

(Flower of Carmel, flowering vine,  
Light of heaven, a virgin bringing forth a child,  
Unparalleled.  
Fruitful mother but without knowledge of a man –  
Grant the privileges of Carmel,  
Star of the sea.

Pray for us, holy Virgin.  
As long as the waves of the sea flow  
And Phoebus drives across the skies,  
May the bright Order of Mount Carmel live.)

This hymn occurs in numerous Carmelite manuscripts from the late fourteenth century.<sup>17</sup> It was recited by the friars on the feast of Simon Stock (16 May) and a very old tradition ascribes it to him. It is an interesting example of the strong, almost pagan, devotion of the Carmelites to the Virgin Mary in the middle ages. The original oratory on Mount Carmel was dedicated to the Virgin, vows were made to her, and in the Carmelite Constitutions of 1294 the Order was declared to be identified with her name.<sup>18</sup> According to one Carmelite tradition the Virgin, while still alive, was reputed to have personally joined the Order on Mount Carmel.<sup>19</sup>

Also of interest in ascribing this Book of Hours to a Carmelite origin is the inclusion, among the five Memorials, of Elisha, the Old Testament prophet (1011). Each Memorial, following the usual practice in Books of Hours, contains an anthem and a prayer. The prayer to Elisha runs:

*Deus qui beatum helizeum prophetam montis Carmeli incolam altis mirificasti prodigiis et illustrasti doctrinis, tribue nobis quesumus ut eius exempla sequentes ad te pervenire mereamur.*

(God, who exalted by portents the blessed prophet Elisha, dweller of the heights of Mount Carmel, and who made him famous by scriptures, grant us, we pray, that, following his example, we may deserve to come unto you.)

It is unusual for an Old Testament figure to appear in a series of invocations to the saints. The Carmelites, however, traced their descent from Elisha and Elijah whom they saw as the first of the holy men to dedicate their lives to God on Mount Carmel. In the Calendar of this manuscript Elisha is given a double rite and is styled *princeps carmeli*. The feast of Elijah (20 July) does not occur in this manuscript and was not introduced into the Carmelite Calendar until the second half of the sixteenth century.

This Book of Hours is also attractively decorated and illuminated. The capital letters are in burnished gold decorated with flowing black