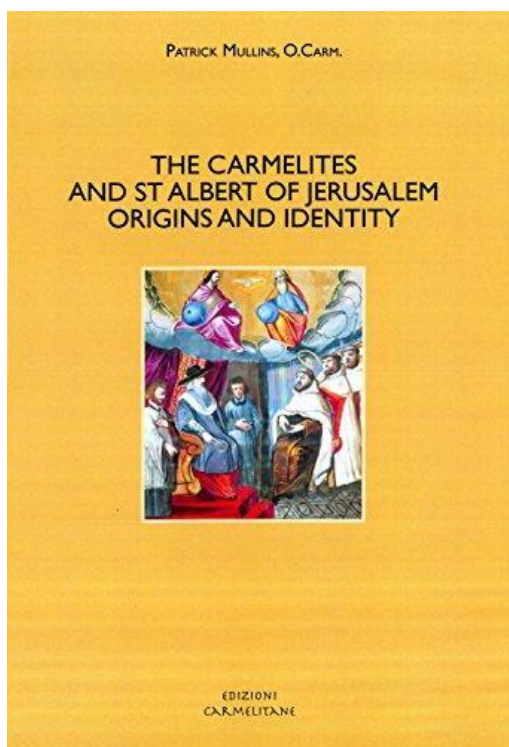


## Module MTh08: The Carmelite Claim to an Elijan Succession

Following the completion of St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, the Superiors of the major Religious Orders asked that they be allowed to place statues of their founders in the vacant niches of the pillars of the basilica. In 1725, Pope Benedict XIII permitted the Carmelites to place a statue of Elijah in the niche between St Dominic Gusman O.P. and St Helena, where it still stands. The Order of Carmelites and the Order of Discalced Carmelites contributed equally to the cost and the statue, sculpted by Agostino Cormacchini, which bears a Latin inscription that might be translated: The Entire Carmelite Order erected [this statue] to its Founder, St Elijah the prophet. It is probably the most tangible evidence of the somewhat unusual Carmelite claim to have been founded by an Old Testament prophet.

This module outlines the history of the emergence, and eventual undermining, of this claim using the more critical methodology of scientific hagiography that has developed since the early seventeenth century. It was in the context of the application of that methodology to St Albert of Jerusalem, and, consequently, to the origins of the Carmelites, that the claim to an unbroken succession of Carmelites from the time of Elijah down to the present day gradually came to be recognised as false. And it was because of that clarification that the true origins of the Carmelites on Mount Carmel in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries came to be generally recognised.



Using a broadly chronological approach, beginning with Mount Carmel in the period from the time of Elijah to the Crusades and down to the present time, this module looks at some of the more significant developments and implications of the claim to an Elijan succession and at the way in which misinterpreted origins can lead to a misinterpreted sense of identity.

The set book for this module is:

Patrick Mullins O.Carm.,

*The Carmelites and St Albert of Jerusalem: Origins and Identity.*

Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane, 2015.