

**PIETY AND POOR RELIEF: CONFRATERNITIES
IN MEDIEVAL CREMONA, c. 1334-1499**

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on confraternal piety and poor relief in the northern Italian city of Cremona between the mid-fourteenth century and the end of the fifteenth century.

It draws upon previously unedited archival documents (Latin and Italian statutes, contracts, letters, and account books) housed in Cremona's Archivio di Stato. The records of the Consortium of the Donna (f. 1334) and the Consortium of St. Omobono (f. 1357) were examined to show the origin, character, and activities of these two confraternities.

One result of this research concerns the reasons for and the methods by which the cult of the Virgin's conception spread throughout northern Italy in the mid-fourteenth century. The cult spread both because Franciscan friars sponsored lay confraternities in honor of the Virgin's conception, and because the feast so closely resembled other well-established Marian feasts. More importantly, although these new confraternities were founded a generation after Duns Scotus had presented his defense for the Virgin's "immaculate" conception, confraternal statutes suggest that the Franciscans were not openly publicizing the immaculist position of their Order.

A second conclusion is that the Consortium of St. Omobono was founded not just to promote charity and combat heresy, but also to restore some of the civic pride of a city that in 1334 had been conquered and incorporated into the Duchy of Milan. The establishment of a confraternity in honor of Cremona's patron saint gave the Cremonese a renewed sense of their own unique identity. Furthermore, it gave the confraternity's administrators a sense of purpose and autonomy in relation to the Milanese authorities.

A third result pertains to the transformation and rationalization of confraternal charity in northern Italy. Here the work of the Cremonese confraternities is compared with that of charities in neighboring Milan (particularly the Scuola delle Quattro Marie). Innovations included the adoption of city-wide distributions, double entry accounts, and identifying tokens. These innovations permitted the confraternities to assist the poor on a larger scale than previously recognized.

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Introduction

The last twenty years have seen a growing interest in the subject of medieval and early modern lay confraternities.¹ New interdisciplinary approaches in this area have extended the limits of historical inquiry and challenged older conceptions of medieval society. Giles Meersseman's Ordo fraternitatis, for example, is an important collection of confraternal statutes and letters of indulgence. Meersseman uses these to trace the history of

¹ In addition to the works cited below, some of the most important recent monographs include Ida Magli, Gli uomini della penitenza (1967; with new introd., Milan: Garzanti, 1977); Giancarlo Angelozzi, Le confraternite laicali. Un'esperienza cristiana tra medioevo e età moderna (Brescia: Queriniana, 1978); Ronald Weissman, Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence (New York: Academic Press, 1982); Luciano Orioli, Le confraternite medievali e il problema della povertà. Lo statuto della Compagnia di Santa Maria Vergine e di San Zenobio di Firenze nel secolo XIV (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1984); James R. Banker, Death in the Community: Memorialization and Confraternities in an Italian Commune in the Late Middle Ages (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1988); Christopher Black, Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Maureen Flynn, Sacred Charity: Confraternities and Social Welfare in Spain, 1400-1700 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989); John Henderson, Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Nicholas Terpstra, Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Announcements, reviews, and short articles are published in Confraternitas: The Newsletter of the Society for Confraternity Studies, vol. 1 (1990).

medieval lay piety and to disprove the old sectarian view that the medieval Church largely ignored the spiritual life of the laity.²

Brian Pullan, in his excellent book, Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice, examines statutes, membership lists, and financial records to describe the transformation of the Scuole Grandi from devotional confraternities into philanthropic institutions and to explain their social and political roles.³ By the fifteenth century, the Scuole Grandi had become both major providers of poor relief and important instruments of state policy. The Venetian government, for example, obliged the Scuole to pay their poor members to serve in the navy's galleys. The government also used the magnificent processions of the Scuole Grandi in civic ceremonies as political propaganda intended to impress foreign dignitaries. Pullan's analysis of the members' social backgrounds questions the assumption that confraternities fostered social egalitarianism. The Venetian Scuole Grandi may have been founded on principles of spiritual and social equality, but they soon divided into distinct orders of rich and poor, in which the rich brothers financed and controlled all the important operations while the poor brothers received alms for performing less dignified tasks. Pullan's study also refutes the established view that Catholic charity, in contrast to Protestant poor relief,

² Ordo fraternitatis. Confraternite e pietà dei laici nel medioevo, 3 vols. (Rome: Herder, 1977).

³ Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: The Social Institutions of a Catholic State, to 1620 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

was indiscriminate and demoralizing. The Scuole normally dispensed their charity not to hordes of professional beggars but to what Pullan calls the "respectable, resident poor."

Ronald Weissman's Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence uses the methods and insights of modern anthropology to explain how confraternal rituals were related to medieval social organization. Two types of confraternities existed in Florence: the laudesi (singers of Marian chants) and the disciplinati (flagellants). Weissman analyzes the attendance records and membership histories of each type and convincingly argues that significant differences existed between the two groups in terms of their members' occupations, wealth, age, position within the family, and neighborhood allegiances. For one flagellant confraternity, Weissman relates membership patterns and levels of participation to the life cycle and concludes that a close correlation existed between the stages of a member's life and his decision to participate actively in his confraternity.

This dissertation studies two Cremonese confraternities (consorzi) founded in the mid-fourteenth century. I chose these two for several reasons. With a few exceptions, most of the English and American scholarship on Italian confraternities focuses on Tuscany and the Veneto.⁴

⁴ The exceptions include Lester K. Little, Liberty, Charity, Fraternity: Lay Religious Confraternities at Bergamo in the Age of the Commune (Bergamo: Lubrina; Northampton, Mass.: Smith College, 1988) and Nicholas Terpstra's Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna.

The need for studies of confraternities in other regions therefore seemed self-evident. I chose the Consorzio della Donna and the Consorzio di S. Omobono because they were Cremona's two most important confraternities throughout the late Middle Ages, not just in the size of their membership and wealth but also in the size of their archives and in the scope of their charitable activities.⁵ Finally, research on these two confraternities has been greatly facilitated ever since the publication of Giorgio Politi's excellent analytical inventory of the archival documents.⁶

From the beginning of my research, the topics which have interested me most have been medieval attitudes and practices towards poverty and poor relief. From my analysis of the account books of the Milanese Scuola delle Quattro Marie, it appears that the period of innovation and reform in poor relief took place in the late Middle Ages when confraternities similar to the two Cremonese consorzi rationalized their methods of administration and

⁵ Giorgio Politi, Antichi luoghi pii di Cremona. L'archivio dell'Istituto elemosiniere (secoli XIII-XVIII), vol. 1 (Cremona: Biblioteca Statale di Cremona, 1979-85), xxxv-xxxvi.

⁶ As Politi explains, Cremona's Istituto elemosiniere was part of Joseph II's program to centralize and reform all the charitable institutions and trusts (opere pie) in his Lombard domain. In 1786, the Austrian government appointed a single administrator to replace the officers of each charitable institution. He received not only the patrimonies of each institution, but also their individual archives. Politi's inventory covers the ancient part of this centralized archive, that is, all the documents dated prior to the May 1786 reform. This collection of documents, which Politi has labelled "Corpi soppressi" (hereafter CS), is presently housed in Cremona's Archivio di Stato. For Politi's history of the Istituto elemosiniere, see vol. I, vii-xxxv.

distribution and made more systematic and continuous efforts to assist the city's poor.⁷ The thesis introduced here stands in contrast to the prevailing view that these developments first occurred in the late Renaissance as a result of humanism's influence. Cremona's close geographical and political ties with Milan raised the question of whether these innovations spread to surrounding cities as well.

Because the history of Cremona is not known to most English readers, chapter one provides an overview of Cremona's history from its foundation by the Romans to the end of Milanese rule in 1499. Chapters two and three discuss the origins and activities of the two consorzi. The Consortium of the Donna was a Marian confraternity sponsored by the Franciscans. The Consortium of St. Omobono was founded by Cremona's bishop to foster piety, charity, and orthodoxy. Chapter four reviews the recent literature on medieval poverty and charity. Finally, chapter five introduces a comparison of the charity of the two Cremonese confraternities with Milan's Scuola delle Quattro Marie, in order to examine the nature and extent of confraternal poor relief in northern Italy.

⁷ Antonio Noto, Liber rationum Schole Quatuor Mariarum Mediolani 5 vols. (Milan: Giuffrè, 1963-69).

Chapter 1

The History of Cremona to 1500

The Historiography of Medieval Cremona

Like so many other provincial cities in Italy, medieval Cremona has received little attention from modern historians working outside of Italy.¹ With two exceptions, the history of medieval Cremona has been of interest only to local antiquarians and to a few Italian historians.² The two exceptions are

¹ For published works on medieval Cremona, see the two-volume bibliography compiled by Agostino Cavalcabò, Saggio di bibliografia cremonese per il quinquennio, 1931-1935 (Cremona: R. Deputazione di storia patria, 1938) and Saggio di bibliografia cremonese per il quinquennio, 1936-1940 (Cremona: R. Deputazione di storia patria, 1942). More recent bibliographies are contained in Fiorino Soldi, La capitale del Po. Saggio storico-economico su Cremona dall'anno 219 avanti Cristo al 1957 (Cremona: Pizzorni, 1957); Carla Spotti Bertinelli and Maria Teresa Mantovani, Cremona. Momenti di storia cittadina (Cremona: Comune di Cremona, 1985). Although the last work mentioned was written for local high school students, it is by far the best recent survey of Cremonese history. Scholarly articles on all periods and aspects of Cremonese history can be found in the local journal, Bollettino storico cremonese, which issued its first volume in 1931.

² Antiquarian histories of medieval Cremona include: Antonio Campo, Cremona fedelissima città et nobilissima colonia de' Romani (Cremona 1585; Bologna: Forni, 1974); Lodovico Cavitelli, Annali della città di Cremona (1588; Bologna: Forni, 1968); Lorenzo Manini, Memorie storiche della città di Cremona, 2 vols. in 1 (Cremona, 1819-20); Angelo Grandi, Descrizione

both twelfth-century religious figures: St. Omobono (d. 1197), the first non-noble lay saint, and Bishop Sicardo (1185-1215), the author of a universal chronicle, a liturgical treatise, and a Summa of canon law.³

Serious scholarship on medieval Cremona began in the late 1920s, thanks to the interests and efforts of Agostino Cavalcabò and especially Ugo Gualazzini. Their works, and those of their collaborators and successors, fall into three main areas. One is the history of Cremona's Commune, which ended in 1334.⁴ A second area is the city's municipal and guild statutes.⁵

dello stato fisico-politico-statistico-storico-biografico della provincia e diocesi di Cremona, 2 vols. in 1 (Cremona, 1856-58); Francesco Robolotti, Cremona e sua provincia (Milan, 1859); Lorenzo Astegiano, "Ricerche sulla storia civile del Comune di Cremona fino al 1334," in his Codex diplomaticus Cremonae, 715-1334, vol. 2 (Turin, 1899) 225-402. None of these four antiquarians produced works of great scholarship, but Astegiano and Robolotti devoted great energy to finding, collecting, and publishing documents. On the fate Cremona's records, see Robolotti, Dei documenti storici e letterari di Cremona (Cremona, 1857). Robolotti's works must be used with caution because his lack of professional training and his intense civic pride sometimes led him to misinterpret or exaggerate the historical evidence he uncovered.

³ L. E. Boyle, "Sicardus of Cremona," The New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967 ed. For St. Omobono, see chapter 3. There are no recently published histories of the Cremonese church. Antiquarian works include Ferrante Aporti, Memorie di storia ecclesiastica cremonese, 2 vols. (Cremona, 1835-37); Giuseppe Cappelletti, "Cremona," in his multi-volume work Le chiese d'Italia dalla loro origine sino ai nostri giorni, vol. 12 (Venice, 1857) 125-239; and G. De Vecchi, Brevi cenni storici sulle chiese di Cremona (Cremona: Moroni, 1907).

⁴ Agostino Cavalcabò, Le ultime lotte del comune di Cremona per l'autonomia. Note di storia lombarda dal 1310 al 1322 (Cremona: R. Deputazione di storia patria, 1937); Ugo Gualazzini, Il "Populus" di Cremona e l'autonomia del Comune (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1940).

The third and most recent area of interest concerns Cremona's origins and urban development.⁶

Roman Origins and Early Middle Ages

The Romans founded Cremona along with Piacenza in 218 B.C. According to Polybius, the colonies were founded for strategic reasons: Piacenza on the south bank of the Po river and Cremona on the north bank were part of the Roman defenses in the Second Punic war against Hannibal (218-201

⁶ Ugo Gualazzini, I mercanti di Cremona 1183-1260-1927. Cenni storici sulla loro organizzazione con appendice di documenti inediti (Cremona: Cremona nuova, 1928); Ugo Gualazzini, Rapporti fra capitale e lavoro nelle industrie tessili lombarde del medio evo. Contributo alla storia del diritto del lavoro (Turin: Istituto Giuridico della R. Università, 1932); Ugo Gualazzini, Studi di legislazione statutaria cremonese (Cremona: R. Deputazione di storia patria, 1937), a collection of revised articles which first appeared in the Bolletino storico cremonese between 1931 and 1937; Ugo Gualazzini, Cremonae statutorum civilium specimen bibliographicum (Milan: Giuffrè, 1939), a bibliography of municipal and guild statutes from medieval and early modern Cremona; Ugo Gualazzini and Gino Solazzi, eds., Statuta et ordinamenta Comunis Cremonae facta et compilata currente anno Domini MCCCXXXIX. Liber statutorum Comunis Vitellianae (saec. XIV) (Milan: Giuffrè, 1952); Ugo Gualazzini, Gino Solazzi, and Agostino Cavalcabò, Gli statuti di Cremona del MCCCXXXIX e di Viadana del secolo XIV. Contributi alla teoria generale degli statuti, 2 vols. (Milan: Giuffrè, 1953-54); Ugo Gualazzini, Inventario dell'Archivio Storico Camerale, con un saggio su la mercandandia nella vita cremonese (Milan: Giuffrè, 1955); Carla Sabbioneta Almansi, ed., Statuti dell'Università e Paratico dell'Arte del pignolato bombace e panno di lino (Cremona: Camera di Commercio, 1970); Ugo Gualazzini, Gli organi assembleari e collegiali del comune di Cremona nell'età viscontea-sforzesca (Milan: Giuffrè, 1978).

⁶ William Montorsi, Cremona, dalla città quadrata a città nova (Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1981); Ugo Gualazzini, Ricerche sulla formazione della "città nova" di Cremona dall'età bizantina a Federico II. Contributi storico-giuridici sulla genesi dei centri urbani (Milan: Giuffrè, 1982).

B.C.).⁷ Little remains of the Roman period, whether archaeological or literary, but it appears that Roman Cremona developed a certain reputation for the quality of its educators. Virgil is said to have travelled from his paternal home in Mantua to Cremona in order to pursue higher studies there.⁸

Virtually nothing is known about Cremona during the fifth and sixth centuries, after the fall of the Roman Empire. Historians continue to debate the extent of a Byzantine presence in the city during the second half of the sixth century.⁹ What is clear is that in 603 Cremona was partially destroyed by the Lombards. The latter maintained their control of northern Italy until their final defeat at the hands of Charlemagne in 773.¹⁰

The Carolingian period witnessed the first economic revival since the fall of Rome. During the ninth century many of the major towns in the Po valley, including Cremona, increased in size. The Po valley was ideally suited for commerce because it connected traders from northern Europe with those coming from the east. Rivers like the Ticino, Adda, Oglio, and Adige flow from the foot of the Alps and Appenines into the Po river which

⁷ Bertinelli and Mantovani 29-30.

⁸ He left Cremona around 55 B.C. for further studies in Milan and then Rome. C. G. Hardie, "Virgil," The Oxford Classical Dictionary, 1970 ed.; Bertinelli and Mantovani 37.

⁹ Montorsi, Cremona, dalla città quadrata a città nova; Gualazzini, Ricerche sulla formazione della "città nova".

¹⁰ Bertinelli and Mantovani 45-46.

empties into the Adriatic. Up the Adriatic, to the mouth of the Po, came eastern goods aboard Venetian, Genoese, and Amalfitan ships.¹¹

Another factor contributing to the prominence of Cremona was its episcopal see.¹² Cremona had a bishop as early as 451 A.D., if not sooner, but his power and prestige only began to grow when Carolingian emperors, here as elsewhere in the Empire, granted him special concessions and privileges.¹³ In 916, Emperor Berengar I (888-924) gave the bishop jurisdiction over the city and the surrounding countryside for a radius of five miles. Adding to the concessions made by their predecessors, Berengar and his imperial successors turned over more and more political and economic power to the bishop. In addition to new lands, Cremonese bishops received the power to collect revenues from those either navigating the Po river, docking at the city's port, or entering the city, as well as from fishermen, grain mills, and those buying and selling at local markets. The bishop was also exempted from the feudal pledge to provide horses, wagons, food and

¹¹ C.T. Smith, An Historical Geography of Western Europe before 1800 (New York: Praeger, 1967) 310-11.

¹² By the tenth century, Cremona possessed an important cathedral school, with one of the finest libraries in northern Italy; Bertinelli and Mantovani 52.

¹³ In 451 Cremona's bishop was recorded as present at a synod in Milan. Cremona always remained part of the Milanese province; Bertinelli and Mantovani 43. The bishops were imperial representatives and frequently Germans; Ugo Gualazzini, I mercanti 23.

lodging to imperial troops or imperial officials.¹⁴ Most vexing to the citizenry were the duties which all merchants, including local ones, had to pay when docking at Cremona's port. In 924, Cremona's merchants attempted to avoid paying docking fees to the bishop, by constructing their own port. To their dismay, however, the emperor successfully intervened on behalf of the bishop and halted the project.¹⁵

The Development of the Commune to 1334¹⁶

As early as the tenth century, then, Cremonese bishops were coming into conflict with the citizens, who, while not yet politically organized, nonetheless demanded that they be allowed to conduct their economic affairs peacefully and freely, without episcopal interference.¹⁷ The citizens first adopted a more active and violent stance against their overlord when they drove Bishop Landolfo (1004-1030) from the city and laid waste to much of the old episcopal city.¹⁸ In the end the citizens allowed his successor, Bishop Ubaldo (1031-1073), to return, but they continued their

¹⁴ Bertinelli and Mantovani 56-57.

¹⁵ Bertinelli and Mantovani 55.

¹⁶ On the rise and demise of Italy's communes, see Daniel Waley, The Italian City-Republics, 3rd ed. (London and New York: Longman, 1988).

¹⁷ Gualazzini, Il "Populus" 14-15.

¹⁸ Bertinelli and Mantovani 59-61.

opposition by refusing to pay the new bishop the customary taxes and tolls mentioned above.¹⁹

Cremona's Commune developed slowly between 1030 and the end of the century. The Commune first appears in a document of 1098, in which Countess Matilda of Canossa granted a piece of land "the representatives of the Church and of the Commune." Matilda's reference to both Church and Commune indicates that the bishop still retained a considerable amount of power.²⁰

The earliest organ of communal government was the arengo, or the "assembly of all the citizens."²¹ How much actual authority the arengo exercised in the Italian communes is still unclear. In all probability its power was greater in the early years, before the introduction of regularly elected consuls and other permanent institutions of government. The main purpose of the arengo was to deliberate and ratify important matters of state. At Cremona the arengo assembled either in the Cathedral or just outside in the public square.²² There, for example, "in 1118 and 1120, certain knights were invested with lands and took an oath in the presence of the people

¹⁹ Gualazzini, Il "Populus" 18; Bertinelli and Mantovani 60-61.

²⁰ It was not until the end of the thirteenth century that the Commune achieved autonomy from the bishop; Bertinelli and Mantovani 60-62.

²¹ Bertinelli and Mantovani 68; Waley 36.

²² Bertinelli and Mantovani 68.

'and the whole arengo'.²³ As communes began to develop permanent organs of government, one of the primary responsibilities of the arengo was to confirm the election of consuls. Cremona was one of the earliest cities to elect consuls on a regular basis.²⁴ The first extant record of Cremonese consuls dates between 1112 and 1116.²⁵ There appears to be no pattern to the number of consuls elected, nor to the length of their terms in office. In 1130 two men were elected, in 1151 seven, and in 1170 ten. Candidates for this office were always selected from the city's oldest, most powerful, and wealthiest families, families which were so frequently at odds with one another that in 1182 it became necessary to introduce a new executive office, that of the podestà. After 1182 consuls and podestà rotated terms of office. Advising the consuls or the podestà were two small secret councils (the consiglio del comune, also known as the consiglio di credenza, and the sapienti).²⁶

²³ Waley 36.

²⁴ According to Waley, three things had to be present for a full-fledged commune to exist: regularly elected consuls, the transfer of jurisdictional authority from bishop to consuls, and "the acquisition of rights outside the city and the development of relations with other communes" (32-4).

²⁵ Waley 35.

²⁶ Bertinelli and Mantovani 68-69. On the podesteria in general, see Waley 40-45.

Between 1169 and 1187 the Cremonese expanded their walls, making the city four times larger than it had previously been.²⁷ The incorporation of the suburbs brought with it new social and political tensions, as the city became divided into two antagonistic camps. Within the città vecchia--that part of Cremona encircled by the ancient Roman walls--resided the city's oldest families: knights (militi), large property holders, judges, and merchants. In the città nuova lived the popolo: petty merchants, artisans, and small property owners.²⁸ As in many other Italian communes, the two groups--militi and popolo--each created their own independent societies. By 1201 the militi of the città vecchia were organized into a Societas militum. The corporation included all those who performed military service on horseback for the Commune. In 1292 these noblemen and wealthy commoners built their own meeting place, the Loggia dei militi.²⁹

²⁷ Bertinelli and Mantovani 81.

²⁸ Bertinelli and Mantovani 73. Social distinctions in this period were not as precise as one might think. Contemporaries found themselves (not infrequently) wrestling with the question of proper definitions. With respect to the distinction between popolo and militi, in 1210 Bishop Sicardo of Cremona declared that, "I understand the popolo excluding those great families which are members of the popolo but are counted among the knights." Waley 120. Ugo Gualazzini, defines the Cremonese popolo as "a social class composed of those who possessed movable wealth, of producers who owned their artisan shops and the tools of their trade." The popolo, in his view, was distinct from the mass of simple laborers; II "Populus" 2-4.

²⁹ Bertinelli and Mantovani 84. On the milites and the societas militum, see Waley 118-20.

The inhabitants of the città nuova tried to gain acceptance as full citizens of the Commune, arguing that, having been incorporated within the city's walls, they had the right to participate in the Commune's government. Over time, as their requests for inclusion were repeatedly denied by the residents of the città vecchia, the residents of the città nuova worked for autonomy instead. In 1229, having produced their own statutes, they formed a Societas populi.³⁰ They elected their own officials, organized a separate government, and refused to acknowledge the Commune's jurisdiction.³¹ In 1256 they began construction on their own headquarters, the palazzo Cittanova.³²

In the course of the thirteenth century, the local dispute between the two Cremonese factions was absorbed into the larger Guelph and Ghibelline conflict.³³ Until the mid-thirteenth century, Cremona's Commune was strongly pro-imperialist. The Empire not only protected and fostered the economic activities of the Cremonese, but it also served as an ally against Cremona's principal rival, Milan. Henry V's privilege of 1114 granted Cremonese merchants the right to navigate and trade freely along the Po

³⁰ On the popolo and the Societas populi in the Italian communes, see Waley 131-43.

³¹ Bertinelli and Mantovani 73-74.

³² Bertinelli and Mantovani 74, 84; Waley 131.

³³ Bertinelli and Mantovani 74-75. On Guelphs and Ghibellines, see Waley 145-56; and John Koenig, "Guelphs and Ghibellines," Dictionary of the Middle Ages, 1985 ed.

river (from the Adriatic all the way east to Pavia) and throughout the entire Kingdom of Italy.³⁴ In 1155 Frederick Barbarossa (r. 1152-90) sought to punish Milan by transferring minting rights from the defiant city to Cremona.³⁵ As Waley writes, "Cremona benefitted by a stream of privileges issued in 1157, 1162 (two), 1164 and 1176. Later in 1176 the Emperor promised Cremona a garrison of 1,000 troops whenever the city requested it, besides which he would not make a separate peace with any of Cremona's enemies."³⁶

Relations between Frederick I and Cremona soured briefly in the middle of the century, when the heavy hand of imperial rule provoked Cremona to side with the Emperor's enemies in the formation of the first Lombard League (1167).³⁷ By 1176, however, Cremona no longer

³⁴ Bertinelli and Mantovani 65-66.

³⁵ Bertinelli and Mantovani 20; Germano Fenti, Manuale delle monete di Cremona. Ricerche e contributi alla storia della zecca di Cremona e delle sue monete (Cremona, 1983) 6. On relations between the Lombard cities and Frederick I, see Gian Luigi Barni, "La lotta contro il Barbarossa," Storia di Milano, vol. 4 (Milan: Treccani, 1954) 1-112.

³⁶ Waley 91.

³⁷ Waley 92; Steven C. Fanning, "Lombard League," Dictionary of the Middle Ages, 1986 ed. The Lombard League remained active for about a century, from the mid-twelfth century to the mid-thirteenth (i.e., from the reign of Frederick I to the death of Frederick II). Its purpose was to prevent the Holy Roman Empire from reasserting control over the communes of northern Italy.

participated in this anti-imperial alliance.³⁸ Having made peace with the Empire, it never again took part in successive revivals of the League.³⁹

During Frederick II's reign (1215-1250), Cremona remained the emperor's steadfast ally against the Lombard League. Frederick made Cremona his military headquarters, residing there on several occasions.⁴⁰ The honor of hosting the Holy Roman Emperor and the advantages which such a powerful ally brought should not completely overshadow some of the less positive aspects of the relationship. As Gualazzini notes, Cremona also suffered from being so closely tied to the Emperor's political and military ventures, because "[t]he continued battles with neighboring cities, to which Cremona was pushed by imperial politics, had put the Commune into debt . . .⁴¹

Ghibelline rule continued from Frederick's death until 1266, during which time Cremona was the capital of Uberto Pelavicino, vicar general of all imperial lands in Lombardy. Originally elected podestà of Cremona, Pelavicino went on to establish Cremona's--and Italy's--first signoria.⁴²

³⁸ Barni 101.

³⁹ Waley 94.

⁴⁰ Bertinelli and Mantovani 66.

⁴¹ Gualazzini, Inventario xlv-xlv.

⁴² Bertinelli and Mantovani 75; Waley 161. The signoria was a legalized tyranny grafted onto republican institutions, a kind of "enlightened despotism." As Waley writes, the lord or "signore and his party wielded their executive power through republican forms of the commune

Now the Ghibelline capital of Lombardy, Cremona became a refuge for opponents of the Church and for Cathar heretics from as far away as southern France.⁴³ One incident from Pelavicino's rule illustrates how prominent a role religion played in the political life of the city-states. Upon hearing that a large group of flagellating penitents was approaching Cremona and Milan, Pelavicino had six hundred gallows erected along his territory's borders. The grim spectacle was meant as a warning to the flagellants not to proceed further. According to a contemporary chronicler (who was also a Ghibelline and hence sympathetic to Pelavicino), Pelavicino feared that the secret aim of these penitents was to incite the Cremonese to overthrow him. Pelavicino's harsh tactic worked. At the sight of those trees of death, the crowds retreated.⁴⁴ Whether the chronicler was correct or not about the

[T]hey were themselves an oligarchy, a narrower one than the 'patrician' oligarchy of the city-republic, yet 'the men of the regime' constituted an important check on the lord and played a role in decision-making as well as in executive action. It is not always easy to draw a firm line between a republic under a tight oligarchy and a signoria proper" Waley 171. On "the triumph of the Signoria" in the Italian city-states, see 165-72.

⁴³ Bertinelli and Mantovani 75.

⁴⁴ Gino Franceschini writes, "Il marchese non se la prendeva con la manifestazione religiosa, ma contro ciò che quella nascondeva. Un anonimo ghibellino contemporaneo dice infatti che scopo di quei disciplinati era 'ut discordie et malum oriretur in Cremona, ut marchio perderet dominium. Veruntamen ipse, sicut sapiens, fecit furcas in introitu episcopatus undique fisare. . . .'" See "La vita sociale e politica nel duecento," Storia di Milano, vol. 4 (Milan: Treccani, 1954) 297 n. 4. On the flagellant movement of 1260, see Angelozzi 26-30; Black 26-27: "[L]ed by Franciscans . . . the Great Devotion of flagellants [was] launched by the lay preacher Raniero Fasani in 1260. Huge processions of people flagellating their bare backs and chanting for divine mercy took to the streets and roads,

intentions of the flagellants, Pelavicino was certainly justified in fearing the worst from his religious opponents. When his downfall came in 1266, it was at the hands of the papacy and its Guelph supporters. Pelavicino's immediate successor was, however, not a Guelph but another Ghibelline--Buoso da Dovara, the Podestà of the University of Merchants and therefore a man who had the trust of the merchant class.⁴⁵ However, Dovara was much more acceptable to the Church because he did not share Pelavicino's open-door policy towards suspected heretics.⁴⁶

Guelphs controlled Cremona from Dovara's deposition in 1275 to 1311. In this new political and religious climate, the Commune reversed its former hospitality towards heretics. Many local heretics were burned in Cremona, while French ones were sent back to their country in chains.⁴⁷ To facilitate the work of the inquisitors and to ensure that Cremona remained a papal ally, the papal legate created a confraternity of laymen,

first in Perugia, then south to Rome, and north to Bologna and Parma. The background to this was both the warfare between the Papacy and the German Empire, and the struggles against Cathar heretics"

⁴⁵ Gualazzini, Inventario lviii. On the University of Merchants, see the end of this chapter.

⁴⁶ Gualazzini, Inventario li-lvi. As the author notes, Dante reserved a place in hell for Dovara (Inferno XXXII, ll. 115-17).

⁴⁷ Bertinelli and Mantovani 76.

known as "the Consortium of Faith and Peace" (Consorzio di fede e di pace).⁴⁸

The decade following 1311 witnessed continued violence between Cremona's Guelphs and Ghibellines. Not surprisingly this internal turmoil only encouraged the intervention of outside powers. In quick succession Cremona succumbed to Galeazzo Visconti, duke of Milan (1322-1323), Emperor Louis the Bavarian (1328-1330), and King John of Bohemia (1331-1333).⁴⁹ Finally in 1334, Azzone Visconti conquered Cremona and annexed it to the Duchy of Milan. With this annexation Cremona ceased to be an independent commune.⁵⁰

The demise of the Commune did not, however, mean the complete disappearance of all communal institutions. For administrative and fiscal purposes, medieval Cremona continued to be divided into four sections, each named after one of the four oldest city gates (porte). Each porta was composed of smaller districts or neighborhoods, known as vicinie. Most vicinie were named after parish churches and encompassed only a street or two, but the largest vicinie were further divided into quartieri. During the

⁴⁸ In a letter dated March 31, 1267, Clement IV granted papal approval for the confraternity and outlined the duties of its members; Astegiano, I, 342, n° 886. See also Little, Liberty 53; Bertinelli and Mantovani 76.

⁴⁹ A. Cappelli, Cronologia, Cronografia e Calendario Perpetuo, 6th ed. (Milan: Hoepli, 1988) 340.

⁵⁰ Bertinelli and Mantovani 76-77. On p. 200 Waley erroneously writes that Cremona's Commune fell in 1344.

communal period the system of vicinie reached its greatest extension, numbering sixty-five sometime before 1283.⁵¹ The inhabitants of each vicinia performed a number of tasks which today would be the responsibility of municipal governments: regulation of certain artisanal and commercial activities, selection of officers for municipal posts (in an ultimately futile attempt to ensure that no single district or faction dominated the city), administration of poor relief, participation in religious and civic rituals, military conscription, firefighting, and maintenance of streets, cemeteries, and sanitation systems.⁵²

Along with the extension of the administrative system of vicinie, the communal period permanently changed the physical appearance of the city.⁵³ The most impressive buildings from this period are found in the heart of the city (known today as the Piazza del Comune), which even today preserves intact five splendid romanesque and gothic buildings. The focal point of the piazza is the Cathedral. Begun in 1107 and consecrated by Bishop Sicardo in 1190, it was under construction as late as 1319 because of the damage it sustained in several earthquakes. To the right of the Cathedral stands the beautiful octagonal Baptistry (f. 1168). To the left of

⁵¹ Cavalcabò, "Le vicende dei nomi delle contrade di Cremona," Bollettino storico cremonese 3 (1933): 48-56; Almansi 279. Over time some vicinie were abolished.

⁵² Gualazzini, Gli organi 26-27.

⁵³ On Cremona's architecture, see Bertinelli and Mantovani 80-87.

the Cathedral is one of the tallest medieval towers in northern Italy, the Torrazzo (13th-14th c.). Facing the Cathedral across the piazza stands the palazzo comunale (f. 1206). In the words of two local historians, the location of the Commune's headquarters "in the heart of the old city, in front of the Cathedral seems to symbolize the autonomy obtained by the Commune even with respect to episcopal authority."⁵⁴ Standing next to the Commune's offices is the Loggia dei militi (f. 1292), headquarters of the Societas militum and similarly a symbol of the prominence of the knights within the Commune.

Signorial Rule (1344-1499)

Between the fall of the Commune in 1334 and the end of our period in 1499, Cremona passed through three periods of Italian signorial rule. During the first period from 1334 to 1403, Cremona was governed by the Visconti of Milan. Then between 1403 and 1420 the city came under the rule of three local signori: Ugolino Cavalcabò (1403-1404), his cousin Carlo Cavalcabò (1404-1406), and Cabrino Fondulo (1406-1420). Finally, in 1420 Cremona once again fell to the dukes of Milan, who held it until 1499.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Bertinelli and Mantovani 83.

⁵⁵ Cappelli, Cronologia 340.

The first period of Milanese rule brought some immediate changes in the legal and administrative structure of Cremona. In 1339 the city revised its statutes in accordance with the Visconti's wishes. Further revisions were made in 1349, 1356, and in 1388, when not just the civic statutes but also those of the merchant and artisan guilds were re-written by order of the Visconti.⁵⁶

While the fourteenth-century revisions of Cremona's civic statutes spelled an end to the political independence of Cremona, the effect of Visconti rule on Cremona's economy appears to have been largely beneficial. Cremona, no longer at war with its most powerful neighbor and rival, now became Milan's main port on the Po river.⁵⁷ Cremonese merchants and artisans could look forward to profiting from local consumption and production, as well as from trade with the much larger Milanese market.

Milanese rule was not without its economic difficulties. At the close of Gian Galeazzo's rule (d. 1402), the expenses incurred in waging war against such powerful enemies as Venice and Florence led to increased burdens on Milan's subject cities. In Cremona taxes multiplied, the money was devalued, and prices spiralled. These economic burdens, coupled with an outbreak of plague and other natural disasters, aroused discontent among

⁵⁶ For the bibliography on Cremona's fourteenth-century statutes, see n. 5 above.

⁵⁷ Bertinelli and Mantovani 96.

the citizenry. Members of the local aristocracy who had lost the most under Visconti rule were quick to play upon this discontent and to seize the opportunity presented by Gian Galeazzo's death. In 1403, the Milanese were driven out, and Cremona fell under local signorial rule.⁵⁸

This period of local signorial rule (1403-1420) was plagued by the same bloody factionalism which had been the terrible scourge of the late Commune.⁵⁹ From 1403 to 1404 Cremona was governed by the Guelph nobleman Ugolino Cavalcabò and from 1404 to 1406 by his cousin Carlo Cavalcabò.⁶⁰ Once in power the victors indulged in the now traditional looting of their opponents' properties and in other acts of ferocity.⁶¹ In 1406, the two cousins and their supporters were killed by Cabrino Fondulo, the military commander and former ally of the Cavalcabò. Fondulo proved himself a more cunning ruler than his two predecessors. He remained in power far longer than the Cavalcabò, largely because of his opportunistic alliances: sometimes he sought the support of Milan, other times that of the Empire. By 1420, however, the game was up and Fondulo was forced to relinquish his lordship of Cremona to Filippo Maria Visconti, though not without a handsome remuneration. The duke paid Fondulo 40,000 ducats

⁵⁸ Bertinelli and Mantovani 97.

⁵⁹ Gualazzini, Gli organi 113-21.

⁶⁰ Bertinelli and Mantovani 106; Cavalcabò, "Cremona durante la signoria di Ugolino Cavalcabò," Bollettino storico cremonese 22 (1961-64): 7-120.

⁶¹ Gualazzini, Gli organi 116.

and permitted him to retain his title of Marquis of Castelleone.⁶²

Nevertheless, Fondulo's good fortune was short-lived. In 1425, the duke of Milan had him arrested and executed on questionable charges of treason.⁶³

The reimposition of Visconti rule brought with it an abatement in the factional bloodletting. Without introducing any major changes in Cremona's governmental structure as his ancestors had done, Filippo Maria Visconti (1420-1441) satisfied himself with reducing taxes and otherwise reviving the Cremonese economy.⁶⁴ The great value of Cremona to the Milanese in this period was due to its location on the Duchy's eastern border. At war with Venice, the Milanese turned Cremona into a strategic military base.⁶⁵

The rulers of Milan took a great personal interest in Cremona during the mid-fifteenth century. In 1441, Filippo Maria's daughter, Bianca Maria Visconti, married Francesco Sforza, the duke's ablest military commander. As part of her dowry she received Cremona and its surrounding territory. The wedding took place not in Milan, but in Cremona, where the city's

⁶² Bertinelli and Mantovani 107-8. According to Francesco Cognasso, the Visconti paid Fondulo 35,000 ducats; "Il ducato visconteo da Gian Galeazzo a Filippo Maria," Storia di Milano, vol. 6 (Milan: Treccani, 1955) 187.

⁶³ Cognasso, "Il ducato visconteo," 189.

⁶⁴ Gualazzini, Gli organi 121-24.

⁶⁵ Bertinelli and Mantovani 109.

dignitaries welcomed the newlyweds as their new signori.⁶⁶ During the twenty-five years in which Francesco and Bianca Maria ruled Cremona, the city enjoyed one of its longest periods of peace and prosperity. The duke and duchess embarked on a building program which demonstrated their commitment to the city's economic well-being and earned them the affection of the citizenry. In 1450 construction began on the city's first public hospital, the Ospedale maggiore or Ospedale di S. Maria della Pietà (completed 1457).⁶⁷

Other building projects included the restructuring of the ducal castle of St. Croce (1455-1475); the foundation of the monastery of Corpus Domini by Bianca Maria in 1455; and the foundation in 1463 of the Vallombrosan church and convent of St. Sigismondo, in commemoration of the wedding vows which the two had exchanged on that site twenty-two years earlier.⁶⁸

Francesco Sforza died in 1466, and Bianca Maria in 1468. Their successors (Galeazzo Maria Sforza, his wife Bona, their son Gian Galeazzo Maria, and finally, Ludovico il Moro) showed less interest in Cremona,

⁶⁶ Bertinelli and Mantovani 110-11. On the signoria of Francesco Sforza and Bianca Maria Visconti, see Gualazzini, Gli organi 124-29.

⁶⁷ Sforza founded an identical hospital in Milan. Both institutions were created, in part, by consolidating the many small existing hospitals and hospices. The creation of ospedali maggiori is perhaps the most well-known example of the rationalization of state-sponsored poor relief in the fifteenth century (see chapter four below).

⁶⁸ Bertinelli and Mantovani 112-13.

residing there only infrequently and burdening the citizens with high taxes and poor government.⁶⁹ Yet in spite of the relative neglect by the Sforza dukes during the second half of the fifteenth century, the economy in general prospered. The wealthiest merchant families in particular benefitted, and it is in this period that they erected many of the grand palazzi which still adorn the city today.⁷⁰

In studying the fate of Cremona's political assemblies and civic associations (professional and artisanal) during the Visconti-Sforza era, Gualazzini concludes that while Cremona maintained a special status within the Milanese duchy--retaining, for example, most of its traditional organs of government--nevertheless, over time the citizens failed "to administer themselves directly, even when willing to follow the general political dictates of [the Milanese]." The reasons for this loss of power cannot be attributed to just one cause. In part the loss resulted from the long-standing social divisions and rival factions which prevented the Cremonese from uniting behind a common leader for the common good. In part the loss can be attributed to the skill with which the Milanese overlords played on these divisions by adopting a policy of "divide and conquer."⁷¹

⁶⁹ Bertinelli and Mantovani 113.

⁷⁰ Bertinelli and Mantovani 113-14 and Gualazzini, Inventario civ-cv.

⁷¹ Gualazzini, Gli organi 139-43.

When Milanese rule came to an end in 1499, Cremona passed without bloodshed to the French crown, which in turn ceded it to Venice. After almost half a century of Sforza domination the Cremonese accepted Venetian rule with some relief. The city remained in Venetian hands until 1509 when the French once again regained it and incorporated it into the Duchy of Milan, then under French control.⁷²

Cremona's Economy in the 14th and 15th Centuries

Cremona benefitted from the economic prosperity which the entire Milanese duchy enjoyed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁷³ While the economies of the rest of the Italian peninsula suffered from what has been variously called depression, recession, or stagnation, the economy of Renaissance Lombardy grew at an unprecedented rate.⁷⁴ One of the effects of this economic prosperity can be seen in the demographic figures of the period. By 1463, Milan had an estimated population of nearly

⁷² Bertinelli and Mantovani 119-20.

⁷³ Bertinelli and Mantovani 91.

⁷⁴ On the debate over the so-called "Renaissance Depression", see Robert Lopez and Harry Miskimin, "The Economic Depression of the Renaissance," Economic History Review 2nd ser. 14 (1962): 408-26; Robert Lopez, Harry Miskimin, and Carlo Cipolla, "Economic Depression of the Renaissance: Rejoinder and Reply," Economic History Review 2nd ser. 16 (1964): 519-29.

90,000.⁷⁵ For Cremona, unfortunately, there are no reliable demographic figures for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁷⁶ Reliable estimates exist only for the late thirteenth and late sixteenth centuries. In 1283 it is probable that Cremona had a population of around 25,000 to 30,000.⁷⁷ In 1576, the number had grown to approximately 35,000, making Cremona second only to Milan in wealth and population among all Lombard cities.⁷⁸

The reasons for Lombardy's prosperity are many, but there is no doubt that the interest taken by Milanese rulers in the economy was of crucial importance. From about 1300 to 1500, the dukes of Milan spearheaded a reorganization of agriculture. The dukes ordered and supervised the construction of a vast network of canals and irrigation ditches which brought new lands into production, increased the yields in

⁷⁵ Carlo Cipolla, "I precedenti economici," Storia di Milano, vol. 8 (Milan: Treccani, 1957) 337.

⁷⁶ In two separate passages Gualazzini writes that Cremona had an estimated population of 80,000 from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries (Inventario cxii-iii, cxxv). The number seems to be excessively high, and furthermore I have been unable to find the author's source for this figure. It may be that Gualazzini was relying on Robolotti, who published the same figure (Cremona e sua provincia 69). However, Robolotti also failed to cite his sources. Moreover, as already mentioned, Robolotti is not always accurate.

⁷⁷ William Montorsi, La "Matricola Popolare" di Cremona del 1283 (Cremona: Biblioteca governativa e Libreria civica, 1961) xiii.

⁷⁸ Giorgio Politi, Aristocrazia e potere politico nella Cremona di Filippo II (Milan: SugarCo, 1976) 14, 22.

previously cultivated fields, and facilitated navigation.⁷⁹ Their economic intervention was not limited solely to agriculture and transportation. As Smith writes,

Ducal policies to develop industry . . . and their support for the new bourgeoisie as a countervailing power against the church and the feudal oligarchy also operated to stimulate the interaction between town and country which was the outstanding characteristic of development in Lombardy in the later Middle Ages⁸⁰

Throughout most of the Middle Ages the production of fustians constituted the leading industry in Cremona, though the manufacturing of cotton and linen threads always remained essential.⁸¹ Made of pure cotton or cotton with a linen warp, fustians were coarse and inexpensive cloths purchased by the lower classes for use in winter clothing.⁸² The linen was produced locally while the raw cotton came from Egypt.⁸³ While we lack figures on fustian production when the industry was at its height, two figures from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries give some sense of the

⁷⁹ Douglas Dowd, "The Economic Expansion of Lombardy, 1300-1500: A Study in Political Stimuli to Economic Change," The Journal of Economic History 21 (1961): 143-60.

⁸⁰ Smith, An Historical Geography 527-8, 524-26.

⁸¹ Almansi 15; Maureen Fennell Mazzoui, The Italian Cotton Industry in the Later Middle Ages, 1100-1600 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 114-15. Cremona produced very little woolen cloth; Bertinelli and Mantovani 92.

⁸² Mazzaoui 90-91.

⁸³ Almansi 278, s.v. pignolato.

volume which Cremona exported.⁸⁴ In 1421 the Venetians recorded that their imports alone of Cremonese fustians came to approximately 40,000 pieces. Over a century later, in 1565, the total production of pignolato (another term for fustian) was 62,000 pieces.⁸⁵ In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when inexpensive German cottons began to compete with those of Lombardy, local producers successfully adapted their merchandise. As Mazzoui writes, "greater emphasis was placed on the manufacture of quality [cotton] cloth, including a wide range of specialty fabrics in which Milan and Cremona still maintained a clear monopoly."⁸⁶

Apart from being one of the greatest cloth producers in Lombardy, medieval Cremona was one of the area's greatest trading cities. Its central location on the Po river made it an ideal landing port for commodities destined either for local consumption or for re-export. The import of Egyptian cotton and the export of cotton thread and cloths has already been noted. Other bulky goods included salt (from Venice), flax (or linen) and

⁸⁴ These numbers refer only to exports and therefore do not include the number of cloths sold locally.

⁸⁵ As Mazzoui observes in the paragraph following these 1421 and 1565 figures (p. 115), "These figures, which are high by medieval standards, are not surprising if we consider that the manufacturing process of cotton was simpler and less time-consuming than that of other textile fibers. Moreover, the technological innovations and advanced organization of the cotton industry which we have described in previous chapters, tended to maximize the efficiency of labor within a traditional handicraft system, thus permitting the mass production of low-cost, standardized goods." On pignolato, see Mazzaoui 90-91.

⁸⁶ Mazzaoui 145.

foodstuffs from the surrounding countryside. Imported luxury items consisted of raw silk, silk cloth, gold cloth, saffron, furs, and dyes.⁸⁷

Medieval Cremona was first and foremost a mercantile city. At the end of the twelfth century the city's merchants had formed a unique corporation (Universitas Mercatorum) to protect their economic interests and ensure that the policies of the Commune did them no harm.⁸⁸ Over time this association developed into an organization far more powerful than a mercantile guild, for it included not just merchants, but also "bankers, brokers, and representatives of the guilds."⁸⁹ Before turning from the economy to Cremona's two largest confraternities, it seems particularly fitting to recall that the first non-noble layman to be canonized by the medieval Church was a twelfth-century Cremonese merchant. St. Omobono became both the patron saint of his native city and the inspiration for a confraternity dedicated to emulating his piety and poor relief.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Bertinelli and Mantovani 90-93.

⁸⁸ Gualazzini, Inventario xxvii.

⁸⁹ Similar corporations existed in other northern cities, including Milan, Pavia, Piacenza, Brescia, and Verona. In Mazzaoui's words, these were "large regulatory bodies which through their own governing organisms, legislation and bureaucracy coordinated and directed all aspects of production, commerce and monetary exchange in the individual cities." Mazzaoui 121.

⁹⁰ See chapter 3.

Chapter 2

The Consorzio della Donna

Origin and Statutes

The later Middle Ages saw a great increase in the number of confraternities dedicated to the Virgin Mary. From the twelfth century, lay men and women established associations in Mary's name for the purpose of distributing charity and maintaining the many churches which bore her name.¹ The phenomenon was tied both to the flowering of Marian spirituality among religious and clergy in the High Middle Ages, and to the emerging independence and resourcefulness of the laity.

By the middle of the thirteenth century, the cult of Mary had become a major force in Western religious life, largely owing to the efforts of the Franciscans and Dominicans. Peter Martyr is said to have founded the earliest Dominican confraternities in northern and central Italy in the first quarter of the century.² He dedicated these to Mary because they were to

¹ Meersseman, II, 927.

² See Meersseman, II, 925 and 1039 for one of these confraternities in Cremona in 1274.

be deployed in the battle against heretics, particularly the Cathars who, according to Peter and his contemporaries, held that the human body was a source of evil.³ Thus, masses and prayers honoring Mary as the mother of God, and as the most blessed of all human creatures after Christ, reinforced the faith of the orthodox and publicly challenged the beliefs of the heterodox. The masses were also occasions for Peter and his fellow Dominicans to preach on the tenets of the Catholic faith and so to nourish the moral and spiritual hunger which had led so many to join the dissident groups. Peter must also have recognized that in praying, fasting, and performing good works together members would be binding themselves more closely to the Church and acting as role models for other Christians.

Franciscan confraternities dedicated to Mary appear to have developed shortly after the first Dominican ones. Evidence of the earliest of these are found in papal bulls of 1257 in which Alexander IV granted indulgences to the confraternities "in honorem b. Mariae virginis et b. Francisci confessoris" of Osimo, Recanati, and Reggio.⁴ The earliest extant statutes for a Franciscan Marian confraternity come from Brescia and were compiled sometime between 1265 and 1272.⁵ Published statutes also exist for

³ Meersseman, II, 927.

⁴ Meersseman, II, 974.

⁵ Paolo Guerrini, "Gli statuti di un'antica congregazione francescana di Brescia," Archivum Franciscanum Historicum (hereafter AFH) 1 (1908): 544-68. Brescia's confraternity was devoted to the Virgin's Assumption.

similar confraternities in Bologna (1317), Parma (1321 revision), and Reggio Emilia (1321 revision).⁶

To this list of north-Italian confraternities we can now add Cremona's Consortium of the Donna (Consortio della Donna).⁷ The Donna's 1347 Statutes explicitly state that it was one of the many Franciscan confraternities established to honor the Virgin Mary.⁸ According to these same Statutes, the Donna was founded in November 1334 (par. 16).⁹

⁶ C. Mesini, "La Compagnia di S. Maria delle Laudi e di San Francesco di Bologna," AFH 52 (1959): 361-89; B. Giordani, "Statuta Consortii B. Mariae Virginis et S. Francisci Parmae saec. XIV," AFH 16 (1923): 356-68; G. Saccani, "Statuto dugentesco della Società della B. Vergine e di S. Francesco presso i Frati Minori a Reggio Emilia," AFH 14 (1921): 130-37. As Giordani demonstrates, Parma's statutes served as the model for those of Reggio Emilia and not vice versa as Saccani maintains. Parma's statutes describe at some length the rituals of the confraternity and the theological underpinnings of the regulations; those of Reggio Emilia provide only the most essential information. Parma and Reggio Emilia celebrated the feast of the Virgin's Conception; Bologna, that of her Annunciation.

⁷ For a description of the archive of the Consortio della Donna, see Politi's introduction in Antichi luoghi pii I, xxxv-lii.

⁸ See Appendix 2 for an edition of the 1347 Statutes, especially paragraph 10.

⁹ The local historian Francesco Robolotti gives 1330 as the foundation date, but without naming his source. In any case, his works must be used with caution since they contain numerous inaccuracies, particularly in matters of chronology; Cremona e sua provincia 146. The author of a 1659 History of the confraternity also speculated that the Donna may have originated before 1334, but he confessed he had no extant proof of this; see CS 1, 1 "Eretione, ordini e privilegi dell'venerando Consortio della santissima et immacolata concettione della beata Vergine Maria addimandato della Donna," f. 1r. This 1659 manuscript of 24 folios formed the basis for a printed history of the Consortium published in Cremona in 1711 under the same title; see CS 287, 9. The Cremonese calendar year began on March 25, the feast of the Annunciation and the day of Christ's Incarnation.

The origin of the Donna's name has been the source of confusion for several centuries.¹⁰ According to the 1659 History of the confraternity, the name Consortium Domine (Consortium of the Lady) originated in 1352 when, moved by the piety of the Donna's members, the Cremonese nobleman Bertone Cavalcabò donated a holding outside the Po gate, together with a comfortable house called "della Donna." In this way, the History concluded, the Donna received its popular name. This explanation was included in the 1711 printed version of the 1659 History and so came to be accepted by later antiquarians and historians.¹¹ It went unquestioned, in fact, until 1979 when Giorgio Politi published his analytical inventory of the Donna's archives. Noting that it was highly unusual for institutions to take their name from their properties, Politi argues that the explanation was a seventeenth-century invention aimed at exalting one of the city's oldest and most important families. In fact, in Bertone Cavalcabo's 1352 donation the confraternity was already being called the Consortium Domine. The name Donna or Domina, as Politi points out, referred to none other than Mary, the Blessed Lady.¹²

From its foundation the Donna went by various other names besides Consortium Domine. Its 1347 Statutes call it Consortium et societas beate

¹⁰ This discussion is based on Politi, Antichi luoghi pii I, xxxvi-xxxvii.

¹¹ E.g. Grandi, Descrizione I, 347.

¹² Politi, Antichi luoghi pii I, xxxvi.

gloriosse [sic] virginis Marie. Other fourteenth-century documents refer to it as Consorzio detto comunemente Compagnia della beata vergine Maria and Compagnia in onore della beata vergine Maria. In the fifteenth century it was sometimes called Consorzio (o Università) di Santa Maria (o della Signora santa Maria).¹³

At the beginning, the Donna's members held their monthly meetings in the Conventual church of St. Francesco (pars. 25, 30).¹⁴ Whether they remained there for long is unclear. A separate seat appears in the documents only in the sixteenth century when the members erected a large building on the right-hand side of the piazza facing St. Francesco.¹⁵

The Donna's earliest extant statutes were compiled in April 1347 (par.1). At first sight, the confraternity's 1659 History suggests that statutes may have existed as early as 1334, since the manuscript opens with a transcription of a provision from "Statutis anni 1334" pertaining to

¹³ Politi, Antichi luoghi pii I, xxxviii.

¹⁴ The now suppressed church and convent of St. Francesco were built sometime after 1288 in the vicinia of St. Sepolcro on the site of a smaller Franciscan church. In 1784, both church and convent were given to the nearby Ospedal grande, which was expanding at the time. The hospital transformed the church into a men's ward; Grandi, I, 331-32 and Politi, Antichi luoghi pii I, x n. 6.

¹⁵ Something of its size can be seen in Antonio Campo's 1585 map of Cremona. The building, labelled Consortium B. Virginis, stood adjacent to the Ospedal grande and, in Campi's rendition, was approximately a quarter the size of the hospital. In the late seventeenth century the Consortium sold this building to the hospital and built a new edifice in front of St. Francesco. This remained the Donna's headquarters until the reforms of 1786. Campo, Cremona fedelissima città. Politi, Antichi luoghi pii I, xxxviii-xxxix.

the election of officers (massari). The accuracy, however, of the 1334 date must be questioned because this provision is worded exactly like the one found in paragraph 17 of the 1347 Statutes. The replication suggests that it was the 1347 Statutes which provided the source for the 1659 transcription.¹⁶ Certainly there is no other trace of these 1334 statutes, nor do the 1347 Statutes make reference to any earlier compilation. Nevertheless, we know from a note which opens the Donna's membership list that in 1342 the four massari then governing gave orders that alms be distributed on the last Sunday of every month.¹⁷ Therefore, in the thirteen years between the 1334 foundation and the 1347 Statutes some regulations, perhaps only in oral form, doubtlessly existed.

Statutes have long served as the foundation for the historical study of confraternities. They provide invaluable information on the administrative, devotional, and charitable activities of the members. Yet there are well-recognized problems in using these sources.¹⁸ They describe norms of conduct, not actual conduct; they tell us what was meant to happen, not what actually happened. They are rarely comprehensive texts. At times, as

¹⁶ This confusion over the dates may have occurred because the 1659 author misread the paragraph which immediately precedes the provision for the election of massari, and mistakenly thought that the Donna's statutes were written in 1334, whereas the paragraph simply states that this was the year of the Donna's foundation; see 1347 Statutes, par. 16.

¹⁷ CS 188, f. 7r.

¹⁸ Most of the problems outlined here are discussed by Angelozzi in his excellent introductory survey, see 49-50.

with the Donna's 1347 Statutes, they neglect to mention that women could and did become members. At other times, statutes, under the guise of having been written at one sitting, are merely collections of sometimes contradictory norms from different periods. Often they simply capture a moment in the life of the confraternity. Subsequent changes in orientation, organization, and practice are rarely reflected in them, save in those cases in which additions were made or the entire statutes were revised. Still, with all these cautions in mind, statutes can greatly illuminate a confraternity's early organization and character.

The form of confraternal statutes is normally bipartite: a short prologue is followed by the regulations proper. Less frequently a tripartite format is used when the author adds a conclusion.¹⁹ L. K. Little has argued that, in contrast to monastic or mendicant rules which stress the spiritual side of the religious life, confraternal statutes are more concerned with practical matters like the election of officers and the obligations of members.²⁰ "Biblical passages," he writes, "so abundant in the old religious rules, are almost wholly absent from these confraternity rules."²¹ In format and tone, Little argues, confraternal statutes more closely resemble

¹⁹ Giuseppina de Sandre Gasparini, Statuti di confraternite religiose di Padova nel medio evo (Padua: Istituto per la storia ecclesiastica padovana, 1974) xxv.

²⁰ Little, Liberty 68.

²¹ Little, Liberty 70.

communal and guild statutes than religious rules.²²

By this criterion, the Donna's 1347 Statutes are unusual: almost a third of the text (pars. 2-10) is devoted to a lengthy meditation on the Virgin Mary. Like sections of monastic and mendicant rules, this part of the prologue contains numerous quotations from the Bible, the Fathers, and later theologians. There are fourteen passages drawn from the Old and New Testaments, Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory the Great, pseudo-Anselm, and Bernard of Clairvaux. The regulations (pars. 17-33) are also concerned chiefly with spiritual matters. Most pertain to masses, sermons, prayers, fasting, confession, communion, readings of the rule, and morals. Only a handful refer to more worldly matters, such as elections, financial contributions, and mutual aid.

Most confraternal statutes are anonymous works.²³ They were often written at the request of bishops and usually compiled by priests, religious, and more rarely, laymen. The authors borrowed heavily from existing models: in some cases these were other confraternal statutes, in other cases they could be formularies like the one Master Boncompagno da Signa compiled around 1200 in Bologna.²⁴ This dependence on existing models suggests that lay members may have played no part in compiling the

²² Little, Liberty 69.

²³ De Sandre Gasparini, Statuti xxiii.

²⁴ Gasparini, Statuti xxvi; Little, Liberty 70. The critical edition of Boncompagno's manual is cited in Meersseman, I, 18 n. 1.

regulations which would govern a substantial part of their lives.

The Donna's 1347 Statutes make no mention of their author or redactor, but internal evidence points to the local Franciscans. The Statutes were written in the church of St. Francesco (par. 1), and in their form and content are clearly the product of someone with a clerical education. Beyond the citation of biblical, patristic, and other theological texts, which could have been copied from similar legislation elsewhere, the Statutes exhibit a level of elaboration and organization not commonly found in the statutes of other north-Italian Marian confraternities. Given the brevity of the document as a whole, Mary's virtues and powers are discussed at considerable length.²⁵ The organization of paragraphs 7-9 also shows the influence of someone familiar with the practice found among preachers and schoolmen of subdividing the argument into distinct parts. Finally, the Statutes were written for a confraternity dedicated to the feast of Mary's Conception at the critical moment when the Franciscans were becoming the feast's staunchest defenders.²⁶

In trying to uncover the nature of confraternal life in the Donna's early years, we are fortunate to be able to compare its Statutes to those of other Marian confraternities, in particular to those of Parma and Reggio Emilia,

²⁵ Compare the statutes of Brescia, Bologna, Parma, and Reggio Emilia cited above.

²⁶ For a fuller discussion of the feast, see the second part of this chapter.

which were also dedicated to the feast of Mary's Conception. For all their similarities, however, these mendicant confraternities present many dissimilarities as well. The major reason for this lies in the absence up until the end of the fifteenth century of a central authority to oversee the foundation of lay confraternities and to enforce uniformity. In general, medieval mendicant confraternities like the Donna were founded by individual friars who drafted or inspired statutes which were tailored to the needs and wishes both of their order and the local lay community.²⁷

In its administrative structure, the Donna was typical of other confraternities, all of whom modeled themselves on contemporary social, political, economic, and religious associations by drawing up regulations and membership lists, keeping financial records, and electing officers. In the early years the Donna's administrative organization was limited. The 1347 Statutes state that two or four administrators (massari or ministri) were to govern the Donna at the pleasure of the members (par. 17). These administrators, together with the members of the confraternity, were annually to hire a good and learned friar to preach and celebrate mass for them (par. 26). In 1334, when the Donna was first founded, there were two massari; by 1342, they had increased to four, and this number was maintained throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.²⁸ The

²⁷ Meersseman, II, 921, 945.

²⁸ CS 188, ff. 7r, 35r-36v.

Statutes do not specify how the massari were to be chosen or what their precise duties were. They are silent on whether they were accountable for income and expenditures, two issues which were important for the authors of other statutes, who insisted on regular financial reports. In other statutes as well, we find complex electoral procedures, penalties for those who refused to serve, and detailed descriptions of officers' duties.

The 1347 Statutes ignore the question of admission procedures, but we can get some idea of what may have been involved from other statutes. At Parma and Reggio Emilia, the two confraternities which bear the closest similarity to the Donna, the process was a simple one. Any man or woman who wished to join one of these confraternities approached the chief officer. He in turn informed the applicants of the regulations to be observed. If the applicants were agreeable, they were received into the confraternity and their names were inscribed in the official book.²⁹ At Brescia the process was much longer and more complicated.³⁰ There up to one month elapsed between the time the candidates requested admission and the time a decision was made to accept or reject them. During this period the minister made careful inquiries and held secret meetings, at which he listened to the comments and objections of the members. He then reported his findings to his twelve councillors. If they approved the candidates, he presented their

²⁹ Giordani 361; Saccani 134.

³⁰ Guerrini 549.

names to the other members for election, and candidates who received a majority of the votes were admitted. There was one final hurdle. Before formal admission, new members had to return all their ill-gotten gains, make full confession to a Franciscan priest in Brescia, and pay an entrance fee in money and wax.

The 1347 Statutes never mention women, but it is clear from the Donna's membership list that women did belong.³¹ Some were the mothers, or possibly the sisters, of the confratres; others were wives. Yet an equal number appear to have been members in their own right.³²

Nor do the Statutes speak of age requirements or the necessity of exceptional piety. Only conditions of ineligibility are mentioned. Paragraph 29 contains the usual condemnations found in most confraternal statutes against gambling, mistresses, and prostitutes. A later hand adds that the usurer and tax collector would also be excluded. Such injunctions appear so frequently in confraternal statutes that they may have been merely formulaic. What is interesting, however, is the moderate tone of the statutes in response to members who committed these transgressions. Paragraph 29 goes on to say that members who were guilty of these faults

³¹ CS 188, ff. 7r-19v, 21r-22r.

³² Judging by their names, they were not directly related to any male member, although some may have been married sisters of the male members.

would not be expelled, nor would they have their names removed from the Donna's membership list if they refrained from these sins in the future.

Other statutes show a similar leniency. At Brescia the accused was given three warnings before being expelled.³³ Bologna's statutes prohibited gambling and drinking in taverns, but they recognized that members might be forced to frequent disreputable places to conclude a business deal or to socialize with a friend who was visiting from outside the city.³⁴ Refusal or inability to attend confraternal functions is never mentioned as grounds for expulsion.

It is clear from extant statutes that sanctions against transgressors normally took the form of fines. At worst a member would be expelled. The 1347 Statutes do not address the subject, but in practice the Donna undoubtedly followed the example of Parma and other confraternities in holding that those who disobeyed the regulations would not incur "the guilt or penalty of mortal sin."³⁵

Similar moderation is apparent when looking at the regulations

³³ Guerrini 550.

³⁴ Mesini 369. See also Giordani (Parma) 361; Saccani (Reggio Emilia) 135; Guerrini (Brescia) 550.

³⁵ Giordani (Parma) 367: "Ultimo est sciendum quod cum institutiones prefacte edite sint pro animarum salute, ideo non intendimus quod si aliquis fecerit contra illas propterea obligetur ad culpam vel penam peccati mortalis." See also Saccani (Reggio Emilia) 137; Guerrini (Brescia) 551; Mesini (Bologna) 371; Meersseman, "Le leggi puramente penali nelle confraternite medievali," Ordo fraternitatis, III, 1290-1314; Gasparini, Statuti xxxiii-xxxv.

concerning confession, communion, and monetary contributions.³⁶

Paragraph 20 reminds members of the precepts of the Fourth Lateran Council that all Christians receive communion and confess their sins at least once a year at Easter.³⁷ And while the same regulation encourages them to receive the sacrament of penance at least twice a year, and to communicate as often as they and their confessors see fit, it does not oblige them to adhere to more than the minimum required by the Church. In this respect the Donna's Statutes take a position quite different from other confraternal statutes.³⁸ The author of Parma's statutes devotes a lengthy passage to the importance of frequent confession and communion, counselling both male and female members to confess their sins at least every two months and to communicate three times a year.³⁹ On the

³⁶ Fasting was also not excessively rigorous, judging from other confraternities. Brescia's statutes specify that members should abstain from eating meat, eggs, or cheese unless this was impossible for reasons of work or manifest necessity ("nisi propter laborem et evidentem necessitatem"); Guerrini 548. In Parma and Reggio Emilia those who could not fast were permitted to substitute prayers or alms; Giordani 363; Saccani 134.

³⁷ Lateran IV (1215), c. 21.

³⁸ Saccani (Reggio Emilia) 134; Guerrini (Brescia) 548, 564; Mesini (Bologna) 367.

³⁹ Giordani 361-62: "Quia vero septies cadit in die iustus et septies in die resurgit, sicut per Salamonem Spiritus Sanctus dicit, idcirco infra duos menses ad minus confiteantur tam viri quam mulieres etiam, ne forte ex nimia longitudine temporis suorum obliviscentes criminum confiteri, graves post mortem in purgatorio penas portent et ne in presenti gratia divina priventur, cum non merea[n]tur quamdiu permanserint in peccatis. . . . Ceterum sicut dicunt doctores frequens et digna receptio corporis Salvatoris non tantum delet peccata sed et gratias multas donat, ideo omnes de

question of these sacraments, then, there was considerable variation, though it is clear that the trend was towards increased participation.

The Donna's Statutes make no mention of entrance fees, but money and candles had to be contributed monthly and on feast days to purchase the necessary candles and torches for masses in honor of Mary and in memory of deceased brethren (pars. 18, 22, 23, 31). The author, however, did recognize that the monthly contribution of four denari might be too high for some members, and so he allowed those of more modest means to contribute less (par. 23).⁴⁰ The same flexibility is shown in the requirement that each member make a testamentary bequest to the confraternity, "secundum possibilitatem suam" (par. 24).⁴¹

The moderate tone of many of the regulations and the patience shown towards public sinners suggest that, rather than being exclusive clubs for a pious elite, confraternities served as pious associations for quite ordinary citizens. If such leniency seems surprising, it must be stressed that confraternities were voluntary organizations founded, as Parma's statutes indicate, not to add to the burden of guilt, but to save souls.⁴² Indeed,

societate communicent ter in anno. . . ."

⁴⁰ Cf. Mesini (Bologna) 368; Guerrini (Brescia) 553; Giordani (Parma) 363-64; Saccani (Reggio Emilia) 135.

⁴¹ Cf. Mesini (Bologna) 369; Guerrini (Brescia) 553; Giordani (Parma) 364; Saccani (Reggio Emilia) 136.

⁴² See above, n. 35.

Weissman's work strongly suggests that for most members participation in confraternal activities was highly irregular, and yet this does not appear to have affected their standing and seldom resulted in expulsions.⁴³

This, then, was the main attraction of the Donna and other confraternities: the promise that through the sincere observance of certain rituals members would receive divine assistance in this life and the next. Members sought protection from harm in the present life; they also hoped to attain eternal life, and to avoid the worst sufferings of Purgatory. The late medieval confraternity united in one institution all the spiritual means by which lay people could work toward their own salvation.⁴⁴ These involved almsgiving, fasting, praying, and the celebration of the Eucharist (par. 11). All were necessary, as the statutes of Parma explain, "because it is not enough to avoid evil unless one also does what is good."⁴⁵ All members were free to make the most of the spiritual opportunities the confraternity offered by multiplying their devotions or simply by performing the required minimum. For its part, the Church hierarchy provided the necessary priests, sacraments, and liturgical objects, and granted indulgences and other

⁴³ Ronald Weissman, Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence (New York: Academic Press, 1982), chapter 3.

⁴⁴ L. K. Little has repeatedly stressed the innovation which confraternities represented in allowing lay people to "plan out the course of their own salvation."

⁴⁵ Giordani 362: "Et cum a malo non sufficiat abstinere nisi fiat quod bonum est . . . ideo non tantum de elemosinis exhibendis, de quibus infra dicetur, sed etiam de faciendis ieiuniis et orationibus precipue ordinatur. . . ."

spiritual privileges as incentives to, and rewards for, participation in confraternal life (pars. 11-13).

Almsgiving was important. Statutes often paraphrased Ecclesiasticus 3:33, "As water extinguishes fire, so alms extinguish sin" (par. 32). Moreover, almsgiving was doubly efficacious because, in addition to being meritorious in itself, it morally obliged the recipient to pray for the donor's soul.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, in 1347 the Donna's charity was minimal; it consisted of one monthly distribution of bread to the sick and to elderly paupers (par. 32).

The Donna's Statutes enjoined members to pray privately every day, and they provided a simple cycle of prayers which all members, literate or not, could recite. These included seven Pater noster and Ave Maria, so that the Virgin might take pity on them; three additional Pater noster in honor of the Trinity; and finally, five Pater noster in reverence for Christ's five wounds (par. 21). By the time the Donna's Statutes were compiled, the mass was the most important devotional act which could be performed for the remission of sins and the repose of souls in Purgatory.⁴⁷ Masses were

⁴⁶ Marie-Thérèse Lorcin, "Les clauses religieuses dans les testaments du plat pays lyonnais aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles," Le moyen âge 78 (1972): 319.

⁴⁷ The literature on testamentary practices and the rise of votive masses is vast. But see Jacques Chiffolleau's important study and the bibliography contained therein, La comptabilité de l'au-delà. Les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du moyen âge (vers 1320 - vers 1480) (Rome: École française de Rome, 1980).

celebrated on the feasts of Mary's Conception, Nativity, Purification, and Annunciation (pars. 22, 31). Four additional masses for the dead were offered on the day following these Marian feasts (par. 33). Finally, on the last Sunday of every month the members left their parishes and gathered in St. Francesco to attend a special mass in honor of Mary and to invoke her mercy for all sinners. As a reminder to the members and probably to attract newcomers, the confraternity's banner was placed in the church on the preceding evening and the bells of St. Francesco were rung (pars. 18, 31).

These Sundays formed the core of the confraternity's collective life. To encourage attendance, members were promised indulgences of 4 years and 200 days. It was then that the Franciscans preached their special sermons and officers distributed bread to the poor. It was then that members donated candles and held their monthly meetings in the chapter house (pars. 18, 23, 30, 32). During these membership meetings, which only males attended, the brethren recited the Pater noster and the Ave Maria for recently deceased members (par. 25). They also received further instruction from the Franciscans and thrice annually heard the Statutes read out loud (pars. 25, 30).

The 1347 Statutes provide only the most rudimentary information on the confraternity's burial practices (pars. 25, 31, 33). More detailed descriptions of these rites are found in the statutes of Parma, Reggio Emilia, and Brescia. When a member of the Donna died, he or she was covered

with the confraternity's silk pall (cultra cindalli). Those who knew the deceased were obliged to attend the funeral.⁴⁸ On the last Sunday of the month following the death, either the priest in his sermon or the Donna's officers in the chapter house commended the deceased's soul to God. The priest and officers then reminded the members to say the Pater noster and Ave Maria ten times for the dead member's soul, and they instructed them to remind any absent members to do the same (par. 25).

At Parma, a white pall with a red cross covered the bier and a large torch was carried at the front of the funeral procession.⁴⁹ This type of burial had an important symbolic meaning. Relatives of the deceased were strongly urged to request the pall and the torch from the confraternity because it demonstrated publicly that the deceased had been a member of the confraternity, and that until death he or she had humbly served Mary, who now in her mercy would lead the soul to eternal salvation. The confraternities of Parma and Reggio Emilia granted their members the option of being buried on the grounds of the Franciscan church.⁵⁰ At Brescia provisions were made for the brethren to spend the night guarding and praying over the body of any member who could not be buried until the

⁴⁸ CS 188, f. 7r and 1347 Statutes, par. 25.

⁴⁹ Giordani 364.

⁵⁰ Giordani 364-65; Saccani 136.

following day.⁵¹

The Feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

My purpose up to now has been to offer a brief overview of the Donna's early organization and character in comparison with similar northern Italian confraternities. I now turn to the topic of the Donna's dedication to the feast of the Conception of Mary and to the central issue of how this feast was understood by the faithful in the early fourteenth-century. The issue arises because it is in this period that the theological understanding of the feast underwent its most profound transformation. Generally speaking, prior to 1300 the meaning of this feast was rather vague. The faithful honored Mary's conception out of love for her because it constituted the first moment of her existence; because her conception made Christ's saving work possible; and because she was believed to intercede on behalf of those who observed the feast. Outside of England, the question of the sinlessness of her conception was incidental. Then around 1300, in the course of doctrinal debates over the legitimacy of the feast, theologians arrived at their clearest exposition of the meaning of this feast, namely that it commemorated Mary's preservation from original sin at the moment of her conception. Was the Donna, therefore, founded to propagate the newly articulated belief in Mary's Immaculate Conception?

⁵¹ Guerrini 552.

The question of when theologians' findings become known by the majority of the faithful and how they are understood by them is complex, especially in the case of the Immaculate Conception. No explicit mention of Mary's sinless conception exists in Scripture or in Apostolic teaching. Belief in the Immaculate Conception emerged only gradually, through centuries of reflection and disputation, and was not proclaimed a dogma of faith until 1854. This gradual unfolding of the doctrine has meant that identifying the shift from a general reverence for Mary's conception to an explicit belief in the sinlessness of her conception has proven difficult. A second difficulty is that until Pius IX's dogmatic definition of 1854, "the term 'Immaculata Conceptio' is nowhere found in the liturgical books, except in the invitorium of the [seventeenth-century] Votive Office of the Conception."⁵² During the Middle Ages the feast was always referred to simply as the "Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary."⁵³ The mere observance of the feast, therefore, tells us little about what people actually believed.

⁵² Frederick G. Holweck, "Immaculate Conception," The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1913 ed., 677, 680. The words "Immacolata Concettione" are also found on the title page of the Donna's 1659 History, see CS 1, 1.

⁵³ Cornelius A. Bouman, "The Immaculate Conception in the Liturgy," 138; and René Laurentin, "The Role of the Papal Magisterium in the Development of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception," 278-81, both in The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception: History and Significance, ed. Edward Dennis O'Connor (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958). This collection of essays is the best English introduction to the dogma's history, liturgy, and theology.

Since 1854, numerous studies have been made of the doctrine's history, most of them based on theological and liturgical sources.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, if one wants to know how universal this belief was in the Middle Ages, these sources have serious limitations. Original theological treatises normally present ideas and doctrines which are not widely disseminated. Initially they are restricted to a small circle, composed mainly of intellectuals. Liturgical formulas are often the last to reflect such changes in belief, since the Church is reluctant to alter its traditionally accepted forms of worship.

The origins of the feast of Mary's conception can be traced to the East at the very end of the seventh century. On December 9, in a feast known as the Conception of St. Anne, the Byzantine Church commemorated the miraculous conception by the barren St. Anne and celebrated the creation of the Mother of God.⁵⁵ By the middle of the ninth century the feast had become widespread in the East. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, Greek monks in southern Italy introduced its celebration in their monasteries.⁵⁶ By the time the feast emerged in Western liturgical books in southern England during the first half of the eleventh century, its name

⁵⁴ See the extensive bibliography for the period 1830-1957 in O'Connor, ed., The Dogma.

⁵⁵ Francis Dvornik, "The Byzantine Church and the Immaculate Conception," The Dogma, ed. O'Connor, 90-91.

⁵⁶ Bouman 115, 123-24.

had been changed to "Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary." An analysis of the English liturgical formulas reveals that the meaning of the Western feast was very similar to that of its Eastern progenitor. The formulas make the connection between Mary's Conception and the Redemption, and they refer to the assistance which Mary gives to all believers.⁵⁷ No explicit reference was made yet to her sinless conception.

Following the Norman Conquest, the feast of Mary's Conception declined in popularity until it was revived in the early twelfth century, in large part through the efforts of St. Anselm's nephew, Anselm the Younger.⁵⁸ In 1129, the feast was officially recognized by a synod of English bishops, and thereafter spread throughout much of England.⁵⁹ At about the same time, the English monk Eadmer composed the first extant treatise in support of the feast. This work, entitled De Conceptione Beatae Virginis Mariae, also contains the earliest explicit reference to Mary's faultless conception.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Bouman 131-32.

⁵⁸ See 1347 Statutes, par. 22 n. 17.

⁵⁹ See E. Bishop, "On the Origins of the Feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary," Liturgica historica: Papers on the Liturgy and Religious Life of the Western Church (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962) 238-59.

⁶⁰ E. D. O'Connor, "Immaculate Conception," The New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967 ed., 380. The date of this work is uncertain, perhaps 1123 or 1139. The Latin text is in PL 159, 301-318; critical edition by H. Thurston and T. Slater, Eadmeri Cantuariensis Tractatus de Conceptione Sanctae Mariae (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1904).

Eadmer's treatise marks the beginning of a divergence in the intellectual and devotional objects of the feast. Whereas thinkers like Eadmer were beginning to concentrate on the precise nature of Mary's conception, a late twelfth-century sermon makes it clear that the popular understanding of the feast remained tied to traditional formulations of Marian piety.⁶¹ The sermon emphasizes that Mary's conception is celebrated because it was necessary "for the salvation of the human race," since "the conception and birth of the Mother is the origin of the Son."⁶² Moreover, it repeatedly stresses that Mary rewards those who celebrate her conception by interceding with Christ on their behalf.

From England the feast travelled to the Continent where it met with Bernard of Clairvaux's vehement opposition. In a letter to the canons of the Cathedral of Lyons, written around 1138 or 1139, Bernard argued first on legal and liturgical grounds that the feast was a novelty which was unknown

⁶¹ De conceptione beatae Mariae; Latin text in PL 159, 319-24; English translation in The Dogma, ed. O'Connor, 522-27. The sermon, now known to be spurious, was for centuries attributed to St. Anselm. It is undated, but the Helsin legend contained therein circulated in different versions, the earliest probably dating from the end of the twelfth century; see Bouman, p. 128 n. 44. One sentence in the sermon seems to allude to her sinless conception, but it may be only a general expression of her transcendent sanctity: "O quanta est dies illa, qua nostrae reparatricis anima digna creatur, et sanctificatur, et sanctissimo corpori unitur!" In any case, the sermon's emphasis lies elsewhere. See 1347 Statutes, par. 22 n. 17.

⁶² The Dogma, ed. O'Connor 526-27.

to the tradition of the Church.⁶³ The matter should have been put to the Holy See. Indeed, Bernard closed his letter by affirming that he would abide by Rome's decision, whatever it might be. Bernard's main objection, however, was a theological one. How could Mary's conception be holy when it was the result of carnal pleasure?⁶⁴ And if her conception was not holy, because sin was present, how could it be celebrated by the Church?⁶⁵ Bernard did not doubt that Mary had been sanctified in the womb before her birth, and therefore he wholeheartedly supported the celebration of her Nativity. But he disputed the argument that because Mary's Nativity was holy, the conception which preceded this birth must

⁶³ Bernard, *Epistola 174*, in *S. Bernardi Opera 7*, eds. J. Leclercq and H. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1974) 388-92. See no. 1, p. 388: "Unde miramur satis quid visum fuerit hoc tempore quibusdam vestrum voluisse mutare colorem optimum, novam inducendo celebritatem, quam ritus Ecclesiae nescit, non probat ratio, non commendat antiqua traditio. Numquid Patribus doctiores aut devotiores sumus?" See Bernard's letter summarized by X. Le Bachelet in "Immaculée Conception," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 1927 ed., 1012-14.

⁶⁴ Bernard, no. 7, p. 391: "Unde ergo conceptionis sanctitas? . . . An forte inter amplexus maritales sanctitas se ipsi conceptioni immiscuit, ut simul et sanctificata fuerit, et concepta? Ne hoc quidem admittit ratio. Quomodo namque aut sanctitas absque Spiritu sanctificante, aut Sancto Spiritui societas cum peccato fuit? Aut certe peccatum quomodo non fuit, ubi libido non defuit?"

⁶⁵ Bernard, no. 9, p. 392: "Quo pacto, inquam, aut sanctus asseretur conceptus, qui de Spiritu Sancto non est, ne dicam de peccato est, aut festus habebitur, qui minime sanctus est?"

also be holy.⁶⁶ Bernard's opposition did not halt the spread of the feast: by the mid-thirteenth century it was celebrated in many dioceses and monasteries throughout Europe.⁶⁷ However, his arguments were taken up by later theologians, including Bonaventure, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and Alexander of Hales.⁶⁸

The theological disputes of the thirteenth century transformed the object of the feast and as a result of this "faith seeking understanding" a standard interpretation of the Immaculate Conception finally emerged within the Catholic Church. The scholastics all agreed that Mary's life had been without sin and that, in the words of Aquinas, "under Christ, the Blessed Virgin was the purest of all."⁶⁹ Nevertheless, most commentators argued against a sinless conception because the idea seemed irreconcilable with Augustine's teaching on the universality of original sin and with the truth of

⁶⁶ Bernard, no. 5, p. 390: "Fuit procul dubio et Mater Domini ante sancta quam nata, nec fallitur omnino sancta Ecclesia sanctum reputans ipsum Nativitatis eius diem et omni anno cum exultatione universae terrae votiva celebritate suscipiens." No. 6, p. 391: "Nam quid consequentiae habet ut, quoniam sanctum praecessit natalem conceptus, propterea reputetur et ipse sanctus."

⁶⁷ Bouman 136.

⁶⁸ For a list of the thirteenth-century scholastics who supported St. Bernard's position, see Carlo Balic, "The Mediaeval Controversy over the Immaculate Conception up to the Death of Scotus," The Dogma, ed. O'Connor 189-90.

⁶⁹ Balic 188-89.

Christ's universal Redemption.⁷⁰ As the Savior of humanity, Christ came to earth to redeem everyone from original sin. If Mary was born without original sin, then she had no need of Christ. At issue was the theologians' fear that, in enhancing Mary, Christ would be diminished.⁷¹ In the words of Aquinas, "If the soul of the Blessed Virgin had never been stained with the contagion of original sin, this would have detracted from Christ's dignity as the savior of all men".⁷² Aquinas, along with most thirteenth-century theologians, shared St. Bernard's view of a sanctification after conception.⁷³

The definitive argument in support of the Immaculate Conception was presented by Duns Scotus, who succeeded in harmonizing the pious belief in Mary's sinless conception with the seemingly conflicting truths of original sin and Christ's saving work.⁷⁴ Scotus argued that a perfect Redeemer would have redeemed at least one human being in a perfect way by preserving his or her innocence from the stain of original sin. It was appropriate that this person was Mary: for, if she had not been free from original sin, then at some point, even for an instant, she would have been in

⁷⁰ Balic 191; O'Connor, "Introduction," The Dogma xii.

⁷¹ Balic 190.

⁷² Cited in O'Connor, "Immaculate Conception," 380.

⁷³ Balic 188.

⁷⁴ Balic 207.

the power of the Devil. But that the Mother of God could ever have been "at enmity with God" does not stand to reason. And because God does not will things which are contrary to reason, Scotus concluded that "[i]t seems probable to ascribe the more excellent prerogative to Mary, provided that the authority of the Church or of Scripture oppose no veto."⁷⁵

To those who feared that this exaltation of Mary detracted from Christ's glory, Scotus replied that the Immaculate Conception actually enhanced rather than diminished the Redeemer. Without original sin,

Mary would have had the greatest need of Christ as Redeemer; for by reason of her procreation, which followed the common mode, she would have contracted original sin had she not been kept from it by the grace of the Mediator, and just as others are in need of Christ for the remission, so Mary would have been in still greater need of a Mediator preventing her from contracting sin.⁷⁶

In reconciling the belief in the Immaculate Conception with the doctrine of Christ's universal Redemption, Scotus succeeded in removing the most important stumbling block to the belief's acceptance. Nevertheless, although his defense prevailed in the long run, in the short run it only fueled the debate between supporters and opponents of the belief. From the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Franciscans almost universally followed their doctor subtilis and became the great supporters of the

⁷⁵ Balic 208-10, 205.

⁷⁶ Balic 207.

belief.⁷⁷ The Dominicans, having committed themselves to following and defending Aquinas after the General Chapter of Metz (1313), cited his arguments against the Immaculate Conception and referred to December 8 as the feast of Mary's "Sanctification."⁷⁸

It is interesting to speculate on the reasons for the overwhelming support of the Franciscans for the feast and the belief in Mary's sinless conception. One cannot discount the importance of Franciscan spirituality, with its special emphasis on the incarnate Christ, in fostering this devotion to Christ's mother and her Immaculate Conception. But it must be noted that such support appears to have spread only after Scotus. As Balic notes, "not a single doctor of the Franciscan Order who wrote in this period--and from St. Anthony of Padua to Duns Scotus and William of Ware, there were more than forty--held that Our Lady was immune from original sin."⁷⁹ It would seem, then, that just as the Dominicans opposed the Immaculate Conception because they had committed themselves to defending the writings of St. Thomas, so too the Franciscans supported it because they held the works of Scotus in such high esteem.

⁷⁷ Bouman 138.

⁷⁸ Balic 212; Wenceslaus Sebastian, "The Controversy over the Immaculate Conception from after Scotus to the End of the Eighteenth Century," The Dogma, ed. O'Connor 214. After 1340 the Carmelite and Augustinian Orders switched camps and became staunch supporters of the immaculist position; Sebastian 220-21.

⁷⁹ Balic 196.

The papacy for its part took no official stand on the matter. By about 1330, the feast was celebrated by the Roman Curia, but only in "an unofficial and private" manner. It was not until the late fifteenth century, when Sixtus IV (1471-84) approved two offices for the feast, that the papacy officially recognized the feast. Even so, Sixtus stopped short of declaring it a universal feast.⁸⁰

The Franciscans championed the feast of Mary's Conception and the belief in her sinless conception in several ways. They wrote theological treatises in defense of the immaculist position, celebrated the feast of the Conception in their churches, and sponsored lay confraternities dedicated to the feast.

Since it has been argued that between 1300 and 1500 "the idea of the feast gradually comes to be understood everywhere according to the precise interpretations, in whatever sense, formulated by the theologians," it would be interesting to know whether the immaculist idea can be found in confraternities like those of Parma, Reggio Emilia, and Cremona.⁸¹ This question is not easily answered because we do not have the Franciscan sermons preached on that feast day. Yet the question is worth asking for the light it sheds on the larger issue of popular preaching and the spread of religious beliefs.

⁸⁰ Laurentin 275.

⁸¹ Bouman 138.

In the absence of sermons we have the 1347 Statutes, which, as mentioned, are unusual among confraternity statutes for their introductory section on Marian piety (pars. 2-10). It is in the prologue that we would expect to find references to the Immaculate Conception. The prologue, however, makes no mention either of Mary's Conception or of its immaculateness.⁸² The traditional explanation for the feast, namely that her conception was necessary for the salvation of the world, is likewise missing. The prologue instead emphasizes Mary's immense powers as the highest and most unfailing mediator between human beings and their Creator. She is the most powerful, the wisest, and the most merciful of all (par. 6-9). As Queen of Heaven, she protects her subjects from invisible enemies, like an earthly queen protects her subjects from visible enemies (par. 10). No one can approach Christ, the final judge, save through her (par. 7). The prologue would have confirmed the worst fears of the Immaculate Conception's critics, because the Virgin Mary is exalted to the point of rivalling Christ. It is through her, the text seems to say, that human beings will gain salvation.

Indeed, if the prologue's first message is that Mary is all-powerful, the second is that to obtain her favors Christians must properly honor her (pars. 2-6, 10-11). The word "honor" and its derivations appear eighteen times in

⁸² References to the feast of Mary's Conception are found only in pars. 22 and 33. The statutes of Parma and Reggio Emilia also do not contain explicit references to the Immaculate Conception.

the prologue, and this repetition must have left listeners with the impression that salvation could be achieved by showing proper deference to a superior, in other words, by being good clients.

The student of ritual will recognize that this insistence on honor and good clientage reflects medieval social relations.⁸³ What is more interesting here, however, is that the Franciscan author of the prologue appealed to this feudal and utilitarian argument when the central issue for the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century theologians of his Order was not the immensity of the Virgin's power but the nature of her conception and its connection to the Redemption.

That the prologue's seemingly utilitarian argument is not an isolated one is clear from reading Parma's statutes. Parma's author gives two reasons for making Mary's Conception the confraternity's special feast. The first is that Mary's other feasts are already widely celebrated. The second, which is echoed in paragraph 22 of the Donna's Statutes, is that many miracles have revealed that she favors this feast. Those who celebrate it, therefore, hope to make themselves more beloved to her and thereby acquire her favors.⁸⁴

⁸³ For this approach to ritual, see the works of Richard Trexler, especially Public Life in Renaissance Florence (New York: Academic Press, 1980) and Weissman, Ritual Brotherhood.

⁸⁴ Giordani 366: "Preterea hoc sit speciale festum huius societatis, quia alie festivitates sue specialiter a quibusdam et etiam generaliter ab omnibus celebrantur. Alia causa que movet nos ad hoc, est quia cum festum istud

One scholar has tentatively argued that this passage from Parma's statutes contains indirect allusions to the Immaculate Conception.⁸⁵ Celestino Piana cites the references to the miracles and to the support of ultramontanes. The miracles appear in the spurious Sermo or Epistola b. Anselmi de Conceptione b. Mariae, which, according to Piana, was frequently cited as an authority by the Immaculate Conception's supporters.⁸⁶ And the English, or ultramontani, were the first to clearly articulate the belief in Mary's sinless conception. While acknowledging that these references are vague, Piana believes that they obviously represent an immaculist opinion, in light of the fact that Parma's statutes were written in the early fourteenth century when "the position of the Franciscan school had already sufficiently delineated itself. . . ."⁸⁷

The Donna's Statutes call into question Piana's arguments. Virtually

sit festum beate Virgini graciosum, sicut per miracula plura est celitus nunciatum seu revellatum, et ideo ultramontani solempniter istud festum faciunt ut sint sibi amplius graciosi, idcirco similiter facimus quatenus per hoc eius gratiam acquiramus."

⁸⁵ Celestino Piana, O.F.M., "Un saggio dell'attività francescana nella difesa e propagazione del culto alla Concezione Immacolata," Virgo Immacolata. Acta congressus mariologici-mariani Romae anno 1954 celebrati, ed. C. Balic, vol. 7, fasc. 3 (Rome: Academia mariana internationalis, 1957) 31-32. In the same place Piana also cites a passage from the statutes of Reggio Emilia, but this is even more vague than the one from Parma.

⁸⁶ Piana, however, neglects to cite any of the authors who invoked the Sermo.

⁸⁷ Piana 32.

the same references to the miracles and to the Pseudo-Anselm can be found there.⁸⁸ This similarity strongly suggests that the authors of Parma's and Cremona's statutes may have taken their references not from the Pseudo-Anselm's Sermo, but from some other source, perhaps another set of confraternal statutes. Even if the authors did base themselves directly on the Sermo, I have argued above that this sermon defends the feast of Mary's Conception, but does not explicitly refer to its sinlessness, so that citing it is not proof of an immaculist opinion.

Certainly the timing of Parma's and Cremona's statutes is compelling. But contrary to Piana's assertion, it seems that Cremona's and Parma's statutes reveal a lag in the diffusion of Franciscan theological positions from the university to the public.⁸⁹ If the evidence from these two confraternal statutes is representative of Franciscan public preaching on the subject of Mary's conception, it would appear that a generation after Scotus some Franciscan preachers were not readily publicizing the immaculist position of their Order. Perhaps these local Franciscans were ignorant of recent theological developments, perhaps they were not sufficiently trained to defend the immaculist position, or perhaps they simply wished to avoid

⁸⁸ See par. 22 n. 17.

⁸⁹ The Donna's Statutes seem, rather, to support Piana's final argument that if his immaculist interpretation is incorrect, the tenor and timing of the statutes from Parma and Reggio Emilia certainly indicate that popular knowledge and acceptance of the Immaculate Conception was not long in coming; Piana 32.

unnecessary controversy.

Whatever the object of the feast of Mary's Conception in the early fourteenth century, the direct engagement of the laity in its celebration marked a new phase in the feast's history. The Donna and other confraternities offered an excellent means for propagating the cult. First, they provided a small core of believers who, having attended the monthly mass and listened to the words of the friars in their sermons and in the confraternity's meetings, could be counted on to disseminate what they had learned. Second, their processions were public displays designed, in part, to draw the attention of the general population. The Donna's Statutes mention these processions only briefly (par. 22), but they must have been very similar to those of Parma.⁹⁰ In that city, the confraternity sent messengers out on the eve of the feast of Mary's Conception to remind the members and the public of the next day's solemnities, and to encourage them to attend.⁹¹ On December 8 the bells of the Franciscan church were rung and the members of the confraternity processed two by two to the altar where they offered the celebrant the lit candles they carried in their hands. At the front of the procession went the confraternity's banner, followed by the

⁹⁰ Giordani 365-66.

⁹¹ The announcement was as follows: "Noverint universi quod cras fiet festum [erasure] Domine in loco Fratrum Minorum. Quicumque habet devotionem et spem in illa, vadat ad festum suum et habebit indulgentiam magnam et predicationem solempnem." Giordani 366.

chief officer and the friar who acted as the confraternity's chaplain. Next came the eight councillors, then the male members, and finally the female members.

One must stress the importance of such public rituals in disseminating the feast. For just as ritual allows participants to express their "respect and regard for some object of ultimate value"⁹², so too it signals, to the non-participating observer, that the object is worthy of honor, even if the reasons for this are unclear. Processions can be persuasive rituals.

But what impelled members to celebrate a feast which so many theologians found objectionable? To some members, honoring Mary's Conception when her Nativity was already a feast must have seemed natural: no persuasion was needed. Others probably gave little thought to what the Franciscans taught; they simply accepted it or paid it no heed. They were drawn to the Donna principally because it offered the material and spiritual security they required. Perhaps they were attracted by the promises of divine help recounted in the legends surrounding the feast. Regardless of their personal beliefs, they helped promote the feast by filling the church pews and the processions.

To others still, the feast's celebration may have seemed a familiar event, because the rituals of December 8 were virtually identical to those of

⁹² Erving Goffman on Durkheim's definition of ritual in Relations in Public: Microstudies in the Public Order (New York: Basic Books, 1971) 62.

the older Marian feasts of the Nativity, Purification, Annunciation, and Assumption. Members fasted on the eve of all five feasts, and offered candles or wax on the feasts of the Annunciation and the Conception (pars. 19, 22). Moreover, the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century liturgy for the Conception was almost the same as that of Mary's Nativity, except that the word Conceptio was substituted for the words Nativitas or Ortus whenever these occurred.⁹³ In short, the dissemination of the feast of Mary's Conception was partly facilitated because it was so similar to the other Marian feasts, and because it was tied to a well-established institution like the confraternity, which may have attracted members for reasons other than devotion to the feast.

⁹³ "We may see in this the influence of the widely known Helsin legend, according to which the Blessed Virgin herself had ordered that the feast of her Conception be celebrated in that way. The main reason, however, was doubtless the very idea of the new feast, and account must also be taken of the fact that for a long time the Church has been very slow in admitting anything new into the traditional antiphonaries." Bouman 140-41. See also 1347 Statutes, par. 22 n. 17.

Chapter 3

The Consorzio di S. Omobono

Omobono Tucengo

Very little is known about the first non-noble layman canonized by the Church, Omobono Tucengo, whose first name literally translates into "good man."¹ According to two surviving medieval Lives, Omobono was a tailor and a merchant, a husband and a father, and a member of Cremona's

¹ André Vauchez provides a list of the medieval sources on St. Omobono and summarizes the different emphases of their authors in "Le 'trafiquant céleste': Saint Homebon de Cremone (+ 1197), marchand et 'père des pauvres'," Horizons marins, itinéraires spirituels (Ve-XVIIIe siècles), vol. I, eds. Henri Dubois, Jean-Claude Hocquet and André Vauchez (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1987) 115-22. As he wrote this essay Vauchez was preparing an edition of the entire Omobono corpus (p. 121 n. 7). See also his discussion of Omobono in his La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du moyen âge, d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques (Rome: École Française, 1981) 234-43, 412-14; and in his chapters, "A Twelfth-Century Novelty: The Lay Saints of Urban Italy," and "Patronage of Saints and Civic Religion in the Italy of the Communes," both in his book The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Beliefs and Devotional Practices, ed., Daniel Bornstein, trans. Margery Schneider (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993) 50-72, 153-68 respectively.

popolo.² After his death in 1197 a Cremonese delegation, headed by Bishop Sicardo, travelled to Rome to advocate Omobono's cause. A mere fourteenth months later, on January 12, 1199, he was canonized by Innocent III.³ This was Innocent's first canonization and while it has been largely forgotten, it confirms once again the pope's earnest endeavors to promote orthodox piety among the laity.⁴ This same pope in 1201 approved the three orders of the Humiliati (including a Third Order for the laity) and in 1210 authorized St. Francis and his followers to preach.⁵ Like Francis, Omobono was the son of a well-to-do merchant, but unlike Francis, Omobono went into the family business and never renounced the secular life. Like the Third Order Humiliati, Omobono lived a very austere life as a layman although he appears to have left his profession as a tailor and

² The first is a Latin Life, entitled Labentibus annis, and probably dates from the close of the thirteenth century; Francesco Saverio Gatta, "Un antico codice reggiano su Omobono 'il santo popolare' di Cremona," Bollettino Storico Cremonese 12 (1942): 96-115. The second Life is written in the vernacular and dates from the fourteenth century; Giuseppe Bertoni, "Di una vita di S. Omobono del secolo XIV," Bollettino Storico Cremonese 8 (1938): 161-76. Both are cited in Vauchez, "Le 'trafiquant céleste'," 119-21.

³ Innocent III's canonization bull "Quia pietas" is edited in Die Register Innocenz' III, eds. O. Hageneder and A. Haidacher, vol. I (Graz-Cologne: H. Böhlaus Nachf, 1964) 761-64.

⁴ Vauchez, La sainteté 42.

⁵ Vauchez, "Le 'trafiquant céleste'," 115-16. On the Humiliati see Luigi Zanoni, Gli Umiliati nei loro rapporti con l'eresia, l'industria della lana ed i comuni nei secoli XII e XIII (1911; Rome: Multigrafica Editrice, 1970).

merchant.⁶ His wealth was expended on caring for the poor and burying the dead. He administered his goods to the poor so directly that to his wife's dismay he habitually invited beggars into their home. Innocent III's canonization bull describes an intensely devout and penitent man who, in addition to his concern for the poor, prayed daily in his parish church of St. Egidio and defended the faith (how exactly we are not told) against heretics.⁷

Disputed Origins of the Consortium of St. Omobono

In 1357 (1356 O.S.), Omobono's tomb was opened by Cremona's bishop, Ugolino Ardengherio, in the presence of many civic officials and members of the clergy, and Omobono's relics were transferred to the

⁶ Vauchez, *La sainteté* 238 n. 157. Bertoni 163: "ecusì posponendo hogne altra terrena occupatione irradiato dal divim [sic] splendore cominçò como infra vedremo contemplare el soperno amore."

⁷ Innocent III, "Quia pietas," 763: "Misse quoque officium et alias horas cum summa devotione frequentans, ita assiduis orationibus insistebat, ut in certis horis aut incessanter oraret aut horas ipsas aliquando preveniret -- nisi forte ipsum sollicitudo, quam super pace reformanda per civitatem tamquam pacificus vir gerebat, aut occasio helemosine pro pauperibus acquirende seu alia iusta causa in aliis operibus misericordie detineret --, qui nimirum ante crucem Dominicam ex assuetudine se prosternens, opus quodlibet faciendo, stando, sedendo, iacendo, ad orationem labia movere continue videbatur. Inter alia vero pietatis opera, que tam circa pauperes, quos secum in propria domo tenebat, curabat et pariter procurabat, quam circa alios indigentes, quibus viventibus humanitatis officium mortuis sepulture beneficium consuerat devotus impendere, diligentius exercebat, ipse a secularium hominum consortio segregatus, inter quos virebat quasi liliun inter spinas, hereticorum, quorum pernities partes illas infecit, austerus exstitit aspernator."

cathedral.⁸ That same year the Bishop published a letter in which he ordered the foundation of a confraternity in the name of the Virgin Mary and St. Omobono. The Bishop's original founding pastoral no longer exists, but we have two unedited eighteenth-century copies.⁹ This founding pastoral, dated February 19, 1357, would seem to offer incontrovertible proof that the Bishop founded the Consortium in that year. Nevertheless, from at least the early sixteenth century, the members of St. Omobono contended that their society had its origins in the late twelfth century, soon after Omobono's death.¹⁰ This early foundation date was defended by the Consortium's eighteenth-century archivists and accepted by later local historians.¹¹

In his letter, Ugolino clearly presented himself as the founder of a new confraternity:

[T]o the honor and glory of the divine name, the exaltation of the Catholic faith, the salvation of the faithful, and the perpetual memory and praise of

⁸ Hugolinus de Addegheriis (Ardengheri), ep. Cremonen. 1349-1361; Conrad Eubel, Hierarchia catholica medii aevi. Ab anno 1198 usque ad annum 1431 perducta, 2nd ed. (1913; Pavia, 1960) I, 214.

⁹ I have edited and translated the Bishop's letter in Appendixes 3 and 4. Politi describes the Consortium and its archive in Antichi luoghi pii xlvii-li.

¹⁰ Politi, Antichi luoghi pii I, xlvii.

¹¹ See the summary notes (carte riassuntive) to CS 291, 2; CS 291, 5; and CS 291, 7 cited below. See also Fulvio Cazzaniga, L'elemosina. Studio storico e sociale (Cremona, 1880) 42; and Fiorino Soldi, La carità di Cremona (Cremona: Pizzorni, 1959) 39; both works cited in Politi, Antichi luoghi pii I, xlvii n. 78.

this saint, we establish and order that under the name of the Virgin Mary, the glorious and chaste Mother of God and her saint Omobono there be and be established a praiseworthy consortium of the faithful to be directed under the rite and norm of this saint's life, which shall be called the Consortium of the Blessed Virgin and of Saint Omobono and which will endure in perpetuity.¹²

Ugolino's role in founding the Consortium is supported by two other sources. The first is Lodovico Cavitelli's annals of Cremona, published in 1588. Under the year 1356 O.S., Cavitelli recorded the following: "when the tomb in which St. Omobono's body rested was opened, with the bishop and the podestà in attendance there, along with other magistrates and many prelates and inhabitants, and when many miracles had occurred, the Society of the Consortium of Omobono was founded and his feast began to be celebrated."¹³ The second source is Bishop Giambattista Brivio of Cremona, who in 1614 paid a visit to Omobono's tomb in the cathedral's crypt. According to a written report of this visit, two sentences were carved on the marble sarcophagus:

¹² CS 292, 1, ff. 1v-2r; see Appendixes 3 and 4 for transcription and translation of the Bishop's letter.

¹³ "Vgolinus Ardigerius Episcopus Cremonae die septima Februari concessit in feudum Vberto secundo Marchioni Pallauicino, ac descendentibus suis ius exigendi portorium a uiatoribus traiciendis nauibus tenendis in flumine Padi ultra, & citra ipsum à bucca fluminis Abduae usque ad buccam torrentis Ardae agri Cremonensis, praeterquàm à ciuibus ipsius ciuitatis, & aperto tumulo, in quo erat corpus diui Homoboni, ibi assistantibus illic praesule, & praetore, & et alijs magistratibus, & multis praelatis, & incolis, & factis multis miraculis inchoata fuit Societas Consortij ipsius, & coepta celebrari eius solemnitas." Cavitelli, Annali f. 133r.

Beneath this altar is the tomb in which the body of the confessor St. Omobono was buried in the year 1197, and there are the ashes of his flesh. This sarcophagus of St. Omobono was solemnly opened in the presence of the lord Bishop and the podestà of Cremona in the year 1356. And when the bones were made public, many miracles were performed, and then a consortium was established.¹⁴

The first extant allusion to an earlier foundation appears in a papal bull of 1509, issued to the Consortium by Julius II.¹⁵ While Politi denies that this bull provides conclusive evidence for an early foundation, sixteenth- and eighteenth-century documents cited it as proof of such an origin.¹⁶ Explicit references to a twelfth-century foundation are found in the documents beginning in the second half of the sixteenth century when the question of the Consortium's origins became a matter of some import. As Colombo has argued, at issue was whether confraternities were lay institutions, subject to secular jurisdiction, or whether they were religious institutions and therefore

¹⁴ CS 291, 7, f. 1v: "Sub hoc altari est tumba ubi sepultum fuit corpus sancti Homoboni confessoris anno 1197 et ibi est cinis carnis suae. Haec est arca sancti Homoboni aperta solemniter praesente domino episcopo et potestate Cremonae anno 1356, ad cuius ossium publicationem multa facta sunt miracula et tunc factum est consortium."

¹⁵ I was unable to consult this papal bull, so I am relying on Politi's description of this document in Antichi luoghi pii I, CS 298, 2.1 (p. 184).

¹⁶ Politi, Antichi luoghi pii I, xlvii n. 79; CS 291, 5, Summary; and CS 291, 7, f. 1v.

under ecclesiastical jurisdiction.¹⁷ The controversy was occasioned by a decree of the Council of Trent which granted bishops the right of visiting and regulating lay confraternities.¹⁸ In the archdiocese of Milan, the canons of Trent were adhered to with unique zeal. Archbishop Carlo Borromeo, who had been a prominent figure at the Council's final sessions, was one of the Counter Reformation's ablest leaders. From 1566 until his death in 1584 he resided in Milan, closely directing the affairs of his see. He presided over numerous local synods and councils; rationalized the administration of his diocese; established schools for the religious instruction of clergy and laity; founded hospices for the sick, the poor, and the abandoned; and undertook methodical visitations of his archdiocese.¹⁹ Not content to leave pastoral visitations solely to the charge of local bishops, lest they overlook important irregularities or be powerless to enforce the Council's dictates, Borromeo repeatedly urged Pope Gregory XIII to appoint apostolic visitators, men with the zeal and the power to bring about much-needed reforms. Borromeo offered his own diocese as a starting point, and

¹⁷ Maria Colombo, "Società laica e progetto borromaico di riforma religiosa. Il caso di Cremona," diss., Università degli Studi di Venezia, 1987, 25.

¹⁸ Conc. Trid. sess. XXII c. 8 de ref., cited in Colombo, p. 25. For facing-page translation of this decree, see Norman Tanner, ed., Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, vol. 2 (London: Sheed & Ward; Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1990) 740.

¹⁹ R. Mols, "Borromeo, Charles, St.," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967 ed.

Gregory agreed to the experiment in 1575. The bishop of Famagosta was appointed visitator apostolic for Milan, and while he conducted his inquiry, Borromeo executed the same office for the dioceses of Cremona, Novara, Lodi, and Bergamo.²⁰ He arrived in Cremona on June 11, 1575 and remained there until his return to Milan on September 6.²¹

On June 27, Borromeo met with the administrators of the Consortium of St. Omobono, and one of his main questions concerned its origin.²² In their reply, the administrators emphasized the independent lay character of the Consorzio.²³ They explained that it had been founded by laymen

²⁰ André Deroo, Saint Charles Borromée. Cardinal réformateur, Docteur de la Pastorale (1538-1584) (Paris: Éditions Saint-Paul, 1963) 292-93.

²¹ Carlo Bascapé, Vita e opere di Carlo, arcivescovo di Milano, cardinale di S. Prassede (Milan: Veneranda Fabbrica del Duomo, 1965) 1009. On Borromeo's Cremonese visitation, see Deroo 295-96.

²² An account of the Cardinal's visit to the Consortium is preserved in a Latin report of six folios commissioned by the Consortium sometime in the last quarter of the sixteenth century (CS 291, 5). The report also contains a version of the written account of the Consortium's origins, governance, and activities, which the administrators submitted to Borromeo at his request. The report is a rough copy and very difficult to read. Entire sentences are cancelled and numerous marginal notes are added. Faded ink renders it illegible on microfilm. Fortunately many of its most important points are found in the Italian summary written by Gaetano Benini, sometime between 1783 and 1785. It is this summary which I have relied upon in what follows.

²³ On the debate over whether the Consortium was secular or ecclesiastical in nature and Borromeo's Cremona visitation, see Colombo 25 ff. I was able to consult Colombo's thesis only very briefly while in Cremona. The notes I made on her thesis do not include references to CS 291, 5 and CS 291, 7, but it is very probable that she discussed these documents and drew similar conclusions to the ones I present here.

shortly after St. Omobono's death without the authority of either the pope or the bishop.²⁴ In the written account of the Consortium's origin and governance which the administrators submitted to Borromeo, they omitted mention of Ugolino's pastoral letter altogether, going so far as to deny that any existing written document could establish with certainty the date of the Consortium's foundation. But they added that the foundation and early governance of the Consortium was known to the members according to tradition.²⁵ Tradition had it that shortly after Omobono's death many miracles took place, particularly to those who visited his tomb, and a confraternity was founded by those who had a special devotion to the saint. Several members of the Consortium built houses for poor pilgrims. The alms

²⁴ CS 291, 5, Summary: "[A]vendo il prelodato illustrissimo e reverendissimo Cardinale desiderato di sapere come fosse eretto il detto Consorzio, gli fui risposto, essere stato eretto da uomini secolari, senza autorità del sommo pontefice o dell'ordinario, dalla morte di S. Uomobuono in avanti, e già molto più di duecento anni erano scorsi; come anche essere stato eretto in memoria dello stesso santo; con beni de' secolari del detto Consorzio essere stato dotato. . . ."

²⁵ CS 291, 5, Summary: "Fù in seguito dal detto Cardinal Borromeo ingiunto alli . . . reggenti del detto Consorzio che gli dessero in iscritto una memoria distinta, spiegante come fosse eretto il detto Consorzio e come fosse governato. Ed essi, senza pregiudizio delle ragioni del detto Consorzio, gli diedero in iscritto tal informazione nella quale dissero che da scritture del detto Consorzio non risultava chiaramente della prima istituzione e fondazione del medesimo, nulladimeno da ordini sì vecchij come moderni si conosceva il fondamento e suo governo. . . ." On the use of ordini to mean "traditions, customs," see Niccolò Tommaseo and Bernardo Bellini, Dizionario della lingua italiana (Turin, 1865-79), s.v. ordine 10.

received by the confraternity were used to maintain these pilgrims, to provide dowries, and to assist prisoners.²⁶

The report goes on to state that when the saint's cult had declined and the flow of pilgrims had ceased, his relics were transferred to the cathedral, and the assistance previously destined for pilgrims was converted into alms for the city's poor.²⁷ Here too the sixteenth-century report makes no mention of Bishop Ugolino and his role in transferring the relics to the cathedral. It seems clear that in emphasizing their ancient lay origin and in concealing Ugolino's letter from Borromeo, the administrators of St. Omobono sought to preserve their independence by denying the archbishop any additional pretext for exercising his jurisdiction.

²⁶ CS 291, 5, ff. 1r-1v: "[E]ssendo S. Uomobuono cittadino cremonese ed avendo in vita fatto opere degne del su santo nome, e dopo morte ancora infiniti miracoli, massime sopra quelli che giornalmente visitavano la chiesa di S. Uomobono nella quale era sepolto il suo corpo ed in cui evvi anche l'arca della sua sepoltura, fù istituito un consorzio nel quale si ascrivevano quelle persone che particolarmente avevano divozione a detto Santo, e le elemosine che si facevano si dispensavano in alloggiar nelle case costruite da alcuni del detto Consorzio alcuni poveri pellegrini, maritar delle vergini, sovvenir a' carcerati. . . ."

²⁷ CS 291, 5, f. 1v: "Essendo cessato il concorso de' forastieri a visitar la detta chiesa ove era prima sepolto il corpo di S. Uomobuono, fù dopo portato il detto corpo sotto confessione della chiesa maggiore, e però non venendo più pellegrini per alloggiar nelle case di detto Consorzio fù commutata l'ospitalità de' pellegrini in far maggiori < sic > elemosina ed a molto maggior numero de' poveri."

That the omission of Ugolino's letter was not accidental is supported by a 1771 History of the Consortium.²⁸ The History's author contended that Ugolino's pastoral letter and the inscription on Omobono's tomb must have been known to the Consortium's administrators at the time of Borromeo's visit. The fact that their report makes no mention of either document, the author rather feebly argued, was proof that they were not considered to provide conclusive evidence for the Consortium's foundation.²⁹ The author went on to admit that both Ugolino's letter and the inscription on Omobono's tomb seemed to indicate a mid-fourteenth-century foundation, but wishing to remain faithful to the tradition of his Consortium, he discounted this late date and argued instead that the events

²⁸ CS 291, 7 contains a brief history of the Consortium in five folios entitled, "Breve notizia dell'antichissima laica erezione del venerando Consorzio di Sant' Omobuono, suo governo, e metodo di distribuire le rendite a poveri." It dates from 1771 and is signed by the Consortium's chancellor, Francesco Manusardi. The text, which exists in triplicate copies, is written in a clear and careful hand. This history is largely based on the late sixteenth-century report (CS 291, 5) cited above.

²⁹ CS 291, 7, f. 2r: "Imperocche la pastorale citata e l'atto della visita dell'arca ritrovati nell'archivio dovevano essere alla cognizione de regenti ed di chi massime aveva la custodia dell'archivio al tempo del visitatore apostolico S. Carlo, e pure nell'informazione data in iscritto al santo prelado non se ne vede fatta parola . . . quindi a ragione si può dire che quanto allora si ommise da altro non sia proceduto se non perche i sovramenzionati documenti non si avevano per fondata prova d'appoggiare sopra de medesimi l'erezione del Consorzio."

of 1357 merely conferred greater order and stability on an already existing Consortium.³⁰

Gaetano Benini, the author of the summary notes appended to the Consortium's documents, writing between 1783 and 1785, agreed with the conclusions of the 1771 History that Ugolino's letter merely formalized an existent if loose association, but he went a step further in asserting that Ugolino's pastoral itself provided evidence for an earlier foundation. His argument rested on two phrases in the pastoral letter, one which he mistranslated and another which is open to interpretation.³¹ Benini

³⁰ CS 291, 7, ff. 1v-2r: "Ma con tutto questo non si puo dire che soltanto nell'anno 1356 si formasse il Consorzio, ma che prendesse una maggiore fermezza ed ordine nel suo istituto, si acrescesse la divozione verso il Santo, e s'aumentassero per tale motivo le limosine e le rendite da distribuirsi a poveri dopo la ricognizione del santo corpo, di cui parte ne fù in dett'anno trasportata nella chiesa cattedrale. . . ."

³¹ CS 291, 2, Summary: "Se dunque il Vescovo Ugolino di Cremona in tal tempo dice nelle dette sue lettere che eranvi in allora profitentes le regole, ossia gli esempj del Santo, ed abitavano nella vicinanza della detta chiesa parrocchiale, se approva il detto Consorzio, ivi: eiusdem consortij universitatem et collegium approbatum quodque praesentibus etiam approbamus, ne viene dunque per conseguenza che in allora soltanto non lo eriggeva e solo da tal epoca non traeva il suo principio, e che detto Consorzio, o, per meglio dire, un unione de' fedeli che seguivano gli esempj ed imitazione del Santo, eravi già da gran tempo prima e verosimilmente subito dopo la morte del Santo come da memorie. Onde devesi piuttosto dire che con le suddette lettere vescovili abbia cominciato detta unione ad assumere il nome di consorzio e che l'oggetto delle medesime non sia stato altro che un'esortazione od insinuazione del Vescovo ad esercitar opere di pietà e crescere maggiormente li divoti del Santo a beneficio de' poveri, locche ricavasi anche dalla parola esortationes. E siccome in tal tempo, cioè prima del detto anno 1356, non eravi una formale unione ossia università de' consorziali, così Monsignor Vescovo ordinò che appunto tal formale università o consorzio si facesse, ivi: sit et fiat laudabile consortium

translated the first phrase as follows: "Bishop Ugolino in that time says in his aforesaid letter that there were at that time individuals professing the rules or the examples of the saint, and they lived in the vicinity of the said [saint's] parish church. . . ." In fact the Latin states that the professing individuals were obliged to pray every morning in their respective parish churches.³²

The second phrase cited by Benini does appear to support his argument that Bishop Ugolino formalized a pre-existing society, because Ugolino writes of "approving" an already "approved" colegium.³³ Part of the difficulty here is knowing precisely what was meant by colegium. The word appears only once in Ugolino's letter; it is absent from other documents relating to the administration of the Consortium. However, the medieval usage of words like collegium, societas, universitas was very fluid.

fidelium." Underlining in original.

³² CS 291, 2, ff. 2r-2v: "Postmodum simplici et deuota promissione firment et seruare teneantur, sicut veri cristiani et dicti sancti Homoboni immitatores, qui in propria parochiali ecclesia missae officium et alias horas canonicas frequentabat, quod omni die mane, iusto impedimento cessante, adibunt ecclesiam parochialem in cuius vicinia iidem profitentes habitant vel postea habitabunt, et in ibi, orando pro uiuis et defunctis, quinquies orationem dominicam, scilicet Pater noster, sigillatim addita salutatione angeli Gabrielis, scilicet Aue Maria, cordialiter decantabunt."

³³ CS 291, 2, f. 3v: "Caeterum uolumus et ordinamus quod per eiusdem consortij vniuersitatem et colegium approbatum, quodque praesentibus etiam approbamus, assumantur perpetui vel temporales, duo vel tres conseruatores et totidem, si uisum fuerit, massarij ad conseruationem consortij et bonorum eius. . . ."

In many cases the words were used interchangeably.³⁴ Yet in this case Bishop Ugolino does appear to distinguish between the consortium and the colegium.

Benini's contention that approbatum is proof of a much earlier foundation remains unconvincing. Not only is there no corroborating evidence for this, but it also contradicts his other argument that until Ugolino's formal authorization the Consortium was an informal association of lay people, one which had received no official approval. A more plausible explanation for the use of approbatum emerges if we consider that Ugolino's letter was written after the translation of the saint's relics.³⁵ It seems probable that prior to the translation of the relics, Ugolino had already assembled a small group of lay people who would be present when the relics were moved and Ugolino publicly announced the formation of a new confraternity. This group may have formed the core of the confraternity, what the Bishop called the colegium. His letter, then, was the written authorization of this previously "approved" colegium, as well as the formal invitation to the public to join the consortium. It would make sense to form

³⁴ Pierre Michaud-Quantin, Universitas. Expressions du mouvement communautaire dans le moyen-âge latin (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1970) 74.

³⁵ In his letter, Ugolino mentions that the relics were beneath the cathedral ("in ecclesia nostra cathedrali et Maiori Sanctae Mariae Cremonensis, ad altare ipsius patroni in confessionibus dictae ecclesiae situm"); see CS 291, 2, f. 3r.

the new confraternity on the day of the translation, when the attention of the entire city would be directed toward the Bishop and the city's patron saint. It would also make sense for members of the new confraternity to take part in the ceremonies, thereby visually and ritually affirming the connection between the saint and his new emulators.

Organization and administration

Information about the Consortium's early organization and administration is sketchy because the confraternity appears not to have possessed any written statutes.³⁶ Ugolino's founding pastoral is the main source, together with what can be gleaned from other surviving documents. Ugolino addressed his letter to both men and women, and we know from membership lists that women did join the Consortium.³⁷ Admission procedures, according to Ugolino's letter, consisted of oaths promising to uphold orthodoxy, despise heterodoxy, and observe the Consortium's regulations.³⁸

Bishop Ugolino's letter contains only general and somewhat vague information on the Consortium's administrative officers, some of it

³⁶ Neither the late sixteenth-century report prepared for Archbishop Borromeo (CS 291, 5), nor the 1771 History (CS 291, 7) mention statutes.

³⁷ The Bishop addressed his letter "to each and every person of either sex living in our city and diocese;" see CS 291, 2, f. 1r. The earliest surviving membership rolls, dating from 1474, list a few female members.

³⁸ CS 291, 2, f. 2v.

seemingly at odds with actual practices, as found in subsequent documents.³⁹ According to Ugolino's letter, there were two kinds of officers: conservatores and, if necessary, massari, both elected by the membership and the elusive colegium. The conservatores were two or three in number, and their office could either be temporary or perpetual. They were responsible for the financial decisions, for reforming the Consortium, and for settling disputes among members. The massari, similarly two or three in number, were charged with collecting membership dues and gifts and with dispensing them according to the instructions of the conservatores. It may be that they collaborated with the conservatores in any reorganizations of the Consortium and in the settlement of conflicts, but here the text is not altogether clear.⁴⁰ The office of the conservatores is nowhere to be found outside Ugolino's letter; only the massari are mentioned in the Consortium's other documents. This discrepancy between Ugolino's letter and what can be discerned about the earliest administrative practices leads once again to the conclusion that Ugolino did not merely sanction an already existing association but rather that he established a new one. If he had simply authorized an existing body, it is unlikely that his

³⁹ On this matter, the Consortium's later histories can shed little light. The 1771 History professed complete ignorance as to the identity of the Consortium's earliest administrators and the method of their election; see CS 291, 7, f. 2v.

⁴⁰ CS 291, 2, ff. 3r-4r.

description of its administration would have been so vague; nor is it likely that his description would have been so different from what the earliest documents reveal.

Reasons for the Creation of the Consortium

St. Omobono's foundation date in 1357, so soon after the demise of the Commune in 1334 at the hands of the Visconti of Milan, is perhaps one clue to the Consortium's origins. In an essay entitled, "Patronage of Saints and Civic Religion in the Italy of the Communes," Vauchez makes a convincing argument for the spread of "civic cults of saints" in northern Italy during the fourteenth century. Rather than being "a sign of the vitality of communal government," Vauchez is correct, I believe, when he writes that

this proliferation of urban devotions was a symptom of the crisis, or even the decadence, of these [communal] institutions: cities tended to exult all the more in their own particularism in this sphere as their real power and their ability to resist lay or clerical pressure groups grew weaker. Like noble families that jealously treasured their emblems and coats of arms in periods when their political decline was well underway, Italian communes of moderate size in the fourteenth century seemed to vaunt the particularity of their own cults of saints just at the time when their spheres of influence and their margins of autonomy had begun to shrink.⁴¹

⁴¹ Vauchez, The Laity 168.

In addition to becoming absorbed by the Milanese, the Cremonese also saw their municipal statutes revised in 1339 and 1356 by order of the Visconti. Perhaps, therefore, the creation of the Consortium of St. Omobono in 1357 not only helped to restore some of the wounded civic pride of the Cremonese by giving them a renewed sense of their own unique identity, but it may also have given those who administered the Consortium a sense of purpose and independence in relation to the Milanese authorities.

Other reasons for the creation of St. Omobono are given by Bishop Ugolino. In his founding letter, the Bishop stated that he was establishing the Consortium of St. Omobono "to the honor and glory of the divine name, the exaltation of the Catholic faith, the salvation of the faithful, and the perpetual memory and praise of this saint. . . ." ⁴² The Bishop's desire to venerate properly Cremona's most illustrious saint was not limited to establishing a confraternity in the latter's name. It extended beyond the Consortium to include all the churches throughout the diocese where Omobono's death was to be commemorated with a double Office. This

⁴² CS 291, 2, f. 1v. According to Benini, Ugolino established the Consortium at the urging of the city; see CS 291, 2, Summary: "Ugolino, vescovo di Cremona . . . essendo eccitato eziandio dalla stessa città, stabilisce ed ordina che . . . si faccia un lodevole consorzio. . . ." This reading is repeated by Politi, *Antichi luoghi pii* I, xlvii. Given the convoluted syntax, it is not difficult to see how this passage was misread, but the correct reading is the following: "[L]ed by pious deliberations and stirred by worthy efforts, we determined that Omobono should be elevated in this city by means of expenditures of greater honor. . . ." CS 291, 2, f. 1v: "[D]isposuimus, pijs ducti consilij dignisque studijs excitati, per ciuitatem eandem honorificentiae potioris impendijs attollendum. . . ."

revelation honored the saint for his exceptional defense and protection of the city. Ugolino likened this revelation by the Cremonese church to the actions of God, who bestows greater rewards on those who have greater merit.⁴³ It is interesting here to compare the thrust of this passage with the corresponding one in the Donna's Statutes, where the members are enjoined to honor the Virgin Mary lest she feel herself forgotten and consequently refuse her intercession.

Ugolino's second purpose in establishing the Consortium was to strengthen the faith through a sincere adherence to certain practices so that, in becoming "true Christians," the members might attain "eternal joy." In many respects the Consortium of St. Omobono resembled most lay confraternities of the period. Like the Donna's members, for instance, those of St. Omobono gathered for mass on the third Sunday of the month at their patron's altar in the cathedral. They paid two denari monthly in membership dues; buried and prayed for deceased members; observed their saint's feast with fasting and a special mass; and committed themselves to confessing their sins and receiving communion once a year.⁴⁴ Somewhat atypically, members were obliged to make weekly donations to their parish church, an obligation which becomes clear in light of the fact that the Consortium was

⁴³ CS 291, 2, ff. 1r-1v.

⁴⁴ CS 291, 2, ff. 3r-3v.

founded by the bishop, who had a responsibility to strengthen, not weaken, the parishes in his diocese.⁴⁵

What distinguished the Consortium most, however, was Ugolino's vision of a confraternity dedicated to the service of outsiders and to imitating the life and morals of a layman. Just as St. Omobono had materially and spiritually helped a wide community, so too the members of the Consortium directed their activities to works of mercy and intercessory prayer on behalf not just of their fellow members, but also of their fellow citizens. Moreover, like their saint, the members helped in a direct and personal manner. Members promised to go to their respective parish churches early every morning to pray for the living and the dead.⁴⁶ At the sound of bells ringing in the city for the anniversary of someone's death, each paused to pray for the known or unknown soul.⁴⁷ And every week members "deliver[ed] one substantial donation . . . depending on their means, to one pauper for the glory of God and of this saint."⁴⁸ At the close of his letter, Bishop Ugolino briefly outlined the spirituality behind his exhortations and regulations, namely the manner in which the soul would be led to salvation. He wrote not just of performing pious works, but of

⁴⁵ CS 291, 2, f. 2v.

⁴⁶ CS 291, 2, ff. 2r-2v.

⁴⁷ CS 291, 2, ff. 3r-3v.

⁴⁸ CS 291, 2, f. 2v.

committing them to memory, that is, internalizing them, so that they could uncover "some spark of God's spontaneous love" in the believer's heart. Their continued observance would "feed that spark" until it grew into a "flame" which "consume[d] the wood of all desires."⁴⁹

Ugolino's third reason for creating the Consortium is as interesting as it is perplexing. He envisioned a confraternity in which all members took an oath that they, like St. Omobono, would be "zealous for the Christian religion and stern despisers of the heretics' perniciousness."⁵⁰ But what did Ugolino mean by "zealous" and "despisers"? Was he thinking simply of fostering and strengthening the orthodoxy of the faithful so that they might resist the lure of heterodoxy? Or did he wish that members become actively engaged in the struggle against heterodoxy? If so, who were the heretics in the mid-fourteenth century who so threatened the Cremonese church that its bishop founded a lay confraternity to resist them? The reference to heretics in Ugolino's letter is doubly perplexing because the presence of heresy in northern Italy had diminished significantly by the mid-fourteenth century.

Anti-heretical confraternities

As I noted in chapter two, during the first half of the thirteenth century the Dominican Peter Martyr created Marian confraternities to foster

⁴⁹ CS 291, 2, f. 4v.

⁵⁰ CS 291, 2, f. 2r.

orthodoxy and halt the spread of Catharism. In addition to these Marian associations, Peter established a second type of anti-heretical confraternity--one which directly assisted the Inquisition in its work.⁵¹ Milan's Society of the Faith, founded by Peter in 1232, exercised its influence on the legislative assembly, seeking to ensure the enforcement of the commune's anti-heretical laws. The confraternity's second purpose was to provide the Inquisition with a constant supply of well-trained lay officials. In the 1230s, Milan's Inquisition employed twelve lay officials, who were appointed to their office every six months.

A similar confraternity is known to have existed in Florence in 1244, when Peter Martyr visited the city, although it is not clear whether Peter was the actual founder.⁵² After Peter's death in 1252, his work was continued by others. In 1266 and 1267 the Guelph forces who had defeated the Ghibelline signore, Oberto Pallavicini, immediately created an anti-heretical confraternity in two of his most important subject cities--Piacenza and Cremona.⁵³ The lay members of the Consortium of Faith and Peace in Cremona vowed to pursue and imprison heretics and their supporters. In addition to assisting the Inquisition, they further committed

⁵¹ For what follows, see Meersseman, Ordo fraternitatis II, 760-64 and N. J. Housley, "Politics and Heresy in Italy: Anti-Heretical Crusades, Orders and Confraternities, 1200-1500," Journal of Ecclesiastical History 33 (1982): 196.

⁵² Meersseman, Ordo Fraternitatis II, 766-70; Housley 198-99.

⁵³ Housley 204; Little, Liberty 53.

themselves to keeping peace in the city and ensuring that Cremona remained loyal to the papacy and the Guelf party.

Whereas Meersseman has stressed the religious side of these confraternities, N. J. Housley, though not denying their religious role, has emphasized their political character. In his view, confraternities like those of Milan, Florence, Piacenza, and Cremona were "political pressure-groups." They enabled the work of the Inquisition to proceed unimpeded by Ghibelline opposition, they protected the property and rights of the Church, and they consolidated the gains made by the Guelf forces. He notes, however, that after about 1300, with a few exceptions, the political importance of these confraternities declined. Indeed, both Meersseman and Housley agree that after 1300 the great need and enthusiasm for this type of confraternity had passed. They both observe a renewed interest in the anti-heretical societies only in the mid-fifteenth century.⁵⁴ This lack of new foundations, Meersseman seems to suggest, can be attributed to the "state of lethargy" into which the Lombard Inquisition fell after John XXII's reign (1316-1334).⁵⁵

If indeed the Consortium of St. Omobono was a descendant of the thirteenth-century Societies of Faith, then it is all the more interesting because its mid-fourteenth century foundation appears to have been an

⁵⁴ Housley 207; Meersseman, Ordo fraternitatis II, 775.

⁵⁵ Meersseman, Ordo fraternitatis II, 775.

exception. It is noteworthy, too, that St. Omobono was not founded by the Dominicans, but by the city's bishop--a fact which lends some support to Meersseman's contention that the Dominican inquisitors in Lombardy were no longer the energetic activists they had been in the preceding century.

It must, however, be admitted that the very terse and vague description of the members' anti-heretical activities found in Ugolino's letter makes one hesitate before asserting that the Consortium of St. Omobono was an anti-heretical confraternity in the tradition of the thirteenth-century Societies of the Faith.⁵⁶ What we do know is that Cremona's medieval Inquisition was directed by the Dominicans of the province of Lombardy.⁵⁷ Moreover, we know that the Consortium was closely tied to the city's Dominican church, for the lay members held their monthly meetings there.⁵⁸ Therefore, while not certain, it seems probable that some kind of

⁵⁶ CS 291, 2, f. 2r: "[They] shall promise and firmly hold that they, like this saint, are zealous for the Christian religion and stern despisers of the heretics' perniciousness with all their power."

⁵⁷ Luigi Fumi, "L'Inquisizione Romana e lo Stato di Milano. Saggio di ricerche nell'Archivio di Stato," Archivio storico lombardo 4th ser. 13 (1910): 17-18. During the Middle Ages, the Lombard Inquisition was in the hands of the Dominicans of Sant'Eustorgio in Milan.

⁵⁸ Poli, Antichi luoghi pii I, xlvii-xlviii. The church of S. Domenico was built sometime after 1303 in the center of the city, not far from the cathedral. It was demolished around 1868. See Antonio Campo's map of Cremona in Cremona fedelissima città; Stefano Forte, "Le Province domenicane in Italia nel 1650. Conventi e religiosi. V: La 'Provincia utriusque Lombardiae'," Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum 41 (1971): 363; De Vecchi 75.

relationship must have existed between the lay members of St. Omobono and the Dominican inquisitors.⁵⁹

Cremonese heretics

The complete destruction of Cremona's inquisitorial records at the end of the eighteenth century frustrates any clear understanding of the fourteenth-century heresies which might have compelled Bishop Ugolino to establish the confraternity of St. Omobono.⁶⁰ At best we can briefly survey the heresies which are known, from other sources, to have affected the diocese at this time.⁶¹

⁵⁹ What, if any, political motives may have contributed to the Consortium's foundation cannot be determined at this time.

⁶⁰ Notwithstanding the absence of surviving records, historians agree that from the twelfth century to the mid-sixteenth century Cremona was a stronghold of heresy. Indeed, although it is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is interesting to note that of all the cities in the state of Milan, Cremona in the mid-sixteenth century was the most "infected" by Lutheranism; Romano Canosa, Storia dell'Inquisizione in Italia dalla metà del Cinquecento alla fine del Settecento, vol. 4 (Rome: Sapere 2000, 1988) 20; on the destruction of Cremona's inquisitorial archive, see Canosa 7.

⁶¹ On heresies in fourteenth-century Italy, see Gioacchino Volpe's old, but still useful, collection of essays, Movimenti religiosi e sette ereticali nella società medievale italiana, secoli XI-XIV (1922; Florence: Sansoni, 1961); M. D. Lambert, Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from Bogomil to Hus (London: Edward Arnold, 1977) chapter 12; and the comprehensive bibliography in Raniero Orioli, Venit perfidus heresiarcha. Il movimento apostolico-dolciniano dal 1260 al 1307 (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, 1988).

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Northern Italy in general, and Lombardy in particular, had been active centers of Catharism.⁶² Cities like Milan, Piacenza, Brescia, Bergamo, and Cremona contained the greatest concentration of heretics outside of Languedoc.⁶³ In the middle of the thirteenth century the Cathar bishop of Toulouse and many of his perfecti were residing in Cremona, undisturbed by the municipal authorities.⁶⁴ The last of the large inquisitorial trials of Cathars, held at Bologna between 1291 and 1310, revealed the presence of several Cathars from Cremona or its environs. In 1291 the inquisitor interrogated a certain Onebene, who testified that he had known several Cathars, by the names of Benevenutus de Cremona, Guerisius de Cremona, Moxius de Gaçolo Tinaço de Cremona, and Albertinus de Gaçoli Tinaço de Cremona.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, by the early fourteenth century, but for a few scattered survivors, Catharism had been

⁶² On Italian Catharism, see Raoul Manselli, L'eresia del male (Naples: Morano, 1963).

⁶³ Lambert 82.

⁶⁴ Guiraud 254.

⁶⁵ Lorenzo Paolini and Raniero Orioli, eds., Acta S. Officii Bononie ab anno 1291 usque ad annum 1310, vol. 1 (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, 1982) 2, 4, 6, 9.

virtually eliminated.⁶⁶ The last recorded Cathar bishop in the West was arrested in Tuscany in 1321.⁶⁷

If the Cathars had all but disappeared, the Waldensians continued to occupy the Inquisition throughout most of the century. The stronghold of the Italian Waldensians was Lombardy and Milan in particular. Other major centers included Legnano, Pavia, Piacenza, Bergamo, Brescia, Cremona, and Verona.⁶⁸ Within Valdes' own lifetime the majority of Italian Waldensians, known as Poor Lombards, differed from their French brethren on several issues.⁶⁹ The supporters of Valdes, or Lyonists, were travelling preachers, who owned nothing and subsisted on the daily alms they received. They sought to reform the Church from within, by word and example. The Poor Lombards, by contrast, led sedentary lives. Inspired by the example of the Humiliati, they lived by their labor and shared all their goods communally. And whereas the Lyonists did from time to time confer the sacraments themselves, the Poor Lombards made a regular practice of this, appointing

⁶⁶ On the various explanations for the disappearance of Italian Cathars, see Raoul Manselli, "La fin du catharisme en Italie," Cahiers de Fanjeaux 20 (1985): 101-18.

⁶⁷ Lambert 140.

⁶⁸ Jean Gonnet and Amedeo Molnar, Les vaudois au moyen âge (Turin: Claudiana, 1974) 136.

⁶⁹ On the differences between the Poor Lombards and the Lyonists, see Amedeo Molnar, Storia dei valdesi. I: Dalle origini all'adesione alla riforma (1176-1532) (Turin: Claudiana, 1974), chap. 4; and Lambert 80-81, 97-98. The two groups tried unsuccessfully to resolve their fundamental differences at the council of Bergamo in 1218.

their own ministers for the purpose. The crucial difference, however, was theological. Despite the Lyonists' strong criticism of the Roman clergy, they nevertheless accepted their sacramental office. The Poor Lombards, on the other hand, linked the efficacy of the sacraments to the worthiness of the priests who administered them.

From the point of view of the medieval Church, the Poor Lombards constituted a greater threat than the Lyonists. For while the Lyonists were willing to arrive at some type of accommodation with the Church, the Poor Lombards consciously estranged themselves from Rome--in effect establishing an independent church with its own ministers and sacraments. Their tenacity and missionary zeal in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries has led one modern authority on the Waldensians to call them "the second founders of the Waldensian movement."⁷⁰

Although Poor Lombards were in the majority in northern Italy, Lyonists did exist there.⁷¹ Both pauperi lombardi and pauperi de Lugduno are mentioned in the account book of the Dominican inquisitor of Pavia, Lanfranco da Bergamo.⁷² Between 1292 and 1305 Lanfranco travelled all

⁷⁰ The phrase is Molnar's in Storia dei valdesi I, 73.

⁷¹ Lambert 97.

⁷² The account book is edited by Gerolamo Biscaro, "Inquisitori ed eretici lombardi (1292-1318)," Miscellanea di storia italiana 50 (1922): 503-27. Here see, pp. 506, 513-15. One cannot rule out the possibility that Lanfranco was using these names interchangeably and that he was unaware of the modern distinction between the two groups. Lanfranco's accounts frequently do not identify the affiliation of the heretics mentioned therein.

across northern Italy, stopping in Bologna, Ferrara, Venice, Padua, Bergamo, Cremona, Pavia, Milan, Genoa, and many other smaller communities. In 1294, in cooperation with Cremona's inquisitor, friar Giovanni, Lanfranco captured eight suspected heretics in Castelleone, a town in the western part of the Cremonese diocese. It would appear that the heretics were tried in Cremona. What is certain is that five of them were burnt. The accounts do not say what heretical views the five professed, but perhaps they were Waldensians.⁷³

The fourteenth century witnessed the diffusion of two new popular heresies in northern Italy. On April 1, 1311, Pope Clement V wrote to the bishop of Cremona, Rainerio Casuli, and instructed him to stamp out the "new sect and new rite . . . of the Free Spirit" which had emerged in the province of Spoleto and in the surrounding regions.⁷⁴ The Free Spirits maintained that since they were guided by the Holy Spirit the moral law did

The only groups which are occasionally named are Waldensians and Apostolics. Cathars are never mentioned.

⁷³ Gerolamo Biscaro, "Inquisitori," 465 and 511: "Item uni spie quam misi ad Castrum leonem cremonensem, ubi erant heretici, quos postea cepimus ego et alius inquisitor Cremonensis, que spia indicavit mihi, et fuerunt VII, et heretica I, ex quibus V fuerunt combusti--s. 12.

⁷⁴ Regestvm Clementis Papae V ex Vaticanis archetypis (Rome, 1887), a. VI, 423-27, no. 7506. The standard account for the heresy of the Free Spirit in northern Europe is Robert E. Lerner, The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); here see 79-80. A summary of the heresy is in Lambert 173-81. For Italy, there still is no critical study like Lerner's, but see Romana Guarnieri, "Il movimento del Libero Spirito," Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà, vol. 4 (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1965) 351-708.

not apply to them. Lerner has argued that the heresy of the Free Spirit was an invention of the ecclesiastical authorities.⁷⁵ Be that as it may, what matters here is that if Bishop Ugolino had the Free Spirits in mind when he founded the confraternity of St. Omobono in all likelihood he viewed them from Rome's standpoint.

At the turn of the century another group of heretics, known as the Apostolics or Apostolic Brethren, appeared in northern Italy. This time the Church was confronted with an authentic sect. According to Gerolamo Biscaro, the Apostolics soon eclipsed both the Poor Lombards and the Cathars in popularity.⁷⁶ Their founder, Gerardo Segarelli, was an ignorant but apparently spiritual man. The Parmese chronicler, Salimbene, scornfully

⁷⁵ "There was no organized sect at all, with a teaching programme hostile to the Church, like the Cathars or the later Waldensians. All that really existed were individual mystics in communication with like-minded friends and followers on an informal basis, some of whom wrote or said some dangerous or extravagant things." Lerner summarized by Lambert 178.

⁷⁶ Gerolamo Biscaro, "Inquisitori," 469. The authority on the Apostolics and Fra Dolcino is Raniero Orioli, whose major works are L'eresia a Bologna fra XIII e XIV secolo. II: L'eresia dolciniana (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, 1975); with co-editor Lorenzo Paolini, Acta S. Officii Bononie; and Venit perfidus heresiarcha. Orioli translated a number of relevant documents in his Fra Dolcino. Nascita, vita e morte di un'eresia medievale (Milan: Jaca Book, 1984). Important historiographical articles on Fra Dolcino are by Giovanni Miccoli, "Note sulla fortuna di Fra Dolcino," Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Lettere, storia e filosofia 2nd ser. 25 (1956): 245-59; Eugenio Dupré-Theseider, "Fra Dolcino: storia e mito," Bollettino della Società di studi valdesi 77 (1958): 5-25; and Grado G. Merlo, "Il problema di fra Dolcino negli ultimi vent'anni," Bollettino storico-bibliografico subalpino 72 (1974): 701-8.

calling Segarelli ydiota et stultus, recalled how Segarelli had tried to join the Franciscans of that city but had been rejected by them.⁷⁷ Undeterred, Segarelli set out in 1260 to live the apostolic life on his own. He and a group of followers adopted a distinctive style of dress based on depictions of the apostles which he had seen in the Franciscan church at Parma. They owned nothing and lived off the charity of their fellow citizens, wandering through Parma, either singly or in pairs, preaching repentance.⁷⁸ Their popularity rested on their zealous observance of the apostolic life, a zeal not seen in any of the existing religious orders, Franciscans included.⁷⁹

Like so many penitential and apostolic movements of their day, the Apostolics did not originally express heretical views, even though after 1274 they were in clear contravention of the Council of Lyon's decree forbidding the formation of unauthorized religious orders.⁸⁰ But for twenty-five years the ecclesiastical authorities largely ignored them. Then in 1286 Honorius IV condemned them and ordered them to disband.⁸¹ That same year Segarelli was imprisoned for the first time. The persecutions intensified in 1294 when the authorities imprisoned Segarelli a second time and burned

⁷⁷ Orioli, Venit perfidus heresiarcha 23.

⁷⁸ Dupré-Theseider 11-12.

⁷⁹ Lambert 193-94.

⁸⁰ Dupré-Theseider 13.

⁸¹ Lambert's date of 1285 is incorrect (p. 194).

four of his Parmese followers. Segarelli himself went to the stake in July 1300.⁸²

Around the time of Segarelli's death, there were signs that the movement was taking an increasingly heterodox turn. At the trial of suspected Apostolics at Bologna in 1299 the accused confessed that only Christ's first disciples enjoyed a greater state of perfection than they did. And they declared themselves free to ignore Church mandates when these were contrary to what they perceived to be God's will.⁸³

The movement's heretical tendencies were strengthened after 1300 when Dolcino of Novara assumed the leadership of the Apostolics. A more learned man than his predecessor, Dolcino in 1300 published the first of three encyclicals. In it he outlined his own biblical exegesis of history and the role of the Apostolics in God's redemptive plan. In contrast to the Trinitarian view of history described by Joachim of Fiore, Dolcino taught that human history comprised four periods. The Apostolics beginning with Gerardo Segarelli represented the forth and final period. God had sent them to prophesy the impending destruction of a corrupted clergy and to help restore the primitive Church.⁸⁴

⁸² Orioli, Fra Dolcino 241.

⁸³ Orioli, Venit perfidus heresiarcha 118-19.

⁸⁴ Orioli, Venit perfidus heresiarcha 119-20; Lambert 194.

Under Fra Dolcino the Apostolics truly became an "alternative church," free from the authority of Rome and subject only to what they perceived to be their divine mandate and saving work.⁸⁵ Equally, if not more, troubling to the ecclesiastical authorities was the violent resistance which they mounted in the face of increased persecution. In 1304 Dolcino and his followers retreated to the Piedmontese mountains. There they relied on the protection and support of local sympathizers and frequently resorted to banditry.⁸⁶ Alarmed by the armed struggle of the Apostolics, Clement V launched a crusade against them in 1306. For a time the Apostolics succeeded in repulsing the crusaders but were overwhelmingly defeated in March 1307. Dolcino was captured and burned soon after.⁸⁷

As mentioned, the disappearance of Cremona's inquisitorial records effectively limits any discussion of heresy in that diocese.⁸⁸ There is,

⁸⁵ The phrase is Orioli's, in Venit perfidus heresiarcha 12, 318.

⁸⁶ Orioli estimates that approximately one thousand followers joined Dolcino in Piedmont; Venit perfidus heresiarcha 314.

⁸⁷ Orioli, Fra Dolcino 242; Lambert 194-95.

⁸⁸ The writings of Cremona's antiquarians on the subject of the Apostolics in that city are fraught with errors. Ferrante Aporti cited the April 1, 1311 letter sent by Pope Clement V to Cremona's Bishop Rainerio. The contents, he claimed, called on the Cremonese bishop to eradicate the Apostolic heresy then rampant in the diocese of Spoleto (Aporti, I, 105-6). However, as mentioned earlier, this letter refers not to the Apostolics, but to the heresy of the Free Spirit. Indeed, according to modern scholars, this letter is the first official document to refer to such a sect ("novam sectam novumque ritum . . . libertatis spiritum nominant"); Guarnieri IV, 414; and Lerner 79-80. Aporti was relying on an early edition of Cesare Baronio's Annales ecclesiastici which I was unable to consult. But in examining a later

however, evidence from other sources which indicates that the Apostolics succeeded in finding recruits among the Cremonese, a not surprising conclusion given Cremona's geographic location. On August 5, 1303, a priest from Como confessed to the Milanese inquisitor that he had received a book on Dolcino's teachings from a certain Cremonino da Cremona.⁸⁹ The following year at the Bolognese trial of Cathars and Apostolics, Rolandino de Ollis, described by Orioli as possibly the most important Apostolic in the region between Bologna and Modena, recounted a visit he had made to Cremona approximately two years before. There Melio da Cremona had welcomed him and introduced him to his brother Guido, Nicola da Cremona, and Ottobonino da Cremona--all members of the sect.⁹⁰ As late as 1348, Clement VI was writing to Milan's ruler, Luchino Visconti, ordering him to

edition of Baronio's work (Barri-Ducis, 1864-83) it became clear that Aporti was probably led astray by the title, "Littera Apostolica contra foedas Dulcini haereses," and the editorial comments which precede a partial edition of Clement's letter (see vol. 23, p. 503, no. 66). Domenico Bergamaschi also described Clement V's letter to Bishop Rainerio as referring to Dolcino, but whether through typographical error or his own misreading, Bergamaschi dated the letter 1305. In general, his article is useless--long on Catholic apologetics and short on historical accuracy; see "L'Inquisizione e gli eretici a Cremona," La Scuola Cattolica, 4th ser. 12 (1907): 280. As Raniero Orioli has argued, confusion over Apostolics and Free Spirits continues to our own day. Romana Guarnieri and other historians have credited Gerardo Segarelli with founding the Italian Free Spirits, an interpretation which Orioli emphatically refutes; see Venit perfidus heresiarcha 36 n. 34 and Guarnieri 380.

⁸⁹ Elena Rotelli, Fra Dolcino e gli Apostolici nella storia e nella tradizione (Turin: Claudiana, 1979) 69.

⁹⁰ Paolini and Orioli, eds., Acta S. Officii Bononie 400-1, 403-4.

capture and conduct to Avignon an Apostolic named Bono da Crema, who was active in Visconti's lands.⁹¹ Clement also addressed two letters to the bishop and inquisitors of Novara, urging them to conclude their proceedings against Dolcino's followers.⁹² While it may never be possible to prove conclusively that Bishop Ugolino of Cremona had the Apostolics in mind when he established the Consortium of St. Omobono, Clement's letters indicate that at mid-century the Apostolic heresy was still very much on the minds of the ecclesiastical authorities.

The original purposes and practices of the Consortium of St. Omobono differed somewhat from those of the Consortium of the Donna. The members of the Donna acted collectively by meeting regularly in the church of St. Francesco; those of St. Omobono acted individually by praying alone in their parish churches and giving alms to the poor directly. If the Donna at its origin was principally a devotional society, St. Omobono was originally as much a charitable organization as it was a devotional and anti-heretical society. Yet in spite of these differences, the two confraternities also shared some fundamental traits. In chapter two I observed how the members of the Donna were urged to regard the Virgin Mary as their protector and intercessor. Similarly, the entire citizenry of Cremona, and

⁹¹ Giannina Biscaro, "Le relazioni dei Visconti di Milano con la Chiesa. Giovanni e Luchino - Clemente VI," Archivio storico lombardo 54 (1927): 209.

⁹² Biscaro, "Le relazioni," 209.

particularly the members of St. Omobono, regarded their patron saint as their special advocate. In striving to ensure the support of the saints the Cremonese were typical of their contemporaries throughout medieval Christendom. Vauchez writes that "[t]he quest for the greatest possible number of intercessors was indeed one of the characteristic traits of religious piety in the later centuries of the Middle Ages."⁹³ In 1328, a Sienese Franciscan put the matter this way: "The more advocates--good advocates--our city has in the court of the One who is its defender, that is, God himself, the greater its chance of remaining entirely secure."⁹⁴

One final similarity between these confraternities is that by the fifteenth century the two had come to resemble one another in their commitment to poor relief. Both became the city's two largest private institutions of public charity. Before turning to this topic in chapter five, I want to review briefly the recent literature on medieval poverty and poor relief.

⁹³ Vauchez, The Laity 165.

⁹⁴ Vauchez, The Laity 164.

Chapter 4

Medieval Poverty and Poor Relief

The modern historian who truly inaugurated the study of medieval poverty and poor relief is Michel Mollat. From 1962 to 1976 Mollat organized a series of seminars at the Sorbonne which attracted some of the best students and scholars in the field of social history.¹ Mollat and his collaborators approached their subject from a wide variety of angles and across large stretches of time and space, trying "to shed some light on a section of mediaeval society that was the largest but the least appreciated."² In a 1966 article, Mollat outlined the nature and scope of this collaborative research project. The researchers sought to analyze the meanings behind the terminology used to describe the poor; the connections between voluntary and involuntary poverty; the changing attitudes towards the poor; the writings of Christian theologians, canonists, and reformers on

¹ Michel Mollat, The Poor in the Middle Ages: An Essay in Social History, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) vii. Originally published as Les pauvres au moyen âge (Paris: Hachette, 1978).

² Mollat, The Poor 29.

the issues of poverty and charity; and the prevailing economic and social conditions which influenced attitudes and treatment of the poor.³

The findings of Mollat and his collaborators were published beginning in 1974 in a two-volume work entitled Études sur l'histoire de la pauvreté, in ten mimeographed Cahiers, and in numerous articles.⁴ Four years later Mollat synthesized these findings in a single monograph covering the longue durée from the fifth to the fifteenth century. Mollat divides The Poor in the Middle Ages into four parts corresponding to what he argues are four distinct periods in the history of poverty. Part One covers the period from the fifth to the eleventh century when poverty was "the general lot" for those living in a largely rural and underdeveloped economy.⁵ In this era of large landed estates and small peasant holdings, the condition of being poor had less to do with being completely indigent (although there were certainly many cases of this) than with being a land-holding peasant dependent on a powerful patron, or a peasant constantly threatened with the loss of his land and his livelihood by some aggrandizing lord. One was considered poor

³ Mollat, "La notion de la pauvreté au moyen âge. Positions des problèmes," Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France 52 (1966): 5-23. Translated in Ovidio Capitani, ed., La concezione della povertà nel Medioevo (Bologna: Patron, 1974) 1-34.

⁴ Mollat, The Poor vii.

⁵ Mollat, The Poor 24.

(pauper) if one was defenseless against, dependent on, or oppressed by the strong (potentes).⁶

The earliest and most articulate defenders of the poor were the bishops of the fifth and sixth centuries. Inspired by the teachings of Christ, they fulminated against oppressors of the poor, and they exhorted both clergy and laity to exercise charity, reminding them that Christ is found in the poor and that alms wash away sin. As administrators of Church property, the bishops personally organized the distribution of alms within their dioceses. At their best they ensured that the canonically stipulated one fourth of Church income reached its rightful recipients, the weak and the oppressed.⁷

Beginning in the late sixth century and continuing for several centuries thereafter, as cities shrank even further and as monasteries sprang up throughout the European countryside, the responsibility for poor relief passed increasingly from urban bishoprics to rural monasteries.⁸ The Rule of Saint Benedict places great emphasis on the hospitality that must be shown to all who knock at a monastery's gates. This duty was institutionalized beginning in the late tenth century when monasteries established a new office--that of the almoner--to provide for the needs of the

⁶ Mollat, The Poor 36, 33.

⁷ Mollat, The Poor 38-39.

⁸ Mollat, The Poor 45.

poor. Monastic charity included shelter within the monastery, food, clothing, "weekly visits . . . to the homes of the ailing poor," money, firewood, blankets, and other household items. In terms of the quantity of aid, Mollat concludes that "[t]he number of people involved varied from a few to a vast multitude; some were permanent beneficiaries of monastic charity, others temporary. . . . Some were maintained on permanent allotments of food and clothing, but most received temporary distributions."⁹

In Part Two Mollat discusses the period from the late eleventh to the early thirteenth century. Demographic growth, the revival of urban life, the reintroduction of money and its ever-widening circulation, the inheritance practice of primogeniture, and the formation of mutual-aid associations--all these had a profound effect on poverty and charity.¹⁰ In Mollat's view, the decisive turning point came at the "catastrophic end" of the twelfth century. Population growth, coupled with a string of natural disasters ranging from prolonged droughts to heavy floods, resulted in exorbitant food prices, famine, and death. The literary evidence indicates that contemporaries perceived that the poor were increasing and that some considered them a destabilizing force in society. As Mollat writes,

⁹ Mollat, The Poor 48-49.

¹⁰ Mollat, The Poor 57.

Previously, in a time of chronic underdevelopment, it had been possible to single out the poorest of the poor for special help, and immutability of the social order had made poverty seem a normal and permanent feature of the landscape. The ranks of the sick and beggars might be swelled in hard times by new recruits, but the social order remained unaltered.¹¹

However, from the mid-twelfth century onwards, as the European economy expanded, attitudes towards poverty became increasingly complex. The literary evidence strongly suggests that an increasingly wealthy, urban, and sophisticated elite held the poor majority--the peasantry--in general contempt. The chivalric ideals to which nobles and well-to-do commoners alike aspired led these elites to despise peasants for their coarse manners, lack of education, and close contact with the soil. Yet despite these prejudices, the twelfth-century hermits who reinterpreted the apostolic life were forcefully reasserting the spiritual value of true material poverty.¹²

Two things are especially noteworthy about the eremitical movement of the late eleventh and early twelfth century. First, as Mollat notes, the leaders of the eremitical life normally came from well-to-do families.¹³ They therefore represent one sector of the elite, however small, which did not despise the involuntary poor. Second, the very act of embracing voluntary poverty in part implied a refusal to be part of an increasingly

¹¹ Mollat, The Poor 63.

¹² Mollat, The Poor 70ff.

¹³ Mollat, The Poor 78.

stratified society. Indeed, some hermits verbally denounced the social and economic order of their day, while others ministered directly to the involuntary poor. As Mollat acknowledges,

At Fontevraud lepers were not kept segregated, and repentant women were included in the life of the community. Robert of Arbrissel wished to die among his "dear patients and beloved lepers. . . ." [T]he ideal was no longer to show solicitude to the less fortunate but to live as a pauper among the poor.¹⁴

Hermits were not alone in affirming the importance of voluntary poverty, as is evident by the emergence of Augustinian canons and Cistercian monks, to name but two of the new orders which sought to follow the apostolic life. In ever growing numbers the laity also responded to the evangelical message by founding hospitals, forming mutual-aid societies, and leaving money or goods to the poor in their wills. Yet, while Mollat recognizes lay involvement in charitable works, he is gratuitous, I think, when he writes that, "the term eleemosyna of course refers to gifts made for religious purposes, but the rather selfish concern of donors for their own salvation led them to designate specific categories of recipients: paupers begging their daily bread, marriageable girls without dowries, invalids, lepers, and captives."¹⁵ While it is true that donors expected poor recipients to pray for their souls--thereby making their alms doubly

¹⁴ Mollat, The Poor 79.

¹⁵ Mollat, The Poor 96.

efficacious--donors could never be entirely certain that the poor had indeed offered prayers on their behalf. I would argue that if we must judge the intentions of the donors, and this is an extremely risky venture, it would be better to consider what alternatives existed for those who wished to provide for their own salvation. For example, as Mollat himself admits, money donated to churches and monasteries for the celebration of masses for the dead had the advantage of virtually guaranteeing donors that prayers would be said for their souls.¹⁶ The practice was extremely popular in the high and late Middle Ages, particularly among the nobility who sometimes arranged for the celebration of hundreds of masses.¹⁷

That some donors were genuinely concerned for the welfare of the downtrodden can also be seen in the social ethic which canonists and theologians developed in the High Middle Ages.¹⁸ These authors naturally based their ethical teachings on those of the New Testament and the Fathers. Where they proved truly innovative was in extending the rights of

¹⁶ Mollat, The Poor 268: "Some were more concerned for their own salvation than for the fate of the poor and gave to establish masses rather than alms for the poor. They were afraid that their instructions would not be followed after their death, that nothing would be given to the poor on their behalf, and therefore that the poor would not pray for their souls."

¹⁷ See for example, the French wills published by Ulysse Robert, Testaments de l'officialité de Besançon, 1265-1500, 2 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902-1907).

¹⁸ The classic work on this topic is Brian Tierney, Medieval Poor Law: A Sketch of Canonical Theory and its Application in England (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959).

the poor and the obligations of the rich. Most authors maintained, for example, that the poor had a right to the rich man's superfluous wealth. A few even argued that charity should involve some material sacrifice for the donor. In situations of dire necessity, during a famine say, the canonists held that the poor could lawfully steal from the rich in order to stay alive.¹⁹

Neither the example and efforts of the hermits and the new religious orders nor the writings of theologians and canonists eliminated poverty, but Mollat overstates the matter when he writes that "[t]he position of the pauper did indeed rise over the course of one century, the twelfth . . . but that rise was a mystical matter, a theoretical construct."²⁰ The great proliferation of hospitals, confraternal charities, poor tables, and lending institutions in the next three centuries was partly the result of how successfully the consciences of some medieval men and women had been formed by the social and religious teachings so clearly expounded in the twelfth century. Seeing the poor, the sick, the homeless, the orphaned and the widowed as the "poor of Christ" did not necessarily mean that "the pauper in himself remained a forgotten figure," and that he was therefore merely "seen as a means by which his wealthy benefactor could earn salvation."²¹

¹⁹ Mollat, The Poor 110-11.

²⁰ Mollat, The Poor 113.

²¹ Mollat, The Poor 113.

In Part III Mollat looks at the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth century, beginning with the impact of the Franciscans and Dominicans on the lives of the poor. While recognizing that both orders borrowed much from the examples and teachings of the hermits and canons in the previous century, Mollat writes that the two mendicant orders were original in their "attentiveness to what we would nowadays call 'signs of the times'. . . ." ²² Dominicans and Franciscans practiced their apostolate among the people, especially those in the cities. They addressed the new problems which the urban commercial economy presented: the avarice of the rich, the injustices committed by merchants, the bloody factionalism, which, in Italy at least, affected nearly every city. ²³

For Mollat the thirteenth-century Franciscans and Dominicans represent the very best of what the Middle Ages offered the poor. His affectionate view of Francis of Assisi is particularly moving. Certainly the intellectual, religious, and social contributions made by the two largest mendicant orders were remarkable. In the area of ethics alone, they reached a broader audience with their preaching than had ever been the case before. As Mollat writes, "[m]endicant friars were most zealous in carrying out the mission of educating consciences called for by the Fourth Lateran

²² Mollat, The Poor 120.

²³ Mollat, The Poor 120.

Council."²⁴ Nevertheless, Roberts is correct in subscribing to the view that Mollat "overestimate[ed] their influence on the fate of the poor. . . ."²⁵ In fact, Mollat himself admits the possibility that in voluntarily choosing to live like the poor and in begging for alms the mendicants received large quantities of aid which might otherwise have gone to the involuntary poor.²⁶

A century of preaching about the necessity of caring for the less fortunate--first by the hermits and canons, then by the friars--coupled with the growing problem of urban poverty, led to a large increase in the number of charitable institutions. Prior to the twelfth century, monasteries had been virtually the sole permanent almsgiving institutions. What was new in the twelfth, but especially in the thirteenth century, was the diversity of private and institutional benefactors.²⁷ On the ecclesiastical side, monastic almonries not only continued to operate, but increased in number; while episcopal, canonical, and (by the fourteenth century) papal almonries were established for the first time. On the secular side, the rapid increase in royal and princely almonries, parish poor tables, confraternities, and hospitals (some of which were under ecclesiastical jurisdiction) indicates how ready

²⁴ Mollat, The Poor 128.

²⁵ Susanne F. Roberts, rev. of The Poor in the Middle Ages, by Michel Mollat, Speculum Oct. 1988: 967.

²⁶ Mollat, The Poor 127, 254.

²⁷ Mollat, The Poor 135.

lay people were not simply to fund but also to organize and administer charitable institutions.²⁸

One of the largest lay organizations dedicated to the distribution of charity was the Florentine confraternity of Orsanmichele.²⁹ Founded as a devotional society in 1291, it began functioning as a private institution of public charity within three years. In what appears to have been an unusual practice for confraternities in general, Orsanmichele ran several different types of poor relief operations. These included a hospital, a poorhouse, distributions of food and clothing to the urban poor several times a week, as well as six annual trips to the surrounding countryside to administer aid to the rural poor. The regular clients included a "few hundred" impoverished persons. Each was issued a special ticket (polizza) as a means of identification. Their selection followed a careful inquiry into their individual circumstances--circumstances which were then duly recorded in a ledger. The charity consisted of money, food, clothing, and shoes. "In 1324," Mollat writes, "the average gift [of money] was five sous." The beneficiaries included "two notaries . . . a ragpicker, a pit-sawyer, two cobblers, a handkerchief manufacturer, three ironsmiths, and three brokers."³⁰ Orsanmichele's other clientele consisted of thousands of

²⁸ Mollat, The Poor 136-53.

²⁹ For what follows, see Mollat, The Poor 143. For the most recent work on Orsanmichele, see Henderson, Piety.

³⁰ Mollat, The Poor 163.

unnamed beggars who gathered at its headquarters or were encountered in the countryside. Compared with the regular beneficiaries, these beggars received smaller sums of money (several deniers), along with bread and clothing "depending on the season and the vagaries of supply."³¹ In 1347, just a year before the outbreak of the Black Death, Florence was gripped by a famine "so severe, according to Villani, that six thousand people died of hunger and the commune had to aid 60-80 percent of the population (which numbered between eighty and ninety thousand)."³² Surviving account books reveal that in that same year Orsanmichele aided "six to seven thousand indigents . . . three to four times a week, and in the then rural district of Santa Maria Novella alone eighteen thousand gifts of alms were handed out. In that year the confraternity devoted one quarter of its revenue to the manufacture and distribution of bread."³³ As in the case of many other charitable confraternities, then, Orsanmichele attempted to alleviate two types of poverty: the poverty which resulted from war, famine, and plague, and the poverty which resulted from personal misfortunes like illness, old age, or financial ruin.

In chapters nine through eleven, Mollat considers closely the nature and extent of poverty from the mid-fourteenth to the early sixteenth century.

³¹ Mollat, The Poor 143.

³² Mollat, The Poor 162.

³³ Mollat, The Poor 143.

The topic is a vast one and lies outside the scope of this dissertation, but two points deserve attention. The first general observation is the ever increasing number of urban poor. Along with the resident "working poor," Europe's cities were full of unemployed persons, many of whom had recently emigrated from the countryside. Cities acted like magnets, attracting rural peasants in search of work, or in times of crisis, such as during a famine, drawing starving souls in search of food. Urban poverty presents some unique characteristics compared to rural poverty. Rural poverty in the late Middle Ages was often more acute than urban poverty, but it was more dispersed and virtually invisible to wealthy urban residents if they wished to turn a blind eye. Moreover, it did not exist side by side with great luxury. By contrast, because rich and poor frequently lived side by side in medieval cities, the wealthy could not evade the poor, nor could the poor, concentrated in a relatively small area, ignore the good fortune of the rich.

The consequences of such a situation are obvious. The urban poor lived on a daily basis with the bitter realization that some lived luxuriously while they went hungry. They lived with the constant reminder that poverty was not an irremediable aspect of human existence which had to be accepted like human mortality. Furthermore, the urban poor probably experienced more keenly than their rural counterparts the oppressive and unjust practices of those who governed and employed them, both because

these practices were more evident and because information travels faster in more densely populated areas.

As for the middling to wealthy residents of the cities, it seems that the sight of so much poverty aroused more fear than compassion. Even today the rich person is commonly believed to fear the beggar because of the envy and violent intentions which the latter is thought to harbor in his or her heart. Moreover, in cities the large concentration of paupers must have aroused fears of collective revolts. Yet I believe that this is not the only type of fear which troubled the well-to-do. By virtue of being a developing region, Europe's medieval economy was not as stable as it is today. The ease with which artisans, merchants, and nobles could suddenly find themselves without work or financially ruined must have often preyed on the minds of the well-to-do when they encountered an unfortunate beggar. Fear of theft certainly existed, but also fear of joining the ranks of the poor.

The second general observation is that urban workers became vulnerable to a more complicated set of conditions as cities grew in size and important urban industries developed. Natural disasters could affect urban workers as they certainly did rural workers, but urban workers also had to contend with complex market forces such as over-production or loss of markets to outside competitors. Furthermore, these workers could easily fall victim to the effects of human greed. Greed of course had always existed in

the rural economy, but its impact and extent were greater in an industrial and commercial economy.

In his final chapter, Mollat describes the poor relief initiatives of the mid-fourteenth to early sixteenth century. Mollat credits humanist thought with making traditional Christian charity more effective, rational, and innovative.³⁴ One of the best known examples of the new forms of poor relief are the monti di pietà (mounts of mercy), municipal pawnshops which loaned money to the poor at low interest rates. The monti originated in mid-fifteenth-century Italy, "the birthplace of humanism and banking."³⁵ As Mollat notes, however, efforts to provide low interest or no interest loans to the poor can be found in northern Europe a century earlier.³⁶ One cannot conclude therefore that the humanist culture and the banking prowess of the Italians were responsible for this new approach to poverty. Moreover, since the monti di pietà were first proposed and promoted by the Observant Franciscans, it would be more accurate to say that this period, while it displayed originality, also displayed continuity with traditional Christian charity.

³⁴ Mollat, The Poor 262, 272.

³⁵ Mollat, The Poor 278-79. See also Carol Bresnahan Menning, Charity and State in Late Renaissance Italy: The Monte di Pietà of Florence (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993).

³⁶ Mollat, The Poor 278.

Mollat, I believe, is certainly correct when he argues that charity in this period became more effective and rational.³⁷ As I will argue in the next chapter, efficacy and rationalization are apparent not only in the new specialized hospitals and the new lending institutions for the poor but also in older charitable confraternities.

Mollat's collaborative research on medieval poverty and poor relief and the publication of the French edition of his book, The Poor in the Middle Ages, inspired scholars working on later periods to publish their collective findings. A colloquium organized by Thomas Riis and sponsored by the European University Institute in 1979 entitled, "Poverty and Urban Development in Europe, 15th-19th Centuries," resulted in the publication of a dozen original studies under the title of Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe.³⁸ The most important issues and conceptual problems raised by the authors concern the causes of poverty (economic changes, technology, infirmity, natural disasters, etc.); how early modern poverty was viewed at

³⁷ Mollat, The Poor 272ff., 286ff.

³⁸ Thomas Riis, ed., Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe, vol. 1 (Florence: European University Institute, 1981). Five years later Riis edited a companion set of essays which focused on how the poor responded to their plight, see Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe II: Les réactions des pauvres à la pauvreté (Odense, Denmark: Odense University Press, 1986). See also the published proceedings of a 1980 conference devoted to poverty and charity in early modern Italy; Giorgio Politi, Mario Rosa, and Franco Della Peruta, eds., Timore e carità. I poveri nell'Italia moderna. Atti del convegno "Pauperismo e assistenza negli antichi stati italiani," Cremona, 28-30 marzo 1980 (Cremona: Biblioteca Statale e Libreria Civica, 1982).

the time (redeeming, degrading); how twentieth-century historians understand and define poverty; the best data and methods for assessing levels of poverty (nutritional intake, housing, wages, etc.); how the poor acted when faced with poverty (begging, crime, rebellion, migration, etc.); and how governments and private citizens responded to the poor (hostility, confinement, expulsion, charity, etc.).³⁹ Three of the essays are particularly relevant to the topic of medieval poverty and charity. Two analyze the nature of poverty and how best to measure it.⁴⁰ The third examines a category of alms recipients known as the "ashamed poor" (*poveri vergognosi*).⁴¹

Pointing out that poverty can never be measured objectively, Blockmans and Beckerman propose that historians analyze degrees of poverty, or, as Blockmans prefers to call it, "deprivation."⁴² "Absolute deprivation" means "having no means of obtaining those goods and services that, at well-defined levels of aspirations and technology, cater in the best possible way for all basic functions of life." "Relative deprivation" refers to "the feeling, created by the norms and values that predominate in a society

³⁹ Riis *Aspects* I, vii-viii. In the same volume, see the list of topics involved in studying poverty and poor relief, Riis 306-7.

⁴⁰ Wim Blockmans, "Circumscribing the Concept of Poverty," 39-45; Wilfred Beckerman, "The Measurement of Poverty," 47-63.

⁴¹ Amleto Spicciari, "The 'Poveri Vergognosi' in 15th Century Florence," 119-182.

⁴² Blockmans 43, Beckerman 48.

at any given time, of being unable to attain a standard of living and degree of involvement in affairs that are regarded as normal or desirable."⁴³

According to Beckerman, in today's developed economies the generally accepted definition of poverty is the relative one. Whereas in developing economies of the past and the present the most relevant is probably the absolute one.⁴⁴

Poverty or deprivation, however, is more than just a matter of material want or of "social, political, and psychological" needs.⁴⁵ Consciousness or subjective awareness of deprivation must also be considered a factor in determining poverty levels. Referring to the conclusions of a European study conducted in the 1970s, Blockmans writes:

"The way a situation is seen has an important role to play, apart from the objective facts. The E.E.C. report brought to light that although in Ireland in 1976 income per capita of the population was the lowest in the Community, people's awareness of their poverty was less than the average of the nine countries. Although it is impossible to estimate the level of aspirations for Early Modern societies, the researcher must

⁴³ Blockmans 43-44. Beckerman 48: "[T]here are basically two extreme positions that can be adopted. One is to define poverty in absolute terms, which usually means some definition of the minimum level of consumption or access to certain facilities that a unit must have in order to survive, or, as in some definitions, in order also to be able to procreate as well. The other extreme is to define poverty in relative terms, which usually means in terms of some ratio of the income, or consumption, of the unit in question to the average level for the society in which that is living."

⁴⁴ Beckerman 48-49.

⁴⁵ Blockmans 43-44.

take it into account if he wishes to use the method of poverty thresholds.⁴⁶

Amleto Spicciani's very detailed essay on the Florentine Buonomini di S. Martino is based on an analysis of the confraternity's account books. Founded in 1442 by St. Antonino, the confraternity was dedicated to serving the needs of the city's ashamed poor.⁴⁷ Spicciani reveals the age, sex, occupation, and social position of the recipients; the nature and extent of the charity; the causes of poverty recorded in the accounts; and the confraternity's benefactors. In chapter five I will refer to the quality and quantity of the Buonomini's alms. Here I wish to consider the identity of the ashamed poor. In a 1973 essay, Richard Trexler tentatively suggests that the poveri vergognosi who benefitted most from the charity of the Buonomini and similar Italian institutions were impoverished members of the upper classes, especially the nobility.⁴⁸ In his opinion, "charity was an

⁴⁶ Blockmans 43.

⁴⁷ The Buonomini continue their charitable work to this day; Spicciani, "Poveri Vergognosi" 120, 122. For similar Italian confraternities, see Giovanni Ricci, "Povertà, vergogna e povertà vergognosa," Società e storia 5 (1979): 305-37. Ricci's study is based principally on the statutes of the Compagnia dei poveri vergognosi di Bologna, dating from 1507 to 1682. The earliest example of a confraternity devoted to helping the ashamed poor is one founded before 1257 in Arezzo; Ricci 318.

⁴⁸ Richard C. Trexler, "Charity and the Defense of Urban Elites in the Italian Communes," The Rich, the Well Born, and the Powerful: Elites and Upper Classes in History, ed. F. C. Jaher (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973) 64-109. For similar claims by other historians of Florence, see Spicciani, "Poveri Vergognosi" 165 n. 41. Trexler readily acknowledges the speculative nature of his thesis. "This article," he writes, "complicates rather than solves some of the problems of medieval and early modern

instrument for preserving the families of the communal elites."⁴⁹ Spicciati does not deny that the Buonomini may have originated specifically to assist impoverished nobles, but the evidence from the account books of the first thirty years indicates otherwise.⁵⁰ The vast majority of those assisted in the fifteenth century came neither from the ranks of the city's social elites nor from the ranks of the destitute. Rather, they belonged to "an intermediate social stratum," that is, widows, textile workers, and artisans with their own shops.⁵¹

Despite Spicciati's conclusions, there is evidence from other sources which indicates that impoverished nobles (and other formerly wealthy persons) were viewed as being among the most worthy beneficiaries of Christian charity. Patristic authors explained that the ashamed poor suffered

charity. It argues that charity was an instrument for preserving the families of the communal elites, but without determining to what extent that was the case." 103

⁴⁹ Trexler, "Charity" 103.

⁵⁰ In the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the amount of charity given to impoverished nobles increased significantly. Black, however, rejects Trexler's thesis and argues that "[t]he concern for the ashamed poor, which is evident in the work of confraternities, is to be seen as part of the battle for status in a society of orders. While there was some bias towards nobles and gentlemen within this category it would be unwise to go too far in interpreting the defense of the poveri vergognosi as that of an old feudal class resisting the advance of a new bourgeois ethic and a class system based on economic values. There was too broad a spread of social groups included by some in this category to fit this interpretation." Black 149.

⁵¹ Spicciati, "'Poveri Vergognosi'" 129, 141.

doubly: from their poverty and from the shame which prevented them from publicly seeking assistance.⁵² Writing in the fifteenth century, the great Franciscan preacher St. Bernardino of Siena (1380-1444) singled out the nobility for special consideration and assistance. Alms, he said, should be distributed first to

the donor's family, saints, the honest, friends, Christians (as opposed to infidels), [then to] nobles whose poverty is not their fault and who are ashamed to be poor, and finally other poor. Among the last, other things being equal, preference can be given to the imprisoned, those afflicted by age, sickness, disability or blindness, and girls of marriageable age whose honesty is in imminent danger unless they are coupled in marriage--and similarly young wives. The worst condition is the poverty of nobles who have lost their riches, and can no longer keep up their social status, so to help them secretly is a major work of charity.⁵³

The presence of the ashamed poor confirms Christopher Black's contention that in understanding the poverty of the medieval and early modern period, historians must use not just the absolute and relative definitions of poverty but also the subjective one.⁵⁴ Many medieval people were destitute,

⁵² Ricci 307.

⁵³ St. Bernardino summarized by Black 138-39.

⁵⁴ Black 132: "Townsend recommends that modern commentators should produce evidence on (1) objective deprivation, (2) conventionally acknowledged or normative deprivation; [sic] representing a dominant or majority view in society, and (3) individual subjective or group deprivation, when we can admit that 'some individuals may feel poor, especially by reference to their previous situation in life, even when they are neither demonstrably poor nor acknowledged to be poor by society'. This attitude

others lived in relative poverty, and a few were prisoners of social expectations which they could not afford financially. Whatever category they came under, all the poor at one time or another experienced fear, loneliness, and shame. Perhaps the most complete description of the poor is Mollat's:

A poor man is a person who, on a permanent or temporary basis, lives in a state of weakness, dependency and humiliation, characterized by being deprived of the means (variable according to period and society) of power and respect: money, relations, knowledge, physical strength, intellectual ability, freedom and personal dignity. He is a man who lives from day to day, unable to improve his condition by himself.⁵⁵

Neither purely a history of poverty nor of charity Bronislaw Geremek's stated aim in La pietà e la forza is not so much another history of poverty as it is "an interpretation of the transformation of social attitudes towards poverty."⁵⁶ In his Marxist analysis, Geremek focuses on the later Middle Ages and the early modern period because in his view this is a transitional period which marks the "formation of a modern society." In this transitional period from medieval to modern it becomes possible for him to identify the connections between structural changes in the economy, changes in collective attitudes towards the poor, and the creation of modern social

brings us closer to both sixteenth-century attitudes and to the viewpoint of historians studying this period."

⁵⁵ Mollat, The Poor 31-32.

⁵⁶ Geremek xix.

policies to combat poverty.⁵⁷ The author acknowledges the many contributions made by those scholars who have written about charity and poor relief institutions, but what he proposes to analyze are the "social consequences of [charitable] initiatives and the sociological characterization of the clients of charitable institutions and of alms distributions."⁵⁸

Geremek correctly rejects the interpretation that from the later Middle Ages onward acts of mercy for the poor were invariably replaced by acts of repression.⁵⁹ He concludes instead that real charity and real threats of force (hence his title, La pietà e la forza or Mercy and the Gallows) always co-existed, though to different degrees depending on the prevailing economic and social conditions.⁶⁰ Geremek's main argument is that poor relief from medieval to modern times was essentially motivated by a desire

⁵⁷ Geremek xix.

⁵⁸ Geremek 28.

⁵⁹ Here on the issue of continuity Geremek is in agreement with Jean-Gutton, though the two come to opposite conclusions about the nature of this continuity. Geremek stresses the restrictive and repressive measures taken down through the centuries. Gutton, on the other hand, emphasizes the survival of positive perceptions of, and reactions to, the poor. Gutton argues that the severe legislation passed by central governments was often mitigated at the local level either because of government inaction or because traditional and more humane responses to the poor survived. For example, according to Gutton, most of the attempts to institutionalize paupers in the seventeenth century ended in failure, while during the same period St. Vincent de Paul founded his greatly successful order of the "Sisters of Charity" (1633). See La société et les pauvres en Europe, XVIe-XVIIIe siècles (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1974) 140ff.

⁶⁰ Geremek xiii.

for "social control." Undoubtedly the efforts to intern, deport, or otherwise restrict the poor must be viewed as "social control," but to describe the distribution of identifying tokens by medieval charities as a "first step towards controlling beggars" is an overstatement.⁶¹

I have already cited Christopher Black's Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century several times. By way of a conclusion it only remains for me to observe how splendidly he synthesizes his own research on confraternities in Perugia, Bologna, and Venice with the work of other scholars. Despite the title, Black surveys the period from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth century--the centuries of the Catholic Reform and the Counter Reformation in which some old confraternities survived, others disappeared, and many new ones were created.⁶² In addition to the superb chapters on poverty and charity (chapters 7-10), one of the great merits of this survey is that Black carefully avoids one-sided generalizations. He rejects the "social control" thesis as too simplistic.⁶³ Instead he

⁶¹ Geremek 30, 38. The advantages of charity tokens will be discussed later in chapter five.

⁶² Black viii.

⁶³ "To undertake a major study of Italian poverty requires an economic analysis over a long period; this is beyond the scope of this book, which is concerned with the history of confraternities in their many dimensions over a very long century. But it can be noted that the preoccupations with structures and long durations can lead to the imposition of a model, or modern scheme such as 'social discipline', which encourages the historian to treat the poor as a large mass, undifferentiated and inhuman. My discussion of confraternities and related institutions dealing with the poor, in this context of poverty, is designed to be a contribution to discussions of 'the

emphasizes the "variety and variability" of Italian confraternities in this period.⁶⁴

world of the poor and society's response to their presence'. It should highlight 'the internal differentiation', and the variety of responses of those dealing with the poor." Black 137.

⁶⁴ Black 4-5.

Chapter 5

Confraternal Charity in Milan and Cremona

Mollat, Geremek, and other historians of poverty rightly emphasize the desperate conditions of the poor in the Middle Ages and the limitations of charitable initiatives. It is also important, however, to recognize that fundamental advances were made in the provision of poor relief. As I will argue in this chapter, some confraternities did indeed adopt new more effective practices to alleviate the suffering of the poor. I will first consider reforms in Milan and then proceed to analyze the charity of Cremona's confraternities. The geographical proximity of Cremona to Milan and Cremona's incorporation into the Duchy of Milan in 1334 makes it fitting to compare the nature and extent of confraternal charity in these two cities.

Milan's Scuola delle Quattro Marie

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries witnessed a gradual but profound change in the administration of poor relief in Milan. Heretofore, organized charity had been the special responsibility of hospitals and

confraternities.¹ Milanese hospitals, supervised by the archbishop and staffed by friars, sisters, and conversi, provided regular public assistance to the elderly and the sick, to paupers, orphans, and pilgrims.² Confraternities or scuole, as they were known in Milan, were normally private associations of lay persons who dedicated themselves to spiritual edification and mutual assistance. Their private character meant that they reserved the bulk of their assistance for their own members.³

In the fourteenth century, however, new types of confraternities emerged which dispensed daily alms to non-members. These new societies were the result of widespread dissatisfaction among the citizenry with the work of the hospitals, where inept or corrupt administration frustrated the poor relief work they were called to perform. Thus confraternities sprang up to fill the numerous gaps in social assistance. Hospitals increasingly looked after matters of sanitation, while confraternities specialized in distributing

¹ There is as yet no comprehensive history of charity in medieval and early modern Milan. Good introductions, however, can be found in the works of Antonio Noto, cited below; in Giacomo Bascapè, "L'assistenza e la beneficenza a Milano dall'alto medioevo alla fine della dinastia sforzesca," Storia di Milano, vol. 8 (Milan: Treccani, 1957) 387-419; and in Maria Pia Alberzoni and Onorato Grassi, eds., La carità a Milano nei secoli VII-XV, Atti del Convegno di Studi, Milano, 6-7 November 1987 (Milan: Jaca Book, 1989).

² On the decline of Milanese hospitals in the later Middle Ages, see Bascapè 390-99.

³ Antonio Noto, Gli amici dei poveri di Milano, 1305-1964 (Milan: Giuffrè, 1966) xvi.

food, clothing and dowries, consoling and burying prisoners condemned to death, assisting incarcerated debtors, and ransoming prisoners of war.⁴

The first of these new confraternities was the Scuola dei Raccomandati della Beata Vergine Maria, founded sometime between 1300 and 1305, and soon nicknamed the Quattro Marie because of the four images of the Virgin Mary--in her Nativity, Purification, Annunciation, and Assumption--which adorned its altar in the cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore.⁵ The members of this fraternity, known as fratres or scholares, came from all social and economic backgrounds and included lawyers, bakers, shoemakers (caligarii), fullers (cimatores), and other small artisans.⁶

From its foundation, this Marian fraternity assigned one half of its monthly membership dues to the city's poor and soon earned a reputation for efficiency.⁷ Many citizens discontented with rampant mismanagement in the hospitals began endowing the new confraternity with their pious donations and bequests. In 1331 Archbishop Aicardo of Milan granted a

⁴ Bascapè 399-400.

⁵ In the fourteenth century the Scuola delle Quattro Marie was occasionally also called a confraternitas, consortium, domus, hospitale, officium, ordo, societas, and universitas. It and other institutions dedicated to the poor received the official name of luoghi pii only in the sixteenth century, see Noto, Gli amici xv n. 4, 5, 10, 20, 29. For the history of the Quattro Marie, see the introduction to Antonio Noto's facsimile edition of its 1447-1451 ledger, Liber rationum.

⁶ Noto, Liber rationum I, xii.

⁷ Noto, Gli amici xv-xvi.

forty-day indulgence to those who contributed financially to the poor relief activities of the Quattro Marie. The archbishop had high praise for what he called "the famous work of piety . . . of the Scuola delle Quattro Marie . . . in distributing necessary goods to paupers and to other miserable and infirm persons. . . ."⁸

Approval and support were forthcoming from the secular arm as well, in the form of exemptions from duties and tolls on the food and cloth which the confraternity brought into the city for distribution to the poor. The rulers of Milan also granted fiscal immunity to those living and working on lands belonging to the Quattro Marie.⁹ Beyond these exemptions and immunities, however, the civic authorities assumed no other responsibilities, legal or financial. The Quattro Marie was considered a res specialis of Milan and was placed under the protection of the podestà, but was not subject to his authority.¹⁰ Thus, by 1358 this association of approximately two hundred members had firmly established a model for lay participation in the regular provision of public charity. Henceforth, the task of caring for Milan's poor would gradually but irreversibly pass from ecclesiastical to lay institutions.

⁸ "famosa opera pietatis . . . Scole Quatuor Mariarum . . . in ministrando necessaria pauperibus et aliis personis miserabilibus et infirmis. . . ." Noto, Gli amici xvii.

⁹ Noto, Gli amici 3-4, 6, 30, 45, 56, 68.

¹⁰ In 1439 the duke of Milan had to remind the administrators of the Quattro Marie that "iurisdictione potestatis nostri Mediolani suppositi non sunt." Noto, Gli amici xvii, xxvii.

The change from ecclesiastical to lay provision of public charity was in large part the result of new economic and social conditions. As mentioned in chapter one, from about 1300 to 1500, Lombardy experienced an "agricultural revolution" and a sustained period of economic growth. By the mid-fifteenth century, with a population of nearly 90,000, Milan had become a thriving center for trade in agricultural goods and the site of a flourishing silk industry. The economic prosperity of these two centuries transformed the traditional order of power and wealth. New men--petty nobles, prosperous tenant farmers, merchants, bankers, administrators, and soldiers--made their fortunes in agriculture and commerce at the expense of the Church and the feudal nobility.¹¹ Possessing great wealth and equipped with the practical skills acquired in the administration of their commercial affairs, these entrepreneurs soon made their presence felt in all areas of civic life. At the end of the fourteenth century, the nobles, merchants, and bankers who belonged to the Quattro Marie could be found with increasing frequency in administrative positions, while their poorer brothers were relegated to minor roles.¹²

The Quattro Marie might have divided into distinct orders of rich and poor, as happened in the Venetian Scuole, had it not been for the

¹¹ Dowd 154-55, 158.

¹² Noto, Liber rationum I, xii-xv.

establishment in 1368 of a rival institution, the Consorzio della Misericordia.¹³ The Misericordia marks a watershed in the history of Milanese charity, for in effect it was the first private institution completely dedicated to the distribution of public charity. The wealthy founders, many of them already members of the Quattro Marie, stipulated that membership in the new Consortium was to be limited to twenty-five administrators elected for life from among the city's most prosperous and influential citizens. No assistance could be given to any member in need. No banquets could be held at the expense of the poor.¹⁴

The reasons for the sudden rejection of an open, fraternal association and the formation of a closed executive body are not altogether clear. Ronald Weissman has argued that in Renaissance Florence social elitism explains the expulsion of poorer members from the city's oldest confraternities.¹⁵ A similar desire may well have motivated the Milanese. Then too, after Gian Galeazzo's police edicts of 1385-1386, large public assemblies were discouraged in Milan.¹⁶ In my view, one of the most probable reasons for the adoption of a closed board of administrators was that the nature of poverty had changed. The effects of economic expansion

¹³ Noto, Liber rationum I, xiii-xiv; Gli amici xxii-xxiv. On the Venetian Scuole Grandi, see Pullan, Rich and Poor.

¹⁴ Noto, Liber rationum I, xiv; Gli amici xxii.

¹⁵ Weissman, Ritual Brotherhood 201.

¹⁶ Noto, Liber rationum I, xiii.

and urban growth had heightened economic differences and magnified the problem of poverty. The situation required a new approach since increasingly the Quattro Marie was coming under attack for giving preference to impoverished brothers over destitute outsiders.¹⁷

That the Milanese welcomed the approach of the Misericordia is evident from the number of extant donations and bequests destined for each of the two institutions. From 1331 to 1373, out of 65 gifts to Milan's lay charities 85% were for the Quattro Marie. However, from 1374 to 1425, out of 150 gifts, the Quattro Marie received only 13%, while 73% went to the Misericordia.¹⁸ The drop in pious legacies to the Quattro Marie was further exacerbated by a reduction in its fiscal exemptions. In response to the growing number of poor, a ducal decree of 1422 granted it an increase in the tax exempt wheat which it could bring annually into the city for distribution to the poor--from 96 moggia to 120 moggia. This increase, however, was significantly lower than the 192 moggia of tax free wheat which it had been allowed to import in the past. Moreover, the administrators of the Quattro Marie must have known that in that same year

¹⁷ Noto, Liber rationum I, xiv.

¹⁸ After 1425 the Quattro Marie appears to have been more successful in attracting bequests and donations. It received 25% of 192 extant gifts while the Misericordia saw its share drop to 43%. The bequests and donations cited here are housed in the archive of the Ente Comunale di Assistenza di Milano and are calendered in Noto, Gli amici 2-115.

the duke of Milan had granted the Misericordia the right to import 300 moggia of exempted wheat.¹⁹

In the face of declining private and public support, the Quattro Marie gradually began to change its structure and mandate as it went from being an open, mutual-aid society to a closed group of wealthy philanthropists.²⁰ After 1368 the members abolished their annual banquet and began to reduce their numbers, first to 40 and then by 1425 to twelve administrators and a prior, in imitation of Christ and the Apostles. All members were now drawn exclusively from the city's elite.²¹ Mutual assistance disappeared and the Quattro Marie directed all its charity towards the city's poor. In time the innovation introduced by the Misericordia was copied by others as

¹⁹ Noto, Gli amici 56.

²⁰ The wider Italian trend away from mutual-aid societies is analyzed in the excellent chapter by Amleto Spicciani, "Solidarietà, previdenza e assistenza per gli artigiani nell'Italia medioevale (secoli XII-XV)," Artigiani e salariati. Il mondo del lavoro nell'Italia dei secoli XII-XV, Atti del Decimo Convegno Internazionale, Pistoia 9-13 October 1981 (Pistoia: Centro Italiano di Studi di Storia e d'Arte, 1984) 293-343. I am grateful to Marsha Groves for referring me to this essay.

²¹ Noto, Liber rationum I, xiii-xiv; Gli amici xxiii. While the administrators and prior all donated their services, the Quattro Marie paid for a priest, three servants, and a negotium gestor who oversaw its financial affairs and kept the books. Rural workers, a land surveyor, a lawyer, and a notary were hired as needed. Noto, Liber rationum I, xv. The Quattro Marie also had its own baker on the premises, see Antonio Noto and Bruno Viviani, Visconti e Sforza fra le colonne del Palazzo Archinto. Le sedi dei 39 luoghi pii elemosinieri di Milano, 1350-1980 (Milan: Giuffrè, 1980) 230.

well, so that by 1447 Milan could boast five major and six minor lay institutions devoted to public charity.²²

The operation of the Quattro Marie, as depicted in its 1447-1451 ledger, illustrates the basic nature of the poor relief which the five largest Scuole provided. At Christmas the administrators distributed tokens to the poor. Throughout the year, these tokens entitled the poor to daily rations of wheat bread (panis furmenti, i.e. frumenti), cooked chickpeas, and wine. The accounts conceal the identity of the poor, usually calling them pauperes Christi.²³ In all likelihood they were the "respectable resident poor."²⁴ The Scuole Grandi of Venice and the Buonomini di S. Martino in Florence assisted similar groups. As mentioned in chapter four, these were the poveri vergognosi, those too ashamed to beg publicly for alms. According to Noto, the Quattro Marie also held a separate distribution of wheat flour, salt, and

²² By the mid-fifteenth century, the five most important lay charities were the Scuola delle Quattro Marie, the Consorzio della Misericordia, the Scuola della Divinità, founded in 1429 by the merchant and nobleman Donato Ferrario, the Consorzio del Terzo Ordine di San Francesco, established in 1442 by the merchant Martino Della Gazzada and other merchant and artisan tertiaries, and finally, the Consorzio dell'Umiltà, created in 1444 by the merchant banker Vitaliano Vitaliani dei Borromei. Noto, Gli amici xxi, xxix n. 41.

²³ Mollat places great importance on this title, noting that "respect for the figure of Christ as reflected in the poor can be seen in the extended use made of the honorific 'pauper of Christ' (pauper Christi) once limited to monks who had voluntarily chosen poverty for love God." See The Poor 3. Perhaps by the fifteenth century such a title had become a mere convention, but it is equally possible that it continued to reflect the special status of the poor in the eyes of the administrators and donors of the Quattro Marie.

²⁴ The phrase is Pullan's, see Rich and Poor 84-98.

money for the "poveri di civili condizioni," as he calls them.²⁵ In all probability these too were the ashamed poor, but of a higher social rank, that is impoverished noblemen, merchants, and artisans of good name.²⁶ Judging from the amount of flour they received, they must have represented only a small group.²⁷ During the war years of 1447-1450, the Quattro Marie also helped displaced persons (forenses expulsi, pauperes expulsi).²⁸

On St. Martin's day the poor in rags received garments made of inexpensive gray woollen cloth (drapus baretinus) and then went in procession to the Duomo where the confraternity made a donation to the Office of the Fabric of the Cathedral.²⁹ This public display recalls the later

²⁵ Noto, Liber rationum I, xi. The accounts say only "pro modiis 16 st. 4 farine furmenti Christi pauperibus hoc anno in corbetis erogatis"; see Liber rationum I, 52. Noto's edition consistently reads furmenti rather than frumenti.

²⁶ In 1567 the statutes of Bologna's Conservatorio di S. Marta distinguished between two classes of ashamed poor. The first were called "the true ashamed" (veri vergognosi), that is, "the gentlemen, citizens, merchants, and also good artisans" who had always lived well (civilmente), but who had fallen on hard times. Members of the second class, presumably lesser tradesmen and manual laborers, were described as being somewhere between the ashamed poor and mendicants (tra veri vergognosi e mendicanti), because for them "there is not much shame in asking for alms or help from others." S. Marta assisted both groups but the bulk of the alms were intended for the first group; Ricci 326-27.

²⁷ Their annual rations of flour ranged between 1,023 kg. to 1,689 kg.; compare this to the total annual distributions of bread in Table 3 below.

²⁸ Noto, Liber rationum I, 49.

²⁹ "xi novembris et sunt pro dono sive elemoxina facta venerabili fabrice juxta solitum pro pauperibus vestitis per Scolam missis altari Ecclesie Maioris. . . ." Noto, Liber rationum I, xi; II, 237. An average of 3.7 meters

"Procession of the Poor" which was explicitly intended to publicize the work of the Aumône Générale, the municipally-run charity of Lyon.³⁰ In a similar fashion the procession on St. Martin's day brought the Quattro Marie to the attention of the Milanese and may have encouraged bequests and donations. This procession to the Duomo is the only example I can find of the poor having to perform a service in exchange for alms. This does not exclude the possibility that abuses existed and that other services may have been unofficially demanded of them.

The largest distribution (elemoxina magna) took place at Christmas.³¹ The Quattro Marie distributed paper packages (buscloti) containing salami, condiments, firewood, charcoal and increased quantities of the daily rations mentioned above.³² Each year the Quattro Marie was also obliged to administer about fifteen annual bequests. These normally consisted of masses and aid to the poor such as food, clothing, dowries, or freedom for incarcerated debtors. Often the recipients included male or

of cloth went into each garment. On baretinus or berretino cloth, see Anna Caso, "Per la storia della società milanese. I corredi nuziali nell'ultima età viscontea e nel periodo della Repubblica Ambrosiana (1433-1450)," Nuova Rivista Storica 65 (1981): 530.

³⁰ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Poor Relief, Humanism, and Heresy: The Case of Lyon," Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History 5 (1968): 264.

³¹ In the Milanese dialect x usually replaces s, hence elemoxina. For the Christmas and Easter alms distributions of the Florentine Buonomini, see Spicciati "Poveri Vergognosi" 130.

³² Noto, Gli amici xxx. However, no condiments, firewood, or charcoal are in evidence for 1447-1451.

female religious.³³ On one occasion the Quattro Marie also gave fairly expensive cloth to two poor nobles.³⁴ Clearly, then, the type of charity dispensed by the fifteenth-century Scuole did not differ from that of the Middle Ages. What had changed was its scope and administration which, with the introduction of double-entry accounts, a new system of distribution, and the use of tokens, had become more rational and systematic.³⁵

The first use of double-entry accounts by the Milanese Scuole is not known. The Quattro Marie possesses the earliest extant ledger, dating from 1434. While it is a double-entry ledger, the layout is crude compared to the accounts from 1447-1451.³⁶ Double-entry bookkeeping offered two main advantages. First, all the financial transactions of the Scuole were registered in one book, their dual entry acting as a check against errors. Second, a balance sheet could be easily drawn, thus permitting the administrators to plan their future activities with more foresight and efficiency. Still, the new system was not perfect. In the case of the ledger here in question, subtotals were frequently adjusted slightly in order to

³³ See for example Noto, Liber rationum I, 46, 48, 50.

³⁴ "pro brachiis drapi azuri dati Dei amore duobus nobilibus pauperibus. . ." Noto, Liber rationum V, 58.

³⁵ On the rationalization of poor relief, see Davis 240.

³⁶ Noto, Liber rationum I, xvi-xvii.

balance the accounts.³⁷ Moreover, although there is no evidence of fraud during this period, it was certainly not impossible. In adopting double-entry accounts, Italian confraternities were far ahead of their northern counterparts. In 1534 Lyon's newly-founded Aumône Générale was still utilizing single-entry bookkeeping and this, according to Natalie Davis, explains the errors which its account books contain.³⁸

The distribution of food and clothing became more rational because of its regularity and close supervision. Daily almsgiving replaced the intermittent assistance of the medieval fraternities. Moreover, two administrators were appointed to each of Milan's six gates. This enabled the administrators to familiarize themselves more readily with the needs of poor residents in their quarter and helped them to distinguish between the deserving and the undeserving poor.

The first use of tokens by the Milanese Scuole is unknown. The oldest surviving token was issued by the Quattro Marie sometime in the fifteenth century, but evidence from other parts of Europe indicates that charity

³⁷ On accounting errors in this period, see Carlo Cipolla, Between Two Cultures: An Introduction to Economic History (New York: Norton, 1992) 41: "Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, approximation certainly prevailed throughout the whole of Europe. In both public and private administrative accounts, errors in calculation were commonplace."

³⁸ Davis 244.

tokens were already in circulation by the middle of the thirteenth century.³⁹

By 1447 the practice of using tokens in Milan was firmly in place. In the years 1447-49, the Quattro Marie distributed approximately 3,390 metal tokens annually, most of them during Christmas. The prior and administrators received a small share to donate as they wished. The archbishop's vicar also received a few tokens for his own poor, while to many others (pluribus aliis) they were sold for three soldi imperiali apiece.⁴⁰

Tokens rationalized the dispensation of alms in several ways. By giving tokens once a year to those whom they judged to be truly deserving,

³⁹ William J. Courtenay, "Token Coinage and the Administration of Poor Relief During the Late Middle Ages," The Journal of Interdisciplinary History 3 (1972-73): 278-79. Descriptions and illustrations of Milanese charity tokens are found in Piero Vandoni, "Tessere milanesi di beneficenza," Rivista italiana di numismatica e scienze affini 5th ser. 2 (1954): 112-39; 3 (1955): 139-47; 4 (1956): 149-64. However, most of Vandoni's historical notes on the Quattro Marie are not supported by Noto's more recent studies. I am grateful to Professor Courtenay for bringing his article and Vandoni's to my attention. See also Mollat, The Poor 140, 156.

⁴⁰ Noto, Liber rationum, "Ratio signorum," I, 168; II, 186; III, 14. Like most Italian businesses in this period, the Quattro Marie recorded its financial transactions in the money-of-account known as lire imperiali or Imperial pounds, in which one lira was equal to 20 soldi or 240 denari; Noto Liber rationum I, xx. Occasionally, a second money-of-account was used within an individual entry (1 florin = 32 soldi), but this florin was always converted to lire imperiali when the entry was totaled. Around 1445, the actual rate of a real florin was about 768 denari, but by 1462 it had risen to 984 denari because of the devaluation of the petty coinage. See C. M. Cipolla, Money, Prices, and Civilization in the Mediterranean World (New York: Gordian Press, 1967) 48. See also Cipolla, "I precedenti economici," Storia di Milano, vol. 8 (Milan: Treccani, 1957) 367. During 1447-1449, the prices for wheat were always recorded in grossi, a silver petty coin worth 24 denari. On the grosso, see Cipolla, "I precedenti," 344.

the administrators ensured that only recommended individuals received assistance. The token identified the holder as a legitimate claimant to the alms of the Quattro Marie. Tokens also gave the poor greater flexibility because they could be redeemed at the holder's convenience and according to need. It is probable, therefore, that waste was reduced. Moreover, if it is correct to assume that the value of tokens was tied to a determined quantity of goods and not to the real coinage, then the poor were partially shielded from inflation.⁴¹

The positive effects of a more rational organization of poor relief are most apparent when one considers the actual quantity of alms distributed and the number of persons assisted daily. The Milanese figures are for a five-year period which was atypical of the century as a whole; however, they do reveal the magnitude of the charity which the Quattro Marie was capable of providing in a state of emergency.

Although Milan prospered throughout most of the fifteenth century, the years 1447 to 1451 were marked by profound upheaval. In August 1447 the last Visconti duke died, and a new Republic was established. Meanwhile, Milan was losing a protracted war with Venice. Peasants from the areas occupied by the Venetians fled to Milan seeking protection and

⁴¹ The disadvantage of money alms is discussed in W. P. Blockmans and W. Prevenier, "Poverty in Flanders and Brabant from the Fourteenth to the Mid-Sixteenth Century: Sources and Problems," Acta Historiae Neerlandicae 10 (1978): 48.

food. On August 18, 1447 the leaders of the newly established Ambrosian Republic, the Capitani e Difensori della Libertà, ordered the refugees of Monte di Brianza to return to their homes within two days for fear of public disorders.⁴² The command, it seems, was ignored, and the homeless and hungry continued to enter the city bringing with them the threat of plague. On August 27 a new proclamation commanded three commissioners from each of the city's six gates to collaborate with the archbishop's vicar in providing food and shelter for the stricken peasants. The incomes of all the city's hospitals were placed at the disposal of the vicar and his commission. Renters and debtors of the hospitals were instructed to pay the money they owed as soon as possible so that it might be applied to the relief effort.⁴³ Those who refused were liable to court action and, in serious cases, to imprisonment.⁴⁴

Then on October 18, 1448, in a move that stunned the leaders of the Ambrosian Republic, Francesco Sforza, the commander of the Milanese forces, made a separate treaty with the Venetians and prepared to lay claim

⁴² Francesco Cognasso, "La repubblica di S. Ambrogio," Storia di Milano, vol. 6 (Milan: Treccani, 1955) 400 n. 5; Alfio Natale, ed. Acta Libertatis Mediolani. I registri n. 5 e n. 6 dell'Archivio dell'Ufficio degli Statuti di Milano (Repubblica Ambrosiana 1447-1450) (Milan: Camera di Commercio, 1987): 191-92. I thank Roberto and Cristiana Menghi for this book.

⁴³ Cognasso 402.

⁴⁴ Noto, Gli amici 96.

to the duchy of Milan.⁴⁵ The situation in Milan deteriorated that winter after Sforza ordered the destruction of the Naviglio Grande, the largest canal then linking the city to the fertile Po valley.⁴⁶ The besieged city was close to starvation. One chronicler wrote that the population was reduced to eating asses, horses, cats, mice, herbs, and roots.⁴⁷ Table 1 gives bread prices recorded between March and December of 1447-1451.⁴⁸ From 1448 to 1449 alone, the cost of bread rose by about 159%.

In response to this crisis, the government took several measures. In the winter and spring of 1449, it fixed food prices and ordered all its citizens to declare what stores of grain, flour, legumes, oil, salted meat, and cheese they had in their cellars.⁴⁹ On February 6, 1449, the government announced that it would provide free doctors, medicines, and all necessary assistance to any poor citizen who was wounded while defending the city.⁵⁰ When the situation became critical, the Captains and Defenders of

⁴⁵ Cognasso 423.

⁴⁶ Cognasso 430 n. 2.

⁴⁷ Cognasso 444.

⁴⁸ These bread prices come from seven bequests which the Quattro Marie was obliged to fulfill annually; see Noto, Liber rationum I, 48, 50; II, 66, 68; III, 62, 64, 66; IV, 60, 62; V, 58, 60, 62. For the weights and measures used in these Milanese accounts, see Appendix 5.

⁴⁹ Cognasso 430; Natale 511, 532-34, 540-41, 559-61.

⁵⁰ "[E]ssendo disposti et inclinati li prefati Signori ad usare ogni liberalitate, benignitate et carità verso tuti li cittadini per meliore conservatione de questa inclita cità, perché sentono essere multi et molti in

TABLE 1
AVERAGE PRICE OF ONE STAIQ OF WHEAT
BREAD IN MILAN,
1447-1451 (in denari imperiali)

Year	Price
1447	127
1448	128
1449	332
1450	190
1451	141

Source: Noto, *Liber rationum*, annual bequests of Arenoldus de Albizate, Beltramina de Placentia, Johannes de Clericis de Lomatio, Antonius de Porris, Christoforus de Pessina, Johannes Balbi, Ambroxius de Bossis; see I, 48, 50; II, 66, 68; III, 62, 64, 66; IV, 60, 62; V, 58, 60, 62.

la dicta città, quali hano animo prompto et fervente a combattere per la deffensione d'essa, ma timendo che, si fusseno feriti, non poteriano per la povertà loro farse medicare et, cussì, forse moririano per dexasio de remedii, fano notitia, bando et crida: che ciaschuna persona talle non si dubiti per alchuno modo da essere in simili casi da essi Signori abandonati, ma vadeno come fidellissimi filioli del glorioso sancto Ambrosio, patrone et protectore de la dita alma città, a combattere contra li perfidi inimici de questa excelsa Comunità, chè a tuti quilli sarano feriti et si troverano poveri et inhabilli a farsi medicare, gli sarà proviste a le proprie spexe de la prelibata Comunità de medici, medecine, remedii et ogni cossa necessaria per sua guarisone et sallute. . . ." Natale 95-96.

the Republic permitted, or maybe forced, the poorest people to leave the city in search of provisions in the countryside. Sforza's army, hoping to bring the siege to a quick and successful end, forced these desperate paupers back into the city.⁵¹ Finally, on February 25, 1450, a throng of angry citizens overthrew what was left of the Ambrosian Republic and on the following day opened the gates of Porta Nova to Francesco Sforza, Milan's new lord.⁵²

As one would expect, the war and the siege of Milan decreased the normal revenues of the Quattro Marie and increased the need for expenditures. Regular returns on its rural holdings dropped sharply as the enemy requisitioned crops or destroyed them altogether.⁵³ As Table 2 illustrates, disbursements for charity in 1447 exceeded revenues by 35% and the deficit kept climbing: 74% in 1448, 117% in 1449, 141% in 1450, and falling to 59% in 1451. To compensate for the decline in regular income, the administrators were forced to sell 14 of their 44 urban holdings.⁵⁴

Under such grave conditions, the Quattro Marie devoted about 93% to 96% of its resources to the provision of the most essential items: food

⁵¹ Cognasso 444.

⁵² Cognasso 447-48.

⁵³ Noto, Liber rationum I, xviii-xix.

⁵⁴ Rural holdings, however, increased substantially in these five years. Noto, Liber rationum I, xii.

TABLE 2
INCOME AND CHARITABLE EXPENSES OF MILAN'S SCUOLA
DELLE QUATTRO MARIE, 1447-1451 (in *lire imperiali*)

Year	Income			Charitable Expenses			% Excess of Expenses over Income
1447	2,977	18s	2d	4,022	4s	12d	35
1448	2,444	10s	5d	4,243	0s	11d	74
1449	2,137	17s	11d	4,644	11s	6d	117
1450	1,078	16s	9d	2,599	7s	8d	141
1451	2,089	18s	0d	3,319	13s	2d	59

Source: Noto's table in *Liber rationum* I, xi n. 11. His figures are taken from the entries "Ratio elemoxinarum" and "Ratio intratarum," as recorded in the annual "Ratio generalis."

TABLE 3
APPROXIMATE ANNUAL DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD AND CLOTHING TO THE
POOR BY MILAN'S SCUOLA DELLE QUATTRO MARIE, 1447-1451

Type	1447	1448	1449	1450	1451
Bread * (in kg.)	64,594	58,173	55,706	23,465	38,329
Chickpeas (cooked, in kg.)	4,503	4,795	61	3,300	4,175
Pork meat (in kg.)	2,504	2,575	2,003	3,318	2,752
Salt (in kg.)	668	814	105	416	439
Wine (in liters)	35,476	41,734	26,418	15,656	26,946
Clothing (in garments)	129	165	0	183	138

* Wheat except for 1449 and 1450, when 72% and 30%, respectively, was mistura.

Source: Table 3 includes all the food and clothing listed in the alms account (ratio elemoxinarum), except for those annual bequests which were recorded but not actually paid out. See Appendix for description of Table 3. Noto, Liber rationum, "Ratio elemoxinarum," I, 46-52; II, 64-70; III, 62-68, 104; IV, 58-66; V, 54-64; "Prestinum Scole", I, 54-65; II, 70-81; III, 68-81; IV, 66-76; V, 64-69; "Ratio cixerorum", I, 79; II, 93; IV, 89; V, 83; "Ratio porchorum", I, 300-1; II, 302-5; III, 316-19, 324-25; IV, 306-13; V, 298-301; "Ratio salis", I, 81; II, 93; III, 91; IV, 95; V, 83; "Ratio vini", I, 103; II, 85; III, 83; IV, 83; V, 71; "Ratio vestimentorum", I, 298; II, 298; IV, 306; V, 298.

and clothing. Table 3 illustrates the nature and dimension of the assistance during these five years. The amount of bread distributed annually ranged between 23,465 kg. to 64,594 kg.⁵⁵ While bread remained the first priority, the availability of other items fluctuated substantially. Daily distributions of chickpeas had to be suspended completely during this period. The poor received them only at Christmas or as part of an annual bequest. All told, 1449 was the most difficult year: 72% of the bread had to be made from mistura, a mixture of wheat and other grains with a lower nutritional value than pure wheat.⁵⁶ With the exception of 61 kg. of cooked chickpeas which were part of several annual bequests, the Quattro Marie was compelled to discontinue even the Christmas distribution of this legume. Quantities of pork and salt were noticeably lower that year, and no clothing was available on the feast of St. Martin. The sudden drop in bread distributions in 1450 is perhaps explained by the fact that the siege of Milan

⁵⁵ It must be remembered of course that by the mid-fifteenth century Milan had five Scuole as large or larger than the Quattro Marie, and thus the total number of people assisted in Milan during this period was at least five times the numbers recorded in Table 3. In 1496 the Quattro Marie purchased about 42,000 kg. of grain for distribution to the poor. Noto and Viviani, Visconti e Sforza 230. Cf. the bread distributions of the Florentine Buonomini between 1442-1455 and 1466-1472; Spicciati 134-35.

⁵⁶ On mistura see Anna Maria Nada Patrone, Il cibo del ricco ed il cibo del povero (Turin: Centro Studi Piemontesi, 1981) 68. A. Francesco La Cava writes that in fourteenth-century Milan bread made from mistura contained only rye and millet; see his Igiene e sanità negli statuti di Milano del sec. XIV (Milan: Hoepli, 1946) 51, 79 no. LIV. To simplify I have treated mistura as though it were equal in weight to wheat.

came to an end on February 26 of that year, and as peasants returned to their homes and food could once again reenter the city the demand for bread from the Quattro Marie diminished.

The significance of the relief which the Quattro Marie provided during these years is apparent not only from the quantity of the alms but also from their quality. Because the range and individual portions of food available to Milan's poor cannot be known precisely, it is impossible to undertake a nutritional analysis of their diet here. Even if it were possible, it is extremely difficult to achieve accuracy since different nutritional tables sometimes yield significantly different results.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, some general conclusions can be drawn about the nutritional value of the food. To begin with, wheat was both the most costly of all the bread grains and the most nourishing. Dietary guidelines established in 1453 by Archbishop Giovanni Visconti for Milan's new civic hospital prescribed a daily allowance of about 650 gr. of fresh wheat bread for the sick, but around 870 gr. of mistura bread for paupers.⁵⁸ That is, the latter had to consume approximately 34% more

⁵⁷ Hémardinquer notes that Frederick Lane's estimate of 3,915 calories per capita on Venetian galleys is really only 3,000 if another conversion table is used. Jean-Jacques Hémardinquer, "Sur les galères de Toscane au XVI^e siècle," Pour une histoire de l'alimentation (Paris: Armand Colin, 1970) 92 n. 1.

⁵⁸ "Quotidianamente a ciascun povero si diano trentadue oncie di pane di mistura ben fatto in quattro pani o miche; agli uomini ventotto oncie di vino puro e schietto, ed alle donne ed ai fanciulli quattr'once. A tutti, inoltre, la minestra due volte al giorno, e poi carni a sufficienza la domenica, il martedì e il giovedì, e negli altri giorni cacio o uova o pesce. Durante la quaresima si

mistura bread to compensate for its lower nutritional value. Although in times of acute shortage (as in 1449) the Quattro Marie switched to this inferior bread, it generally dispensed bread made from pure wheat.⁵⁹

Second, chickpeas were among the richest sources of vegetable protein available at the time, for they yield a qualitatively superior protein when combined with cereals.⁶⁰ According to a study of diets in medieval Piedmont, the high price of chickpeas and their inclusion in testamentary bequests to a spouse or a relative suggest that they were the legumes which contemporaries prized most.⁶¹ In short, although there was no variation in the food alms, the two principal staples--wheat bread and chickpeas--were among the most nutritious foods available to the general population.

diano cibi congrui. E siccome i deboli e gl'infermi richiedono speciale trattamento, il vitto loro sia conforme all'infermità e debolezza ed agli ordini del medico; a ciascuno di essi si diano ogni giorno ventiquattro oncie di pane di frumento ben fatto, ventotto oncie di vino, carni fresche di pollo o vitello, una minestra ad essi conveniente e le altre cose necessarie in tali casi. Ogni ricoverato venga inoltre provveduto di vesti e camicie e calzature, secondo la necessità." Bascapè 404-5.

⁵⁹ From 1442 to 1472 the Florentine Buonomini also dispensed bread made solely from pure wheat. Spicciani "Poveri Vergognosi" 130.

⁶⁰ Today 100 gr. of cooked chickpeas provide 7 gr. of protein or about as much as 28 gr. of cooked lean beef. This amount of chickpeas, however, supplies nearly two and a half times as many calories as the beef. Chickpea protein contains abundant amounts of the amino acid lysine, but is deficient in the amino acids methionine and cystine, whereas for grains the reverse is true. Therefore, taken together the amino acids of chickpeas and cereals complement each other and supply a better protein, see Foods and Nutrition Encyclopedia, vol. 1 (Clovis, California: Pegus Press, 1983) 391.

⁶¹ Nada Patrone 127.

As for the quantity of alms, the 1447-1451 ledger gives no direct figures for the number of people assisted daily, although the approximately 3,390 tokens distributed at Christmas during 1447-1449 tell us something about the number of heads of families which the Quattro Marie was prepared to assist annually. It is also possible to estimate the number of people who received bread daily by using the data presented in Table 3 and the surviving instructions given to the baker of the Quattro Marie later in the century. In 1479 the baker was ordered to bake 12 moggia of wheat bread weekly for daily distribution to between 300 and 320 needy persons.⁶² This amounted to between 490 gr. and 523 gr. of daily bread for each person. By rounding off these daily per capita rations to 500 gr., I have constructed Table 4 which shows that between 1447 and 1451 the Quattro Marie fed approximately 128 to 353 every day.⁶³

How much of the daily nutritional requirements did these rations of bread represent? As mentioned, the Archbishop's guidelines stipulated that the sick receive around 650 gr. of wheat bread. Studies of diet in this period support the archbishop's numbers. For neighboring Pavia, Zanetti has estimated that in the fifteenth century per capita consumption of wheat

⁶² Viviani 230.

⁶³ Cf. the approximate number of persons receiving bread once a week from the Florentine Buonomini: 155 persons in 1442, 188 in 1444, 56 in 1446-47, 441 in 1466; Spicciani 137.

TABLE 4
APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF PERSONS RECEIVING
500 GRAMS OF BREAD DAILY FROM MILAN'S
SCUOLA DELLE QUATTRO MARIE, 1447-1451

Year	Recipients
1447	353
1448	318
1449	305
1450	128
1451	210

Source: Annual bread distributions listed in Table 3.

bread was approximately 654 gr.⁶⁴ Thus, the daily rations of bread which the Quattro Marie distributed would have been insufficient for an adult male, but in all probability many of those seeking help were women, children, and the elderly—all people with lower nutritional requirements.

Cremona's Consortium of the Donna and Consortium of St. Omobono

Unfortunately for the study of confraternal charity in Cremona, there are no extant ledgers as detailed and complete as those of the Quattro Marie. However, fragmentary evidence for the type and amount of charity distributed by the Consortium of the Donna and the Consortium of St. Omobono can be discerned from the extant fiscal exemptions, account books, and testamentary legacies.

In 1399, the Donna received fiscal exemptions from the duke of Milan for 30 moggia of grain and 8 carra of wine, approximately 3,070 kilograms and 5,436 liters respectively.⁶⁵ Four years later, in 1403, Cremona's ruler, Ugolino Cavalcabò, exempted the Donna from all municipal tolls on live animals and butchering in the amount of 120 pesi of meat, or about 924

⁶⁴ Dante Zanetti, Problemi alimentari di una economia preindustriale. Cereali a Pavia dal 1398 al 1700 (Turin: Boringhieri, 1964) 60. Most studies of European diets show daily consumptions of 500-600 gr. of bread, see Hugues Neveux, "L'alimentation du XIVe au XVIIIe siècle. Essai de mise au point," Revue d'histoire économique et sociale 51 (1973): 351.

⁶⁵ CS 188, f. 6r. This ducal exemption was renewed, along with other fiscal exemptions and privileges, in 1421, 1462, 1476, 1477, 1485, and 1496. See CS 1, 3-9.

kilograms, which the Donna distributed to the poor every year at Easter and at Christmas.⁶⁶ A regulation passed in 1493 concerning the distribution of alms indicates that at least at the end of the fifteenth century the Donna supplied the poor with grain, flour, legumes, and wine.⁶⁷

The only surviving quantitative data of actual food distributions are found in an account book which records the flour and bread given to the poor during the years 1471-1483.⁶⁸ This ledger contains the accounts of the Donna's miller and baker. Aside from the quantitative information it provides, the account book is noteworthy because it is organized in double-entry form. Clearly then, the use of advanced accounting techniques was

⁶⁶ Politi's description of this exemption underestimates the amount of meat by 60 *pesi*. The document states that 60 *pesi* were to be distributed at each of the two feasts. See CS 1, 2: "ipsi singulo anno faciant duas notabiles ellimosinas inter pauperes Christi Cremone, videlicet ad festum natiuitatis Domini nostri Yesu Christi et ad pasca Resurrectionis eiusdem de pensibus lx carnum pro quolibet festo."

⁶⁷ See CS 188, f. 34v: "decetero nullus massarius valeat neque possit distribuere nec erogare de dictis introytibus vne persone paupere et in calamitate constitute vltra quartarios duos frumenti aut farine, leguminum uel vini sine approbatione et consensu aliorum trium massariorum ad pretactum regimen deputatorum." The baker's accounts discussed below mention the slaughtering of calves for Easter and pigs shortly before Christmas, but it is by no means certain that the veal and pork went to feed the poor on these feast days. See CS 190, f. 64r: "Item d' hauer restituiti ad vltimo d' marzo in tre uolte per quelli che amazò li vitellj d' la pasqua. . . ." And f. 23r: "Item per staro vno d' pan cotto per li portadori che hano amazado li porci ad 20 d' desembre. . . ."

⁶⁸ CS 190. See Appendix 5 for the weights and measures used in medieval Cremona.

not limited to confraternities in large cities like Milan; the same practices were also employed by confraternities in provincial towns like Cremona.

In order to make some meaningful comparisons between the almsgiving of the Scuola delle Quattro Marie and that of the Consorzio della Donna, I have concentrated on a five-year period. The years 1477-1481 did not have the kind of significance for Cremona which the years 1447-1451 had for Milan, when that city was under siege and the Scuola delle Quattro Marie was operating under desperate conditions. The years 1477-1481 were chosen because the accounts for this five-year period are the most legible and the most complete.⁶⁹

The flour and bread accounts of 1477-1481 reveal three different types of almsgiving. The smallest were annual bequests and special distributions to the Friars Minor. Given the close ties between the Donna and the Franciscans, it is not surprising to find that they received food alms. What is somewhat surprising is the paucity of the total amount of the donations. During this entire five-year period, the Franciscans received only thirteen staia of bread.⁷⁰

As in the case of Milan's Quattro Marie, Cremona's Donna was obliged to distribute food on the anniversary of a donor's death, if the donor

⁶⁹ For example, unlike the accounts for other years, these include detailed notes on the amounts of bread that the baker either owed the Donna or was owed by the same; see Table 5.

⁷⁰ CS 190, ff. 17r, 23r.

so specified. Three donors appear regularly in the accounts. In 1393, Guido Piscarolo stipulated in his will that six staia of baked bread and two staia of wine be given to Christ's poor every year on February 16.⁷¹ The miller's and baker's accounts for 1477-1481 indicate that the Donna was still respecting Guido Piscarolo's wishes over eighty years later, distributing six staia of bread in the neighborhood (vicinia) of St. Erasmo.⁷² These same accounts show that the poor of the vicinia of St. Sepolcro received another six staia of baked bread in memory of Antonio Casalmorano.⁷³ Then in 1479, the Donna began to administer a further six staia of baked bread on behalf of Zaccarina da Bozzolo. She wanted to be remembered every year by her neighbors and by the friars at the monastery of St. Agostino.⁷⁴

Six staia of bread, then, was a customary bequest, one which bore little relation to the donors' wealth. We know nothing about Antonio

⁷¹ CS 188, f. 34v: "Mcccclxxx^o iij de xvj february. Dominus Guido de Pischarolo, qui multa legauit dicto consortio in suo testamento facto per <Nicolinum> de la Fossa notarium, ordinauit quod omni anno d<i>e xvj february obitus sui masarij dicti consortij debeant dare et destribuere inter pauperes Christi pro anima ipsius, stara vj panis cocti et stara duos vini, et celebrari facere vnam missam in perpetuum omni anno ut supra."

⁷² E.g. CS 190, f. 25v: "Item per sachi doy dati al suprascripto ad suprascripto per far la elemosina de domino Guido da Piscarolo la quale si dà in sancto Herasmo ad 17 de febraro--st. vj."

⁷³ CS 190, f. 25v.

⁷⁴ CS 190, f. 23r: "Pedro da Milan de Canzo <.....> de hauer per sachi doy de pan cotto del qual fo fato per la caritate de madona Zacharina da Bozolo, zoè stara vj de pan cotto, e dato in la visnanza de santo Thomaso a li soy vicini e a li frati de santo Augustino ad iij^o de septeembre."

Casalmorano's economic standing.⁷⁵ The other two donors, however, were wealthy individuals. Guido Piscarolo was remembered by the administrators for his generosity towards the Donna. Zaccharina da Bozzolo and her father Pietro were among the chief benefactors of both the Donna and the Consortium of St. Omobono. In 1414 Pietro da Bozzolo endowed both confraternities with their first extensive urban and rural properties.⁷⁶

The second largest food distributions took place at Easter and Christmas. On these feast days it appears that the Donna gave away flour, but no bread. As I noted earlier with regard to the Quattro Marie, this suggests that the beneficiaries were not the poorest of the poor since there would have been baking costs involved in turning the flour into bread.⁷⁷ It is impossible to know how much flour the Donna normally dispensed on these days because only the miller's account of 1480 specifically records the date and the recipient of each sack of flour. We do know that in that year the Donna distributed ninety staia of flour at Easter and sixty staia of flour at Christmas.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ He may have been the same Antonio Casalmorano who in 1425 appeared as a testamentary executor; see Politi, Antichi luoghi pii I, 54.

⁷⁶ Politi, Antichi luoghi pii I, xlvii n. 80.

⁷⁷ In 1477 two entries state that six staia of flour were specifically destined for li recomandati or "recommended poor." These two entries are the only ones of their kind during the entire five-year period. CS 190, f. 9r.

⁷⁸ CS 190.

The third and largest distribution of food alms consisted of bread handed out every Sunday.⁷⁹ According to an entry in the baker's account of 1447, it seems that the bread was distributed directly from the bakery to the poor.⁸⁰ It also seems probable that one or more members of the confraternity were present to ensure that the bread was properly cooked and the correct weight: not only did the baker's contract stipulate that the baker would be held responsible for any defective bread, but the accounts also reveal that the administrators carefully weighed the sacks of baked bread and kept records every time the baker oversupplied or undersupplied them.⁸¹

⁷⁹ A typical account of these weekly distributions of bread is the following, from January 1480 (CS 190, f. 25r):

Jesus 1479 et 80

Pedro da Milano de Canzo fornaro nostro del consorzio de' hauer per sachi cinque de pan cotto per la elemosina fata la prima dominica de zenaro che fò ad ij zoè st. xv qr. o

Item de' hauer per sachi cinque de pan cotto per la seconda dominica del suprascripto st. xv qr. o

Item per la tercia dominica del suprascripto de' hauer per sachi cinque de pan cotto st. xv qr. o

Item per la quarta dominica del suprascripto de' hauer per sachi cinque de pan cotto st. xv qr. o

Item per la quinta dominica de zenaro che fò ad xxx del suprascripto per sachi cinque de pan cotto st. xv qr. o

⁸⁰ CS 190, f. 13r: "Francescho da Riua de' hauere ad 14 de zugno per sua mercede de stara xv de pan fato coser al suo fornaro per la elimosina che fa ogni dominicha per li massarij del consorcio de madonna sancta Maria, a conputo de soldi 0 denari x imperiali per staro. . . ."

⁸¹ See Table 6 below and the following contract between the baker and the Consorzio della Donna (Cremona, 1477 June 8); CS 190, f. 68v [pagination mine]:

Table 5 records the amount of grain dispensed by the Donna between 1477 and 1481, either in the form of flour or bread.⁸² In constructing this table I have ignored the amount of bread which the baker owed the Donna. As can be seen in Table 6, except for the years 1479 and 1480, the difference between missing and surplus bread was insignificant. Table 5 shows that the Donna normally distributed over 20,000 kg. of grain annually. Why there was a noticeable decrease in the years 1478 and 1479 is difficult to say. A contract dated February 3, 1479, suggests that the Donna may have been financially strained by other commitments. The contract states that the Donna paid two painters the third of four payments

+ Yesus 1477

Adí viij de zugno domini Baptista de la Colla, Marchiso da Borgo et Francescho di Sozzi, massarij del consorcio de la Vergine Maria rimasono de acordio con Francescho da Riua de la visenanza de sancto Prospero de Cremona de far far lo nostro pane, zoè quel del consorcio de la elimosina da far fatta per li suprascritti massarij per cadauna settimana secondo el consueto. In questo modo, zoè chel ne promette de far el pane ben cotto e ben asasonato e promette darne libre sesanta octo de pane per ceschaduno staro ben cotto vt supra. E nuy li promettemo darge denari x imperiali per staro et darge la farina al peso, zoè pis viiij libre xvij de farina per sacho. Et con questo pacto che ogni volta chel nostro pane serà mal cotto ouer mal sutto promette de darge la tarra conueniente et debita. Et questo presente Iohanne da Mareliano dicto del'Agata [delagata MS], Nicolò de Castel e Bartolamé Marengono. Item con questo che li sia computati tanti sachi a nuy quanti li daremo a luy.

⁸² The miller's accounts indicate that most of the grain was wheat and only a fraction was mistura. In constructing this table I have used the total amount of grain which the Donna gave to the miller. As I explain in Appendix 6, I have calculated that the weight of a measure of grain (in this case a stajo of 24.72 kg.) would have yielded about the same weight in flour or bread.

totaling £ 1050 for their work in painting and gilding an altarpiece for the main altar of St. Francesco.⁸³

Table 7 estimates the number of mouths which the Donna probably fed every Sunday, assuming that each person received approximately 500gr. of either flour or bread. The lowest number was about 695 people in 1478; the highest was about 975 in 1481.

How did the assistance provided by these Milanese and Cremonese confraternities compare with that of other charitable institutions in this period?⁸⁴ Meaningful comparisons are difficult to make when the type of alms varied, unless we look exclusively at a single commodity, such as bread or grain. We have already seen that the Quattro Marie distributed approximately 23,465 kg. to 64,594 kg. of bread annually (Table 3), while the Donna averaged over 20,000 kg. annually (Table 5). From 1372 through the sixteenth century, a confraternity in the Low Countries distributed 14,688 kg. of rye annually.⁸⁵ In May of 1534, Lyon's public charity, the Aumône Générale, dispensed about 16,656 kg. of bread.⁸⁶

⁸³ CS 2, 1. Politi's inventory reads £ 1500. The manuscript, however, says "librarum millequinquaginta."

⁸⁴ For the charity of Florentine confraternities in the fifteenth century, see Henderson, Piety 354-410.

⁸⁵ Blockmans and Prevenier 42-43.

⁸⁶ Davis 275, Table 7. For additional figures on the amount of food distributed by northern confraternities and poor tables in the fifteenth-century, see Mollat, The Poor 273-77.

TABLE 5
APPROXIMATE ANNUAL DISTRIBUTION OF GRAIN
TO THE POOR BY CREMONA'S CONSORZIO
DELLA DONNA, 1477-1481

Year	Staia	Kilograms
1477	948	23,434
1478	732	18,095
1479	795	19,652
1480	933	23,063
1481	1,026	25,362

Source: CS 190.

TABLE 6
MISSING AND SURPLUS BREAD OF CREMONA'S CONSORZIO
DELLA DONNA, 1477-1481 (in kg.)

Year	Missing	Surplus
1477	100	99
1478	214	216
1479	291	212
1480	260	205
1481	88	89

Source: CS 190.

TABLE 7
 APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF PERSONS RECEIVING
 500 GRAMS OF FLOUR OR BREAD WEEKLY FROM
 CREMONA'S CONSORZIO DELLA DONNA, 1477-1481

Year	Recipients
1477	901
1478	695
1479	755
1480	887
1481	975

Source: Annual grain distributions listed in Table 6.

All in all, the totals recorded here are considerable. They represent a serious commitment on the part of donors and administrators to meet some of the needs of the poor.

In comparison with the charity of the Donna, that of St. Omobono appears to have been both more limited and more personal, even though in February 1495 the duke of Milan confirmed that St. Omobono would enjoy the same privileges and fiscal exemptions which the Donna had been granted by his predecessors in 1457 and 1485.⁸⁷

The sole surviving account book which records St. Omobono's charity dates from 1479 to 1498.⁸⁸ In examining the accounts for 1495 (the same year the confraternity received the aforesaid ducal letter), one finds that St. Omobono's alms included the distribution of alms on the anniversary of the deaths of two donors, and a Christmas distribution of approximately 190 staia (4,734 kg.) of bread made from millet.⁸⁹ The confraternity also distributed alms to about 45 individuals or religious institutions--many of

⁸⁷ CS 298, 1.1.

⁸⁸ CS 389 also contains a record of agricultural and other revenues, as well as expenses for lamp oil and hospital bedsheets, and payments to agricultural laborers, chaplains, and visiting preachers. Although there are several references to a hospital, it is not clear whether it belonged to the confraternity. The 1495 accounts are found on ff. 116r-123v.

⁸⁹ CS 398, ff. 118r, 119v.

them identified by name, unless they were the ashamed poor. The breakdown of the recipients is as follows:⁹⁰

- 1 unnamed poor man
- 1 unnamed gentleman (for a cape)
- 4 sick persons
- 6 female ashamed poor (4 received dowries)
- 7 male and female religious communities
- 11 named girls or unnamed ashamed poor (for dowries)
- 14 named persons (usually for clothing)
- 5 unidentifiable alms

Not surprisingly, the confraternity made social distinctions in allocating its charity. Four povere vergognose received the equivalent of fifteen Imperial pounds each towards their dowries, whereas most other girls (many of them identified as the daughters of named fathers or mothers) received only five Imperial pounds apiece.⁹¹

The selective number of alms and the attention given to individual needs (clothing, dowries, or money) is reminiscent of Bishop Ugolino's instructions that the confraternity's administrators concern themselves personally with the poor as their patron saint had done.

The charitable activities of these late medieval confraternities did not eliminate poverty. Nonetheless, their charity represented a conscious improvement over the poor relief efforts of the past. Their charity was

⁹⁰ Note that four girls are counted twice because they were among the ashamed poor who received dowries.

⁹¹ CS 389, ff. 119r-123r. On the importance of confraternal dowries, see Black 178-84.

continuous, substantial, and administered according to rational principles. One preliminary conclusion is that confraternal charity was most successful when it took the form of "disaster relief." Modern economics distinguishes between "structural poverty"--caused by market forces and social structures--and "cyclical poverty"--caused by war, famine, epidemics, old age, and childbirth. Adopting this distinction, it appears that the assistance of the confraternities was less successful in addressing structural poverty and better equipped to respond to cyclical poverty. In an acute crisis, such as a war, confraternal resources could be relied upon to prevent even greater disasters such as mass starvation. At the height of Milan's war against Francesco Sforza, the Scuola della Donna and others like it did not limit their assistance to their usual "recommended" clients. They fed as best they could those outsiders who had come to Milan in search of shelter and aid. Finally, it must be said that while confraternities did not eliminate "structural poverty" they very likely saved many "resident poor" from potentially worse fates: from becoming vagrants, exploited servants, or social outcasts.

Conclusion

This dissertation has examined some of the important and varied roles which lay confraternities played in the later Middle Ages. One result of this research concerns the reasons for and the methods by which the cult of the Virgin's conception spread throughout northern Italy in the mid-fourteenth century. Despite the controversy which surrounded it, the cult spread partly because Franciscan friars actively involved the laity in its propagation, through the creation of new confraternities. The feast also spread because it harmonized so well with contemporary Marian devotions. Indeed, the liturgy of this feast was nearly identical to the other traditional Marian feasts. What is particularly interesting about the early history of these confraternities is that the Franciscan support for Mary's "immaculate conception"--so persuasively argued by Duns Scotus--was never mentioned in the fourteenth-century statutes. At this stage of the research it is impossible to give a definitive explanation for this omission. It appears, however, that unlike the friars in the universities, those friars who sponsored the new confraternities were either unwilling or unable to take a public stand on the question.

A second conclusion has to do with the different reasons behind the foundation of the Consortium of St. Omobono. Ostensibly Cremona's bishop founded it to promote piety, charity and to combat heresy. Yet, there is also evidence that the Consortium served to restore some of the civic pride of a city that in 1334 had lost its political independence to the Milanese. The establishment of a confraternity in honor of Cremona's patron saint gave the citizenry a renewed sense of their own unique identity. Moreover, at a time when the Milanese authorities were increasing their control over Cremona's municipal institutions, the opportunities for leadership, power, and prestige which the Consortium's administrative positions offered must have appealed to some Cremonese citizens.

A third conclusion concerns the transformation and rationalization of confraternal charity in the northern Italy. Like the Scuole Grandi in Venice and Orsanmichele in Florence, confraternities in Milan and Cremona developed new systems to respond more effectively to human crises. Innovations included the adoption of city-wide distributions, double-entry accounts, and universally applied distinctions between the deserving and the undeserving poor. Most important, these innovations permitted the confraternities to assist the poor on a larger scale than previously recognized.

It must be emphasized, however, that this rationalization of charity did not constitute a radical departure from past attitudes and practices, nor did

it represent an inexorable move towards a "bourgeois" society.¹ Unlike the example of many cities in northern Europe beginning in the sixteenth-century, there was no wholesale government centralization of poor relief in early modern Italy. While large state-funded hospitals were created in fifteenth-century Lombardy, the confraternities of that region remained private and independent institutions until the eighteenth century. Donations to such institutions remained voluntary; they were not levied by the state. Certainly charity retained its religious character, even when it may also have been motivated by a desire to prevent social unrest and to preserve the social order. The repeated references to the poor as pauperes Christi, the compassion shown to the sick, the old, the unmarried, and the otherwise vulnerable—all attest to a continued interest in the material and spiritual welfare of some, though not all, of the poor.

¹ This point is made by Giovanni Assereto, in his wise and informative review article "Pauperismo e assistenza. Messa a punto di studi recenti," Archivio storico italiano 141 (1983): 259.

Appendix 1

Document Descriptions and Editorial Practices

The codex containing the 1347 Statutes of the Consorzio della Donna comprises 34 parchment and 14 paper leaves, measuring 400 x 270 mm (Cremona, Archivio di Stato, CS 188). The red leather cover probably dates from the seventeenth century. The codex was restored in 1959. Because the foliation in the codex is incomplete and full of errors, I follow the numbering adopted by Politi in his document description.¹ The Statutes are written on parchment, beginning on folio 4r and ending on folio 5v.

In addition to the Statutes, the codex contains copies of bequests and fiscal privileges, membership lists from the mid-fourteenth century to the first half of the sixteenth century, documents pertaining to acquired properties, excerpts from the minutes of two meetings, and lists of officers to 1680.

Except for the first paragraph, the text of the Statutes is arranged in two columns. The script is round gothic textual, a bookhand characteristic

¹ Politi, Antichi luoghi pii I, 141-42.

of Italy and southern France. Several minor emendations were made by the first hand, and by one or more cursive notarial hands. The first paragraph is perhaps the work of a different, though contemporary, hand; the final paragraph is most definitely so.

Whenever alterations and corrections appear to be attributable to the original hand, I have simply noted the change in the textual apparatus without further comment. But when the corrector appears to have been someone other than the original scribe, I have added the words "by later hand".

The text has few decorations. The initial "I" of "Incipit" takes up three lines and has fine ink-line flourishes. The initial "Q" of "Qui" (par. 2) is four lines high and has a long extension running eight lines down the left margin of the text. The only other enlarged initial is the "I" of "In" (par. 17). Paragraph marks introduce each section. Any colored inks in the text are indiscernible on microfilm.

Bishop Ugolino Ardengherio's 1357 letter exists in two eighteenth-century paper pamphlets in Cremona's Archivio di Stato, (CS 291,2).² Both copies are unadorned and appear to be the work of the same copyist, since they are virtually identical in layout, handwriting, and content. It would seem that the copyist made a first rough draft (which I identify by the

² Politi, Antichi luoghi pii I, 168.

siglum A), from a now lost copy or original. In it he retained many of the medieval abbreviations and left blank spaces when he could not understand the text. A second hand (A2) filled in the missing words and made a few corrections. The first hand then executed a fair copy (B), silently expanding most of the medieval abbreviations. I have chosen A as the basis of my edition. Paragraphs and folio numbers are my own, since both are absent in the two copies.

* * * * *

I have retained the original spelling of the manuscripts and silently expanded all the abbreviations, according to the prevailing usage of Cremonese scribes. The scribes always omitted the accents and apostrophes so essential to Italian and its numerous dialects. For guidance in this area, I have relied on the excellent edition by Rossana Saccani, Antichi testi cremonesi. Due libri di conti del convento di S. Antonio di Cremona (1428-1433) (Cremona: Biblioteca Statale e Libreria Civica, 1985). Numbers are reproduced exactly as they appear in the manuscripts: either as Roman numerals, Arabic numerals, or spelled out. When necessary, I have emended word divisions. Cremonese scribes commonly used the long i (here transcribed as j), and they distinguished between u and v only in the case of initials when v was sometimes preferred. Bishop Ugolino's letter is a

hodgepodge of "classical" and medieval spellings because the eighteenth-century copyist retained most of the medieval orthography but introduced the "e-cedilla" as the equivalent of the "classical" diphthongs ae and oe.

Square brackets indicate my editorial additions, while angle brackets denote illegible letters or words. In the textual apparatus "ed." refers to readings which I have supplied. Capitalization and punctuation follow modern usage, and names of prayers are underlined. Abbreviations of the books of the Bible follow the style used by Boniface Fischer, et al., eds., Biblia sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983).

Appendix 2

Statutes of the Consorzio della Donna (Cremona, 1347 April)

ASC, CS 188, ff. 4r-5v

/f.4r/ [1] Incipit liber consorcij et societatis beate gloriosse uirginis Marie in quo scripta sunt^a omnia statuta et ordinamenta que debent obseruari^b per homines et personas dicti consorcij et societatis, quod factum et scriptum fuit^c MCCCXLVII indictione XV^d de mense aprillis. Et tunc erant massarij et ministri dicti consorcij et societatis anni predicti domini Fachinus de Galignano, Vgnabenus de Cauucijs, Facinus de Vida et Ghirardus de Trescoribus.

[2] "Qui honorificauerit me, glorificabo illum," primo Regum, secundo capitulo.¹ Si seruus dominum suum honorare studuerit, profecto eius gratiam optinebit. Et hoc probatur aperte in curijs dominorum ubi

^a scripta sunt corrected from scriptum est MS; superfluous sunt added above line by later hand

^b obseruari corrected from obseruare MS

^c fuit above line MS

^d XV ed.: <.> V MS (erasure where X should be)

aduertendum^a si homines cum sint mali et pauperes respetiue, siue ingrati et inpotentes, ita prouident seruis suis, quanto magis omnipotentis Dei bonitas hec implebit. Similiter et Virgo beata. Notandum est igitur quod quanto magis Domina nostra pre contis^b in omnibus uirtutibus est perfecta, tanto plus erit se honorantibus^c magis grata. Melius est ergo seruire gratissime ac potenti quam alicui alteri, ne forte, cum in tempore angustie ad illam recursum habuerimus, de nobis querelam ab ipsa protinus audiamus: "Vos inhonorastis me." Nec mirum si seruos Domina non exaudit, cum ipsi illam honorare noluerint. Si ergo cupis quod te in tuis necessitatibus debeat adiuuare, illam in infrascriptis modis studeas honorare. Qui enim illam honorificauerit sicut decet, in suis tribulationibus obuiabit illi, quasi Mater honorificata, et uiam salutis illi ostendet. Ait et enim per prophetam: "Sacrificium laudis honorificabit me et illic iter quo ostendam illi salutare Dei."²

[3] Preterea Christus qui mandauit honorari parentes, cum propter eum hec facias, plurimum acceptabit. Ad quod facit illud quod ait: "Qui uos audit, me audit. Et qui uos recipit, me recipit."³ Fertur quod quidam frater minor post mortem aparens inter alia istud dixit: "Qui uolunt Christo ualde placere, Matrem eius /f.4rb/ studeant honorare."

^a aduertendum followed by expunged quia homines MS

^b pre contis ed.: precontis MS (variant of prae cunctis)

^c honorantibus corrected from honorantitibus by later hand

[4] Preterea^a quanto ab aliquo uel per aliquem maiora beneficia es adeptus, tanto sibi es amplius obligatus. Set omnes a Matre Redemptoris salutis eterne beneficia receperunt et alia carismata gratiarum, quidam magna et aliqui potiora, ergo sibi quilibet est obligatus. Ingrati uero gratijs priuabuntur, tam preteritis quam futuris. Dicit enim beatus Bernardus: "Ingratitudo obstruit uias gracie."⁴ Et iterum: "Ingratitudo est uentus urens, siccans fontem pietatis."⁵

[5] Et non tantum ut serui dominam, set ut etiam adoptiui filij Matrem suam, debent omnes Dominam honorare, presertim cum Mater sit eius quem Patrem nostrum in oracione dominica nominamus. Et ex hoc sibi accumulabunt gloriam celestium thesaurorum. Scriptum est enim: "Sicut qui thesaurizat, sicut qui honorificat matrem suam."⁶

[6] Adhuc cum sit omnium set suorum precipue aduocata potentissima, sapientissima et piissima super omnes, ideo peramplius honoranda.

[7] Primo dico quod est potentissima; est enim Caçelaria regni Dei sine qua nemo potest gratiam a Deo impetrare. Unde dicit beatus Augustinus: "Nichil uult nos Filius Dei habere quod non transeat per manus Marie."⁷ Set et sanctus Ambrosius in oracione loquitur sibi dicens: "O Domina, te orante, omnes orabunt, omnes iuuabunt; te cessante, nullus orabit, nullus iuuabit."⁸

^a Preterea ed.: Pretera MS

[8] Secundo dico quod est sapientissima. Unde figuratur per sapientem mulierem que Daud cum Absalone filio suo concordauit, de qua illud Sapientiae potest exponi: "Sapiens mulier edificat domum suam".^a

[9] Tercio dico quod fuit, et est^b piissima, et semper erit, et magis suis deuotis, sicut miracula infinita hoc probant, ad quam fiducialiter ecclesia clamat /f.4va/ dicens: Salue Regina misericordie etc., et infra, Eya ergo Aduocata¹⁰ etc. De hijs tribus dicit B.: "Non deest ei potencia quia Mater est potencie, nec sapientia quia Mater est sapientie, nec pietas quia Mater est misericordie."¹¹ Qui ergo non eget eius auxilio, supradicta non curet implere. Set constat quod quilibet indiget eius auxilio, ergo unusquisque curet sua beneplacita adimplere.

[10] Hinc est quod, ad Dei honorem et reuerentiam Matris eius et animarum salutem, in multis prouinciarum terris facta est congregacio hominum, que appellatur societas Virginis gloriose in loco fratrum minorum, qui sibi precipue sunt deuoti. Sperant enim quod sicut comunitas cum aliqua mundi regina ab hostibus uisibilibus sunt securi, ita qui sunt de societate Regine celi ab hostibus inuisibilibus erunt tuti.

[11] Hec autem societas multipliciter ipsam uenerabilem^c Reginam celi honorat, in ieiunijs et orationibus et eleemosynis. Item in missis,

^a suam ed.: suum MS

^b et est added at end of line by later hand

^c uenerabilem ed.: superfluous stroke over second e

predicationibus et oblationibus et in multis bonis alijs sibi gratis et illis ualde utilibus, sicut infrascriptis statutorum capitulis continetur, satis utique facilibus ad seruandum ob hanc causam precipue quia, ut ait beatus Gregorius: "Consideracio premij minuit uim flagelli."¹² Non solum enim ex predictis ab ipsa pia Matre expectatur auxilium in presenti et eternum premium in futuro, uerum etiam a sancta Matre Ecclesia et prephato ordine fratrum minorum magna premia inpetrantur spiritualia. Et primo ab Ecclesia. Qui^a et enim fuerit de societate, quociens conuenerit ad capitulum fratrum minorum ad agenda que ad honorem dicte Virginis ibi fiunt, tociens a domino papa Alesandro habet de indulgencia^b C. dies.¹³ Item in qualibet dominica ultima cuiuslibet mensis anni, quatuor annos et CC. dies.

[12] Item in qualibet alia dominica, tres annos et CC. dies.

[13] Item quociens audierint in loco nostro predicationem Domine, tociens habebunt indulgenciam^c trium annorum et XLVIII dierum. Similiter de missa eiusdem quociens solempniter /f.4vb/ celebratur, quemadmodum in priuilegijs nostri ordinis hec plenius continentur.

[14] Item frater Gondisaluus^d condam generalis ordinis supradicti¹⁴ concessit omnibus perseuerantibus in societate predicta quod participes

^a Qui preceded in left margin by nota

^b indulgencia ed.: induligencia MS

^c indulgenciam ed.: induligenciam MS

^d Gondisaluus corrected from Gonsaluus MS

essent omnium missarum, oracionum et ieiuniorum et aliorum omnium bonorum que fiunt a contis fratribus ordinis sepe dicti. Similiter et frater Alexius de Collibus olim prouincialis Bononiensis¹⁵, idem fecit scilicet de conctis meritis que in prouincia ista fiunt. Et qui scripturas hec omnia continentes uidit, testimonium perhibuit. Et uerum est testimonium eius.

[15] Sciendum est autem quia hec societas habet tria genera statutorum, quorum unum ordinat illos ad Deum, aliud ad eius Matris honorem, aliud uero ad proximum. Explicit prolegus.

[16] Incipiunt statuta et ordinamenta^a dicti consorcij et societatis, que facta fuerunt in loco fratrum minorum de Cremona, et ordinatum dictum consorcium fuit M^oIIIcXXXIII^o de mense nouembris, et primi massari et ministri fuerunt domini Aualinus de Gnochis et Amadeus de Lisolla.

[17] In primis statutum est quod duo uel quatuor massarij siue ministri eligantur, qui regant, gubernent et execucioni mandare curent omnia facta dicte societatis et omnia et singula ad eorum officium spectancia que cognouerint pro meliori et fieri ordinabuntur per homines dicte societatis siue consorcij, quorum officium duret ad uoluntatem hominum dicte societatis siue consorcij.

[18] Item quod quilibet dicte societatis in ultima dominica cuiuslibet mensis teneatur conuenire ad ecclesiam fratrum minorum, et audire predicationem et missam gloriosse uirginis Marie, et offerre candellam uel

^a ordinamenta ed.: ordinameta MS

denarios secundum quod fuerit ordinatum, et intrare capitulum quedam utilia audituri. Et ut de predicta dotrina melius recordetur, pulsabitur campana in precedenti sero et vexillum societatis in ecclesia ponetur.

[19] Item quod omnes de societate predicta teneantur et debeant ieiunare in^a omnibus vigilijs beatissime uirginis Marie, uidelicet conceptionis que est octaua die mensis decembris, natiuitatis eiusdem que est die octaua mensis setembris, anunciacionis que est die XXV^o mensis marcij, purificationis que est die secundo februarij^b, et assumptionis^c que est die quinto decimo augusti. De alijs ieiunijs ab ecclesia ordinatis, secundum uoluntatem et possibilitatem cuiuslibet relinquitur statuendum et faciendum.

[20] Item quod quilibet de societate teneatur bis quolibet anno uel saltem semel sua confiteri peccata et penitenciam obseruare. De comunione, cum sit preceptum Ecclesie quod quilibet semel in anno se comunicet de corpore Christi, relinquitur uoluntati et cognitioni cuiuslibet, secundum quod dispositi fuerint et cognouerint se dispositos et sufficientes ad hec de consensu suorum confessorum.¹⁸

[21] Item quod quilibet dicte societatis teneatur et debeat qualibet die septies dicere Pater noster et totidem Aue Maria pro commemoratione

^a in above line MS

^b februarij ed.: frebruarij MS

^c assumptionis ed.: assuptionis MS

septem gaudiorum uirginis Marie ut de nobis peccatoribus misereatur et nos habeat commendatos, et ter Pater noster ad honorem beatissime Trinitatis, et quinquies etiam Pater noster ob reuerentiam quinque plagarum Christi.

[22] Item cum inter cetera festa gloriose uirginis Marie festum conceptionis minus consueuerit celebrari, et per multa miracula aparuerit, ut narat beatus Anselmus, quod placuerit uirgini Marie, et placeat quod dictum festum sue conceptionis specialiter celebretur, ordinatum est^a quod ipsum festum pro nostro festo principaliter celebremus.¹⁷ Et quilibet de societate in dicto festo conceptionis teneatur uenire ad ecclesiam predictorum fratrum et, hora ordinata, uexillo uirginis Marie precedente, offerre ad altare cereum uel candellam sicut fuerit ordinatum. Similiter fiat in annunciatione beatissime Virginis ad cuius honorem fuit dedicata ecclesia fratrum minorum.

[23] Item quod sex candelle grosse et duo cerei magni fiant et manuteneantur semper expensis dicte societatis, que candelle et /f.5rb/ cerei operentur quociens missa cantabitur ad instanciam hominum dicte societatis in quolibet die et casu, secundum quod placuerit massarijs dicte societatis. Et eciam ematur oleum ad suficienciam pro comburendo in lampade posita ante altare magnum. Et pro faciendo dictas expensas, quilibet de societate teneatur et debeat qualibet ultima dominica cuiuslibet mensis soluere quatuor denarios ad^b minus, secundum conditionem et qualitatem cuiuslibet soluentis.

^a est above line MS

^b ad ed.: et MS

[24] Item quod quilibet dicte societatis tempore mortis sue teneatur pro remedio sue anime aliquid relinquere dicto consorcio, secundum possibilitatem suam et pro predictis expensis et eleemosynis tribuendis.

[25] Item si contigerit aliquem de societate de hoc seculo migrare, acomodetur illi cultra¹⁸ societatis. Et omnes de societate predicta quibus notum fuerit teneantur eiusdem funeri assistentes personaliter honorare, nisi iustam habuerit causam. Et sequenti die dominica ultima illius mensis in congregatione facta ad predicationem in ecclesia et in capitulo, frater qui predicauerit uel massarij debeant recomendare animam dicti defuncti et imponere quod quilibet dicat decies Pater noster cum Aue Maria pro anima defuncti. Et quilibet dicere teneatur et recordationem facere alijs qui tunc non erunt presentes quod faciant illud idem.

[26] Item quod homines et massarij societatis procurent quolibet anno habere unum bonum et sapientem fratrem qui specialiter curam habeat et diligenciam societatis in predicando et dicendo missas quociens oportuerit.

[27] Item si contigerit litem uel discordiam fieri uel moueri inter aliquos dicte societatis tam in ciuili quam criminali causa, quod actor siue offensus in quolibet casu teneatur primo, antequam recurat ad rationem uel aliquem officiallem Cremone, suam querellam proponere coram massariis dicte societatis, qui massarij teneantur, auditis alegationibus et uisis rationibus /f.5va/ parcium et habito consilio, si ipsis massarijs uidebitur, tam ab illis de societate quam a sapientibus uiris, inter ipsos discordes pacem et

concordiam ponere et iuste sentenciare, quam sentenciam teneantur
obseruare sub pena inposita per ipsos massarios.

[28] Item si aliquis de societate offensus uel^a dampnificatus^b fuerit iniuste, uel contra ipsum ageretur et procederetur contra ius per rectores uel officiales comunis Cremone, uel per dominum episcopum et eius officialles, seu per aliquam uniuersitatem uel collegium uel singularem personam, quod ille talis dicte societatis debeat^c defendi et manuteneri^d in iure suo per massarios et homines dicte societatis, et eciam si necesse fuerit expensis dicte societatis, prius habito consilio dicte societatis, maxime si contigerit expendi de auere dicte societatis pro defendendo illum tallem dicte societatis.

[29] Item quod nullus publicus vsurarius et dacierius^e, lusor^f azardi uel bescacerius et qui publice tenuerit concubinam, et habens uxorem publice usus fuerit cum mulieribus male fame, hij talles non admitantur in dicta societate. Et si intrauerint, cum hoc notum fuerit massariis, debeant

^a uel followed by expunged dampnatus MS

^b dampnificatus ed.: dapnificatus MS

^c debeat added in left margin with sign indicating its correct place in the text by later hand

^d manuteneri followed by superfluous debeat added above line by later hand

^e vsurarius et dacierius added above line by later hand

^f lusor ed.: luxor MS

remoueri et de libro societatis cancelari, si a predictis uiciis et peccatis se noluerint abstinere.

[30] Item quod dicta capitula ter ad minus omni anno legantur coram hominibus dicte societatis quando fuerint congregati in capitulo in ultima dominica mensis septembris, decembris et aprilis.^a

[31] Item unusquisque de societate predicta teneatur offerre unam candelam ad altare beate Virginis in qualibet ultima dominica cuiuslibet mensis anni et in qualibet festiuitate predictae Virginis gloriose, ut de illis candellis misse dicantur pro animabus illorum de societate tam uiuorum quam et mortuorum, et fiat istud hoc modo ut, intrent bini et bini in^b capitulo usque /f.5vb/ ad altare predictum cum candelis accensis ordinate ac deuote procedant.

[32] Et quia ut ait Saluator: "Beati misericordes, quoniam ipsi misericordiam consequentur,"¹⁹ ideo statutum est quod teneantur in qualibet ultima dominica cuiuslibet mensis anni de bonis comunibus societatis predictae distribuere, per se uel alios, bonam quantitatem panum, secundum suum posse, et maxime uerecondis pauperibus et infirmis. Nam "sicut aqua extinguit ignem, ita elemosina extinguit peccata."²⁰ Amen.^c

^a aprilis followed on new line by cancelled Item nullusquisque de societate predicta MS

^b in ed.: erasure MS

^c Amen added by later hand

[33]^a Item cum^b sancta et salubris sit cogitatio pro defunctis exorare ut a peccatis soluantur, ordinauerunt uenerabiles uiri masarij societatis uirginis Marie quod, pro animabus omnium defunctorum qui fuerunt de benedicta societate predicta, quater^c in anno, uidelicet in crastinum^d conceptionis, natiuitatis, purificationis et anunciationis Virginis gloriose, solemniter cantetur in domo fratrum minorum una missa de mortuis, et post missam fiat processio circa claustrum ecclesie dictorum fratrum, et quilibet de ista societate teneatur uenire ad predictam missam et ad processionem et dicere quindecim Pater noster et totidem Aue Maria.

^a entire paragraph is by later hand

^b cum followed by erasure of half a line MS

^c quater later hand adds natiuitatis in right margin (with sign indicating its correct place in the text) and alters ter to quater

^d crastinum followed by cancelled siue in die MS

1. I Sm. 2:30.

2. Ps. 49(50):23.

3. Probably a conflation of Lc. 10:16 and Mt. 10:40.

4. Bernard, De misericordiis, par. 1; in S. Bernardi Opera, vol. 6A, eds. J. Leclercq and H. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1970) 40: "Dico ego vobis quoniam pro meo sapere nihil ita displicet Deo, praesertim in filiis gratiae, in hominibus conversionis, quemadmodum ingratitude. Vias enim obstruit gratiae, et ubi fuerit illa, iam gratia accessum non invenit, locum non habet."

5. Bernard, Sermones super Cantica Canticorum, ser. 51, par. 6; in S.

Bernardi Opera, vol. 2 (Rome, 1958) 87: "Ingratitudo ventus urens, siccans sibi fontem pietatis, rorem misericordiae, fluenta gratiae."

6. Sir. 3:5.

7. Not found.

8. Not found.

9. Prv. 14:1.

10. These are the first and sixth lines of an "Antiphona Maior de B.M.V." composed by the eleventh-century monk, Herimannus Contractus (d. 1054); see Guido Maria Dreves and Clemens Blume, eds. Analecta hymnica medii aevi, vol. 50 (Leipzig: O. R. Reisland, 1907) 318.

11. Not found.

12. The same citation appears in the Parma statutes. According to Giordani it is probably based on Gregory, Moralia in Iob, liber III, ix; see M. Adriaen, ed., Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina, vol. 143 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979) 125. Giordani 360 n. 4.

13. Alexander IV (1254-61). There is no record of this papal indulgence in J. H. Sbaralea's Bullarium franciscanum romanorum pontificum, vol. 2 (Rome, 1761), hereafter BF. Nor does it appear in the 1487 inventory of the Donna's bulls, privileges, and exemptions (CS 189). Alexander IV did grant similar indulgences in 1257 and 1258 to Marian confraternities in Bagnorea, Osimo, Recanati, Toscanella (BF II, 261-62, 280), and Reggio Emilia (Bonaventura Giordani, "Acta Franciscana e tabulariis Bononiensibus deprompta," Analecta Franciscana 9 (1927): 22 n. 72). Probably, therefore, the author of the Donna's Statutes simply borrowed this indulgence from another confraternity. Similarly, the large indulgences of 4 years and 200 days, etc. which follow in paragraphs 11-13 cannot be verified. Parma's statutes contain almost identical concessions. Giordani suspects that either they are forgeries or they are the sums of different concessions, rather than individual grants. Nonetheless, he does concede that during Alexander IV's reign Rome did grant large indulgences (see Giordani (Parma) 357). On the forgery of papal bulls in the Middle Ages, see BF I, xvi-xviii.

14. Gonsalvo of Valboa, Minister General from 1304 to 1313; John Moorman, A History of the Franciscan Order: From Its Origins to the Year 1517 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) 589. No record of this privilege exists in the Donna's extant documents.

15. I have been unable to find any information on Alexius de Collibus, but according to Moorman, Cremona belonged to the Franciscan province of Bologna from as early as the mid-thirteenth century; Moorman 158.

16. Lateran IV (1215), c. 21.

17. A reference to three miracles performed by the Virgin Mary in exchange for promises to celebrate and spread the feast of her conception. The miracles appear in a work of unknown authorship which circulated under the name of Sermo or Epistola b. Anselmi de Conceptione b. Mariae; see Bouman 128 n. 44. For a list of the various versions and editions of this story, see O'Connor, The Dogma 522 n. 1; English translation, 522-27. In the Middle Ages it was widely believed that St. Anselm had instituted the feast of the Immaculate Conception. In fact, as Edmund Bishop has shown, it was not St. Anselm but his nephew, Anselm the Younger, who had been the fervent champion of the feast. The similarity of the two names seems to have led medieval writers to confuse the nephew with his more famous uncle; see Bishop, "On the Origins," 238, 245-46.

18. cultra = pall; see the 1334 statutes of the Paduan confraternity of S. Antonio Confessore, cited in Gasparini, Studi 102: "Et habeatur palium vel cultra pulcrum et decens, quo coperiantur corpora et ad coperiendum funera."

19. Mt. 5:7.

20. The fourteenth-century statutes of S. Maria dei Colombini in Padua contain the same citation. As Gasparini notes, it is probably an echo of Sir. 3:33 (Vulgate: "ignem ardentem extinguit aqua, et elemosyna resistit peccatis"); see Studi 15 n. 13. The citation is also found in Parma's statutes (Giordani 367); and in the statutes of the Misericordia of Nembro (Little, Liberty 75).

Appendix 3

**Letter of Ugolino Ardengherio, Bishop of Cremona, Establishing a
Confraternity in Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Omobono
(Cremona, 1357 February 19)** ASC, CS 291, 2, ff. 1r-5r

/f.1r/ Hugolinus, Dei et Apostolicae Sedis gratia episcopus
Cremonensis¹ et comes, uniuersis et singulis utriusque sexus per nostram
ciuitatem et dioecesim^a constitutis, ad quorum notitiam praesentes
advenerint, salutem in filio Virginis benedictae.

Gloriosus Deus in sanctis suis et in magestate mirabilis, cuius
inefabilis altitudo prudentiae nullis inclusa limitibus, nullis terminis
compraehensa, recti censura iuditij caelestia pariter et terena disponit,
quamuis cunctos eius ministros magnificet, altis decoret honoribus, et
caelestis faciat beatitudinis possessores, illos, tamen, ut dignis digna
rependat, premiorum uberiori retributione prosequitur, quos digniores
agnoscit, et comendat ingentior excelentia meritorum. Sic et alma Mater
Ecclesia, eius sacra vestigia prosequens, licet uniuersos in regnis caelestibus

^a dioecesim B: diecesim A

constitutos sonoris efferre praeconijs non disistat², nonnullos sanctos et Dei atheletas electos praecipuis et specialibus disposuit honoribus venerari.

Hinc est quod nos, exemplo /f.1v/ huiusmodi laudabili et honorifico moti, quamquam omnes beatos altis decorare teneamur honoribus, tamen clarissimum confessorem nostrae in spiritualibus ciuitatis Cremonensis et populi eius mirificum^a protectorem et patronum potentissimum et quasi luminosam ardentemque lucernam super candelabrum in domo domini positam, ciuitatem ipsam suis miraculis illuminantem velut sidus irradians matutinum, re et^b nomine Homobonum, cuius corpus in terris existens, anima cum beatis in caelo collocata, mirabiliter et dilucide nuper^c nobis et in populo praedicto manifestatum extitit celestis irrigui gratia influente, disposuimus, pijs ducti consilijs dignisque studijs excitati, per ciuitatem eandem honorificentiae potioris impendijs attollendum, ut ab ea tanto propensius honorari^d se sentiat, quanto ipsam prae caeteris excellentius protegit et deffendit.

Ideoque ad diuini nominis honorem et gloriam, exaltationem catholicae fidei salutemque fidelium ipsiusque sancti perpetuam memoriam et laudem, statuimus et ordinamus /f.2r/ quod sub nomine gloriosae et intactae Dei

^a mirificum AB: corrected from mirificantem A

^b re et AB: corrected from decet A

^c nuper A: super B

^d honorari ed.: honorare AB

genitricisque virginis Mariae et ipsius sancti Homoboni sit et fiat laudabile consortium fidelium sub ritu et norma uitae ipsius sancti dirigendum, firmis perpetuisque temporibus duraturum, quod consortium beatae Virginis et sancti Homoboni nuncupetur. Censuimus itaque ordinantes^a quod ipsius consortij directionem profiteri volentes et eius meritis participes fieri proprio iuramento in adstrictione eorum ad ipsum consortium promittant et firmiter teneant se christianae religionis zelatores et haereticorum perniciem^b austeros spernatores ad instar ipsius sancti existere toto posse. Postmodum simplici et deuota promissione firment et seruare teneantur, sicut veri cristiani et dicti sancti Homoboni imitatores, qui in propria parochiali ecclesia missae officium et alias horas canonicas frequentabat, quod omni die mane, iusto impedimento cessante, adibunt ecclesiam parochialem in^c cuius vicinia iidem profitentes habitant vel postea habitabunt, et in ibi, orando pro uiuis et /f.2v/ defunctis, quinquies orationem dominicam, scilicet Pater noster, sigillatim addita salutatione angeli Gabrielis, scilicet Aue Maria, cordialiter decantabunt. Et, hijs dictis, dicent Benedictum sit nomen Domini nostri Iesu Christi et nomen gloriosae virginis Mariae matris eiusdem in aeternum et ultra, pro quo solo dicto decem dierum indulgentiae apostolicae consequentur. Omnique die dominica peractis huiusmodi in altari ipsius

^a ordinantes AB: corrected from ordinan<...> A

^b perniciem AB: corrected from primitiarum A2

^c in ... uiuis underlined in A

parochialis ecclesiae aliquid offerent, iuxta posse suum, ut appareant^a spiritualiter et temporaliter, iuxta imperium a Deo^b Moysi datum, coram eo non vacui accessisse et, secundum veritatis doctrinam regnum Dei ac iustitiam eius primum quesivisse, ut omnia addiciantur eisdem.³ Et ut videantur eiusdem incliti confessoris, qui, pauperes et debiles in propria domo recipiens, curabat pariter et procurabat exempla memoriter retinere, unam bonam elemosinam qualibet hebdomada, pensatis eorum facultatibus, uni^c pauperi, ad honorem Dei et ipsius sancti, exhibebunt. Et cum in ipsius sancti vita et moribus, /f.3r/ qui arca quibuslibet indigentibus^d quibus uiuentibus humanitatis obsequium et mortuis sepulturae beneficium consueuerat deuotus impendere, more sanctorum patriarcharum, quorum nonnullus ob huiusmodi misericordiae et pietatis opera^e sanctae Trinitati famulari meruit,⁴ curam diligentius exercebat, desiderare debeant^f firmiter stabili⁵, ad missarum solemnia cuiuslibet mensis tertia dominica in ecclesia nostra cathedrali et Maiori Sanctae Mariae Cremonensis, ad altare ipsius patroni in confessionibus⁶ dictae ecclesiae situm, fideliter conuenientes,

^a appareant AB: corrected from appareat A

^b a Deo AB: corrected from ad eo A; superfluous a with expansion mark above line A

^c uni AB: corrected from usu A

^d quibuslibet indigentibus ed.: quoslibet indigentes AB

^e opera AB: corrected from opera <.> A

^f debeant AB: corrected from debe <.> ant A

duos denarios offerent, qui, cum alijs oblationibus aliorum de consortio et bonis ipsi consortio provenientius, coligantur et recipiantur per massarios in ipso consortio assumendos, et de consilio conseruatorum eligendorum ab ipsius consortij societate in perpetuum^a dispensentur. Et accedent ad sepeliendum mortuum de consocijs suis dicti consortij et dicent duodecies Pater complete atque Aue Maria pro anima ipsius. Et cum uero^b audiuerint^c pulsationem^d septimam, tricesimum /f.3v/ vel anniuersarium alicuius defuncti, quicumque sit ipse defunctus, pro anima eius quinquies Pater noster cum totidem Aue Maria dicere teneantur. Et quia ipse sanctus valde de fide confessor in sua canonizatione comendatur, ipsi profitentes obseruationes supradicti^e consortij memorati promittant et teneantur districtius semel in anno omnia sua confiteri peccata et in die Paschatis suscipere Eucharistiae sacramentum. Insuper huic nostrae addicimus sanctioni quod quilibet de ipso consortio uigilia ipsius sancti festiuitatis obitus ieiunare teneantur. Et per vniuersas nostrae iurisdictionis ecclesias, huiusmodi festiuitatem, volumus statuimus et praecipimus, annis singulis perpetuis futuris temporibus, sub offitio duplici, solemniter celebrari.

^a in perpetuum AB: in blank space at end of line A2

^b uero above line A2: vero B

^c audiuerint AB: corrected from audiueri <. > A

^d pulsationem AB: above cancelled horam A2

^e supradicti AB: above cancelled <..... > A

Caeterum uolumus et ordinamus quod per eiusdem consortij
vniuersitatem et collegium^a approbatum, quodque praesentibus etiam^b
approbamus, assumantur perpetui vel temporales, duo vel tres
conseruatores et totidem, si uisum fuerit, massarij ad conseruationem
consortij et bonorum eius, qui potestatem /f.4r/ habeant reformandi statum
et ordinem, secundum varietates temporum, dicti consortij, etiam de nouo
statuendo de consilio tamen vniuersitatis supradictae, et de discordijs quae
inter aliquos de dicto consorcio nascerentur cognoscendi et^c componendi,
secundum prouidentiam eorum, habito, si expedierit, nostro vel vicarij nostri
et maioris partis vniuersitatis dicti consortij deliberato consilio et auxilio.

Nos enim Christi fideles ad praemissa profitendum et firmiter opere
perficiendum donis spiritualibus adiuuare et inducere cupientes, omnibus
ipsum consortium ingredientibus et praedicta profitentibus pro ipso primo
actu tantum quadraginta, qui vero opere illa complendo ad missam
suprascriptam conuenerit totidem, qui autem in pulsatione septimae,
tricesimi^d vel anniuersarij modo quo supra quinquies dixerit Pater noster
similiter quadraginta, uniuersis etiam qui infirmum pauperem de dicto
consortio uisitauerint, manus ei adiutrices porrigendo, totidem dies de

^a collegium ... approbamus underlined in A; pointing hand in left margin

^b etiam B: <...> A

^c et ed.: om. AB

^d tricesimi AB: corrected from tricessum A

incumbentibus /f.4v/ eis penitentijs et suorum peccaminum satisfactionibus, de omnipotentis Dei misericordia ipsiusque genitricis Mariae ac beatorum confessorum eius Imerij et Homoboni meritis, confidentes indulgentes eis misericorditer relaxamus.

Praedicta igitur nostra ordinamenta, exortationes^a, monitiones, et mandata, quae vobis praesentibus intimamus^b, cellulae memoriali quisque uestrum ita comendare deproperet, ut ipsa inueniant in cordibus uestris, aucthore Deo dictique sancti prece, aliquam scintillam gratuiti amoris Dei et inuentam^c illam flamment^d et nutriant, ut cum creuerit flammamque^e dignissimam fecerit omnium cupiditatum ligna consumat et vos per haec et alia bona quae Domino inspirante feceritis ad aeterna possitis gaudia peruenire.

In quorum omnium testimonium et perpetuam rei^f memoriam praesentes fieri iussimus et nostri sigilli appensione munitae^g per nostrum notarium infrascriptum registrari. Datum et actum Cremonae in nostro

^a exortationes underlined in A

^b intimamus AB: corrected from intima <..> A

^c inuentam followed by in cancelled A

^d flamment ed.: flaant AB; changed from planctant A

^e flammamque AB: corrected from plantamque A

^f rei B: <...> A

^g munitae ed.: munitas AB

episcopali /f.5r/ pallatio anno Dominicae Incarnationis millesimo trecentesimo quinquagesimo sexto, indictione decima, die dominico decimo nono mensis februarij, praesentibus venerabilibus viris dominis Iacobo de Conradis praeposito ecclesiae Sanctae Luciae Cremonae et nostrae Cremonensis ecclesiae canonico nostro vicario generali, Iacobino de Cassio praeposito ecclesiae Sanctae Mariae in Silva dioecesis Cremonensis, praesbitero Venerando^a rectore ecclesiae Sancti Galli Cremonae capellano nostro, et^b praesbitero Ilario de Marianis beneficiato altaris dicti sancti Homoboni in dicta ecclesia siti testibus ad praemissa adhibitis et vocatis.

Subscripta cum signo tabellionatus anteposito, ego Petrus de Madijs, notarius Cremonensis praefatique domini episcopi officialis et scribe, praedictis omnibus et singulis interfui et mandato ipsius domini episcopi has praesentes litteras in hanc publicam formam redegei et^c scripsi et me subscripsi.

^a Venerando corrected from Bernardo A: venerando B

^b et AB: above cancelled <..> A

^c et B: <..> A

1. Hugolinus de Addegheriis (Ardengheri), ep. Cremonen. 1349-1361 (Eubel, I, 214).

2. disistat = desistat

3. Mt. 6:33 and Lc. 12:31.

4. Perhaps a reference to Gn. 18:1-15. For centuries the Church has interpreted Abraham's hospitality to three angels as service to the Trinity.

5. stabeliri = stabiliri

6. In this context confessionibus normally means a saint's tomb under an altar, but here it refers to tombs beneath the cathedral; J. F. Niermeyer, Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus (1976; Leiden: Brill, 1984) s.v. confessio 3; Grandi I 269: "Ritrovavasi in questo tempio il corpo . . . che il vescovo Siccardo nell'anno 1202 ripose in arca di marmo, ma apertasi questa nel 1357 dal vescovo Ugolino Ardengherio, trasportò egli dalla medesima la maggior parte di detto corpo alla cattedrale, riponendola in urna nell sotto-chiesa."

Appendix 4

English Translation of Bishop Ugolino's 1357 Letter

Ugolino, by the grace of God and the Apostolic See, bishop of Cremona and count, sends greetings in the Son of the blessed Virgin to each and every person of either sex living in our city and diocese, to whose knowledge the present letters come.

God, glorious in his saints and marvelous in his majesty, whose inexpressible greatness of prudence enclosed by no limits, and bounded by no boundaries, disposes by the censure of right judgment both divine and earthly matters, although he glorifies all his ministers, decorates them with high honors and makes them possessors of heavenly beatitude, nevertheless, in order that he may reward worthy persons with worthy honors, he honors with a fuller repayment of rewards those whom he recognizes to be more worthy and whom a greater perfection of merits commends. And so the nourishing Mother Church, following God's sacred steps, although it does not refrain from proclaiming with resounding praises all those who are in the heavenly kingdom, has determined to venerate some of the saints and chosen athletes of God with particular and special honors.

Hence it is that we, moved by a laudable and honorable example of this kind, although we are obliged to adorn all the blessed with great honors, nevertheless, led by pious deliberations and stirred by worthy efforts, we determined that the most illustrious confessor and the most marvelous protector and most powerful patron of Cremona, which is our city in spiritualities, and of its people, placed almost like a bright and burning light above a light-stand in the house of the Lord, illuminating this city with his miracles, shining like the morning star, in deed and in name, Omobono, whose body remaining on earth (his soul is placed among the blessed in heaven) marvelously and brightly was recently manifested to us in the aforesaid populace by the abounding grace of the heavenly refreshment, should be elevated in the aforesaid city by means of expenditures of greater honor, in order that he may feel as fully honored by the city, as he more excellently protects and defends her above all others.

And so to the honor and glory of the divine name, the exaltation of the Catholic faith, the salvation of the faithful, and the perpetual memory and praise of this saint, we establish and order that under the name of the Virgin Mary, the glorious and chaste Mother of God and her saint Omobono there be and be established a praiseworthy consortium of the faithful to be directed under the rite and norm of this saint's life, which shall be called the Consortium of the Blessed Virgin and of saint Omobono and which will endure in perpetuity. Therefore, we decree that those wishing to exercise

the governance of this Consortium and wishing to be made partakers in its merits, by a personal oath of theirs in obligation to this Consortium, shall promise and firmly hold that they, like this saint, are zealous for the Christian religion and stern despisers of the heretics' perniciousness with all their power. Afterwards with a simple and devout promise they shall vow and shall be obliged to observe, like true Christians and imitators of saint Omobono, who attended the office of the Mass and the other canonical Hours in his own parish church, that every day, early in the morning, barring a legitimate impediment, they will go to the parish church in whose vicinia the aforesaid professed individuals live or will afterwards live, and in those churches, praying for the living and the dead, they will sincerely recite five times the Lord's prayer, namely the Our Father, one by one with the addition of the salutation of the Angel Gabriel, namely the Hail Mary. And after these are said, they shall say Benedictum. . . and so forth, for which prayer alone they shall obtain ten days of apostolic indulgences. And every Sunday after they have completed these prayers they shall offer something at the altar of their parish church, according to their means, so that, according to the commandment given by God to Moses, they might appear to have approached God neither spiritually nor materially empty-handed, and according to the teaching of truth to have first sought God's kingdom and His justice, so that all things might be added to them. And in order to be seen to fully preserve the examples of the aforesaid illustrious confessor,

who, taking the poor and the weak into his own home, cared for them and at the same time provided for them, they will deliver one substantial donation each week, depending on their means, to one pauper for the glory of God and of this saint. And since they must seek to become more firmly set in the life and morals of this saint, who was accustomed to supplying with his purse a service of humanity to any poor people who were living and the benefit of burial to the dead, following the example of the Holy Fathers, some of whom as a result of works of mercy and piety of this kind merited to serve the Holy Trinity, at the celebration of mass on the third Sunday of each month in our cathedral church of Santa Maria Maggiore of Cremona, faithfully assembling at this patron's altar located beneath the said church, they shall offer two denari, which, with the other offerings of the other members of the Consortium and the goods coming to this Consortium, are to be collected and be received by the massari to be elected in this Consortium, and are to be dispensed in perpetuity on the advice of the conservatori to be elected by the membership of this Consortium. And they shall go to bury the dead members of their Consortium and shall say twelve complete Our Fathers and Hail Marys for the soul of the deceased. And, in fact, when they hear the bell ringing for the seventh day, the thirtieth day, or the anniversary of any deceased person, whoever this deceased person may be, they are obliged to say five Our Fathers and the same number of Hail Marys for his soul. And because in his canonization this saint was

greatly commended as a confessor for the faith, those professing the regulations of the aforesaid mentioned Consortium are to promise and more strictly be obliged to confess all their sins once every year and to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at Easter. Furthermore, we add to this sanction of ours that all members of this Consortium shall be obliged to fast on the eve of the feast of this saint's death. And we wish, establish, and order that every year in perpetuity this feast be solemnly celebrated with a double Office in all the churches subject to our jurisdiction.

For the rest we wish and order that two or three perpetual or temporary conservatori and, if need be, the same number of massari, be elected, by the whole membership of the aforesaid Consortium and the approved College, which we with the present letter also approve, for the conservation of the Consortium and its goods. And they are to have the power of reforming the state and order of the said Consortium, according to the changing times, and also of establishing it anew, although with the advice of the aforesaid membership, and of investigating and settling the disputes which might arise among any members of the said Consortium, according to their own foresight, after having, if necessary, received the careful advice and assistance of ourselves or our vicar and the greater part of the membership of the said Consortium.

Indeed, desiring to help and encourage Christ's faithful with spiritual gifts, in order that they profess the aforesaid and more firmly carry them out

in deed, indulgent towards them and confiding in the mercy of the omnipotent God and of his Mother Mary and the merits of God's confessor saints Imerio and Omobono, we mercifully free them from the penances incumbent on them and from the atonements for their sins, and to all those entering this Consortium and professing the aforesaid things we grant for this first act forty days only; however he who, completing these things in deed, will have attended the aforesaid mass shall receive the same number of days, but he who will have said the Our Father five times in the manner described above when the bells ring for the seventh day, trental, or the anniversary of a person's death similarly shall receive forty days, and also the same number of days shall be granted to all those who, extending helping hands to him, will have visited the sick pauper of the said Consortium.

Therefore, let each one of you so hasten to commit to memory our aforesaid ordinances, exhortations, warnings, and mandates, which we announce to you by this present letter, that these may discover in your hearts, with God as their author and with the intercession of the said saint, some spark of God's spontaneous love, and that they may inflame and feed that discovered spark, so that when it grows and becomes a most worthy flame it may consume the wood of all desires, and that through these ordinances and other good works which, inspired by God, you will have performed, you may come to eternal joy.

In testimony of which and to the perpetual memory of the matter, we order that the present letters be made and, provided with the affixing of our seal, be registered by our notary mentioned below. Given and pronounced in our episcopal palace at Cremona in the 1356th year of our Lord's Incarnation, in the tenth indiction, on Sunday the nineteenth of February, in the presence of the venerable lords Iacobus de Conradis, provost of St. Lucia of Cremona and, canon of our Cremonese church, our vicar general; Iacobinus de Cassio, provost of St. Maria in Silva in the diocese of Cremona; the priest Venerandus, rector of St. Gallo in Cremona, our chaplain; and the priest Ilarius de Marianis, beneficiary of the altar of St. Omobono situated in the said church, were summoned and convened to the aforesaid as witnesses.

Signed with the preceding mark of the office of notary, I, Petrus de Madijs, notary of Cremona and official and scribe of the aforesaid lord Bishop, was present at all the aforesaid, and by the mandate of the lord Bishop I redacted and wrote the present letters in this public form, and they are signed by me.

Appendix 5

Weights and Measures in Medieval Milan and Cremona

MILAN

moggio (for cereals) = 1.462 hl. = 8 staia

staio = 4 quartari

libbra grossa = .762 kg. = 28 once

brenta = .755 hl.

braccio = .668 meter

Source: Antonio Noto, ed., Liber rationum I, xxv-xxvi.

CREMONA

moggio at Milan = 4 staia at Cremona

sacco = 1.069 hl. = 3 staia

staio (for cereals) = .356 hl. = 4 quartari

peso = 7.737 kg. = 25 libbre

libbra = .309 kg. = 12 once

Source: Ubaldo Meroni, Cremona fedelissima. Popolazione - industria e commercio - imposte camerali- commercio dei grani - monete e prezzi a Cremona durante la dominazione spagnola (Cremona: Biblioteca Governativa e Libreria Civica, 1957) II, 135 n. 2. Saccani, "Glossary," Antichi testi cremonesi. Ronald Zupko, Italian Weights and Measures from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1981). CS 190, f. 68v.

Appendix 6

Explanatory Note to Table 3

Clear-cut quantitative data exists for salt, wine, and clothing. The accounts state the volumes used for salt and wine and Noto provides the modern equivalents.¹ The accounts also give the precise number of garments distributed. For bread, chickpeas, and pork the information is there but it must be processed and the results are necessarily approximate.

Bulky foods were recorded in volumes known as moggia, staia (1/8 moggio), and quartari (1/4 staio). Bread was sometimes recorded in moggia of bread, but more frequently the Milanese accounts state how many moggia of flour were used to make bread for the poor. The Milanese weight of a moggio of wheat bread was fixed at 120 libbre grosse (at 762 grams per libbra) or about 91.44 kilograms.

In order to calculate the number of people receiving bread daily, it is necessary to know the density of the grain, the average yield of grain to bread, and the estimated daily per capita consumption of bread. I have

¹ For the modern equivalents of Milan's weights and measures, see Noto, Liber rationum I, xxv-xxvi. A very valuable English source for the same is Ronald Zupko, Italian Weights and Measures.

calculated the yield of flour to bread as follows. The modern equivalent of a Milanese moggio of wheat grain in this period was 1.462 hectoliters.

According to Zanetti, all the evidence for the early modern period suggests that the density of wheat ranged somewhere between 70-75 kg. per hectoliter. To be safe I have chosen the lower density of 70 kg. Thus, a moggio of wheat grain weighed about 102.34 kg., and to simplify I have estimated that a moggio of wheat flour weighed about the same. Zanetti also notes that the weight of grain was roughly equivalent to the weight of bread; what was lost in milling was compensated for both by the bran which fell into the flour and by the baking process.² Thus, assuming that flour and grain had roughly the same weight, a moggio of wheat flour (102.34 kg.) would have yielded about the same amount in bread.

Cooked chickpeas are also recorded in moggia, but their modern equivalent is unknown. Thus I have estimated their weight based on the ratio of one measure of flour to one measure of cooked chickpeas, or 1:1.6.

Finally, the accounts mention only the number of pigs slaughtered and the weight (in libbre grosse) of their carcasses (pexatura porcis) except in 1449 when the weight is for meat (pexatura carnis). To arrive at the ratio of meat to carcass I have ignored modern ratios since these are much higher

² Zanetti 61-62. See also Spicciani, "'Poveri Vergognosi'" 128: "Even today there is a saying among the 'contadini' that 'the wheat comes back as bread,' since the water mixed in the dough weighs roughly the same as the chaff that is removed from the flour."

than those of the fifteenth century. Instead, I have calculated the weight of pork meat first by subtracting any meat or lard which was not intended for the poor. Second, by subtracting 25% from the remaining carcass weight, as suggested by a document from early modern Pavia which reports that boneless pork cost 25% more than a carcass.³

³ Giuseppe Aleati and Carlo Cipolla, "Contributo alla storia dei consumi e del costo della vita in Lombardia agli inizi dell'età moderna," Éventail de l'histoire vivante. Hommage à Lucien Febvre, vol. 2 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1953) 323 n. 16.

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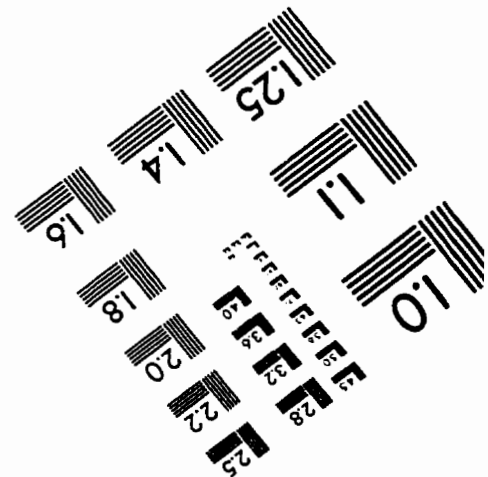
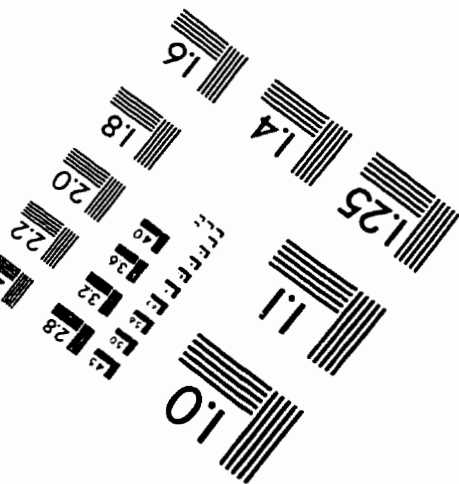
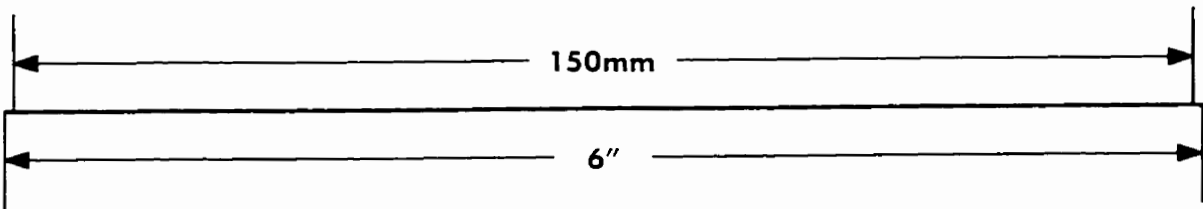
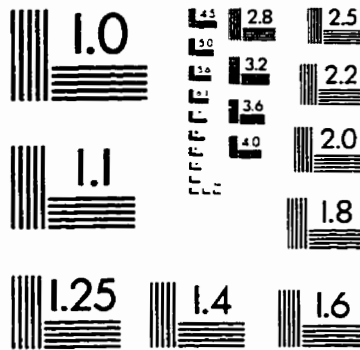
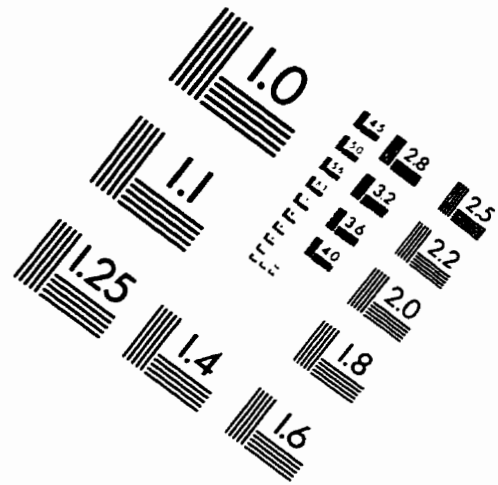
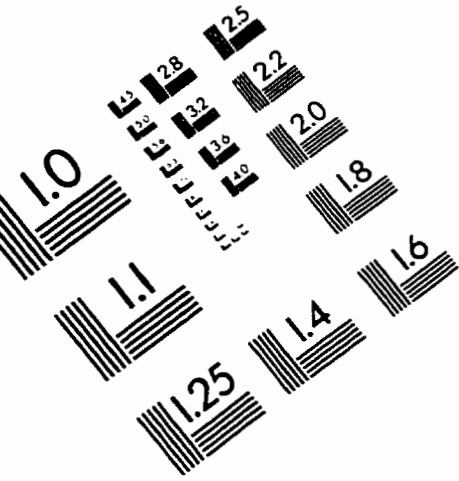
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