a modern translation. In this case it is important to retain the Vulgate *Carmelus* and not to translate as 'fertile ground' as in almost all modern translations of this passage.
27. *De Adventu Carmelitarum*, Staring, pp. 284-5.
28. Clark, 'A Defence', *op. cit.*, in n. 18, p. 101.
29. *Speculum de Institutione Ordinis*, ch. ii, Staring, pp. 187-89.
30. Beryl Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 187 and 330.
31. Clark, 'A Defence', *op. cit.*, p. 87.
32. *Laus*, book VI, ch. ii, Staring, p. 250.
33. 'Hic sauctus ac peculiaris et antiquus ordo suus Carmelitarum praetendit in habitu, qui hoc festum ipsius solemnizat, candorem habitus sui ut aestimo, prudenter et devote referens ad hoc festum. ['This holy, ancient and peculiar order of Carmelites (who accord this feast a special celebration) assert [this] by means of their habit, wisely and prudently relating the whiteness of the habit (as I reckon) to this feast.'] *Analecta Ordinis Carmelitarum Discalceatorum*, *op. cit.*, in n. 23, p. 166.
34. 'Anno Domini 1287 fratres beatae Mariae de Carmelo commutaverunt vestem stragulatarn, scilicet pallium Eliae, in cappam albam in honoreni matris Christi.' Staring, p. 277.
35. B.M. Xiberta, *De Visione Sancti Simonis Stock* (Rome, 1950); Christian P. Ceroke, 'The Credibility of the Scapular Promise', *Carmelus* xi (1964), pp. 81-123.
36. Particularly in Baconthorpe's *Laus*, book 1, Staring, pp. 218-33, and Hornby's *Defence*.
37. Song of Songs 7:5, 'Caput tuum ut Carmelus' ('your head is like Carmel') is central to this association.
38. Jacobus de Vitricao, *Libri Duo*, *op. cit.*, in n. 3, p. 86.
39. *Laus*, book 1, ch. x, Staring, p. 227.

40. For the Marian interpretation of the little cloud of rain, see Eamon Carroll, 'Carmelite Marian Legends', *The Sword* xviii (1955), pp. 359-65.
41. Jerome, *In Amos*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina LXXVI, p. 216. A possible explanation for Jerome's etymology is that Hebrew *mul* is 'to circumcise' and that *car* ('knowledge') may derive from Hebrew *qr*' and the related Syriae *qr*' ('proclaim, read'). However our author has split the word not as *car* + *mul* but as *carm* + *yls*, possibly influenced by Greek *'ulh* ('matter, material'), hence 'creator', maybe through 'creation'. In attempting to make sense of these etymologies, I have been helped by Paul Joyce, Ruth Taylor and Iain Torrance, all formerly colleagues at the University of Birmingham.
42. Nicholas of Narbonne, *The Flaming Arrow*, *op. cit.*, in n. 11, ch. i.
43. Clark, 'A Defence'; Jerome, *Liber Interpretations Hebr. Nom.* Corpus Christianorum Series Latina LXXII, p. 137.
44. Et vinea Carmelitarum matris Christi radicitus omnino fuisset evulsa, nisi Dominus Deus reliquisset illis semen in Cypro et Sicilia per antea radicum.' *De Duplici Fuga*, Staring, p. 280.
45. 'virg[o] glorios[a] ... ad cuius laudem et gloriam ordo ipse transmarinis partibus exstitit specialiter institutus.' Staring, p. 47.
46. 'Carmelitae matris Christi', *De Duplici Fuga*, Staring, p. 279.
47. Clark, 'A Defence', p. 100.
48. The precise meaning of the two phrases *patronatu* and *patrocinio* is discussed by Eamonn Carroll, 'The Marian Theology of Arnold Bostius, O. Carm. (1445-1499)', *Carmelus* ix (1962), p. 212.
49. 'Ordinamus quod in omni confessionibus beata virgo patrona nostra specialiter invocetur si dicendo', 1294 Constitutions, Paschalis Kallenberg, *Fontes Liturgiae Carmelitanae* (Rome, 1962), p. 24; see also L. Saggi, ed., *Santi del Carmelo.. Biografie da vari dizionari* (Rome, 1972), pp. 110- 12.
50. *Ordinaire de l'Ordre de Notre Dame du Mont-Carmel par Sibert de Beka*, ed. Benedict Zimmerman (Paris, 1910).
51. Which is retained even in the late BL Add. MS 29704-5, fol. x; see Margaret Rickert, *The Reconstructed Carmelite Missal: An English Manuscript of the Late XIV Century in the British Museum (Additional 29704-5, 44892)* (London, 1952), p. 29.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 29
53. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
54. Bamberg, Staatliche Bibliothek, msc.lit. 120 (Ed. 11 13. See Kallenberg, *Fontes*, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

55. This is a literal translation; the one commonly in use is a much freer translation.
56. As Staring points out, this particular story is not in any of the standard infancy narratives; Staring, p. 220.
57. *Laus*, book 1, ch. viii, Staring p. 225.
58. *Laus*, book 1, ch. viii, Staring p. 225.
59. *Laus*, book 1, ch. iii, Staring, p. 220. The Gregory quotation is *XL Homeliae in Evangelia*, Patrologia Latina LXXVI, 1112.
60. *Tractatus*, Staring, pp. 193-94.
61. Valerie Edden, 'Marian Devotion in a Carmelite Sermon Cycle of the Late Middle Ages', *Medieval Studies* Ivii (1995), pp. 101-29.
62. Richard Rolle, *The Fire of love and Mending of Life*, ed. R. Harvey, Early English Text Society O.S. 106 (1896).
63. S.S. Hussey, 'Latin and English in the Scale of Perfection', *Medieval Studies* xxxv (1973), pp. 456-76.
64. Valerie Edden, 'A Carmelite Sermon Cycle: British Library Royal 7.B.I', *Carmelus* xliii (1996), p. 112. Patrick Nold has subsequently pointed out that these sermons are in fact by the Franciscan Bertrand de la Tour and appear to have been 'borrowed' by the Carmelites. His article is forthcoming in *Carmelus*.
65. Valerie Edden, ed., *Richard Maidstone's Penitential Psalms, ed. from Bodl. MS Rawlinson A 389*, Middle English Texts XXII (Heidelberg, 1990).
66. *The Book of the Institution of the First Monks*, trans. Bede Edwards (Oxford, 1969), pp. 3-4.