

*The Ten Books*  
*on*  
*the Way of Life*  
*and Great Deeds*  
*of*  
*the Carmelites*

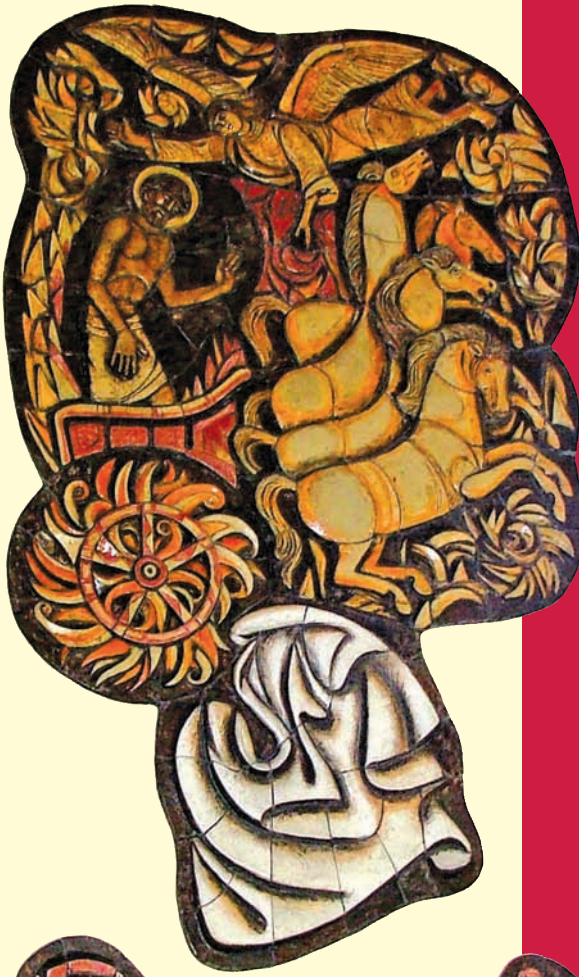
*(including The Book  
of the First Monks)*

A medieval history of the  
Carmelites written c.1385 by

Felip Ribot, O.Carm.

Edited and translated by

Richard Copsey, O.Carm.



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**EARLY CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY**

**Volume 1**

**Felip Ribot, O.Carm.**

*THE TEN BOOKS ON THE WAY OF LIFE  
AND GREAT DEEDS OF THE CARMELITES*

Edited and translated by Richard Copsey, O.Carm.

*Second Edition*

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#### Preface to the Second Edition

The very successful reception and sale of the first edition of *The Ten Books* confirmed the demand in the Carmelite Family and beyond for a modern English translation of this key text of medieval spirituality. This second edition has been produced to keep up with that demand, and the opportunity has been taken to make a handful of minor revisions and corrections; many thanks to those who have pointed these out to us. The pagination has remained the same, allowing easy referencing to either edition.

Johan Bergström-Allen  
Carmelite Projects & Publications Office, York  
March 2007

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The cover illustrations are reproduced by kind permission of the prior and community of Aylesford Priory, Kent, England. All other illustrations are taken from the *Speculum Carmelitanum*, (ed.) Daniel a Virgine Maria, (Antwerp, 1680), vol. 1.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

(abbreviations of books of the Bible are given in the table of authorities)

<i>Bullarium Carm.</i>	<i>Bullarium Carmelitarum</i> , edited by Eliseo Monsignano, (Rome, 1715. 2 vols).
<i>Cassian Conferences</i>	<i>The Conferences of John Cassian</i> , (trans.) E. Gibson (Xlibris, 2000).
<i>Cassian Institutes</i>	John Cassian, <i>The Monastic Institutes. On the training of a Monk and The Eight Deadly Sins</i> , (ed.) Jerome Bertram (London: St. Austin, 1999).
<i>Chandler thesis</i>	Paul Chandler, O.Carm., “ <i>The Liber de Institutione et Peculiaribus Gestis Religiosorum Carmelitarum in Lege Veteri Exortorum et in Nova Perseverancium ad Caprasium Monachum</i> by Felip Ribot, O.Carm.” doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 1991.
<i>Friedberg</i>	<i>Corpus Iuris Canonici</i> , (ed.) A. Friedberg, (Leipzig, 1879. 2 vols).
<i>The Hermits from Mount Carmel</i>	Richard Copsey, <i>Carmel in Britain 3: The Hermits from Mount Carmel</i> , (Faversham: Saint Albert’s Press, 2004).
<i>Medieval Carmelite Heritage</i>	Adrian Staring, O.Carm., <i>Medieval Carmelite Heritage</i> (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1989), 44-48.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Carmelite origins

When the crusader forces conquered Jerusalem in 1099, to great acclaim throughout Christendom, it was thought that the Latin kingdom then established would endure for centuries, thus preserving the Holy Land in Christian hands. However, this was not to be the case, and it was not long before the Moslem forces, regrouping under their new leader Saladin, inflicted a disastrous defeat on the Christian army at the Battle of Hattin in 1187. Once again, the whole of the Holy Land was under Moslem control and it was only in the Lebanon that the surviving crusaders could find refuge. With the arrival of the Third Crusade, led by Richard the Lionheart from England and Philip II from France, a determined effort was made to recapture as much of the Holy Land as possible. Acre fell to the crusading forces in 1192, and Richard led a campaign which regained control of a narrow coastal strip down to Ascalon. This area remained under Christian control until the final assault and fall of Acre to the Moslem forces in 1292.

Within the confines of the coastal strip was the mountain range of Mount Carmel overlooking the bay of Haifa, and it provided one of the few places where those Christians seeking to live as hermits could find solitude in relative safety. Following the recapture of Acre, a few of them began to gather around the well of Elijah on Mount Carmel. Some time between 1206-1214, they sent a deputation down to the patriarch of Jerusalem, Albert Avogadro, then resident in Acre, asking for him to draw up some guidelines for them so that they could live together as a community. He provided them with a *formula vitae*, or 'way of life', and gave them his blessing.<sup>1</sup> The small community flourished and grew in size. After the death of Albert, the community sought some permissions and approval of their way of life from Rome, which were granted by Honorius III in a bull dated 1226, and by Gregory IX in two bulls dated 1226 and 1229.<sup>2</sup>

Relations with the surrounding Moslem kingdoms were never easy and increasing attacks on the small Latin kingdom led some of the hermits to move away from Mount Carmel in search of safer places. A foundation was made in Cyprus around 1235, and then other hermits returned to Europe, founding houses in Messina in Sicily and Les Aygalades near Marseilles in France around 1238. Carmelite hermits arrived at Hulne and Aylesford in England in 1242. In Europe, though, the hermits found new problems. The fact that they were unknown in the West, and their strange dress (they wore a striped cloak), meant that many bishops were reluctant to have them in their dioceses or to grant them permission to undertake any public functions. So the new Order had to struggle for survival. A sequence of petitions to Rome led to the issue of some papal documents from Innocent IV in their support, which urged the bishops to foster the new arrivals. A change of name from the 'hermits of Mount Carmel' to the 'brothers of the blessed Mary of Mount Carmel' also helped their image. Then, in 1247, a general chapter was convened in Aylesford, and it sent a delegation to the pope seeking formal approval of the Order's 'way of life'. Later the same year, after seeking advice from two Dominicans, pope Innocent IV gave his approval, and Albert's document – subject to certain small modifications and amendments – be-

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<sup>1</sup> The 'way of life' received by Albert is given in Ribot's work, see Book 8, Chapter 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Bullarium Carm.*, i, 2-4.



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came a formal Rule.<sup>3</sup> This marked the beginning of a rapid expansion for the Order. The total of 17 houses in 1250 was effectively doubled by 1260 (to 33) and quadrupled by 1270 (to 69).

However, this growth, which was matched by many other new orders, raised serious disquiet among the bishops and diocesan clergy. The result was a call for a general council which met at Lyons in 1274. The previous general council of the Lateran in 1215 had issued a ban on any new orders, but this was never fully implemented. So, among the points on the agenda for the bishops at Lyons was a proposal to suppress all religious orders founded since 1215. After due deliberation this proposal was accepted, with the exception of the Franciscan and Dominican Orders who were considered to be of great use to the Church. As for the Carmelites and the Augustinians, there was some doubt as to their status, so they were left as they were pending a further decision.<sup>4</sup>

This threat to their survival aroused serious concern among the Carmelites, and a few years later at a general chapter in 1281 they launched a campaign to secure permanent approval from the Holy See.<sup>5</sup> An international study house was established at Paris, the leading university of the time, so as to enable Carmelites from throughout the Order to gain academic degrees and especially doctorates. This would enhance the Order's usefulness to the Church by providing scholarly theologians, as well as candidates for bishoprics and other offices. The first Carmelite to gain his doctorate in Paris was Gerard of Bologna in 1295, and English Carmelites were incepting at Oxford and Cambridge at around the same time.<sup>6</sup> The prior general, Pierre Millau, began writing to important figures throughout the world asking for their support for the Order. A letter to king Edward I of England survives which mentions, in passing, that the Order was founded in honour of Mary. This is the first time this claim is made, and it ignores the fact that Mary is nowhere mentioned in the Rule.<sup>7</sup> Two further letters written in support of the Carmelites survive, both from the Holy Land, one signed by three bishops, and the other by the Grand Masters of the Templars and the Hospitallers.<sup>8</sup> The set of Constitutions issued by the 1281 general chapter contain an important opening paragraph which outlines the Order's origins. Here the claim is made that the Carmelite hermits on Mount Carmel were following in a continuous tradition of devout persons living there since the time of the prophet Elijah.<sup>9</sup> Finally a few years later, a campaign to change the unusual striped cloak for a more befitting pure white cloak was begun, and came to a successful conclusion when the pope approved the change in 1287.

These efforts to gain formal and permanent approval of the Order were effective.<sup>10</sup> The Carmelites were granted a succession of bulls culminating in 1326 when pope John XXII granted the Order all the same privileges as the Dominicans and Franciscans. From this point onwards, the Order flourished. It produced a number of very talented theologians

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<sup>3</sup> The text of his decree is found in Ribot's work which follows, Book 8, Chapter 7.

<sup>4</sup> Ribot expounds on the decree of the council in Book 10, Chapter 7.

<sup>5</sup> 'Constitutiones Capituli Londoniensis anni 1281', (ed.) Ludvico Saggi, O.Carm., *Analecta Ordinis Carmelitarum* 15 (1950) 203-245. The constitutions issued by this chapter are the earliest available. It is possible that some action was taken to gain support for the Order in the preceding chapter of 1278 but no records survive.

<sup>6</sup> The evidence from Carmelite records is that it took 11-12 years after ordination to gain a doctorate. In addition, there was considerable expense involved which frequently called for financial support from generous sponsors. Humphrey Necton was the first Carmelite doctor at Cambridge and Peter Scaryngton or Swanington was the first at Oxford. *Medieval Carmelite Heritage*, 44-48.

<sup>8</sup> See Richard Copey, O.Carm., "Two letters from the Holy Land" in *The Hermits from Mount Carmel*, 29-50 (text 42-50).

<sup>9</sup> "Constitutiones Capituli Londoniensis anni 1281", 208.

<sup>10</sup> The documents have been reprinted in *Medieval Carmelite Heritage*, 54-70.

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and other scholars, notably John Baconthorpe who lectured in Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge. By the latter part of the fourteenth century the Order was at its peak, and playing a significant part in national and international affairs. In England, the Order was prominent in its opposition to Wycliffe and the Lollards who followed him. However, the exaggerated claims put forward by the Carmelites in order to justify their approval, their foundation by Elijah and the claim that Mary was their special patron, began to cause offence among the other orders. A Franciscan attacked the Order's claims in Germany and was answered by the Carmelite John of Hildesheim in his *Dialogue between a detractor and a supporter* (c.1370). Then, a serious situation arose in Cambridge where students in the university created disturbances against the Carmelites. The Order was stopped from giving public lectures, and an appeal was made immediately to the chancellor for a public debate. How far the students were prompted by the other mendicant orders is not known, but it was a Dominican, John Stokes, who challenged the Carmelite claims in a hearing before the assembled doctors of the university. The Order was defended by its regent master, John Hornby, who arrived with all the papal bulls and old chronicles that he could find. Stokes attacked on three fronts, claiming that the Carmelites were not descended from Elijah, that they were not formally approved by the Church, and that the Mary in their title was not Mary the Mother of God (whom the Dominicans claimed as their own) but rather St. Mary of Egypt, a converted prostitute. In the debate, Hornby's arguments (which still survive) prevailed, and the chancellor issued a formal declaration in the Carmelites' favour.<sup>11</sup> This document was copied by the Order and rapidly distributed around the other provinces.

## Felip Ribot and his *Ten Books*

It was against this scenario that, some time after 1379, a new Carmelite history emerged based on previously unknown documents.<sup>12</sup> The work was entitled *The Way of Life and Great Deeds of the Carmelites*, but was frequently referred to by the title of its first part, *The Book of the First Monks*. Its author was the provincial of Catalonia, Felip Ribot, who had written a number of other scholarly works.<sup>13</sup> Felip Ribot was a Catalan who joined the Order in Perelada. He gained a doctorate before 1372, but at which university is not known. King Pedro IV of Aragon sent Ribot's name to pope Gregory XI as a candidate for serving on the Inquisition in 1375. He was appointed provincial of Catalonia in 1379, and served in this office until his death in 1391.

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<sup>11</sup> For an account of this debate and Hornby's arguments, see J. P. H. Clark, "A Defence of the Carmelite Order by John Hornby A.D. 1374" *Carmelus* 32 (1985) 73-98.

<sup>12</sup> In dating Ribot's work, the fact that he signs himself as provincial of Catalonia implies that he wrote the work after 1379, the year of his appointment. Normally scholars give the latest date of composition as 1391, the year of his death, but the work is cited by Francesc Martí, a member of Ribot's own province, in his *Compendium veritatis immacolatae conceptionis Virginis Mariae Dei Genitricis*, which is known to have been written in Barcelona in 1390. Therefore, Ribot's work must have been in circulation some time before then. Fr. Adrian Staring believed that the copy of Ribot's work which Martí used is that which survives in Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms. 779. [*Medieval Carmelite Heritage*, 270 n.13].

<sup>13</sup> Ribot's other two surviving works have been edited by Jaume de Puig i Oliver in "El *Tractatus de haeresi et de infidelium incredulitate et de horum criminum iudice* de Felip Ribot, O.Carm.", *Arxiu de Textos Catalans Antics*, 1 (1982), 127-190; and "El *Tractatus de quatuor sensibus sacrae Scripturae* de Felip Ribot, O.Carm. (m. 1391)", *Arxiu de Textos Catalans Antics*, 16 (1997), 299-389.

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In his prologue, Ribot claims that his treatise is compiled from four works written by various Carmelites during the Order's history. The first is an account entitled *The Book of the Institute of the First Monks who began under the Old Law and continue under the New, to Caprasius the monk*. This work, Ribot claims, was written by John, 44<sup>th</sup> bishop of Jerusalem, in 412 A.D., and it describes how the Order was founded by Elijah, and its history through the Old Testament up to the coming of Christ when all the Carmelites become Christians. Now there was a John, 44<sup>th</sup> bishop, who occupied the see of Jerusalem from 387-417. He was a supporter of Chrysostom and a friend of Rufinus. He entered into an argument with St. Jerome who accused him of sympathising with the Pelagians, and he was censured by the pope for not controlling the violence of the Pelagians. However, only in the Carmelites' imagination did the Order exist in 412 A.D. and Ribot has clearly concocted most of what he attributes to John.

Ribot's second source is Cyril, a hermit on Mount Carmel, who supposedly was writing around 1220. His short account which is written in the form of a letter to a "brother Eusebius" takes the history of the Carmelites through the Moslem occupation of the Holy Land and the arrival of the crusaders in 1099. He finishes by giving the text of the 'Way of Life' or Rule as received from Albert, the patriarch of Jerusalem. No Cyril features in the few Carmelite documents surviving from the Holy Land, but there is one possible link. Around the late 1290s, a group of Franciscans, probably in Paris, followers of Joachim of Fiore, produced a curious little work entitled *Oraculum Cirilli*.<sup>14</sup> This claims to contain a letter sent from 'Cyril, a hermit on Mount Carmel' to Joachim of Fiore asking for his interpretation of a text. Cyril had a vision while celebrating mass, in which an angel appeared to him and gave him two silver tablets containing a mysterious text. Cyril writes to Joachim asking for his help in interpreting this text, and the rest of the *Oraculum* consists of sections of this 'text' and its interpretation by Joachim.<sup>15</sup> The *Oraculum* came into Carmelite circles when it was found around 1340 by Pierre Maymet, a French Carmelite student in Paris, who transcribed the work and made it available to his confreres.

Ribot's third source is Sibert de Beka, a well-known German who entered the Carmelite Order in Cologne. He studied at Paris, where he gained his doctorate in 1316. He was chosen to chair a commission to revise the Carmelite ordinal which he produced in 1312, and this became the standard reference for Carmelite liturgical practice from then on. In 1317, Sibert was elected provincial and remained in office until he died in 1332. He was a very influential figure in the Order, lecturing at Paris for some years, even while provincial. He was a personal friend of pope John XXII and is credited with obtaining the bull of 21 November 1326 when the Order was given the same privileges as the Dominicans and Franciscans. He was one of the theologians consulted by the pope about the condemnation of Marsilius of Padua's *Defensor Pacis*, and on 24 January 1327 he presided at the ecclesiastical trial of Master Eckhart.<sup>16</sup>

Ribot claims to have found a commentary on the Rule by Sibert de Beka which explains the need for the formal approval of the Rule in 1247 and the reasons for the changes and modifications which were made. This commentary also contains the text of the Rule approved by pope Innocent IV.

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<sup>14</sup> Paul Puir, "Oraculum Angelicum Cyrilli nebst dem Kommentar des pseudoJoachim", in K. Burdach, *Briefwechsel des Cola di Rienzo*, (Berlin, 1913-1929) vol. 2, pt. iv, 221-343.

<sup>15</sup> In at least one copy of Ribot's work, Cyril's letter is addressed not to Eusebius but to the abbot Joachim [of Fiore], i.e. Lambeth Palace Libr. Ms. 192.

<sup>16</sup> For the details of Sibert's life, see the numerous references to him in F.-B. Lickteig, O.Carm., *The German Carmelites at the Medieval Universities*, (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1981).

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Finally, Ribot transcribes a work entitled *William of Sandwich, hermit on Mount Carmel, A chronicle on the spread of the Carmelite Order through the regions of Syria and Europe and the loss of the monasteries in the Holy Land*. This work describes the experiences of the Order during the thirteenth century, the expansion of the Order in the Holy Land, the way in which the Carmelites were forced to migrate to Cyprus and Europe, and the final fall of the monasteries in the Holy Land into the hands of the Moslems. Again, William of Sandwich is a real character and his name appears as one of the definitors for the Holy Land at the general chapter held in Montpellier in 1287. However, nothing more is known about him and Ribot is the first to produce his chronicle.

## The structure of Ribot's *Ten Books*

### Books 1-7

Ribot adopts a very precise structure for his work. As stated, it is divided into 10 books, and each book consists of 8 chapters. Following an explanatory prologue, Books 1-7 contain the treatise of John 44<sup>th</sup> bishop of Jerusalem. Ribot claims that the large part of the text in these chapters is by John 44<sup>th</sup>, but Ribot has interspersed John's narrative with quotations from the Church Fathers (such as Augustine, Jerome, and Isidore), as well as more recent authors such as William of St. Thierry (the quotes from his *Golden Letter* are attributed by Ribot to St. Bernard, a common mistake in that period). The range of authorities quoted gives evidence of Ribot's scholarship, although some of the references are common among earlier Carmelite writers. Ribot himself (labelled as *Author*) has also added some explanatory paragraphs. John 44<sup>th</sup>'s work is addressed to Caprasius, a monk on Mount Carmel, who begs him to explain the foundation of the Order and its early history, and the work was originally written in Greek.

Of the first seven books, Book 1 is an exegesis of a short text from the story of Elijah, taken from the Bible's *Books of the Kings*:

The word of the Lord came to Elijah saying: Depart from here and go towards the East, and hide yourself in the wadi Carith, which is over against the Jordan, and there you will drink of the torrent, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there. [1 Kgs 17:2-4].

The significance of this text is explained by God to someone who wants to be a monk, and it is revealed that each phrase forms an instruction on how to live the monastic life.

Books 2-4 then describe how Elijah formed the first community of Carmelites, his handing on of the leadership to Elisha and then the community's history during the Old Testament. The early Carmelites are called 'sons of the prophets' in the Bible, and various biblical personages are claimed as Carmelites, such as Jonah, Micah, Obadiah and the Rechabites.

Book 5 relates the coming of Christ and explains how John the Baptist lived as a Carmelite during his early years in the desert. Then, after preaching in the Jordan he returned to baptise them and inform them of the coming of Christ. The Order flourished and people joined from all nations. The Carmelites were in Jerusalem at the time of Christ's Ascension, and were present in the crowd at Pentecost. They were baptised by the apostles and began to preach the gospel.

Book 6 starts with an explanation of why the Order is devoted to Mary. The little cloud rising from the sea which Elijah saw from Mount Carmel is regarded as a symbol of Mary,

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and the story is interpreted with typical medieval ingenuity to explain how this foretold the immaculate conception of Mary, her vow of perpetual virginity, the time at which she would be born, and the incarnation of her son. In honour of the Virgin Mary, the Carmelites built a chapel on Mount Carmel in 83 AD. The last part of this book deals with the various titles of the Order, such as ‘sons of the prophets’, ‘monks’, ‘hermits’, ‘anchors’, down to ‘Carmelites’ and ‘brothers of the blessed virgin Mary of Mount Carmel’.

Book 7, the last of John’s treatise, deals with the habit. It explains in general why the monk wears a habit, and then explains the symbolism of each part of the Carmelite habit. When dealing with the cloak, John explains that the Carmelites started with a white cloak, a copy of that worn by Elijah. Then, after the arrival of the Moslems, they were forced to stop wearing it because the Moslem *satraps* wore white as a sign of office, and so the Carmelites had to adopt the striped cloak instead. Only after their arrival in Europe were they able to return to the white cloak once again.

## Books 8-10

Book 8 contains two short works: the account written by Cyril, “a hermit on Mount Carmel”, of the history of the Order from the arrival of the Moslems up to the giving of the first form of the Rule by the patriarch Albert; and a commentary on the approved Rule written by Sibert de Beka. Cyril’s history is in the form of a letter to “brother Eusebius” and occupies Chapters 1 and 2 of Book 8. In Chapter 1, Cyril relates how the Carmelites survived under Moslem rule but were forced to change their white cloak for a striped one, and then in Chapter 2 how they were first formed into a community with a prior by Aymeric of Salignac, patriarch of Antioch. Aymeric also arranged for the book of John 44<sup>b</sup> to be translated into Latin as the Carmelites no longer knew Greek. This narrative forms the introduction to the text of the Rule as given by the patriarch of Jerusalem, Albert, which forms Chapter 3.<sup>17</sup> The authorship of Chapter 4 is not stated, but it is almost certainly Ribot speaking for himself as he explains how all the clauses in the Rule given by Albert can be found at least implicitly in John 44<sup>b</sup>. Sibert de Beka’s commentary starts in Chapter 4 and is intended to explain why the Carmelites sought approval of their Rule in 1247. The danger for the Carmelites was that this approval would be seen by their enemies as the first time that the Rule was approved by a pope, and so Sibert is at pains to show that the initiative was taken by the Carmelites, not because they needed formal approval but because there were some points unclear in Albert’s text, and also that since the transfer to the West they needed to have some of its conditions mitigated. Chapter 5 goes through these changes in detail, explaining the reason for each one. Chapter 7 then gives the full text of the Rule as approved by Innocent IV, evidently taken from an official copy as it includes the formal introduction from the papal register. Chapter 8 would again appear to be a post-script by Ribot as it contains extracts from a series of later papal bulls confirming the Church’s approval of the Carmelite Rule.

Book 9 is the chronicle by William of Sandwich. This describes the way in which the Order flourished in the Holy Land during the Latin kingdom. It explains how the Order grew and multiplied, and Chapter 2 gives a list of supposed foundations made by the Order throughout the Holy Land and further north in the regions of Lebanon and Antioch. In Chapter 3, William explains that, due to the continual attacks of the Moslems, some houses were lost, and the Order began seeking to make foundations in safer places, first in

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<sup>17</sup> If it is genuine, this text by Ribot is the only copy of the early rule given by Albert. Most scholars are inclined to think this is a genuine text, although where Ribot obtained it is unknown.

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Cyprus, and then Europe. Chapters 4 and 5 describe the Carmelites' expansion through Europe and some of the problems encountered from the bishops. Chapter 6 is devoted to an account of a miracle in which St. Louis of France is rescued from shipwreck during a storm near Acre after praying to Mary. As the storm calms, he hears the bells of the monastery on Mount Carmel calling the hermits to matins. After docking in Acre, he goes up to the monastery and, impressed by the holiness of the hermits there, he brings a group of them back to France, giving them a house on the outskirts of Paris. Chapter 7 describes further problems encountered in Europe, and then Chapter 8 finishes the work with an account of the fall of the Holy Land, the capture of Acre, and the massacre of the remaining hermits on Mount Carmel, as they sung the *Salve regina*.

Book 10 concludes Ribot's masterpiece with an account of approvals of the Rule by later popes, and privileges granted to the Order, such as exemption from local episcopal jurisdiction. Then Ribot details at length how the Order is approved both in divine law (Chapter 5) and in canon law (Chapter 6). Finally, Chapters 7 and 8 deal with the thorny problem of the decree issued by the Second Council of Lyons, which stated that the Carmelites and Augustinians may remain in their present state until decided otherwise. Ribot's argument, which is standard among Carmelite apologists of the period, is based on the Latin wording of the decree which states: "in suo solito statu volumus permanere" (we wish them to remain in their present or customary state). Ribot argues that the text is wrong and should be "in suo solido statu volumus permanere" (we wish them to remain in a secure or stable state). This difference of one single letter in the Latin has enormous significance for the Order. In fact, due to Carmelite persistence, pope John XXII gave full recognition to the Order and decreed in his text, "in statu firmo, solido et stabili decrevimus et volumus permanere" (we decree and wish them to remain in a firm, secure and stable state).

The whole work ends with a postscript by Ribot which recaps the contents.

## Critical analysis

The major problem surrounding Ribot's work is that none of the texts which he transcribes are referred to by other Carmelite historians of the period. None of the earlier chronicles and histories of the Order mention texts by John 44<sup>th</sup> or Cyril, or William of Sandwich. Sibert de Beka is the best known of Ribot's sources, but nobody else has ever heard of him writing a commentary on the Rule, although his composition of such a work would be quite feasible. In fact, none of the texts transcribed by Ribot have ever been found outside of Ribot's own work. A chronicle such as that by William of Sandwich would have been enormously popular among the early Carmelites, but it has never been found in a manuscript by itself. All Ribot's four sources are found only in his composition.

On its date alone, the treatise of John 44<sup>th</sup> has to be rejected as spurious. Similarly, the letter of Cyril is so fantastical in its account of the Carmelites living under Moslem rule and their formation into a community by Aymeric of Salignac that it too must be fiction. Sibert de Beka's commentary on the Rule could possibly be genuine, and it is the sort of work which he could have composed. However, the style of the text, and the way in which the work so clearly complements Ribot's argument, arouse considerable suspicion about its authenticity. The fact that it has never been noticed or found in a separate form would seem to confirm that it is another composition by Ribot himself. Finally, the chronicle by William of Sandwich has lots of genuine information on the Holy Land, but the list of Carmelite foundations there, for example, must be fictitious, as many of these areas were

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back under Moslem control before the Carmelites began, and the accounts of the miracle experienced by St. Louis (which is unknown in the contemporary accounts of his crusade) and the final massacre of the hermits singing the *Salve regina* bear all the marks of medieval legendary invention.

So, almost the whole of Ribot's work would seem to be his own composition. One part, though, Book 1, would seem to be adapted from a pre-existing text. This little biblical exegesis on the life of the monk almost certainly comes from some other source. Its style is different from the following six books attributed to John 44<sup>th</sup>. The succeeding books contain quotations from the Fathers and passages by Ribot himself, whilst Book 1 (Chapters 2-8), in contrast, contains only references taken from scripture. The writer is so immersed in the scripture that many paragraphs are little more than sequences of biblical quotations. Each chapter in this book has a definite structure which is missing from the chapters in later books. Each chapter starts with an exposition of a phrase from the scriptural text and expounds its meaning. Then the second half of the chapter is addressed to the monk himself and identifies the significance of this phrase for his own monastic vocation. There is no specific Carmelite element in these chapters, and no mention of any of the later themes, such as how Elijah formed a community of disciples, etc. Chapter 1 is clearly an introduction by Ribot himself, but Chapters 2-8 can be separated out as a little self-contained treatise which has no links with any other part of Ribot's work. In fact, Book 2, Chapter 1 covers the same ground as Book 1, with many of the same ideas. In Book 2, Chapter 1, however, there are quotations from the Fathers such as Isidore, Jerome, and Cassian. The fact that this initial chapter in Book 2 does not refer to Book 1, where the same theme has been treated at great length, lends further argument to the hypothesis that Ribot found the text of Book 1 elsewhere and added it after starting Book 2. Discovering where Ribot found this treatise, or whether he composed it himself on a separate occasion, would need further study.

Clearly the rest of the treatise attributed to John 44<sup>th</sup> is largely Ribot's invention, although he has taken and developed ideas from elsewhere. The identification of Mary with the cloud is earlier than Ribot, and is found in the Fathers.<sup>18</sup> The complicated exegesis of this passage into a prediction of Mary's immaculate conception and the date of Christ's incarnation bears all the marks of a passage adapted from elsewhere. Similarly, the contents of Book 7 and its exposition of the significance of the habit would have been a passage commonly used for the instruction of novices.<sup>19</sup>

## Significance of Ribot's composition

It is difficult nowadays to appreciate the significance of Ribot's composition. It appeared out of the blue, so to speak, and astounded the whole Order. Here was a magnificent 'history' of the Carmelites, apparently confirming all the Order's early history and based, seemingly, on impeccable sources. From this moment onwards, Ribot's work became the sourcebook and 'bible' for all Carmelite writing. Thomas Netter, the provincial of England and the outstanding Carmelite theologian of the period, wrote to the prior general a few years after the composition's emergence begging for a copy of the work to be sent to him,<sup>20</sup> and Netter refers to it in his magisterial work, *Doctrinale Antiquitatum Fidei Catholicae Ecclesiae*.<sup>21</sup> Ribot's work was translated into English by

<sup>18</sup> Kevin Alban, O.Carm. is currently researching this theme.

<sup>19</sup> In fact, one is suspicious that after Book 5, Ribot ran out of ideas on the history of the Order, and Chapters 6 and 7 are slight diversions to fill out his narrative. It is likely that these chapters were taken, at least in part, from pre-existing works or sermons.

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Thomas Scrope around 1435 whilst Scrope was an anchorite in the Carmelite house in Norwich.<sup>22</sup>

The figures mentioned in the work rapidly acquired other legendary details about their lives. Miracles were credited to John 44<sup>th</sup>, and the Caprasius to whom his work is addressed becomes prior on Mount Carmel for 42 years and dies in 464 AD. Cyril, with his correspondent Eusebius, were credited with the conversion of Armenia after ten years of missionary work there. He and Eusebius then retired to the Holy Land and became Carmelites, Cyril was elected prior on Mount Carmel and third prior general, whilst Eusebius became prior at the Carmelite monastery on the Black Mountain near Antioch.

William of Sandwich is credited with living in the Holy Land from 1254 and dying in 1291 soon after his escape from Acre, just before its fall, but having had time enough to finish his chronicle.

Many of the stories in Ribot's work are quoted extensively elsewhere, and his vision of the Order coloured Carmelite spirituality for centuries to come. In fact, it is Ribot's portrait of Elijah which transforms the prophet's status from a brief mention in the first chapter of histories of the Carmelites into becoming a significant spiritual figure in Carmelite life.

A copy of Ribot's work, translated into Spanish, was in the convent of the Incarnation in Avila, and was read by St. Teresa of Jesus in that town. It gave her a vision of how the Order had lived during the early years of its existence and was a seminal influence on her ideas for the reform of the Carmelite Order.<sup>23</sup>

Sadly, it was only in the twentieth century, as the Order's historians developed more scientific approaches, that a critical attitude was adopted to Ribot's composition, even though outsiders such as the Bollandists and others had long raised doubts about it. In spite of the evident fiction of much of its contents, Carmelites were reluctant to confess defeat over its historicity. Fr. Benedict Zimmerman, OCD, was severely criticised by one of his confreres when he dared to doubt the Order's foundation by Elijah. Fr. Norman Werling, O.Carm., in his M.A. thesis for the Catholic University of America in 1946, "The Date of the *Institution*", argued that the work was written between 1247 and 1287.<sup>24</sup> At the time this was one step closer to the truth, though his conclusions have long been super-

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas Netter mentions the work in two of his letters to the prior general. The letters are not dated but must have been written before June 1425:

"May you also deign to let me have through him the work of John XLIV addressed to the monk Caprasius, or another of the requested books if you have any, at my expense." [letter 27]

"Finally, I ask you, and many other people with me, to have the book of John XLIV to the monk Caprasius copied at our expense, a book which would be of great value and honour to us if it could be purchased for us in ancient script." [letter 28]

<sup>21</sup> See Thomas Netter, O.Carm., *Doctrinale Antiquitatum Fidei Catholicae Ecclesiae*, (ed.) Bonaventura Blanciotti, O. Carm., (Venice, 1759), iii, 573-579.

<sup>22</sup> London, Lambeth Palace Library, Ms. 192, which contains a Latin copy of the work followed by Scrope's translation. Dr. Valerie Edden is currently editing Scrope's translation for publication. For details, see Valerie Edden, "The prophetic lyf of an heremyte: Elijah as the Model of the Contemplative Life in *The Book of the First Monks*", in E. A. Jones, (ed.), *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VII*, (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 149-161. On Ribot's reception within the wider context of vernacular Carmelite literature in medieval England, see Johan Bergström-Allen, *Heremitam et Ordinis Carmelitarum: a Study of the Vernacular Theological Literature Produced by Medieval English Whitefriars, particularly Richard Misyng, O.Carm.*, (unpublished M. Phil. Thesis, University of Oxford, 2002). For a recent study of Ribot's significance, see Andrew Jotischky, *The Carmelites and Antiquity: Mendicants and their Pasts in the Middle Ages*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). On the place of Ribot's work in the development of the Order's Elijah tradition, see Jane Ackerman, *Elijah, Prophet of Carmel*, (Washington D. C.: ICS Publications, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> This manuscript is preserved in the Carmelite archives in Saint Albert's International Centre (CISA) in Rome, and was used in the preparation of the Latin text of Books 8-10 for this translation.

<sup>24</sup> Werling's thesis was printed in *The Sword*, 13 (1949), 275-334.



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seded. By the 1950s, even Carmelite scholars accepted that the work was a fabrication, although they debated whether parts of it were genuine. In 1991, the Latin text of the first seven books was edited by Paul Chandler, O.Carm., in his doctoral thesis, “The *Liber de Institutione et Peculiaribus Gestis Religiosorum Carmelitarum in Lege Veteri Exortorum et in Nova Perseverantium ad Caprasium Monachum* by Felip Ribot, O.Carm.”. Chandler’s research marked the beginning of more intensive study of the work, and a more critically objective understanding of its composition.<sup>25</sup> However, there is still much research to be done on its composition and in identifying the sources used by Ribot. Considerable discussion among scholars continues, but few of their findings have appeared in print as yet.

## The Latin Text

The initial success of Ribot’s work led to it being copied widely, and Paul Chandler traced ten early manuscript copies for his critical edition.<sup>26</sup> In 1507 the work was printed for the first time in the *Speculum Carmelitanum*, edited by Battista Cathaneis, O.Carm. (Venice, 1507). This ensured a wider dissemination of the work, but Cathaneis’ text suffers from many errors.

The work was printed again in the series *Maxima Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum* (original edition, 1589; seventh edition, Lyons, 1677), which was edited by Marguarin de la Bigne.<sup>27</sup> He wanted to present it as the work of John 44<sup>th</sup> bishop of Jerusalem, but Ribot’s book contained later material and numerous quotations from the Latin Fathers which could not have been part of the supposed Greek original, plus the sections by Ribot himself. Therefore, de la Bigne ‘reconstructed’ the primitive text by eliminating all the supposed interpolations. With all these excisions, de la Bigne was forced to abandon Ribot’s structure for the work and to divide the remaining text into 41 chapters. This partial text was in turn based on the version that de la Bigne found in the *Speculum Carmelitanum*, which itself was a poor copy. De la Bigne’s version of the work was very influential, because it was published in the prestigious and widely circulated *Bibliotheca Patrum*, the first great collection of writings of the Fathers, and it formed the basis of a number of translations. However, its mutilated text has created many problems of interpretation even up to the present.

It was only with the appearance of Paul Chandler’s thesis that a critical edition of the first seven books became available. However, his partial approach again removed Ribot’s original structure of ten books which form an organic whole.

## Existing translations of the text

Over the years, there have been many partial translations of Ribot’s work into different languages. However, they have all suffered from the fact that no critical edition of the Latin text existed, and in many cases they focussed exclusively on the treatise of John 44<sup>th</sup>, to the exclusion of the other parts of Ribot’s work. In 1940, Norman Werling produced a translation of the treatise of John 44<sup>th</sup>.<sup>28</sup> However, due to the Second World War, the only text Werling had available in the U.S.A. was the de la Bigne edition where, of course, all the chapter headings are different and a large part of the text is missing. Translations in other languages, such as R. Mollinck and Irenaeus Rosier’s Dutch version,<sup>29</sup> and that by Valentino di San José,<sup>30</sup> suffered from the same lack of a complete text.

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<sup>25</sup> See *Chandler thesis*. Sadly, Chandler’s thesis has not yet been published.

<sup>26</sup> These are listed in *Chandler thesis*.

<sup>27</sup> *Maxima Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum* (original edition, 1589; seventh edition, Lyons, 1677).

<sup>28</sup> This was published in *The Sword*, 4, (1940), 20-24, 152-160, 309-320; 5, (1941), 20-27, 131-139, 241-248; 6, (1942), 33-39, 147-155, 278-286, 347-355.

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Book 1, with its more mystical theme and its advice for the monk, was instantly popular, and was translated by itself or with the first one or two chapters of Book 2. Small pamphlets with only this part of Ribot's work have appeared in Dutch (1948, 1971), English (1969, 1974), French (1945-1954), German (1980), Italian (1946, 1951, 1983, 1986), and Portuguese (1983).<sup>31</sup>

More recently, a translation into Italian by Edmundo Coccia of Paul Chandler's critical text of the first seven books has appeared.<sup>32</sup> This is a carefully prepared and nicely presented book, but sadly, by limiting itself to the first seven books it continues the impression that John 44<sup>th</sup>'s treatise has an existence as an independent entity. This has never been the case, and such an approach obscures Ribot's original intention.

All the above translations have focussed on the supposed treatise by John 44<sup>th</sup> and completely ignored the last three of Ribot's books. Luckily, the chronicle of William of Sandwich was translated into English by Jude Cattelona some years ago.<sup>33</sup> The text of the Albertan Rule in Book 8 has also received a lot of attention from scholars, and it is often included in one form or another in books on the Carmelite Rule. The remainder of Book 8 and Book 10 have been almost completely ignored.

### The present translation

For the purpose of the translation into English which follows, Paul Chandler's Latin text was used for the first seven books. For the last three books, the Latin text had to be constructed from a number of sources. Some parts have appeared in print, although with varying degrees of trustworthiness, and they are listed in the footnote below.<sup>34</sup> For the remainder, and as a check on the printed versions, recourse has been made to three manuscript copies. These were:

Rome, Biblioteca del Teresianum, Ms. 69.

London, Lambeth Palace Library, Ms. 192.

Rome, Archives of the Carmelite Order (A.O.C., II.C.O.II.35), Ms. from the Incarnation, Avila.

In addition, these have been checked against the two printed editions (accepting their imperfections):

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<sup>29</sup> R. Mollink, O.Carm. and Irenaeus Rosier, O.Carm., *Het Boek over de Ersten Monniken*, Merkelbeek [1943], (mimeographed).

<sup>30</sup> Anon. [Valentino de San José, OCD], *Libro de la institución de los primeros monjes fundados en el antiguo testamento y que perseveran en el nuevo*, por Juan Nepote Silvano, obispo XLIV de Jerusalén, traducido al latín por Aymerico, patriarca de Antioquia, y del latín al castellano por un carmelita discalzo, y *Carta de san Cirilo Constantinopolitano, traducida al castellano*, (Avila 1959).

<sup>31</sup> The translations are all listed in *Chandler thesis*.

<sup>32</sup> Felip Ribot, *Istituzione e gesta dei primi monachi*, a cura di Edmondo Coccia, (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> Book 9 was translated by Jude Cattelona, O. Carm., in *The Sword*, 3, (1939), 365-368, 479-487.

<sup>34</sup> Book 8, Chapters 1-2: 'Epistola Sancti Cyrilli', (ed.) Gabriel Wessels, O.Carm., *Analecta Ordinis Carmelitarum*, 3, (1914-1916), 279-286.

Book 8, Chapter 3: Bruno Secondin, O.Carm., *La Regola del Carmelo. Per una nuova interpretazione*, (Rome: Quaderni di 'Presenza del Carmelo', 1982), appendice 1, pp. 91-97.

Book 8, Chapters 3, 5-6 (incomplete): "Regula Primitiva O. N. et Mutationes Innocentii IV", (ed.) Gabriel Wessels, O.Carm., *Analecta Ordinis Carmelitarum*, 3, (1914-1916), 212-223.

Book 8, Chapter 7: Carlo Cicconetti, O.Carm., *La Regola del Carmelo: origine - natura - significato*, (Rome: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1973), 201-205.

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*Speculum Carmelitanum*, (ed.) Battista Cathaneis, (Venice, 1507), fos. 2-42.  
*Speculum Carmelitanum*, (ed.) Daniel a Virgine Maria (Antwerp, 1680), i, 7-114.

The final Latin text is as accurate as possible, taking into account the limited number of manuscripts which were available for consultation.

The starting point for the English text was some photocopied pages which were circulated at a conference held in Washington D.C. These contained the first part of a projected translation by Paul Chandler of the first seven books. The remainder were taken from Norman Werling's translation of the de la Bigne edition of John 44<sup>th</sup>'s treatise where, of course, all the chapter headings were different and a significant part of the text missing. In addition, there was the translation of the chronicle of William of Sandwich by Jude Cattelona. This latter translation, together with the Chandler/Werling composite text, was all that was available when the present translator compiled a volume of early Carmelite documents in English for use by student friars in the British province of Carmelites. This compilation was well received, and led to a request from the prior general, Joseph Chalmers, for the collection to be made available in a printed form so that it could be more widely available, especially for those engaged in the training of young Carmelites. At present, a new enlarged collection of texts is being prepared for publication.<sup>35</sup> When the question arose of including Ribot's work in this collection, an incomplete translation was not really an option; the work is so significant that it was time for a full text in English to be made available. So the project to produce a new translation of the whole of Ribot's *Ten Books* took root.

Although advantage was taken of existing translations where available, the whole of this translation has been compared with the Latin original, and the final English text – after extensive corrections and revisions – is my responsibility alone. However, I am deeply grateful to all those Carmelites whose earlier labours made my work so much easier.<sup>36</sup>

In Ribot's text, there are some problems with the exact translations of his technical Latin words into English. Ribot uses, for example, a variety of words to refer to the Carmelite Order (*institutio, religio, ordo*, etc.), just as its members are given diverse nomenclatures (*monachi, professores, heremiti, filii prophetarum, cenobiti*, etc.). It is not possible to translate each of these with a separate English word, and I am not sure that Ribot always uses them in a technically accurate sense.<sup>37</sup> There are instances when Ribot seems to be using a different term simply to lend variety to his text. Although Catholics do use the word 'religious' to refer to members of a religious order, I have tried to avoid using this word as it is often misunderstood by those who come from other denominational backgrounds or from none at all. In general, I have chosen English words which give the sense of Ribot's ideas, rather than attempting to slavishly follow his exact choice of Latin terms.

A particular difficulty is caused by the word *institutio*, which in Latin means not only the founding or creation of a group but also its way of life, rules and customs. The English word 'institute' does not do the Latin justice. So I have felt free to use 'way of life' or 'foundation' or some other term depending on the sense of the passage. Those who wish to do a more technical study of the words used by Ribot will, of course, refer to the Latin text.

Then there is the title! For years, the work has commonly been called *The Book of the First Monks*, but this is not the title given it by Felip Ribot. Ribot's Latin title is more cor-

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<sup>35</sup> Translations of many of the Carmelite documents cited in the footnotes will be included in this collection, *Early Carmelite Documents*, to be printed by Saint Albert's Press.

<sup>36</sup> I am particularly grateful here to Paul Chandler for allowing me to make use of his translation of Book 1 and Book 2, Chapter 1. This is part of his own projected translation, which will contain all the scholarly apparatus.

<sup>37</sup> These terms are listed individually in the Index, but should not be regarded as definitive nomenclature.

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rectly rendered as *The Ten Books of the Way of Life (or Institute) and Great Deeds of the Carmelites*. The *Book of the First Monks* is an abbreviation of the title of John 44<sup>th</sup>'s treatise given at the beginning of Book 1, Chapter 1, that is, *The Book of the Institute of the First Monks which began under the Old Law and continues under the New, to Caprasius the monk*. But this title applies only to Books 1-7 and occurs underneath the opening line of Book 1, which has the introduction: *Here begins Book 1 of the Way of Life and Great Deeds of the Carmelite monks*.<sup>38</sup> After a long deliberation, I feel that Felip Ribot was clear about what he wanted the title to be and that he should have his way. So, his original title has been used at the front of this book, but in order to prevent any confusion, I have left *The Book of the First Monks* as a subtitle.

Although advantage has been taken of modern editions of the Bible when translating the scripture quotations, the Vulgate text frequently differs from the modern versions and Ribot's quotations have their own idiosyncrasies. This has often made it necessary to translate the Latin afresh in order to reflect the nuances intended by Ribot or by one of his supposed authors. The scripture references reflect modern conventions and so the numbering of the Psalms and the titles of the books of Samuel and Kings have been adjusted. As might be expected in a medieval work, the scripture references abound, so where there is a sequence of references in a single paragraph, these have been grouped together into one footnote in order to reduce the number.

For the other footnotes, I have benefited from the researches of Paul Chandler and other scholars. However, I have not felt it appropriate to include all the references to similar passages in works by the Church Fathers unless these add to the understanding. On occasion, though, I have added further notes, particularly where there are links to other earlier Carmelite writings which have probably influenced Ribot. It is important to realise that Ribot's work did not appear out of nothing, but was a culmination of a series of Carmelite historical works (and imagination) over the previous 100 years or more. Ribot's quotations from the Church Fathers and other authors are mostly used to support his legendary history of the Carmelites, so his interpretation of them can be somewhat partisan. As with the scripture quotations, even though published translations exist, it has frequently been necessary to translate the Latin quotations afresh so as to preserve the particular slant of Ribot's argument. In general, the footnotes list published translations where available; otherwise, the footnote indicates the part of the work where the quotation can be found and scholarly readers will need to refer to the standard modern patristic collections, such as *Corpus Christianorum* or *Sources chrétiennes*.

## Postscript

My thanks are due here to the members of the Indonesian Carmelite province who invited me to go to Indonesia in the summer of 2004 to give their annual retreat based on Ribot's book. It was their interest and encouragement which gave me a great stimulus to finish the first draft of this translation. The community in the Carmelite house in Malang, in particular, gave me the warmest of welcomes, looked after all my needs, and provided me with space, time and an air-conditioned room in which to complete the major part of this translation. To all of the members of this province, true Carmelite brothers, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude.

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<sup>38</sup> The title chosen by Paul Chandler for his thesis curiously combines both of Ribot's titles together, "*The Liber de Institutione et Peculiaribus Gestis Religiosorum Carmelitarum in Lege Veteri Exortorum et in Nova Perseverantium ad Caprasium Monachum*", which confuses the whole situation.

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*For the greatness of this work,  
I give thanks to the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
the almighty and eternal God, my creator, redeemer and sanctifier  
who has guided me from the beginning of this work,  
leading me through the chapters right up to the end.  
To whom be praise, honour, virtue and glory for ever and ever.  
Amen.*

Felip Ribot, Carmelite

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**THE TEN BOOKS**  
**ON**  
**THE WAY OF LIFE AND GREAT DEEDS**  
**OF**  
**THE CARMELITES**



Ill. 3: The word of the Lord came to Elijah saying, "Depart from here and go towards the East, and hide yourself in the wadi Carith". [1 Kgs 17:2-3]

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## PROLOGUE

Here begins the prologue to the Ten Books on the way of life and great deeds of the Carmelites.

The Lord held the people of Israel in a special place in his affection for as he says of them in *Exodus*, Chapter 4: “Israel is my firstborn son”, and unlike other nations, God treated them like a beloved son and through his servant Moses gave them the great wisdom of the law, so that they might understand well God’s will and having understood it, put it into practice, as the prophet says in Psalm 147: “He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and his laws to Israel; he has not dealt thus with any other nation nor he has revealed his laws to them.” But the people, glorying in the fact that they could trace their human descent from Abraham, trusted that this ancestry was sufficient for their salvation without needing to imitate Abraham’s deeds; which trust our Lord rejected when he said to them in *John* Chapter 8: “If you were the sons of Abraham, then you would do the works of Abraham”. From this over-confidence, in fact, the people not only failed to follow Moses’ law, as our Lord said to them in *John* Chapter 7: “Moses gave you the law and yet none of you keeps the law”; also they neglected to study the law and to seek to understand it. As a result, God’s anger was kindled, as king Josiah says in the fourth book of *Kings*, Chapter 22: “Great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.”<sup>39</sup>

But just as the Israelite people, before all other people, were taught by God through Moses about the great wisdom of the law, so the Carmelite monks before all other men of the Israelite people were instructed by God through the prophet Elijah about the special writings and rules of the monastic life. They should, though, lest they incur God’s wrath, not boast that they have so great a prophet as this as the author and founder of their Order, but rather they should strive to imitate the life of this prophet, to study and understand his teachings and the rules of this Order, and to copy his deeds.

And as they seek with all speed to understand and to do this, I, brother Philip Ribot, doctor in sacred scripture and prior provincial of the province of Catalonia of this Order, have consulted and studied with careful attention and edited into one volume all that the early fathers of this Order have written truthfully of its first way of life, of the teachings of Elijah, and of the progress of the Order both during the time of the Old Law and then under the New, until in our own days it has spread throughout the different regions of Europe.

I was greatly guided in this work by four of the earlier fathers who had taken care to write conscientiously about our history. The first of whom, called John, was a hermit on Mount Carmel and afterwards bishop of Jerusalem. Taking great care, he was the first to write about the founding of this Order and the wonderful works of the founder and the first members of our Order. He lived at the time of the emperors Arcadius and Honorius.<sup>40</sup>

The second, called Cyril, was a prophet and hermit on Mount Carmel. He wrote about the things which happened to our Order from the time of John up to the composition of the Order’s Rule. He lived during the time of the emperor Henry VI.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Ex* 4:22; *Ps* 147:19; *Jn* 8:39; *Jn* 7:19; 2 *Kgs* 22:13.

<sup>40</sup> Honorius Flavius and Arcadius Flavius were the two sons of the Roman emperor Theodosius. Honorius ruled the western part of the empire from 395-423, whilst Arcadius ruled the eastern part from 395-408.

<sup>41</sup> Henry VI was Holy Roman Emperor from 1191-1197.



The third, called William of Sandwich, was a hermit on Mount Carmel. He wrote a chronicle about the spread of our Order through the provinces of Syria and Europe, and of the loss of the monasteries in the Holy Land. He lived during the time of emperor Rudolf.<sup>42</sup>

The fourth, called Sibert de Beka, a doctor in sacred scripture, wrote a tract commenting on the Rule of this Order. He lived during the time of emperor Henry VII.<sup>43</sup>

Thus the present volume is entitled *The Book of the Way of Life and Great Deeds of the Carmelites*, and is composed using the writings of the said fathers of this Order, whose writings at times correspond with passages cited from other authorities, saints or other trusted authors. In this volume, all that follows immediately after the citing of any author are the actual words written by the author cited, even if in a different chapter they are subsequently attributed to another writer. Now, as I am well aware that every passage of human eloquence is always subject to criticism and contradiction by rivals, I have endeavoured to identify with red lettering the authors and books from which the passages and arguments quoted in this book have been taken, so that everyone may read them in their original source before rejecting them. For as blessed Isidore says in the second book of his *Soliloquies*: “When the written text is not examined in detail, some go on the attack entangled in a labyrinth of errors, because they judge before having understood, they accuse before having read and reread the text.”<sup>44</sup> In this work, I referred to myself only occasionally when no greater authority could be found, lest the order of the narrative or its development should be impeded.

My main reason for composing this volume was because of the dispersion of these texts and references which, until now, have never been collected together so that they may be read in one volume, even though the way of life and history of our Order are not fully covered. However, in this volume, in abridged form, arranged in separate ordered books, the origins of this Order and its way of life and history and its standing are described clearly enough.

Now the present work is separated into ten books or parts, each one of which is divided into eight chapters, and each book is headed by a brief preface which gives a summary of the contents of the whole book and of each of its chapters.

The first book explains the way of life of this Order as it was put forward by God to the prophet Elijah to be lived, and is described by lord John, the bishop of Jerusalem.

The second book reveals how Elijah lived out this way of life, and how he brought together and retained disciples to live in the same way.

The third book deals with the places where the first members of this Order lived, and how they reached perfection through this way of life in them.

The fourth book deals with the ascent of Elijah into paradise, and how this Order, after his departure, was led by Elisha and preserved from the Jewish captivity.

The fifth book treats of the time when the members of this Order were first baptised, and of the men who baptised them and led them to a knowledge of the Incarnate Word.

The sixth book lays out the titles of this Order and most importantly why its members are called the brothers of the blessed Mary.

The seventh book considers the habit of this Order and the reasons for its changes and differences.

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<sup>42</sup> Rudolf I of Hapsburg was king of Germany from 1273-1291.

<sup>43</sup> Henry VII was Holy Roman Emperor from 1312-1313.

<sup>44</sup> Actually not from Isidore but Gratian's *Decretals* D 29 c 1: *Friedberg*, i, 106.

The eighth book reveals the first authors to formulate this way of life and the Rule of our Order and of the correction, clarification and mitigation of that Rule.

The ninth book describes the growth of this Order across the provinces of Syria and Europe, and of the loss of the houses in the Holy Land.

The tenth book demonstrates the exempt status of this Order and the approval and confirmation given it.

In these ten books, it will be possible to learn enough of the truth about the Carmelites so as to devoutly study the beginning, progress and growth of their Order, the admirable qualities of its founders and earliest members, the eremitical monastic way of life and its purpose, and the blessed reward gained by those who live it worthily.

**T**herefore I beg you, dear brothers, in imitation of the holy fathers who went before us, that you should welcome and read this way of life, examine and understand it, test and live it, for through observance of it you will appease God's anger, and "being adopted as sons" you may receive your eternal reward, for as the Wiseman, in *Sirach*, Chapter 48, says of our father Elijah: "Blessed are those who hear you and are blessed with your friendship."<sup>45</sup>

**T**he end of the prologue to the whole work etc.

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<sup>45</sup> Gal 4:5; Sir 48:11.



Ill. 4: Elijah by the brook of Carith gathered together some righteous men and began to instruct them in the monastic life given to him by God.

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# BOOK 1

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST BOOK

**H**ere begins the preface to the first book.

**A***uthor*: This book deals entirely with the first founder of this Order, and the origins and first form of this way of life, that is, the method for reaching prophetic perfection and the end of the eremitical monastic life.

This book contains eight chapters:

Chapter 1: What were the beginnings of the first founder of this Order, at what time did he live, from whom he was born, where did he grew up, and when did he first take up this dedicated way of life.

Chapter 2: How Elijah was the first man, under the inspiration of God, to lead the monastic and prophetic eremitical life, and how God communicated to him the way of reaching the goal and the perfection of this way of life, partly openly and partly in a mystical fashion.

Chapter 3: How it is necessary for the monk to renounce possessions and riches in order to achieve prophetic perfection and the goal of the eremitical monastic life.

Chapter 4: How it is necessary for the monk to crucify all human desires, and to relinquish his own will, in order to reach prophetic perfection and the goal of the eremitical religious life.

Chapter 5: How, in order to attain prophetic perfection and the goal of an eremitical religious life, It is necessary for the monk to seek solitude, and to avoid all human contact, especially with women, and to live chastely.

Chapter 6: How in order to be able to grasp prophetic perfection and the goal of the eremitical religious life, it is required above all that the monk should be full of love, and how he should love God and neighbour in this way so that he is in love.

Chapter 7: How the monk, through these four achievements, will reach prophetic perfection and attain the goal of the eremitical religious life, and be able to remain in it.

Chapter 8: How the monk ought to persevere humbly until he reaches prophetic perfection and the goal of the eremitical religious life.

**H**ere ends the preface.

Here begins the first book of the way of life and great deeds of the Carmelites.

## Chapter 1

**W**hat were the beginnings of the first founder of this Order, at what time did he live, from whom was he born, where did he grow up, and when in his youth did he decide to live a dedicated way of life.

*John XLIV bishop of Jerusalem in his book on the way of life of the first monks who began under the Old Law and continue under the New, to the monk Caprasius.*

**W**ith good reason, beloved Caprasius, you inquire about the beginning of the Order and how and from whom it came forth, for these are things that should be examined before anything else. For although an understanding of this way of life consists in experience alone – and this understanding cannot be given fully in words alone unless from someone who is experienced, nor can it be completely grasped by you unless with equal application and toil you strive to learn it through experience – nevertheless, you will be able to follow the teaching of this way of life much better and be encouraged to practise it more fervently if you understand the worthiness of its members and founders, and are acquainted with the original pattern of life of the Order.

So that we may proceed in due order, we shall begin to speak for a while of the supreme founder of this Order and its first way of life. Then we shall describe briefly some of the holy deeds, glorious virtues and the habit worn by the founder himself, and then of his first disciples and the other early members of the Order, as the ancient followers of this – our way of life – understood all these things before us, and taught them to us both in the Old law and in the New, by their teachings and their example. From all this you may learn how our Order’s way of life is confirmed by the authority of outstandingly holy men, and how we, following a form of life which is founded not on novelties or empty fables but on the original approved example of the complete monastic life, make a way in our hearts for the Lord, and we “make straight the paths for our God” to come to us, so that “when he comes and knocks we may open immediately” to him who says “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with me”.

**K**now this, therefore, and remember: From the beginning of the reign of Ahab, king of Israel, until the coming of Christ in the flesh, there passed about 940 years. It was this length of time, as recorded by the chroniclers, that Ahab began to rule before the incarnation of our Lord Jesus. In these days of Ahab, king of Israel, and in his kingdom, there was a certain great prophet of the tribe of Aaron whose name was Elijah, born in the city of Tishbe in the region of Gilead, of a father named Sabach, and from this Tishbe Elijah was called the Tishbite. Later Elijah was an inhabitant of the city of Gilead, which was built on Mount Gilead, and which took its name from the mountain, as did the region surrounding the mountain, which lay across the Jordan, and was allotted to the half-tribe of Manasseh.

## Chapter 2

**H**ow *Elijah was the first man, under the inspiration of God, to lead the monastic and prophetic eremitical life, and how God communicated to him the way of reaching this goal and the perfection of this life, partly openly and partly in a mystical fashion.*

This prophet of God, Elijah, was the first leader of monks, from whom this holy and ancient way of life took its origin. For he, having reached divine contemplation and filled with the desire for higher things, withdrew far from the cities, and laying aside all earthly and worldly things, was the first to begin to devote himself to following the religious and prophetic eremitical life, which, under the inspiration and command of the Holy Spirit, he initiated and formulated. Then God appeared to him and commanded him to flee from normal human habitation and hide himself in the desert away from the crowds, and thereafter live like a monk in the desert according to the way of life made known to him.

This is all proved by the clear testimony of Holy Scripture, for we read about this in the first book of *Kings*, Chapter 17: “The word of the Lord came to Elijah saying, ‘Depart from here and go towards the East, and hide yourself in the wadi Carith, which is over against the Jordan, and there you will drink of the torrent, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.’”<sup>46</sup>

Now these salutary commands which the Holy Spirit inspired Elijah to fulfil, and these welcome promises which he encouraged him to strive for, should be meditated upon by us hermit monks word for word, not only for their historical sense but even more for their mystical sense; because our way of life is contained in them so much more fully, that is, the way of arriving at prophetic perfection and the goal of the religious eremitical life.

The goal of this life is twofold.<sup>47</sup> One part we acquire by our own effort and the exercise of the virtues, assisted by divine grace. This is to offer God a pure and holy heart, free from all stain of sin. We attain this goal when we are perfect and “in Carith”, that is, hidden in that love of which the Wiseman speaks: “love covers all offences”.<sup>48</sup> Wishing Elijah to reach this goal, God said to him, “Hide in the wadi Carith”.

The other goal of this life is granted to us as the free gift of God, namely, to taste somewhat in the heart and to experience in the mind the power of the divine presence and the sweetness of heavenly glory, not only after death but already in this mortal life.<sup>49</sup> This is to “drink of the torrent” of the pleasure of God. God promised this to Elijah in the words: “And there you shall drink of the torrent”.

It is to achieve both these goals that the prophetic eremitical life is adopted by the monk, as the prophet bears witness: “In a desert land” he says, “where there is no way and no water, so in the sanctuary have I come before you, O God, to see your power and your glory”.<sup>50</sup> And so, by choosing to remain “in a desert land where there is no way and no water”, and so to come before God “in the sanctuary”, that is, with a heart purified of sin, he indicates that the first goal of the solitary life which he has chosen is to offer God a holy heart, that is, purified of all actual sin. By adding “to see your power and your glory”, he indicates quite clearly the second goal of this life, which is, whilst in this life, to experience or

<sup>46</sup> 1 *Kgs* 17:2-4.

<sup>47</sup> The ideas here come from *Cassian Conferences*, 345-6.

<sup>48</sup> *Prv* 10:12.

<sup>49</sup> cf. also *Cassian Conferences*, 284-5.

<sup>50</sup> *Ps* 63:1-2. The Latin text used here differs from modern versions.

to see mystically in the heart something of the power of the divine presence and to taste the sweetness of heavenly glory.

Through the first of these, that is, through purity of heart and perfection of love, one comes to the second, that is, to an experiential knowledge of the divine power and heavenly glory. As the Lord says in *John* Chapter 14: “He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will show myself to him”.<sup>51</sup> And so God, by what he had proposed to the holy prophet Elijah in all the above words, wanted greatly to persuade him – the first and outstanding leader of monks – and us his followers, that we should “be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect”, “having above all things love, which is the bond of perfection”.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, in order that we may be worthy of the perfection urged on us and the promised vision of glory, let us seek attentively to understand clearly and logically, and to fulfil in our actions, the form of life given by God in the above words to blessed Elijah as a way to achieve them.

For, speaking to the holy Elijah, the Lord also says, both in the Old Law and the New, to every hermit monk: “Depart from here”, that is, from the perishable and transitory things of this world, and “go towards the East”, that is, against the natural desires of your flesh, “and hide in the wadi Carith”, so that you do not live in the cities with their crowds, “which is over against the Jordan”, that is, so that through love you are cut off from all sins. By these four steps you will ascend to the height of prophetic perfection, and “there you will drink of the torrent”. And so that you may be able to persevere in this: “I have commanded the ravens to feed you there”.

All this you will understand better if, going through each part separately, we explain them clearly and in order.

### Chapter 3

**H**ow it is necessary for the monk to renounce possessions and riches in order to achieve prophetic perfection and the goal of the eremitical monastic life.

Therefore these things which I entreat you to do, you should study in sequence, one by one. Now, firstly, I told you in my instruction: “Depart from here”, that is, “from your country and your kindred and your father’s house”, not only in spirit, but so that you do not “set your heart” on the earthly goods which you have inherited or perishable worldly riches, but also strive that you do not even possess such things. “For unless a person renounce everything that he possesses, he cannot be my disciple”. Although it is true that the possession of riches does not itself close the gate of the kingdom of heaven to a rich man, so long as he does not set his heart on them; as the Wiseman says in *Sirach* Chapter 31: “Blessed is the rich man who is found without fault, who has not gone after gold nor put his trust in treasures of money”. Yet it is clear from what the Wiseman says next: “Who is he? We will praise him”, that he well knows the difficulty of finding such a man, who possesses riches and yet does not set his heart on them. For the human heart easily clings to the things it is used to. Moreover, when riches are possessed, they cause stronger desires to

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<sup>51</sup> *Jn* 14:21.

<sup>52</sup> *Mt* 5:48; *Col* 3:14.

burn in the heart and give rise to more intense greed. As the Wiseman says in *Sirach*, Chapter 5: “The surfeit of the rich man will not let him sleep”. So, occupied in the useless love of wealth, he has to exert himself on his personal affairs, and thus he is continually beset by the needs of his never-ending duties, and these do not allow the desire to enter him of fulfilling the call of the divine command which he has heard. “For the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and desires for other things enter in, and they choke the word and it is rendered fruitless”, and so “it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven”.<sup>53</sup>

Therefore, my son, “if you wish to be perfect” and to arrive at the goal of the eremitical monastic life, “and there to drink of the torrent”, “Depart from here”, that is, from the perishable things of this world, renouncing in your heart and in your actions all earthly possessions and privileges for my sake, for this is an easier and safer way that leads to prophetic perfection and brings you at last to the kingdom of heaven. “For everyone who has left house, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold” already in this life, foretasting the sweetness of my delight, which surpasses a hundred times all earthly things, and finally “he shall possess life everlasting”.<sup>54</sup>

Thus you have heard briefly the first step by which you can rise to the height of prophetic perfection.

## Chapter 4

How it is necessary for the monk to crucify all human desires, and to relinquish his own will, in order to reach prophetic perfection and the goal of the eremitical religious life.

Now listen to the second. It follows in my counsel: “And go towards the East”, that is, against the natural desires of your flesh. For, you ought to know that “on the day you were born, your navel cord was not cut” from sin, because “you were born entirely in sins”. As the prophet says, speaking for every person begotten by man of a woman: “Indeed, in guilt was I born, and in sin my mother conceived me”.<sup>55</sup>

It is due to this original sin in which man is conceived that the flesh “has desires against the spirit”. “I see”, says the Apostle, “in my members another principle at war with the law of my mind, taking me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members”. This law of sin, that “wide gate” which a person enters when he consents to sin, is that “broad road which leads to destruction”, on which he travels when he lives according to it, “that leads to destruction and those that enter through it are many”. But “when someone comes to serve the Lord”, he must “keep away from worldly desires that war against the soul”, “stand uprightly and in the fear of God and prepare his soul” not for rest nor for delights but for temptations and trials, for “it is necessary to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God”. “How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who

<sup>53</sup> Gn 12:1; Ps 62:11; Lk 14:33; Sir 31:8-9; Sir 5:11; Mk 4:19; Mt 19:23.

<sup>54</sup> Mt 19:29.

<sup>55</sup> Ez 16:4; Jn 9:34; Ps 51:7.



find it are few". For "few are chosen" and "the flock is small to whom it has pleased the Father to give the kingdom".<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, my son, "if you wish to be perfect" and to arrive at the goal of the eremitical monastic life, "to drink of the torrent there", "go towards the East", that is, against the natural desires of the flesh, and "sin must not reign over your mortal body, so that you obey its desires". For I know how "to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgement, and especially those who follow the flesh with its depraved desire and show contempt for authority". Therefore "go not after your lusts but keep your desires in check", forsaking the flesh totally and humbly subjecting it for my sake to the good judgement of a superior until death; for "no disciple is superior to his teacher, but everyone will be perfect if he is like his master". Indeed, I am the Lord and teacher of the prophets and "I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me", of the Father, "becoming obedient to him unto death, even death on a cross". Therefore "if anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross every day and follow me". For "whoever does not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple".<sup>57</sup>

If you wish, therefore, to come after me "towards the East", that is, against the natural desires of your flesh, consider how it is necessary for you to carry the cross. Just as someone who is crucified has no power to move or turn his limbs by his own will, but hangs immobile where the executioner has fixed them, so must you be fastened to the cross and deny yourself, so that you do not turn your will to what pleases you and delights you at this moment, but instead seek to apply your whole will to that to which my will has bound you, "so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer by human passions but by the will of God".<sup>58</sup>

And, as he who is fastened to the tree of the cross does not think of the present, forgets the past, is not worried about tomorrow, is not moved by any desires of the flesh, and is not puffed up with pride, or competition, or revenge or envy, but while he still has breath in his body considers himself dead to the world so that he may fix the longing of his heart only on that place where he does not doubt that he is going, so also must you be fastened by the fear of the Lord, dead to all these things, having the eyes of your soul fixed firmly on where you should hope to go at any moment.<sup>59</sup>

In this way "go towards the East", that is, against the natural desires of your flesh. For "those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires", "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in their bodies". In which, when they have been transformed, they shall come through it to heavenly glory, as the Apostle tells them: "for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God; when Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory".<sup>60</sup>

Behold, I have shown you briefly the second step by which you can reach the state of prophetic perfection.

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<sup>56</sup> Gal 5:17; Rom 7:27; Mt 7:13; Sir 2:1; 1 Pt 2:11; Sir 2:1; Ac 14:22; Mt 7:14; Mt 22:14; Lk 12:32.

<sup>57</sup> Rom 6:12; 2 Pt 2:9-10; Sir 18:30; Lk 6:40; Jn 6:38; Phil 2:8; Lk 9:23; Lk 14:27.

<sup>58</sup> 1 Pt 4:2.

<sup>59</sup> For the crucified disciple cf. *Cassian Institutes*, 61-2.

<sup>60</sup> Gal 5:24; 2 Cor 4:10; Col 3:3-4.

## Chapter 5

**H**ow, in order to attain prophetic perfection and the goal of an eremitical religious life, it is necessary for the monk to seek solitude, and to avoid all human contact, especially with women, and to live chastely.

**N**ow to treat of the third step. It follows in my counsel: “And hide in the wadi Carith”. For I do not want you to linger any longer among the crowds in the city “for in the city I see injustice and strife; day and night evil prowls about its walls, evil and mischief are in its midst and injustice, usury and deceit have not departed from its streets”. Because all such things are to be shunned, the prophet himself, given to you as an example, chose to live in solitude rather than in the city. “Behold”, he says, “far away did I flee, I lodged in the wilderness”. And of course the Wiseman says, “Be guilty of no evil before the city’s populace, nor disgrace yourself before the assembly. Do not plot to repeat a sin; even for one you will not go unpunished”.<sup>61</sup> But if, as the Wiseman says, you live in *monos*, that is, alone or by yourself, you shall not be free from sin, therefore you must fear and weep in solitude, that is, perform the duty of a monk.

For *monos* in Greek means “one” or “singular” or “alone”, and *achos* in Greek means “sad”. Therefore a monk is called *monachos*, “alone and sad”, that is, as one lamenting in solitude for his own sins and those of others. And this is to be preferred more than living among the crowds in the city. For if, as the Wiseman testifies, you will not be always immune from sin “in one” – that is, living in *monade*, or singular, or in solitude – how much more so will you sin again and again if, as he says, you immerse yourself among the people.

Turn away, therefore, from where the crowd gathers, lest in the city you be forced to do the things that nature and your will do not wish, that is, you will be disturbed by the anger of others, you will suffer foreign wars, you will be ensnared by the harlot’s eye or led by a beautiful figure to forbidden pleasures, or you will be ensnared by the shackles of greed and other vices, and all these things can be avoided by solitude. “Who has given the wild ass his freedom, and who has loosed him from his bonds” unless it was him “who made the wilderness his home and the salt flats his dwelling?” Therefore “he scoffs at the crowds in the city, he hears not the cry of the tax-collector”.<sup>62</sup> The ass is an animal which loves solitude, and signifies him who lives alone, far from the crowd of people. God “loosens the bonds” of his sins and “sets him free” from the slavery of sin; while “he makes the wilderness a home for him and the salt flats his dwelling” which increases his thirst, so that he might thirst after the justice of his heavenly homeland, which, at the end, will satisfy him. “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they will be satisfied.”<sup>63</sup>

**T**herefore, my son, “if you wish to be perfect” and to arrive at the goal of the eremitical monastic life and “drink of the torrent there”, “hide in the wadi Carith”, that is, cultivate silence in hidden solitude. Thus, knowing your weakness and the fragile vessel that you carry, you should fear to blunder about in the city lest you clash with the crowds, fall and be broken. “You shall sit alone, therefore, and hold your peace, for it is good to hope in silence for the salvation of God”. “Hide, therefore, in the wadi Carith”, which means “separation”, because it fosters your prophetic perfection that, hidden, you are “separated”

<sup>61</sup> Ps 55:10-12; Ps 54:8 *Vulgate*; Sir 7:7-8.

<sup>62</sup> Jb 39:5-8.

<sup>63</sup> Mt 5:6.

from human company, and also, you are not joined in marriage to a woman. "It is good for man not to touch woman". "I am telling you this for your own benefit and for that which is honourable, and that it may offer you the opportunity of following the Lord without distraction". For you must be separated from those things which hinder you from being wholly centred on God. "The cares of this world and the deceits of riches suffocate the word of God" and thus impede the soul from wholly loving God. As the Wiseman says, "Whoever loves him will keep his word", for "he who has a wife is anxious about the affairs of this world" and so is drawn away from wholly adhering to the love of God, for "he seeks how to please his wife". But "he who is without a wife is anxious for the things of the Lord, and seeks how he may please God". So, "if you are not bound to a wife, do not seek a wife". "You will be more blessed if you remain according to my counsel", that you may be one of those eunuchs who "have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven". "For I will give them a place in my house, and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which shall never perish".<sup>64</sup>

Behold, I have explained to you the third step by which you can reach the height of prophetic perfection.

## Chapter 6

**H**ow in order to be able to grasp prophetic perfection and the goal of the eremitical religious life, it is required above all that the monk should be full of love, and how he should love God and neighbour in this way so that he is in love.

Now learn the fourth step. It follows in my admonition: "which", that is Carith, "is over against the Jordan". "Jordan" means "their descent", so in this text it fittingly signifies sin. For what makes men fall from the dignity of having the image and likeness of God into misery and disgrace except sin, which is the transgression of the divine laws? As the Wiseman says, "Sin makes the people wretched". Therefore, when the people were about to transgress the laws of God, Moses told them "You will sink lower and lower".<sup>65</sup> For every natural thing, although it be impeccable among its own type, when it is compared to a higher being it is rendered unsightly and dirty and loses its prestige; likewise, something precious when mixed with something inferior becomes corrupted, even though in its own class the inferior thing is not corrupted. Even gold is spoiled when silver is mixed with it.

As scripture says, I have made man of so excellent a nature that I appointed him Lord of every creature. Thus, although creatures are impeccable among their own type, human hearts lose their dignity and are corrupted when they take delight in created things. The prophet says of those who fix their hearts on created things: "They became as abominable as the things they loved". Again, the prophet writes in another place, "Destroyed is the pride of the Jordan", that is, of sin. For sinners, in despising God's law, arrogantly sin against God, and thus descend into the desolation of corruption and abomination. As the prophet says, "They are corrupted and become abominable in their iniquities".<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Lam 3:28, 26; 1 Cor 17:1; 1 Cor 7:35; Mt 13:22; Sir 2:18; 1 Cor 7:33; 1 Cor 7:32; 1 Cor 7:27; 1 Cor 7:40; Mt 19:12; Is 56:5.

<sup>65</sup> Prv 14:34; Dt 28:43.

<sup>66</sup> cf. Gn 1:26-28; Hos 9:10; Zec 11:3; Ps 52:2.

“Carith” means separation, and so may rightly be taken to mean love, because love alone divides man from the Jordan, that is, from the descent into sin. For this reason, Carith, that is love, is “over against the Jordan”, that is, against the descent into sin, because as the Apostle says, however rich a man is in all other things: “even if he speaks every language, has every prophecy and all faith and all knowledge, and distributes all his possessions to feed the poor, and even if he delivers his body to be burned, and yet has no love, it profits him nothing”; nor shall he “be raised from the death” due to sin “unto life”. For “whoever does not love remains in death”. From this death, though, man is separated by love and transferred to life, as the apostle John testifies: “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers”. Truly then, Carith, that is love, is “over against the Jordan”, namely against the descent into sin, because, as the Wiseman says, “love covers all offences”.<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, my son, if you wish to be perfect and to arrive at the goal of the monastic eremitical life, and to be “over against the Jordan”, that is, against the descent into sin, you must hide in Carith, that is, in love, and “there drink of the torrent”. “You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul and with your whole mind”.<sup>68</sup> When you have done this, you will be perfect and will hide “over against the Jordan” in Carith, that is, hidden in love.

If, however, you refuse to do this, you will become pitiful and depraved and not in Carith but in the Jordan, that is, you will be in the descent into sin. If you love anything more than me, then you do not yet love me with your whole heart, nor are you in Carith, that is, in love, and therefore you are not worthy to see me. “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me”. But if you love anything else more than me, you do not yet love me “with your whole heart”, and you are not in Carith, that is, in love. For if you love me with your whole heart, and however dear your soul and all other things are to you, you would prefer my love to them all, and everything which would turn your heart from it you would immediately reject and hold in disdain. “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and brothers and sisters, and even his very life, he cannot be my disciple”.<sup>69</sup>

If, however, you offer me your heart so full of love and commit yourself to me with so much affection that whatever I do not wish and forbid to you, however difficult it may be to avoid, yet for love of me you will completely avoid it and detest it, and whatever I wish and command you, however difficult it may be to do, you will nevertheless observe and do it for love of me, then you will begin to love me “with your whole heart and whole soul and whole mind” and to be in Carith, that is, in love. For “whoever has my commandments and observes them, is the one that loves me”. “And the first of all commandments is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is the one God. You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul, and with your whole mind. This is the first and the greatest commandment’”.<sup>70</sup>

This cannot be observed without love of neighbour, because “whoever does not love his brother, whom he sees, cannot love God, whom he can not see”. Therefore the second commandment is similar: “You must love your neighbour as yourself”, that is, in the same

<sup>67</sup> 1 Cor 13:1-3; 1 Jn 3:14; Prv 10:12.

<sup>68</sup> Mt 22:37.

<sup>69</sup> Mt 10:37; Lk 14:26.

<sup>70</sup> Jn 14:21; Dt 6:4; Mt 22:37, 38.

way and for the same reason as you love yourself. But you ought to love yourself for the good in you and not the evil. If you love yourself for the evil, then you do not love but hate yourself: "Whoever loves sin hates his own soul". Therefore, you must love your neighbour as yourself for the good and not for the evil: "In everything do to others as you wish they would do to you", "and what you would hate to have done to you, never do it yourself to anyone". "Love of neighbour never does evil". Therefore, you must so love your neighbour and act towards him in such a way that he becomes upright if he is wicked, or remains upright if he is good. Again, you must love yourself, not because of yourself, but because of God. Whatever is loved for its own sake becomes a source of joy and happiness, the hope of attaining which is comforting, even on earth. But you must not place your hopes for a happy life in yourself or any other man. "Cursed be the man who trusts in men and seeks his strength in his flesh, and whose heart turns away from the Lord". Therefore, you must make the Lord the source of your joy and happiness, as the Apostle says: "But now you have been freed from sin and become slaves of God, the benefit that you have leads to sanctification and its end is everlasting life in Christ Jesus our Lord".<sup>71</sup>

If you understand this clearly, you should love God because of himself, and yourself not because of yourself but because of God. And, since you should love your neighbour as yourself, you should love him also not because of yourself, nor because of him, but because of God. What else is this but to love God in your neighbour? "In this", says the apostle John, "we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments". In the preparation of your soul you do all this if you love God because of himself, and because of God you love your neighbour as yourself. "On these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets". "Love is the fulfilling of the law".<sup>72</sup>

Therefore, the apostle Peter recommends possessing love above all: "But before all things have a constant mutual love among yourselves, for love covers a multitude of sins". But the less Carith, that is, love, covers all your sins and is "over against the Jordan", that is, against the descent of sin, the less you love God and your neighbour. Indeed, the less the love, the less forgiveness of sin is merited; as it is written: "The one to whom little is forgiven, loves little". But the more Carith, that is, love, covers your sins and is "over against the Jordan", that is, against the descent of sin, the more you love God and neighbour, because the greater the love, the greater the remission of sins it merits; as it is written: "Many sins are forgiven her because she has loved much".<sup>73</sup>

Behold, I have shown you the fourth step by which you can attain the good of prophetic perfection which you desire.

## Chapter 7

**H**ow the monk through these four achievements will reach prophetic perfection and attain the goal of the eremitical religious life, and be able to remain in it.

**I**t remains now for you to learn how you are to attain the height of prophetic perfection and the goal of the eremitical monastic life through the four preceding steps. It follows

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<sup>71</sup> 1 Jn 4:20; Mt 22:39; Ps 10:6 *Vulgate*; Mt 7:12; Tb 4:16; Rom 13:10; Jer 17:5; Rom 6:22.

<sup>72</sup> 1 Jn 5:2; Mt 22:40; Rom 13:10.

<sup>73</sup> 1 Pt 4:8; Lk 7:47.

in my instruction: “And there you will drink of the torrent”. In other words you need to – from the example of the Wiseman – “withdraw your flesh from wine that you might turn your mind to wisdom and avoid foolishness”. For “wine is a luxurious thing, and drunkenness riotous. Whosoever is delighted therewith shall not be wise”.<sup>74</sup> To come more easily, then, to true wisdom, in Carith you must abstain from wine; to relieve your thirst and preserve the life of your body you will drink of the contents of the torrent there, that is, of the water of the torrent.

But remember how before I said to you “And there you will drink of the torrent”, I said “Hide in the wadi Carith”. I said this first because – in order to drink spiritually of the torrent – you must first be hidden in Carith, that is, in love. You will not be hidden there immediately when you first begin because, as it is said, not just any love but only whole-hearted love “covers all offences”.<sup>75</sup> Even though as soon as you begin to love me with your whole heart you are truly “in Carith”, that is, in love, you are not immediately “hidden in Carith”, that is, in love, because you are not at once completely divided from all actual desire for sin. For bodily desires and unclean thoughts will rise up in you – indeed they are not so soon quieted – seeking to tempt your heart to forbidden things and to withdraw you from my love entirely; and for this reason you are not yet able to love me perfectly with your whole heart. And even though your heart from then on assiduously and habitually retains my love in itself, you are still not able to be brought to me peacefully and perfectly through true love.

So, lest you fall completely from my love, it is necessary for you to seek to expel all unclean thoughts and bodily desires which are in opposition to my love. While you are subduing those unlawful passions, you will not be continually hidden in Carith, that is, in love, because you will not yet love me perfectly with your whole heart.

There remain many things which are permitted to you, which are not commanded nor forbidden to you – such as marriage, riches, worldly business and similar things which I have mentioned above – which, when you are engrossed with them, even if they do not turn your heart entirely from my love will not readily permit you to think of me, but will often hinder you from thinking of me and seduce your heart from the ardour of my love. The less that love burns within you, the less you love me with your whole heart and the less you love me, the less you are “hidden in Carith”, that is, in love; and the less you are hidden in love, the less you are heading towards prophetic perfection and the goal of the monastic eremitical life.

**T**herefore, my son, so that you may more quickly be “hidden in Carith”, that is, in love, and reach your destined end and “there drink of the torrent”, avoid not only those things I have forbidden which separate you off completely from my love, such as carnal passions which act contrary to it, and unclean thoughts, but you must also flee from those things which dim the ardour of my love, such as those things which I exhorted you against above, namely riches and marriage and other things which involve worldly business: “No soldier in God’s service entangles himself with worldly business, since he wants to please the one who enlisted him”.<sup>76</sup> With the greatest zeal, therefore, seek those things which draw you to the ardour of my love, such as the precepts of my law, and those things which I urged on you above, namely poverty and the crucifixion of bodily desires, obedience and the renunciation of your own will, continence and the solitude of the desert.

<sup>74</sup> *Sir* 2:3; *Prv* 20:1.

<sup>75</sup> *Prv* 10:12.

<sup>76</sup> *2 Tm* 2:4.

If you are so diligent in following my commands and counsels that you flee not only unclean thoughts and bodily desires contrary to my love, but even other things which impede or retard the fervour of my love; and if you choose the things which favour my love so that you love me completely with such a heartfelt love and cling to me in peace with such powerful affection that, in your mind, you feel no desire contrary to my love or a hindrance to it, then you are beginning to love me perfectly with all your heart and to be “hidden in Carith”, that is, in love, and are on the way to your chosen goal. For “the aim of the law is the love which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith”.<sup>77</sup>

Whatever I command you in my law, or advise – whether it is to fly from unclean thoughts or the desires of the flesh or the world so that you may keep your heart pure from them, or to do your duty to your neighbour and to avoid offending him so that you may preserve a good conscience towards him without reproach, or to devote yourself to the obligations of my worship so that you might serve me with “a faith without pretence” and sincere – all these things I urge on you for this reason, that from your “pure heart and good conscience and sincere faith” there may freely rise a love so fervent and powerful, and yet so peaceful, that it may join your heart to me completely, without resisting, so that you feel nothing whatever in your heart contrary to or impeding my love, but your heart rests totally at peace in my love. This is nothing other than to have a heart cleansed from all stain of real sin and to be “hidden in Carith”, that is, in that love of which the Wiseman says: “love covers all offences”.<sup>78</sup>

**W**hen, therefore, you arrive at this goal of the prophetic and monastic eremitical life, and are “hidden in Carith”, that is, in love, then there “you will drink of the torrent”, for in this perfect union of yourself with me, I shall give you and your companions to drink from that torrent of which the prophet says to me: “You shall give them to drink of the torrent of your pleasure”.<sup>79</sup>

It is written:

“If you return to the Almighty you will be restored  
and if you put iniquity far from your tent;  
he will give you flint for earth,  
and for flint torrents of gold,  
and the Almighty will stand against your enemies,  
and silver will be heaped in front of you.  
Then shall you delight in the Almighty  
and shall lift up your face toward God.”<sup>80</sup>

See from this how – if you turn back to God “with all your heart” as has been said above – you will be gradually restored.

Firstly, “you will put sin far from your tent”, that is, from your heart, for otherwise you cannot be joined with the Almighty; as it is written: “If we say we have fellowship with God and continue to walk in darkness, we lie”. “It is our crimes which separate us from God, and our sins hide his face from us”.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> 1 *Tm* 1:5.

<sup>78</sup> 1 *Tm* 1:5; *Prv* 10:12.

<sup>79</sup> *Ps* 36:9.

<sup>80</sup> *Jb* 22:23-27 *Vulgate*.

<sup>81</sup> 1 *Jn* 1:6; *Is* 59:2.

Secondly, “for earth” – that is, for the earthly affections and riches, you shall put them aside – “God will give you flint”, that is, a strong and ardent love. For flint is a hard stone and gives off sparks from which fire is born, and it signifies that perfect love of which the Wiseman says, “love is as strong as death, devotion as enduring as hell; its brightness is like flashes of fire or of flames”. This God gives, as the Apostle says: “The love of God poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us”.<sup>82</sup>

Thirdly, “for flint”, that is for the strong and perfect love observed by you, God will give you “torrents of gold”, that is, those inexpressible and sweet spiritual delights about which it is written: “The eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those that love him”. These delights are truly called “a torrent” because with the force of a torrent and with great abundance of pleasure they flood the mind of the prophet. As it is written: “The fountain of wisdom is an overflowing stream”. But just as a torrent quickly dries up with the heat of the risen sun, so this spiritual abundance, when carnal passions arise, soon vanishes from the mind of the prophet and dries up. These are indeed torrents of gold, they shine both with the ardour of the love of God from whence they flood into the mind of the prophet, and with the bright knowledge of God to which they secretly lead the prophetic man. As the Lord says: “He who loves me, will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and show myself to him”.<sup>83</sup>

Fourthly, when you attain such knowledge of God, “the Almighty shall stand against your enemies”, visible and invisible, protecting you from them, as he himself says: “I shall protect him because he knows my name”.<sup>84</sup>

Fifthly, “silver will be heaped in front of you”, of which the prophet says, “The words of the Lord are holy words, pure as silver” that is love “tried by fire”.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, for love of God you should leave the world and the companionship of men so that with a pure heart you may cling to God, and then you will be worthy to enjoy an abundance of divine conversation, where hidden and even future things will be revealed to you by God. Then you will overflow with indescribable delights from the Almighty, and gladly raise up the fullness of your mind to contemplate God.

Behold, I have taught you how to reach prophetic perfection and to attain the goal of the monastic eremitical life.

## Chapter 8

**H***ow the monk needs to persevere humbly until he comes to prophetic perfection and the goal of the eremitical religious life.*

**F**inally, you must see how you need to persevere in the perfection of the prophetic eremitical life. For there follows, in my promise: “And I have commanded the ravens to feed you there”. I have judged this especially necessary for your consolation, for although you will overflow with indescribable delights as long as you drink from the torrent of my raptures, for two reasons your joy will not yet be complete.

<sup>82</sup> Sg 8:6; Rom 5:5.

<sup>83</sup> 1 Cor 2:9; Prv 18:4; Jn 14:21.

<sup>84</sup> Ps 90:14.

<sup>85</sup> Ps 11:7.



Firstly, because from the very depths of your heart you will desire intensely to look directly upon my face; however you will not be able to see it clearly, “for no man shall see me and live”, because I “dwell in inaccessible light”, which no man has seen in this life, nor can he see. Secondly, because although you will seek to remain a while in those inexpressible delights which you drink from the torrent of my raptures, yet suddenly, due to the frailty of your body, you will be removed from them and returned to yourself. “For the corruptible body burdens the soul, and this earthly shelter weighs down the mind that has many concerns”. For these two reasons then – because you will not be able to see my face clearly, and because, burdened with a corruptible body, you will not be able to remain long in that glorious contemplation of the sweetness you have tasted – you will pray then, if you wish to persevere in perfection, and begin to sigh, saying: “O God, my God, I keep watch for you at daybreak. My soul thirsts for you, for you my flesh thirsts in so many ways! As in a desert land, trackless and without water, so in the sanctuary have I come before you, that I may see your power and your glory”.<sup>86</sup>

**I**t is true – lest you pine away in unquenchable sighs and inconsolable sadness of heart from this desire to see me and this hunger to taste the sweetness of the delights of my glory, and for your consolation – that “I have commanded the ravens to feed you there”. The word “ravens” is to be understood correctly as the holy prophets whom I have given you as an example, because in no way do they take pride in the radiance of their holiness, but through the grace of humility and the knowledge of their own weakness they confess the blackness in themselves as sinners, saying: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us”. Therefore, it is written of each of them: “Who provides food for the raven when her young ones cry to God, casting about because they have no food?”<sup>87</sup>

The instinct of the raven is to watch the open mouths of her young, born white, casting about here and there in the nest waiting for food, but not to feed them at first until she recognises in the blackness of their feathers the likeness of her own colour. But when she sees them turning black, she gives all her energy to feeding them.

So it is when chicks – or disciples – are born to the holy prophet whom I sent. In the end they come to such grace through his example that “they drink of the torrent” of my delights, like the prophet himself. But since, through the weakness of their nature, they have not yet been led to taste that sweetness, they must cry to me, casting about here and there in their desire since they cannot as yet eat the food of inner sweetness which they long for. And according to what is written – “Unless you be converted and become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven” – they must then, through humility consider themselves as chicks, that is, as little ones in virtue, and they should fear lest through sin they harm the growth of virtue, for it is written, “We all offend in many ways”.<sup>88</sup> But many of them ignore their sins and do not reflect on their weakness, and so they fail to display the blackness of humility which they ought to assume against the brightness of the world. For the less they are able to consume inwardly that spiritual nourishment, so much more do they make an outward show after the fashion of this life.

Therefore, the raven looks upon the open mouths of her chicks, but before she gives them food the raven waits to see the black feathers begin to cover them. And so, the prophet sent by me, before he leads his disciples to the hidden banquet of my delights,

<sup>86</sup> Ex 3:20; 1 Tm 6:16; Sir 9:15; Ps 62:2-3 *Vulgate* (partly in 63:1 *NAB*).

<sup>87</sup> 1 Jn 1:8; Jb 38:41.

<sup>88</sup> Mt 18:3; Jas 3:2.

warns them and waits until, following his example, they darken from the brightness of this present life through the laments of humble repentance and they recognise in themselves the blackness of their sins. If, in the confession of their past life, they express cries of sorrow from their inmost hearts, it is as if their feathers blacken, and then the prophet brings to their open mouths the food which has been prepared by me, and he invites them to taste the sweetness coming from the torrents of my raptures. And the more he feeds them with the ardours of these torrents, the more he sees the brightness of the world blacken in them through the laments of humble repentance. But so that the disciples may know that the food to which the prophet invites them comes from me, it is rightly expressed in this petition: “Who provides the food for the raven, when her young ones cry to God, casting about because they have no food?”. You surely know that no one provides it but God who, as it is written: “gives food to the young ravens that call upon him”.<sup>89</sup>

Therefore, my son, when you arrive at prophetic perfection and the goal of the Teremitical monastic life and you drink of the torrent of my love, lest you be elated at such great sweetness that you have tasted, you will suddenly be removed from it for a time because of the weakness and imperfection of your flesh. Beware, therefore, that you do not “go down from the housetop of perfection “to take anything” back which you have renounced. For “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God”. So, “forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching yourself towards what lies ahead, press toward the mark till you come to the prize of your supernal vocation”. For it is not the one who begins what has been described but he “who perseveres in them unto the end who will be saved”. On this account, casting about like the raven’s chicks, you must cry to me without ceasing: “As the hart longs for fountains of water, so my soul longs after you, O God”.<sup>90</sup>

Now, if you do not return at once to the sweetness of my delight that you have tasted, this happens firstly so that you may know that it is not through your own merits but by my grace that you reached that sweetness; and secondly so that you may long for it even more fervently, and through the intensifying of your desire you may become more capable of receiving it. But lest, in the meantime, you fall away from perfection altogether: “I have commanded the ravens to feed you there”. For I have ordered your holy predecessors, the prophets, that they should feed you the understanding by their example of humble repentance, by which they humbly recognised in themselves the blackness of their sins and avoided the brightness of fleshly life. Therefore, if you seek to be wise in the meantime, you should feed avidly on their teaching. As it is written: “The wise man explores the wisdom of the men of old, and occupies himself with the prophecies”.<sup>91</sup>

For, if you follow their example and turn from the brightness of this present life, through knowledge of your own frailty and an abundance of true humility, and thus grow completely black like the raven’s chicks, and if through devout prayer and humble and true confession of sins you offer to God copious cries of sorrow, like blackening feathers, and if, like the raven’s chicks, you withdraw from the crowds in the city and live in solitude, you will blacken completely the brightness of the joy of this carnal life and of the possessions and other riches of the world. Then God will lead you to taste again the sweetness of the food flowing from the torrent of his delights. For thus is it written; “Consider the ravens;

<sup>89</sup> *Jb* 38:41; *Ps* 146:9.

<sup>90</sup> *Mt* 24:17; *Lk* 9:62; *Phil* 3:13, 14; *Mt* 24:13; *Ps* 41:2.

<sup>91</sup> *Sir* 39:1.

they do not sow, neither do they reap, neither have they storehouse or barn, and yet God feeds them”.<sup>92</sup>

Behold, I have taught you how you should persevere humbly in the perfection of the prophetic eremitical life.

**A**nd so ends the institution, that is, the manner of coming to prophetic perfection and the goal of the monastic eremitical life, which God gave to the prophet Elijah to observe, and which has been commented on and expounded by John XLIV bishop of Jerusalem, from the sayings of both the Old Law and the New.

**T**hus ends the first book of the way of life and great deeds of the Carmelites.

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<sup>92</sup> *Lk* 12:24.