

Carmel in Britain: Studies on the Early History of the Carmelite Order: Volume III: The Hermits from Mount Carmel.

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Carmel in Britain: Studies on the Early History of the Carmelite Order: Volume III: The Hermits from Mount Carmel (review)

Keith J. Egan

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

Keith J. Egan

Carmel in Britain: Studies on the Early History of the Carmelite Order. Volume III: The Hermits from Mount Carmel. By Richard Copsey, O.Carm. (Faversham, Kent, England: Saint Albert's Press, and Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane. 2004. Pp. xii, 513. Soft cover. Available at Friars Bookshop, Aylesford, Kent, ME20 7BX, UK.)

Old-style Carmelite historiography was a notorious minefield of legends and myths that unfortunately led historians either to avoid Carmelite history altogether or to rely on generalized bromides that too often have endured even to this day. However, the last half of the twentieth century witnessed a new day that has given birth to a genuine renaissance in Carmelite scholarship, pioneered by the Institutum Carmelitanum, Rome, and its polyglot journal *Carmelus*. Carmel's past, admittedly with much yet to be explored, is no longer a minefield but a treasure trove of events and documents ready for the historian's critical eye.

Father Richard Copsey, former provincial of the British Carmelites and one-time editor of *Carmelus*, has in recent decades nearly singlehandedly made possible this new day in the history and historiography of the medieval Carmelite Order in England, Wales, and Scotland. Copsey has literally scoured **[End Page 791]** the published and unpublished documents often hidden in sources many of which lie in the most out-of-the-way dusty corners that had not been explored for their Carmelite contents.

The preceding two volumes in this "Carmel in Britain" series are volume 1: *People and Places of the Medieval English Carmelite Province* and volume 2: *Theology and Writings of the Medieval English Carmelite Province*. Both of these volumes were published in 1992 during the 750th anniversary of the English-Welsh province; they were edited by Patrick Fitzgerald-Lombard, O.Carm., but they were the initiative of the then provincial, Father Copsey. These two volumes were published in Rome by the Institutum Carmelitanum. Volume 4, now in preparation, will be

entitled *Thomas Netter: Carmelite, Diplomat and Theologian*. Netter was perhaps Carmel's most widely read medieval theologian.

The volume under review contains thirteen articles; four of them were published in *Carmelus* with five of them in other journals; four of them are published here for the first time. Copsey has revised and enlarged some of the previously published entries. While Copsey is principally interested in the history of the English-Welsh province of Carmelites, he has discovered that the story of this province cannot be understood in isolation but only in the broader context of the medieval Carmelite Order. So at times he has cast his net wider than the British Isles.

Anyone who has occasion to do research on medieval Carmelite history must turn to this volume 3 of *Carmel in Britain*. The contents are varied. One will find here explorations of early Carmelite historiography, extensive treatments of the Carmelites in Scotland, a long-neglected topic that now has received a full and detailed study. Copsey also offers excellent guidance in the use of the Carmelite notebooks of John Bale (1495–1563). These notebooks are a unique collection of data on medieval English Carmelites and their writings. This one-time Carmelite who never lost his reverence for his Carmelite ancestors had a lifetime interest in Carmel's past. One would indeed be reckless to ignore Copsey's guidance in the use of these notebooks. While they contain much to be found only in them, they also have untold pitfalls for the unwary researcher.

Of particular interest to historians is the final chapter in this book: "The Carmelites in England 1242–1540: Surviving Writings," where English medieval Carmelite authors are arranged in alphabetical order. Entries list manuscripts with their locations, editions, excerpts, and important studies about various works. This list is a researcher's gold mine but for which Copsey welcomes additions and corrections to this catalogue of English Carmelite authors. An extensive and detailed index (pp. 431–512) is a great gift for anyone who turns to this many-faceted volume. I for one will keep this volume close at hand as a reference tool to be frequently consulted.

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valuable record for Innocent and his successors, not to mention modern historians, but in addition to the errors, there are anomalies. Items were registered without much regard to chronological order and most letters were not registered at all, including some of weighty importance. The register has 269 numbered entries; the calendar of Potthast has nearly 600 entries for the same period. To be sure, a few letters for the ninth year were registered in the separate register for matters concerning the empire (*Regestum Innocentii III papae super negotio Romani Imperii*, ed. Friedrich Kempf, 1947), but others clearly important to Innocent's policies were simply omitted, like Pott. 2711 concerning Sweden and Pott. 2962 concerning Sardinia.

For many years, the manuscript register itself was available to scholars outside of Rome only through microfilms that were difficult to obtain and unpleasant to read. Now the Vatican Archives make color photographs available on compact disks. Reg. Vat. 7, with the registers for both the eighth and ninth years, can be purchased for 103 Euros. But this wonderful accessibility in no way lessens the value of the superb edition under review, an invaluable vademecum even for the scholar examining the manuscript text.

This review must conclude with a special salute to Othmar Hageneder, who has labored at this monumental project from the very beginning. May he live in good health to see its completion.

JOHN C. MOOZ

Bloomington, Indiana

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