

through the first thousand years of the Christian era after anchorites and hermitages, solitaries and coenobia had become a recognized feature of it, Mount Carmel, too, had had always its religious denizens. In the first four centuries Paul and Pachomius and Antony had covered Upper and Lower Egypt, not so far away, with the followers of their life: the mountain and peninsula of Athos have shown the like possibility, in another form, for nigh a thousand years.¹

The Crusades kindled anew the flame of devotion to that life lived apart on the hallowed mountain:² it is definite historical fact that under the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem S. Albert, patriarch, about the year 1209 found the hermits on Carmel so numerous that he formed them into a community and gave them a Rule, laying down as the

'principal objective of their monastic life the mystic union of the soul with God by means of love and contemplation. He had left also as a secondary aim to the brethren that of being useful to their neighbours. Although retreat prayer and silence were prescribed by him, he made the exception—"unless for good reasons the Religious are occupied in "something else".'³

That is how the Order was called into being, and they came to take their name from the mount: it has been and is their spiritual domicile of origin, their link with all the past ages of the worship of the one, true God, by right of descent back to His inspired, the prophet Elias.

"The 30th January 1926 marked the end of the seventh century since the approval of our "Primitive Rule, that Rule for which Saint Brocard and his companions had asked so "pressingly . . . and which S. Albert, patriarch of Jerusalem, wrote so wisely and gave "to the denizens of the Mountain. . . . Seven centuries have passed since the Bull of "Honorius III, given in the town of Rieti, confirmed our Rule. . . . From Saint Brocard "to Saint Cyril, third Latin general . . . from Saint Simon Stock,⁴ who obtained from "Innocent IV⁵ some slight modifications, up to the memorable fall of Ptolemais and of "the Latin kingdom in Palestine (1291), the Primitive Rule was always the solid support "of an exemplary life and source of glory, the brilliance of which shone on Palestine and "the whole East. . . ."⁶

With the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Hermits of S. Augustine, the Carmelites formed one of the four Orders of mendicant friars who left their mark so widely on the culture of Europe and its corporate Catholic life. In the course of the following centuries the conditions of life around them brought a slackening, a laxity in the observance of the Primitive Rule.

"The Order of Carmel in Europe continued on the upward grade till it reached the fullness of its development . . . then came decadence, afterwards mitigation of the Rule. . . ."⁷

and the Letter of 1925 from the Praepositus General of the Order may be cited again:

¹ Ruins of a large monastery were visible in 1185, according to the Greek monk Phokas from Patmos, and a monk in priest's orders had not long before arrived from Calabria in obedience to a vision, and built a small church and campanile amid the ruins, living with about ten others from Europe.

² After a massacre by the Saracens in 1238, the first convent buildings fell into decay. Two English Crusaders are said to have taken one recluse back with them, by whom a community was begun at Alnwick. But besides S. Simon Stock another early connection with England is that the first Chapter General of the Order in Europe was held, 1245, at Aylesford, about 12 miles from Sittingbourne.

³ Vide Fr. Berthold-Ignace de S. Anne, O.C.D., *Histoire de l'établissement de la mission de Perse par les PP. Carmes Déchaussés, 1608-12*. Bruxelles, 1885, p. 346.

⁴ The name of S. Simon Stock (died 16.5.1265) will be familiar to English readers for his church in London: he was an Englishman, elected in 1247 sixth General of the Primitive Order, which began to work in England by 1249 at Cambridge, the site and memory of the London convent, founded about 1253, being preserved in the "Carmelite Court" and "Carmelite Press" of *The Times* newspaper.

⁵ It should be noted that Pope Innocent IV (1243-54) had intercalated the direction that the Religious "are obliged to travel often", i.e. for the salvation of their neighbours.

⁶ Quoted from the letter addressed to the Order of Carmelites by the Praepositus General, William of S. Albert, Rome 8.12.1925.

⁷ Fr. Florencio del Niño Jesus, quoted hereafter.