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Review of *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia: The Safavids and the Papal Mission of the 17th and 18th Centuries*

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Recommended Citation

Lehner, Ulrich, "Review of *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia: The Safavids and the Papal Mission of the 17th and 18th Centuries*" (2013). *Theology Faculty Research and Publications*. 309.

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A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia: The Safavids and the Papal Mission of the 17th and 18th Centuries.

A CHRONICLE OF THE CARMELITES IN PERSIA: THE SAFAVIDS AND THE PAPAL MISSION OF THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES. Anonymous. Edited and translated by H[erbert] Chick, introduction by Rudi Matthee. 2 vols. New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012. Pp. 1376 (across 2 vols.). \$365.

The presence of Carmelites in Persia in early modernity is absent from the consciousness of most theologians. This is unfortunate because its history gives us a glimpse into early Christian-Muslim dialogue, Catholic-Armenian relations, and also into papal politics insofar as Persia was considered a strategic impediment to the further rise of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover the work provides detailed information about missionary strategies, as a letter of 1665 from a Persian Carmelite to the general of the order in Rome makes clear: "To confound Persian temerity accomplished persons are needed, for these people are very studious--they have infinite esteem for a Religious who can stand up to them (in argument)" (1:448).

From the beginning of a permanent establishment in 1610 until its end in 1753, the Carmelite chronicles describe the everyday life in Persia, be it political, social, cultural, or religious; they also testify to the executions of Christian martyrs (e.g., 1:261-63) and the growth and problems of the Carmelite mission. Besides missionizing among Muslims, which was permitted yet restricted, the monks were especially interested in reconciling with Rome Armenians living in Persia. However, good relations with Armenians existed for only short periods of the 17th century, while in the 18th century Armenian resentment against the proselytizing monks grew. This conflict culminated in the Armenian Katholikos's persuading the Ottomans to engage in widespread harassment of Roman Catholics in Persia (1:526). The increasing harassment of the monks in Persia during the 18th century led finally to the order's giving up its monasteries.

While the two volumes were originally published in 1939, one can find them in only a few specialist research libraries. This reprint makes them available again, and it is to be hoped that college libraries acquire them and encourage students to mine this cultural treasure.

The only shortcoming is the usability of these volumes. While there is an index, it leaves out too many important keywords. For example, the index does not mention the important 1665 discussion over Carmelites' wearing sandals or going barefoot because both practices were regarded as unhygienic by Muslim elites (1:448). The editor of the new edition also failed to add a proper table of contents for both volumes, which makes their use a tiresome enterprise. Nevertheless, the volumes are a fascinating read.

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