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Carmelite Propaganda in a Fifteenth-Century French Gradual Fragment*

by

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The late Middle Ages was a difficult period for the mendicant orders. Many of their claims to be the “New Apostles,” with special efficacy in the confessional, the pulpit, and the classroom—as Penn Szittya has recently shown—were under sharp attack. Though less visible as teachers and preachers than the Dominicans and Franciscans, the Carmelites were also the victims of anti-mendicant hostility from an early period. Furthermore, they were disliked by the other orders because they claimed superiority by reason of alleged great antiquity and the special patronage of the Virgin, for Carmelite legend holds that the Old Testament prophets Elijah and Elisha founded the order of Carmelite Friars. Such a genealogy, of course, was hotly contested, and as a conscious response to criticism, during the first half of the fifteenth century Carmelites often attempted to propagandize for their views in tracts and picture cycles.

In its simplest form, visual propaganda usually shows Elijah and Elisha, the putative founders, dressed in Carmelite habit to reinforce the order’s claim to great antiquity. Representative examples occur in the historiated initial H from the Sanctorale of a Carmelite breviary made in Bruges between 1440 and 1478 and in a page from a Florentine Carmelite antiphonal made between 1312 and 1362. In the breviary (fig. 1), we find a tonsured Elisha with halo—he is a saint in Carmelite kalendars and Sanctorales from the fifteenth century onward—wearing the white mantle, which gave the name “white friars” to the order, and standing in front of what is presumably the Church of the Blessed Virgin on Mount Carmel. A brief text about the prophet is introduced by the initial. The antiphonal leaf (fig. 2) is rather more complicated, for the entire page is propagandistic. The historiated V depicts the Assumption of the Virgin—to whom the order
had a special relation because of her visit to them on Mount Carmel—as she is borne aloft by two angels and venerated by a saint. A Carmelite *orant* stands atop a shield with coat of arms at middle left (probably those of the book's secular donor). At lower left Elisha and at right Elijah in white head-dresses point up at the Virgin. Interestingly, the artist does not give them the same habits as the Carmelite depicted at the left (perhaps the Prior of the house) and apparently hesitated to make the concrete identification which we see in the Flemish example painted some 200 years later. The miniature shows the history of the order from the two prophet founders to the present. While such images of Elijah and Elisha as white friars were fairly common in public church art, they were rarer in service books, as there was little need to propagandize among their users. Most probably, then, the Florentine page, judging from its heraldic decoration, represents a secular attempt to honor the order; the gradual fragment* that will concern us in the following pages belongs to precisely the same tradition.

It is not at all uncommon in service books presented by patrons to religious orders for one page, often well into the work, to outshine all of the others in sumptuousness of decoration and to flatter the donor as well as the order itself. I suggest that just such a secular aristocrat was the patron for the Carmelite gradual discussed here and that he makes an appearance as a donor both in the main miniature and in the marginal registers. Such a hypothesis goes far toward explaining, as well, the existence of a program of propaganda made at a time when it would seem unnecessary. A secular enthusiast of the order could very easily have continued to propagandize for the Carmelites even after any actual need for such activity had passed.

More complex are the representations that place the founders in a figurative relationship with Christ and the Apostles and so seek to tie the order to primitive Christianity as both moved westward. Deriving in part from the forty-page woodcut form of the *Biblia Pauperum*, created by Dutch or Belgian Carmelites in 1460, such scenes were fairly common. The pages of these books contain drawings that show the typological relationship between Old and New Testament events by means of a center roundel depicting some episode of Christ's life, known as the antitype, flanked by two Old Testament scenes, the types, which were thought to prefigure it. Appropriate Bible prophecies in banners heightened the visual impact of the drawings for the literate. From its creation in 1190, the *Biblia Pauperum* was of enormous importance for northern European art, and its influence can be seen well into the Reformation. In the center of the woodcut illustrating IV Kings 2.23 appears the antitype, Christ crowned with thorns and mocked; flanking him are Old Testament types, Noah mocked by his sons and a haloed prophet Elisha mocked by the children of Bethel. In the woodcut for IV Kings 2.11-13, two Old Testament Ascension types flank Christ ascending, Enoch taken up to heaven, and the prophet Elijah rising
in a fiery chariot above Elisha. In each scene, the prophets are dressed and tonsured as Carmelites, though the brown habit is clearer in the second example.\textsuperscript{13}

In 1476 and 1477 two apparently apocryphal documents were circulated as codicils to the bull \textit{Mare Magnum} of Sixtus IV,\textsuperscript{14} which gave the most fervent papal support to the order’s claim to hereditary succession and to the special prerogatives which followed from it. These documents, published in an eighteenth-century collection of bulls relating to the Carmelites, share identical phrasing in certain portions and appear much more florid in style and detailed in content than the Sistine bulls known to be genuine. Each goes to considerable length to confer this status retroactively, for the writer invokes a long and distinguished list of predecessors before coming to the key concession:

As the mirror of religion and the exemplar of a shining charity do we regard these friars whose hereditary succession is from the holy prophets Elijah and Elisha, and other holy fathers who dwelt near the fountain of Elijah on holy Mount Carmel.\textsuperscript{15}

Whatever the actual origins of these concessions,\textsuperscript{16} it is of considerable historical and aesthetic interest to find such typological propaganda in two complex and interrelated parts in a page from a Carmelite gradual painted about the same time as or just after the appearance of the two “Sistine” texts. This gradual fragment is now in the World Heritage Museum\textsuperscript{17} of the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign (fig. 3).

As the leaf is little known,\textsuperscript{18} a detailed description may be in order here. Its measurements are typical of graduals of the period: 360 mm x 518 mm with a writing space of 245 mm x 360 mm on the verso. The painted area on the front measures 330 mm x 475 mm with six staves of four red lines. At the top is the original numbering, Folio XXV, and the number 24 at the right. A modern hand has penciled in 350 on the verso, which contains the end of the text for the vigil of the Ascension. This is attractively decorated with a four-line cadel capital for “cumque” and a four-line gold leaf A with filigree flourishing for the Alleluia after “dixerunt.” The A of “ascendit” is a four-line versal.

On the front of the leaf is the text of the Introit for the Carmelite mass of Ascension Day\textsuperscript{19} introduced by a thirteen-line miniature serving as the V for the Ascension text “viri Galilei.” A full-figure Christ is borne aloft on a blue cloud by eight angels.\textsuperscript{20} Directly below is a depiction of the Mount of Olives. As John Mandeville noted in his \textit{Travels}, “Upon that hill our Lord stood when He mounted into heaven, and men can still see the print of His
left foot in the stone He stood upon.” These footprints appear, for example, in a rather similar Ascension miniature from a Carmelitine missal painted at the convent of Rouen between 1479 and 1481 (fig. 4). That this precisely datable miniature shows no trace of propagandistic concerns suggests that WHM 29.14.3 is unusual in having them.

The next discrete element of decoration is the three-fourths-inch gilt border that partly surrounds the page. Its flowers, strawberries, and acanthus with grotesque and naked figures in parodic combat on gold-paint grounds reflect the period style associated with the school of Jean Bourdichon. This borderwork is quite typical of late fifteenth-century manuscripts coming from French commercial workshops, as can be seen in a comparison with a page of a horae of Rome use from Tours painted in the Bourdichon workshop about 1490 that has very similar marginal decorations (fig. 5).

The final elements, the compartmented pictorial borders and bas de page found on the front of the leaf, are also typically French and likewise reflect a period style. Jean Colombe, who continued the Très Riches Heures of Jean de Berry after the deaths of the Duke and the Limbourg brothers, was perhaps the leading exponent of this style. Two pictures from his continuation may be helpful in placing the decoration of WHM 29.14.3 stylistically. In Colombe’s own Ascension scene (fig. 6), we find a similar use of modeling by means of very faint crosshatched and parallel gold lines as well as the same deep blues heightened by this gold hatching and by gold rays which our artist also favored. So too, the Colombe style employs a strong currant red such as we see in the robes of one of the figures in the miniature for “viri Galilei” and also in the cape of the leading horseman in the bas de page. Typically, Colombe’s landscapes recede into horizons of blue, his hills are naked, his cliffs have bizarre outlines and he includes many bodies of water, which are likewise features used by our artist.

Colombe, and later Fouquet, were also partial to the bas de page to heighten the impact of the chief miniature on a page and to comment on it, as in this example of the Three Living and Three Dead from the Très Riches Heures (fig. 7). Unfortunately, by the late fifteenth century, these decorative styles were so common in French service and devotional books that not much can be concluded about our artist except that he was thoroughly familiar with them and that the manuscript must have been painted for a Carmelitine convent in France, particularly in an area within Bourdichon’s and Colombe’s range of stylistic influence.

Though the decorative style of these three parts of the leaf is relatively conventional and much the same can be said of the iconography of the Ascension miniature, one feature of the Ascension scene is quite puzzling and worthy of comment. Below the rising Christ appear at left the Virgin and a tonsured St. Peter in a gold robe behind whom are
Figure 1. Saint Elisha, Carmelite Breviary, Parma, Biblioteca Palatina MS Palatine 215, fol. 9, Bruges, 1440–1478.
Figure 2. Assumption of the Virgin, initial V, Carmelite Antiphonal, Florence, Biblioteca San Marco MS E(576) fol. 52, 1312-1362. Courtesy Biblioteca San Marco.
Figure 3. Ascension of Christ with scenes of Carmelite history, Carmelite gradual, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, World Heritage Museum MS 29.14.3, French, c. 1475. Author's photograph.

Courtesy World Heritage Museum.
Figure 4. Ascension of Christ, Carmelite Missal, Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale MS A 22, fol. 143, 1479–1481.

Courtesy Rouen Bibliothèque Municipale.
Figure 5. Three Living and Three Dead, Horae, Rome use, Tours, Chicago, Newberry Library MS 47, fol. 135v, c. 1490.

Courtesy Newberry Library.
Figure 6. Jean Colombe, Ascension, Très Riches Heures, Chantilly, Musée Condé, fol. 184r, c. 1450.

Courtesy Musée Condé.
Figure 7. Death of Raymond Diocrates, Très Riches Heures, fol. 86v.

Courtesy Musée Condé.
Figure 8. Ascension, Viri Galilei initial, Carmelite Gradual, Florence, Biblioteca San Marco MS D(570) fol. 50v, 1306-1342.

Courtesy Biblioteca San Marco.
Figure 9. Christ in Majesty with Elijah and Elisha, Carmelite Gradual, Florence, Biblioteca San Marco, MS C(580), fol. 1, 1306-1342.

Courtesy Biblioteca San Marco.
Figure 10. Master of Mary of Burgundy, Adoration of Virgin with Mary of Burgundy, Horae, Vienna, Austrian State Library MS 1857, fol. 14v, Bruges, 1467-80.

Courtesy Austrian State Library.
Figure 11. Ascension with angels, Carmelite Missal, Manchester, John Rylands Library MS 123, fol. 174, Italian, fifteenth century.

Courtesy John Rylands Library.
undifferentiated Apostles. On the right are the rest of the Apostles. This group's dominant figure is given special prominence by his position opposite the Virgin. He is a darkly bearded man in currant-colored robes who may be St. John the Evangelist. He is normally placed with the Virgin following Christ's request from the cross that they regard each other as mother and son (John 19:26-27). Since he does not, however, have that saint's usual attribute of a book and is not appropriately youthful as he is in a similar Ascension miniature from a fourteenth-century Carmelite gradual at Florence\(^2\) (fig. 8) and in many other Ascension scenes, it is more probable that he was a secular donor, patron of the Carmelites, or a member of their confraternity\(^3\) who commissioned the gradual and who memorialized himself in it.

As we noted earlier with regard to the *Biblia Pauperum* pages, Christ's and Elijah's "Ascensions" made a common typological pairing. And St. Bernard in an Ascension sermon goes so far as to add Elisha to make a triad, remarking that "Elijah signifies the person of the Lord ascending and Elisha truly the choir of Apostles anxiously sighing below."\(^4\) Interestingly, WHM 29.14.3's Ascension miniature does not include this sort of typological material within its frame. Instead, the painter gave it its own presentation in serial actions in the marginal registers.

Let us now consider these scenes in the registers on the bottom and on the right-hand margin of the page. Starting from the *bas de page*, we see the Horsemen of the Apocalypse riding the white, black, dun, and red horses of Revelation 6.2-8, led by a crowned, black-clad and dignified figure with currant-colored cape.

As we move up the page, the serial registers at right show a tonsured Elijah dressed in a black habit, dropping from his fiery chariot the mantle of prophecy—here the fleecy, white mantle of the Carmelites—upon Elisha, who is similarly dressed. In the far distance is a large mountain, which represents Mount Carmel, believed to be the place from which Elijah ascended.\(^5\)

In the next register up, both prophets in black habits with white mantles stand in front of an oratory on the northwest promontory of the mountain, looking down at the Mediterranean.\(^6\) That Elijah is larger than his disciple indicates that he is the more important of the pair.

The black habits worn by the two figures help to place the gradual leaf in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, a period when the controversy over the order's claims to hereditary succession was at its hottest. The earliest descriptions of Carmelite costume focus on the mantle. Those worn in the Holy Land were brown and white in seven perpendicular bands symbolizing the theological and cardinal virtues, a practice abandoned in the West in 1287 when the mantle was henceforth to be white.\(^7\) In an opening miniature from a Carmelite gradual from Florence that can be dated between 1306 and
1342\(^{34}\) (fig. 9), we can see something of the history of this costume. At the upper right, a Carmelite—presumably Albert of Vercelli or Jerusalem—displays a scroll that is probably his Rule. He wears the barred eastern form of the mantle. In the miniature itself, a haloed, mantleless Elijah rises toward a bald orant Elisha in a white mantle, no doubt passed to him by his senior. At the bottom corners of the page, the scribe and illuminator of the book wear white mantles while another Carmelite feeding a lion at bottom center wears a brown habit and has no mantle. Between 1324 and 1369 brown habits were customary. The Constitutions of 1369, however, ordain that the habit be “totaliter nigra” to commemorate the “Babylonish captivity” of the popes at Avignon.\(^{35}\)

By about the middle of the fifteenth century, black habits appear to have been fairly common, as the Flemish Carmelite breviary made around that date shows Elisha in one. In 1475 Sixtus IV declared in a bull *Etsi cunctis ecclesiastici* that all religious orders should wear only black or white habits.\(^{36}\) Another, possibly spurious, Sistine bull of 1483 in the eighteenth-century Carmelite collection referred to earlier commanded white mantles and black robes for all forms of Carmelites.\(^{37}\) Thus, from the point of view of religious costume, our leaf can probably be dated between these two fifteenth-century documents.

Secular costume in the marginal registers and *bas de page* is more or less that of the reign of Louis XI. The Virgin’s modest gown is characteristic of Louis’s reign, for this was the period when the plunging décolletage revealing the tops of the breasts was replaced by the higher and squarer form of opening, as is apparent in a well-known miniature from the *Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, which can be dated between 1467 and 1480\(^{38}\) (fig. 10). So too, the ends of the shoes worn by the foremost horseman in the *bas de page* are not the tagged and extreme type characteristic of the mid-century, but the slightly squarer ends of the last years of Louis’s reign, though not yet the “bear paw” type which we see in the art work of the reigns of Louis XII and Francis I.\(^{39}\) Our artist, then, appears attuned to the costume styles of the late 1470s. This matter of costume is important because it is a rather more precise indicator of the leaf’s date than the script. It shows no bâtard elements and is a well-formed liturgical gothic *textura quadrata* of a calligraphic sort with typically French hairlines at the tops of ascenders and curved hairlines in the bow of A. It could have been written by any French or French-trained scribe between about 1450 and 1525.

Let us move now to the subject matter of the illustrations. Because so little is said about the Ascension of Jesus in the Gospels, there was what might be called an iconographic vacuum for this subject, which drew to itself imaginative and apocryphal details, such as the footprints of the ascending Christ on the rocks of Mount Olivet, as well as information from elsewhere in scripture. An artist seeking images with which to illustrate the Ascension
was forced to turn to the Acts of the Apostles, and indeed, it is the opening of this book which provides the source of the text for the Introit to the mass and the basis for much of the imagery in the marginal illustrations. The notion of an actual ascent and entrance into a cloud, which we see in the main picture, comes from Acts 1.9-10 as does the Apostles’ intent and upward gaze. From Acts 1.12 comes the idea that the group was on Mount Olivet when Christ left them.

The chief contribution of the first verses of Acts, however, is the presence of two men in white who address the Apostles as “viri Galilei.” These figures were usually understood as angels, and that is how they appear in many Ascension miniatures. In a Carmelite missal now in Manchester (fig. 11), they serve double duty by both lifting Christ aloft and pointing Him out to his disciples. Our artist certainly took his cue from the image of the two men in white, but he kept them “viri” rather than “angeli” and placed them in the marginal registers as prophet Carmelites to show the antiquity and the hereditary succession of the order.

It is worth tracing in some detail this notion of hereditary succession and the successive waves of controversy it engendered in order to understand better the contents of these marginal registers. The first codification of the order’s descent from Elijah and Elisha appears in the Constitutions of London in 1281:

Since certain friars recently entered into the order do not know how truthfully to satisfy those seeking to know by whom and when the order was founded, we wish to reply in the following terms. We say to render witness to the truth, that from the time of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, living on Mount Carmel, some holy men both of the Old and New Testament, seeking the solitude of this same mountain for heavenly contemplation, have undoubtedly lived in a praiseworthy manner near the fountain of Elijah in holy penitence, and have continued unceasingly in a holy succession.

In the Constitutions of 1324 appears much the same material with several important additions. There is an attempt to base the succession idea on historical authorities; Jacques de Vitry’s Historia Hierosolymitana and Vincent of Beauvais’s Speculum Historiale are invoked, and the order is fitted into scriptural history. The exordium is much the same but contains the information that “some holy fathers of the Old Testament and true sons of the prophets living in the expectation of the redemption of Israel dwelt in
a praiseworthy manner until the incarnation of Christ.” And some totally new material is inserted:

Thirty years after the incarnation of Christ, when Jesus had been baptized by John and had taught, a number of friars of this same order went up to Jerusalem and lived near the gate of Saint Anne or the Golden Gate in order to hear the teaching and to see these miracles of Him whom the books of their fathers had told them would come in the flesh. It is of those that one reads in the Acts of the Apostles 2.5, “And there were living in Jerusalem some holy men of all nations.…”

The writer traces the progress of these ur-Carmelites present at Pentecost down to their establishment into a single community by Albert of Vercelli. Carmelite claims to superiority over the other orders deriving from this antiquity and direct contact with the ministry of Jesus began with John Bacon or Bactonthepe’s (his surname appears in two forms) apologetic treatise Laus Carmelitarum in the same year. John, who died in 1346, was provincial of the English Carmelites and a Master at Oxford. He wrote commentaries on the rule of his order, and the Laus is attributed to him in the unique MS in which it appears, Oxford, Bodleian MS Selden Supra 72. The key chapters for our concerns are the second and third of Book II and bear the rather inflammatory rubrics “Ordo Carmelitarum preest aliis senioritate” and “Carmelite sunt aliis digniores racione tempore.”

Indeed, the dignity of the Carmelite order, growing and persevering until the present for the praise of God and the Virgin is recognized as more ancient than the others. The Carmelites began in the time of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, living intimately with them and following their contemplative practices a long time before confirmation and from a much earlier period than that in which the other religious orders arose. … Though by the date of their confirmation they seem to be later than some orders, by this holy intimacy with the prophets they are shown to be earlier.

The third chapter draws support from the Acts of the Apostles, for Bacon goes on to observe that “Elijah and Elisha who led contemplative lives on
Mount Carmel appear to be the first of the Carmelite order. Thus the
dignity of the order is demonstrated by time as is shown by this which
was said to these friars themselves 'you are the sons of the prophets.'”
John Bacon, like the Constitutions of 1324, supports much of his Laus
on the supposed testimony of Peter Comestor, Jacques de Vitry, and
Vincent of Beauvais.

It is, presumably, the conclusion of the proselytizing speech made by
Saint Peter in Acts 3.12–25, which is illustrated by certain of the pictures in
the right-hand margin of WHM 29.14.3 and which ties these scenes to the
Ascension miniature in the text proper. Acts 3.21 alludes glancingly to the
Ascension when Peter speaks of Christ, whom the heavens must receive
until the time of restitution of all things. The rest of the chapter enumerates
various Old Testament prophets who typologically foreshadow or predict
Christ. As can be seen, then, the marginal registers depict not only the history of
the order but also the “hereditary” relation between the two prophets.

This point was a feature of the apologetic treatises as well. John
of Chemineto, a Carmelite from Metz and a Master at Paris in 1336,
composed a treatise, Speculum Fratrum Ordinis Beatae Mariae de Monte Carmeli,
in 1337, which, like some of the others mentioned, makes an attempt
at historical justification by citing St. Jerome in his Epistle to Paulinus,
Peter Comestor's Historia Scholastica,47 and generally creating brief biographies
of Elijah and Elisha that make them sound a bit like St. Francis and
St. Dominic or other saints in the Aurea Legenda. “Concerning St. Elijah,” he
says, “it is found in the Historia Scholastica that before the birth of Elijah his
father had a dream in which he saw men in white saluting him, a portent
of the future... Elijah had some disciples, first among them Elisha. As
Elijah wished at God’s command to take Elisha as a disciple, he put on him
his mantle.”48 It is this episode, cast as an episode in a saint’s life, which is
depicted in the first of the registers; the second, showing the two prophets
on Mount Carmel before the oratory there, must be intended to reproduce
other elements of these apologetic treatises.

In 1342, the claims for the primacy and superiority of the Carmelites
were considerably advanced by a man who was shortly to become one
of the friars’ most formidable enemies. This was Richard FitzRalph,
Archbishop of Armaugh. Katherine Walsh’s fine study, A Fourteenth-century
Scholar and Primate: Richard FitzRalph in Oxford, Avignon and Armaugh,49 has
outlined the Archbishop’s changing attitudes toward the mendicant orders
in general; for the moment we need only note that he preached at several
mendicant churches in Avignon and gave a sermon at the Carmelite church
there on 8 December 1342. The relevant passage in this sermon argues that

since the time of Elijah and Elisha as histories
worthy of faith recount, dwelt on Mount Carmel
three miles from Nazareth the city of our Lady, some pious men who had the custom of living in retirement until the advent of the Saviour and then these hermits, converted among others by apostolic preachers, on the side of their mountain built a church or oratory in honor of the Virgin in this holy place where they learned that she had lived for part of her life with her virginal companions. And this is why among all the religious who take the title of our lady they have the most right to be called the friars of the blessed Mary of Mt. Carmel. Moreover, because since the beginnings of the primitive church they have worked to preach the gospel in the holy land ... they enjoy by right the honor of antiquity over the other mendicant orders and ought for both of these reasons to be held by everyone in the greatest veneration.\textsuperscript{50}

By the 1370s these points of view, as well might be imagined, had created considerable hostility to the white friars from both the seculars and the other mendicant orders, with the result that Carmelite writing took on a somewhat defensive tone, as can be seen by an academic disputation concerning this order read by John Horneby at Cambridge University in 1374.\textsuperscript{51} An important Carmelite controversialist at this period was John of Hildesheim, best known for a lengthy work, \textit{History of the Three Kings of Cologne}, which is a romance of exotic travel and hagiography.\textsuperscript{52} John, who died in 1375, entitled his polemic \textit{Dialogus inter Director em et Detractorem de Ordine Carmelitarum}. He was delegated by his embattled order in 1370 to compose an “official” piece of propaganda to answer in his role as “Director” a certain Dominican friar, called “Detractor,” who challenges, among other things, the idea of the Elijhan succession. Detractor is refuted by a vast array of learned citations drawn from Plato, Aristotle, and other antique authors; Church Fathers such as St. Isidore of Seville, St. Jerome, and St. John Cassian; and of course, moderns such as Jacques de Vitry and Vincent of Beauvais.

The Dominican detractor first raises the question of why there are no documents to support Carmelite claims to an Elijhan succession. John responds that in the time of Elijah only kings had scribes and kept records and that the hermits on Mount Carmel were simple men more interested in praying than in writing. What records they did keep must have been destroyed by the Saracens at the Fall of Acre in 1291, which resulted in the destruction of their convent and their flight to the West. “It is well
established,” John notes, “that the mantle of Elijah, which they had kept until the Fall of Acre, had been lost as a result of the siege.” The defender goes on to argue that since these ancient writings supporting hereditary succession have been lost, it is necessary to believe independent sources such as the fourth book of Kings, which contains many proofs. Detractor is still not content and asks the most telling question of the dialogue, “How is it shown by these writings that Elijah is your founder?” Director then accuses his opponent of ignorance even of holy scripture, offering him an array of citations from modern authors.55

These, then, are the controversial currents in the immediate background of our leaf’s decorative program and to which it responds directly. As I hope I have so far shown, the connection between the Ascension miniature of WHM 29.14.3 and its marginal propaganda scenes, which by putting the two Old Testament prophets in Carmelite habit assert the order’s pre-Christian history, is clear enough. The first of these iconographic cruces, however, leads us immediately to the second: the function of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse in the *bas de page*. Yet this material, by its position, is highlighted as a key part of the leaf’s propagandistic and typological program. I propose that it relates Carmelite dispersion throughout Europe as an example of proselytization to the familiar idea of the power of the Word preached to the four corners of the world.

To be sure, there do not, at first glance, seem to be any geographical implications in the scene of the Four Horsemen. But a Latin Ascension Day university sermon with Middle English verses found in Merton College, Oxford, MS 248, and recently published by Siegfried Wenzel,54 places the *bas de page* of the Horsemen in an Ascension Day context. This sermon comes from a compilation made from mendicant sources by the Benedictine, John Sheppye, later Bishop of Rochester, who died in 1360.55 It discusses the idea of parting and returning from the point of view of the angels, who are pleased to see Christ return to heaven at the Ascension, and from that of the Apostles, who are sad to see Him leave the earth, in a question-and-answer dialogue in which geographic images present these ideas concretely. The answer to the angel’s question “How shall Christ come?” which forms part of the *thema* based on Genesis 16.8 and Judges 19.17 is that He comes from the four points of the compass, from the east at the Incarnation, from the west at the Passion, from the south at the Harrowing of Hell, and from the north at the Rejection. So too, the response to the Apostles’ question “Where are you going?” is also presented in geographic terms: “I go by land, by water, by fire and by air,” Christ replies; and the preacher develops this idea:

\[
\text{istam enim, ut ita dicam, quadruplicem regionem} \\
\text{super quattuor equos mistice equitando transiuit}
\]
ad eternam mansionem, quos sub speciebus quatuor colorum vidit beatus Johannes sub apercione quatuor sigillorum, Apocalipsis vi.

After a description of the various seals with their horsemen, the preacher allegorically relates the horses and Christ’s moving to heaven at the Ascension:

Primam igitur regionem terream transiuit equitando super equum album, carnem puram sibi vniens in incarnacione;
secundam regionem, scil. aquam, transiuit equitando super equum rufum, mortem diram subiens in passione;
terciam regionem, scil. igneam, transiuit equitando super equum nigrum, infernum spolians post suam resurrectionem;
quartam regionem, scil. aerem, transiuit equitando super equum pallidum, in nube transuolans ad eternam mansionem.56

Could the person responsible for the iconographic program of WHM 29.14.3 have known of this sermon, or one like it, and been intrigued by the geographical interpretation of the four horses contained therein? It is certainly possible. Sermon collections appear to have been more important to the Carmelites than to the other mendicant orders judging from the fact that of the 618 volumes in the convent in Florence in the fifteenth century, 110 are sermon collections, not necessarily of Carmelite authorship.57

I suggest, then, that the cosmological and geographical images of this Ascension Day sermon help to explain the presence of the bas de page. We probably are intended to understand by the Four Horsemen the spread of the order from its original foundation in the east to the four corners of the earth, just as Christ’s power had spread by means of the gospel in fulfillment of Psalm 18.4–5: “There are no tongues or languages where their words are not heard; their sound goes throughout the world and their words go to the ends of the earth.”58 For example, in the propagandistic thirteenth-century chronicle of Guillaume de Sanvic, which tells the story of the destruction of the Carmelites in the holy land by the Moslems after the fall of Acre, we see hints of contemporary controversy as well when the author points out that the devil attempted to impede the extension of the order through the anti-mendicant activities of secular curates and rectors.59

The landscape through which the Horsemen ride in the bas de page flows by its green color and topographic detail directly into the successive registers
containing Elijah and Elisha, who stand on similar greenswards; it seems to symbolize the earth from which man was originally made, and the three horses behind the leader may signify the other three elements. Earth and the whiteness of Christ’s purity come together in the preacher’s admonition to his audience: “Equus iste albus super quem Christus equitabat erat eius caro munda. . . . Si ergo vis sequi Christum, istum equum album oportet te ascendere, ut corpus tuum ab inquinacione luxurie mundum custodias…” (p. 356). The element of fire is clearly present in both the horses and chariot of Elijah in the next register, and of water in that containing the view of Mount Carmel overlooking the sea. Air appears both in the donor’s vision of the heavenly Christ and in the Ascension miniature, where clouds are also prominently featured. The sermon concludes with some wordplay on the idea of the pale horseman as Mors; but properly understood, the preacher tells us, he is really Vita (p. 363). Thus, just as the color and topography of the landscape linked the bas de page with the three registers, so it serves to link it with the Ascension miniature as well. And the currant of the foremost rider’s cape is a color echoed in the costume of the donor in both the top register and in the Ascension miniature proper—the focal point of the page which shows Christ’s final destination, a destination which, of course, has been typologically prepared for in the first register depicting the Ascension of Elijah above a waiting disciple.

This idea is nicely presented at the close of the sermon, because there the preacher considers the pale horse and rider, explaining: “Equus iste palidus fuit nubes qui ascendentem in celum ipsum suscepit.” He also notes that the question “Quo vadis?” and its reply “Vado ad fratres meos” of John 15.18 can best be understood by the Ascension text from Acts: “Quod fecit per aerem, quando videntibus apostolis elevatus est et nubes suscepit eum ab oculis eorum” (p. 363).

If we assume that the figure in currant-colored costume is, indeed, the secular donor or patron of the gradual, the leaf’s seemingly obsolescent propaganda content becomes more explicable. Though the documents associated with the bull Mare Magnum might have seemed to bring an end to the controversy, in fact, they did not. But an enthusiast of the Carmelite order could by his gift of such a gradual at once triumphantly vindicate the order’s claims and at the same time honor himself by his appearance at the Ascension of Christ and in a serial program of Carmelite history. This hypothesis is, to be sure, a very tentative and speculative one, yet it finds some support in the iconographic program of the leaf itself.

Whatever the precise artistic circumstances of WHM 29.14.3 might have been, of course, we shall never know unless the rest of the book comes to light—an unlikely event, since the leaf was probably detached in the first place because the rest of the volume seemed to have no commercial or artistic value. Yet other leaves have been rejoined to their books, and
perhaps bringing this interesting leaf to the attention of a wider audience than it now has will result in just such a rapprochement.

NOTES

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3. On this question, see Millard Meiss and Elizabeth H. Beatson, eds., *La Vie de Nostre Benoit Sauveur Ihesuocrist & La Saincte Vie de Nostre Dame* (New York, 1977), p. xxiv.


6. This miniature is mistakenly identified by Bruno de Jésus-Marie as coming from a missal, “La Madone du Carmel (XIVe siècle)” in *Élie le prophète*, Vol. I, Fig. 17. See for full description, Kallenberg, *Fontes Liturgiae Carmelitanae*, pp. 252–53.


8. A gradual is generally smaller than an antiphonal and contains the music for the variable as well as the fixed portions of the mass. The former include the Introit for the beginning of the office, the Gradual responding to the reading of the Epistle, the Alleluia and the Offertory and Antiphon of the Common with its Psalm. The latter, or Proper, is that material which never changes, the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. See on this subject A. Cabrol, *The Books of the Latin Liturgy* (London, 1932); and Andrew Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office* (Toronto, 1982).

9. Studies of Carmelite history vary widely in quality. I have found the following items useful: B. Zimmermann’s article in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, Vol. II.2 (Paris, 1923), cols. 1776–1792; and Titus Brandsma’s in *Dictionnaire de*


13. See the facsimile of this work by P. Heitz and W. L. Schreiber, Biblia Pauperum nach dem einzigen Exemplare in 50 Darstellungen (Strassbourg, 1903), and the more convenient reproductions in Koch, “Elijah the Prophet,” figures 1 and 3.


15. See Eliseo Monsignano and José Alberto Ximénez, eds., Bullarium carmelitanum (Rome, 1715–1768), Vol. I, Constitutiones XXII and XXIII, pp. 319–49, esp. 346:

\[
\text{tamquam Religionis speculum,} \quad & \text{exemplar speciali charitate fulgentes, Sanctorumque Prophetarum Eliae,} \\
& \text{& Elisei, \ldots nec non etiam a liorum Sanctorum Patrum,} \\
& \text{qui Montem Sanctum Carmeli, juxta Eliae Fontem} \\
& \text{inhabitantur, successionem haereditarianum tenentes.}
\]

16. Koch, “Elijah the Prophet” seems unusually trusting with regard to this bull; he observes “in 1477, a bull was issued by Pope Sixtus IV declaring that the right of hereditary succession that the Carmelites claimed was true” (p. 548), basing his views on P. Helyot’s Histoire des ordres monastiques published in 1721, which simply cites the passage verbatim from the Bullarium carmelitanum. B. Zimmermann, Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. III, p. 356, refers to the passage as “an ordinance of the Apostolic Chancery of 1477.”

17. The leaf, now WHM 29.14.3, was bought from A. Léonard in Paris in 1929; nothing is known of its earlier history.

19. The content of the leaf is, on the verso, the Communion verse of the Vigil of the Ascension and, on the recto, the Introit for the Feast of the Ascension and the Alleluia verse after the Epistle of the same feast. See the Missale secundum usum carmelitarum (Venice: Lucas Antonius de Giunta, 1504), fols. 134–35.


22. See Kallenberg, Fontes Liturgiae Carmelitanae, pp. 144–47, for description.


34. See Kalenberg, Fontes Liturgiae Carmelitanae, pp. 230-31, for discussion.

35. Latin text in Analecta ordinis Carmelitarum 3 (1916), 151-52.


37. See Bullarium carmelitani, I, Constitutio XXXVI, pp. 375-78.


40. See Rickert, Reconstructed Carmelite Missal, pp. 100-1.


43. See an interesting late statement of the same idea made by Jean Golein d. 1403, who was a translator for Charles V. He claimed that the order was founded by Elijah on Mount Carmel, and the members, drawn from the European nations, were visiting Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles. Thus they were the first beneficiaries of the gift of tongues, and accepting Christianity, they became “les frères de Nostre dame, qu’on apelle les Carmes,” Meiss and Beatson, eds., La Vie de Nostre Benoît Sauveur, p. 134.


50. Latin text edited by B. Zimmermann, Analecta ordinis Carmelitarum Discaeleatorum 3 (1931), 158-89.

51. On John de Horneby, fl. 1374, see A. B. Emden, A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500 (Cambridge, 1963), p. 314; and B. Zimmermann, Analecta ordinis Carmelitarum Discaeleatorum 6 (1932), 163. Horneby’s disputation with the English Dominican John Stokes exists in Oxford, Bodleian MS e. Musaeo 86, fols. 176, 211.


54. “Poets, Preachers, and the Plight of Literary Critics,” Speculum 60 (1985), 343-63. The sermon’s tema and structure are discussed on p. 346. When the Index volumes of J. B. Schneyer’s monumental Repertorium der Lateinischen Sermones...
des Mittelalters, 9 vols. (Münster, 1969—), appear, it may be possible to learn where Sheppey got this sermon; a spot check of the volumes devoted to Franciscan and Dominican MSS shows no Ascension Day sermon using themes from Genesis and Judges.


58. These verses had been taken by the eminent thirteenth-century Dominican exegete, Hugh of St. Cher, to refer to the fame of the Apostles and by extension the "New Apostles" and the way in which their words had reached the most inaccessible parts and peoples of the world. See Opera Omnia in Universum Vetus et Novum Testamentum (Venice, 1732), Vol. II, fol. 40v.