

their settlement in Greater Armenia, in the district of Nakhchiwan, to which reference will often be made.

The Jesuits were established in Western India, at Goa, etc., presumably from 1548 by S. Francis Xavier; there was a mission to Delhi in 1580, a church at Agra by 1602, from 1598 they began work in Bengal. In China (at Canton, Nanking, Peking, Macao, etc.) the Jesuits claim to have had four colleges, a seminary and forty mission stations from 1581; the noted Fr. Ricci settled at Peking in 1600. In Japan, where S. Francis Xavier had first landed in 1549, it is asserted that by 1582 there were some 200 "churches" or chapels, fourteen to twenty houses founded by the Order, including a noviciate and two seminaries (all of course closed and abandoned when the expulsion of missionaries came in the century following).

Between 1549 and 1575 the Augustinian Hermits had also got to work in the Philippines: from Hurmuz in the Persian Gulf they settled themselves at Goa, also during the last quarter of the sixteenth century.

But that, succinctly, seems to cover the small area of missionary settlements in the vastness of the Asiatic continent.

It must have called, then, for some exceptional impulse, some important conjuncture to send an Order, new to missionary enterprise too, into the heart of a region of Middle Asia and so remote from coastal districts where the few Orders mentioned were already at work.

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First—for the layman—the question needs answer: Who were the Discalced Carmelites, and what was their position in 1600?

To go back to the beginning of things, the circumstances recorded indicate the cliffs and fastnesses of Mount Carmel, which rise above the busy modern port of Haifa and are rapidly losing their religious seclusion and amenities through the encroachments of commercial building, to have been ground already hallowed to the worship of the Deity, when in the reign of Ahab in Israel—i.e. between 878 and 850 B.C. the mount was appointed for that revelation of His power so impressively related in the third book of Kings, xviii. 1-42:

"Post dies multos factum est verbum Domini ad Eliam, in anno tertio, dicens—Vade, te ostende ad Achab ut dem pluviam super faciem terrae. . . . Verumtamen nunc mitte ac congrega ad me universum Israel in monte Carmeli. . . . Misit Achab ad omnes filios Israel et congregavit prophetas in monte Carmeli. . . . Elias ascendit in verticem Carmeli et . . . in septima autem vice. . . . Ecce nubecula parva quasi vestigium hominis ascendebat de mari . . ."

—that vision to which reference is made in the lection of the second nocturn of the feast of Our Lady of Carmel:

" . . . ubi Elias olim ascendentem nebulam Virginis in typo insignem conspexerat eidem purissimae Virginis sacellum construxerunt . . ."¹

The tradition has endured that from those days of the great prophets of Israel the mountain continued to have throughout the centuries its recluses and men of God. To the pagan Pliny, as the Christian era began, they were "gens sola et toto in orbe praeter coeteras mira".

If Samaria and Mount Geraizim with its special worship has remained and subsists to this twentieth century after Christ, if Mount Sinai and its monastic settlement provides a shorter witness to the agelong durability of the contemplative life remote from traffic, there is naught to gainsay, or for scepticism to brand as impossible, in the tradition that, down

¹ Quoting *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the site of the Prophet's altar according to tradition was at Al Muhrakeh at the eastern end of the ridge, the mountain itself being known to orientals as "Mar Elias".