

# Carmelite Antiquities

*by Paul Chandler*

A visit in April 2004 to the Institutum Carmelitanum in Rome by the librarian of the Carmelite Library in Middle Park brought an unexpected windfall of rare books to the library.

The Carmelite Order began at the end of the 12th century in Crusader Palestine, and later became one of the four principal mendicant orders of the Middle Ages. The first surviving Carmelite literature dates from the 1270s. Although the order was never as large or intellectually significant as the Dominicans or Franciscans, there is nevertheless a large literary production from across these seven centuries: largely biblical, theological and philosophical before the 16th century, and predominantly spiritual and mystical thereafter, but ranging across almost every field from astronomy and *belles lettres* to canon law and psychology, even to a 1998 translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* into Welsh.

Every monastery had a library, large or small, and the principal *studia* in the university cities usually had quite large collections. There were, of course, various destructions and depredations, but the systematic suppressions of the 19th century were the most severe blow to the Order's libraries, with almost all of the most important dispersed. The Carmelites reached a low intellectual ebb in the 19th century (an old barb counted a learned Carmelite among the seven wonders of the ecclesiastical world, along with a simple Jesuit, a poor Franciscan, a humble Dominican, and a few others). The Order's failure to re-establish an international graduate faculty in Rome or elsewhere also slowed attempts to reconstitute library collections that would represent the Order's rich bibliographical heritage.

Although many smaller libraries remained intact, a definitive revival really came only with the establishment of the Institutum Carmelitanum in Rome in 1950. Its tasks included historical research and publication, an annual bibliography (*Bibliographia Carmelitana Annualis* 1953- ), and administration of the *Biblioteca Carmelitana*, which was built on the foundation of what remained of the Order's principal Roman libraries. Today, consisting of about 25,000 volumes by or about Carmelites, the BC is the most comprehensive such collection in the world. Other significant *Carmelitana* collections include, more or less in order of importance, the *Carmelitana Collection* in Washington DC, with 14,000 volumes, the *Teresianum* in Rome, and the *Nederlands Carmelitaans Instituut* in Boxmeer. In a field where there is little competition, our small *Carmelitana* collection at Middle Park, with about 5,000 volumes, is not insignificant.

I spent some time in Rome in the early '80s doing graduate work in theology, Latin, and paleography. The *Biblioteca Carmelitana* had a doubles room, where duplicate books from the library were kept. Legend had it that Fr Kilian Lynch, an Irishman of aristocratic bearing who was the last of the old-style priors general, had been horrified to discover the neglected state of various Carmelite libraries in Italy in the impoverished years just after the war. In one house, supposedly, he had found the exceedingly rare *Speculum Carmelitanum*

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of 1507 in a stack of books being used page by page as toilet paper. The story goes that he summoned Fr Pio Serracino-Inglott, then librarian, from Rome to the offending Sicilian convent and instructed him to remove all books of value on his authority. Other monasteries neglectful of their cultural goods were similarly stripped of them, and the library in Rome was not only substantially strengthened but also began to collect numerous duplicates of even the most valuable books. A collection of these duplicates was finely bound, furnished with bookplates bearing the prior general's arms, and presented to the refounded 13th-century house at Aylesford in England, which had been suppressed in 1538 and restored in 1949. Others went to help establish the very fine collection in Washington DC. By the '80s, however, the doubles room was no-go territory. Despite much trying, I never managed to get in.

It was a bit of a thrill, then, to be given the key and invited to ransack in April 2004, a process which took two days, and a third for packing up eighteen large boxes of books. Nearly all were hard-to-find titles of Carmelite interest which have considerably enriched the obscurer corners of our collection. 120 were pre-1800 titles, which have been added to our rare book collection, which now includes about 500 pre-1800 volumes dating from 1538, mostly Carmelitana. ANZTLA members might be interested to know of some of them.

¶ **Dialogos de Dom Frey Amador Arraiz, Bispo de Portalegre, revistos e acrescentados pelo mesmo autor nella segunda impressão. En Coimbra: na Officina de Diogo Gomez Lovreyro, 1604.**

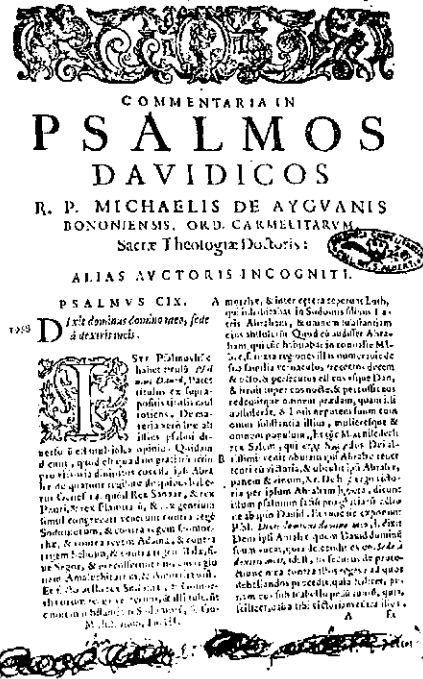
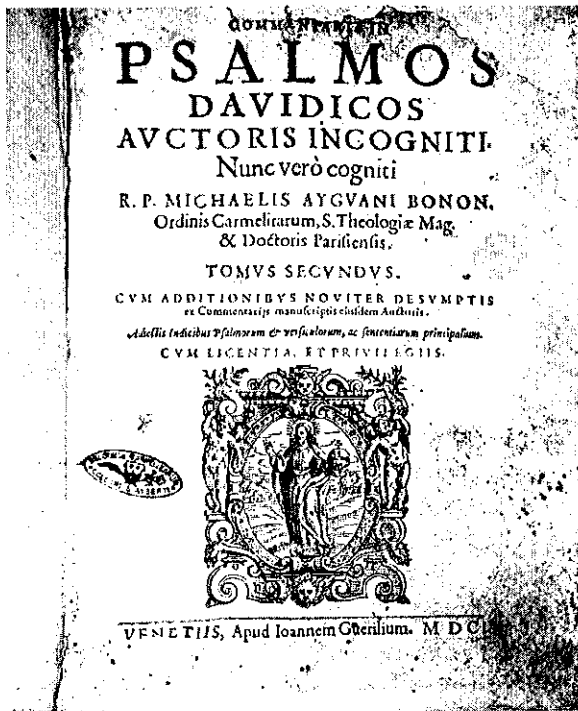
Also from the early years of the 17th century is the Dialogos of Amador Arrais (d. 1600), one of the most famous classics of Portuguese literature. Arrais joined the Carmelites in Lisbon in 1545, studied in Catalonia, lectured in Coimbra, was court preacher under King Sebastian of Portugal, and became Bishop of Portalegre in 1581, where he was considered a model of the post-Tridentine reforming prelate. His dialogues on social and religious themes, extremely erudite but clear and elegant, were first published in 1589, and Arrais spent the ten years of his retirement rewriting and polishing them. The fourth centenary of the definitive edition, published posthumously in 1604, was celebrated extensively in Portugal and Brazil.

¶ **Pietro Tommaso Cacciari. Della vita, virtù e doni soprannaturali del venerabile servo di Dio P. Angiolo Paoli, Carmelitano dell'Antica Osservanza, Libri III... In Roma: appresso Giuseppe Collini, 1756.**

Angelo Paoli (1642-1720) joined the Carmelites in Siena but spent most of his religious life in Rome, where he was known especially for his work for the disadvantaged. An accomplished networker, he managed to attract broad support for his social programs from the rich and famous, to whom his characteristic advice was, "If you want to love God, go find him among the poor". He was largely responsible for the modern state of the Colosseum: after a long public campaign he prevailed upon the authorities to have it cleared of housing and declared a shrine of the martyrs, and established the Good Friday Stations of the Cross there, a custom which continues to the present. His biographer, Cacciari, was an expert on ancient Christian writers and professor at the University of Bologna (the library also holds his 1753 edition of the works of the 5th-century pope, Leo the Great). This biography, the first, remains the fundamental source on Paoli.

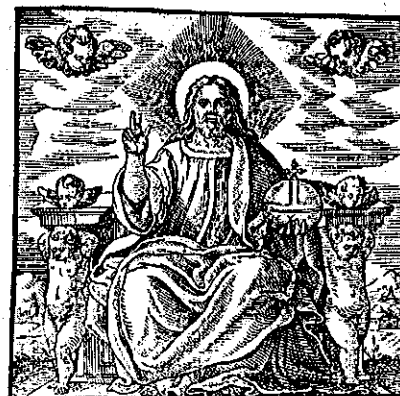
¶ **Dichiarazione della mistica vigna esposta nella facciata di Santa Maria Traspontina... in occasione di celebrarsi l'Ottavario per la canonizzazione di Santa Maria Maddalena de Pazzi... In Roma: per Giacomo Dragonelli, 1669.**

Although comparatively little-known in the English-speaking world, St Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi (1566-1607) is now considered, with St Teresa of Avila, one of the most notable female mystics of the 16th century. She joined the Carmelite Nuns in Florence in 1582, and several times in the following years experienced long series of ecstasies. She was canonised in 1669, when these ceremonies were at their most sumptuous. The Carmelite church of S. Maria in Traspontina (close to St Peter's Square in the present-day Via della Conciliazione) used the occasion to present an elaborate twelve-part display glorifying the Order and its (largely legendary) historical traditions; the present work is a small booklet providing a guide to the display. The library has a comprehensive collection on Mary Magdalen, including various early editions of her life and works (1639, 1652, 1711, 1716, 1739 &c.).



**Commentaria in psalmos davidicos auctoris incogniti, nunc vero cogniti R.P. Michaelis Aygvani Bonon.... Venetiis: apud Ioannem Guerilium, 1600-1601.**

The oldest work amongst this generous donation is a three-volume commentary on the Psalms by Michael Aiguani of Bologna (d. 1400). Although the Carmelites were rather late in entering the universities (the first graduate was not until 1295), from about 1350 the Order's masters seem to have specialised in biblical studies. In this area Aiguani was perhaps the most noted and certainly the most prolific author. His massive psalm commentary is his most significant work and has preserved his reputation to the present. Ironically, the first three printed editions (1524, 1581, 1588) presented it as an anonymous work, to the indignation of the Order. The general chapter of 1598 directed Basil Angussola to establish Aiguani's authorship, which he did by comparison with manuscripts in Bologna and Venice, publishing this corrected edition under Aiguani's name in Venice in 1600-1601. The popularity of the work is attested by the numerous editions over the next century, of which the library also has the Venice folio of 1603. The work was much admired by J.M. Neale: he thought it the best of antiquity and drew on it extensively for his own psalm commentary (1860-1874).



**VENETIIS, M DCL**  
Apud Ioannem Guerilium.

¶ **Collegii Salmanticensis FF. Discalceatorum B. Mariae de Monte Carmeli Primitivae Observantiae Cursus theologicus... 10 vols. Lugduni: sumpt. Joannis Antonii Huguetan, 1679 [etc.].**

The Salmanticenses were a group of Carmelite friars lecturing in the theology faculty at the University of Salamanca in Spain. Over seventy years (1631-1701) they produced a gigantic 10-volume commentary on the Summa theologiae, the 13th-century masterpiece of Thomas Aquinas. Their collaborative technique, which involved classroom trials, consultation with other theologians, and voting on points of disagreement, made progress slow but won the Cursus theologicus unusual prestige, because the final result represented the consensus of a group of respected theologians and teachers. The Cursus was reprinted many times, and the library now holds a 10-volume set made up from various 17th-century printings.

¶ **Palestina, ovvero, Primo viaggio di F. Leandro di Santa Cecilia, Carmelitano Scalzo, in Oriente... In Roma: nella Stamperia di Angelo Rotilj, 1753.**

The original monastery of the Carmelite Order on Mount Carmel was lost in 1291 with the fall of Acre, the last Crusader outpost in the Holy Land. It was not until the 17th century, with the development of missions in Persia, that the Order's attention turned again to its birthplace, and a monastery was re-established on Mount Carmel in 1631. Thereafter the Discalced friars maintained a presence in Syria and Palestine, as well as in Persia and Ottoman Mesopotamia. Leandro di Santa Cecilia published three volumes on his travels in the Middle East. This, the first, covers his visits to Mount Carmel, Tripoli, Beirut, Jerusalem and the usual holy places. Generally unimpressed with social and political conditions in the Ottoman lands, he nevertheless takes unusual pains to understand Islam and to correct misunderstandings current in the West.

¶ **Angelus a S. Iosepho. Gazophylacium linguae Persarum, triplici linguarum clavi italicae, latine, gallicae, necnon specialibus praeceptis eiusdem linguae referatum. Amstelodami: ex officina Jansonio-Waesbergiana, 1684.**

From 1607 the Discalced Carmelite friars took on extensive missions among the Christians of the Middle East, and several published grammatical and linguistic works. Angelus of St Joseph (Joseph La Brosse, 1636-1697) studied Arabic in Rome from 1662 to 1664 and then spent thirteen years in the Levant. He studied Persian in Isfahan, and took special interest in Arabic medicine and pharmacology. On his return to Europe he published in Latin his Pharmacopoea Persica (Paris, 1681) and a few years later the present work, the first substantial Persian grammar and dictionary for Europeans, with translations into Latin, French and Italian. Unable to find a willing publisher with the required specialised types in Paris, he bought his own type in 1681 and arranged the printing in Amsterdam.

**P A L E S T I N A**  
*O V V E R O*  
**PRIMO VIAGGIO**  
DI F. LEANDRO DI SANTA CECILIA  
CARMELITANO SCALZO  
**I N O R I E N T E**  
*SCRITTO DAL MEDESIMO,*  
E DEDICATO AL MERITO IMPAREGGIABILE  
DELL' ALTEZZA SERENISSIMA  
*DEL PRINCIPE REALE*  
**GIUSEPPE**  
**D' A U S T R I A .**



*IN ROMA, MDCCLIII.*  
NELLA STAMPERIA DI ANGELO ROTILI  
NEL PALAZZO DE' MASSIMI.  

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*CON LICENZA DE' SUPERIORI.*