

purpose of communing with God. But when the Thesbite gathered the scattered sons or disciples of his predecessors, and founded on Mount Carmel the first school of prophets, the fountain of Elias supplied not only the water for slaking the thirst of bodies, but a spiritual fountain sprang up, changing the desert of souls into a blooming garden, laden with the fruits of holiness, and diffusing its sprays of hope and patient desire over the downtrodden chosen people.

A large cave 60 feet long and 45 feet wide was the cradle of this school. There the promise of a Redeemer, made in paradise, was elucidated: there the adepts were told that personal sanctity, intercessory prayer, and fervent desire might accelerate the fulfilment of the promise, and an anticipated "*Rouale, celi desuper*," rose from the assembled prophets.

Hence we need not be surprised that God, in answer to so many aspirations, gave a sign. Elias sees rising out of the sea a little cloud shaped like a man's foot, and inspired by the Holy Ghost, he knows it to be not only a sign of the rain promised to Ahab, but a token of the immaculately conceived Virgin, who rises pure out of the contaminated mankind, a pledge of the coming redemption. The signal is given. Henceforth the sons of the prophets centre their aspirations in the future Mother of the Messiah, and as prophet succeeds prophet, as the prophecies become clearer and more pointed, as the time of fulfilment approaches, their hopes grow stronger, their longing more intense, their prayers more fervent.

Could it be otherwise, after Ahab had been told: "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and shall bring forth a Son, whose name shall be Emmanuel, that is, God with us?" Could they sigh for the coming Redeemer without yearning for His Mother? Could they pray that the second Adam would retrieve the lot of fallen mankind, without looking for the second Eve, who in an eminent sense was to be the mother of all the living?

Thus there is a nucleus of devotees of our Lady of Carmel anticipating her veneration, and this nucleus at the same time foreshadows, as far as possible in the Old Law, the highest flower of devotion—religious life. For these sons of the prophets

formed a community under an acknowledged superior; they had their devotions in common, and the traditions of their school were as sedulously guarded and as conscientiously handed down as the constitutions of any religious Order of the New Law. Why should this not be so? As everything else of the New Law found its figure and type in the Mosaic dispensation, so the prophetic school prefigures the perfect abandonment of man to God, which is the essence of religious life.

As the plenitude of time approached, God revealed the fact to some of these sons of the prophets, and by them the joyful tidings were communicated to St. Ann, the mother of the Blessed Virgin. It would indeed be difficult to picture the transports of delight engendered by these news. What they had so long and ardently prayed for, their own eyes should behold realized. Their own gaze should fasten upon the morning dawn, heralding the rising of the Sun of justice. From this time the intercourse between Nazareth and Mount Carmel was not only frequent and amiable, but it was the intercourse between a sovereign Lady and her vassals. Deeply interested in the weal or woe of the favored persons, the sons of the prophets never for a moment lost sight of the fact that it was the Mother of the Redeemer of the world and its co-redemptrix, they were privileged to see and to speak to. And the more the extraordinary graces became patent, which God showered upon his child, the more tender and reverential their affection for her grew. They anticipated the Magnificent: "Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

When the holy night saw the birth of the Saviour, and angelic hosts announced the glad tidings to the shepherds in Bethlehem, they spoke to Essenians, and these Essenians stood to the sons of the prophets, the hermits of Mount Carmel, in the same relation as a third Order does now to the first Order. Consequently the inhabitants of Carmel were soon apprised of the occurrence, and the "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will" resounded in the caves of Carmel.

The years pass; the hermits are witnesses of the hidden life in Nazareth, of the public appearance of the Messiah, of the catastrophe of Golgotha. They fully under-