

**LAY CONFRATERNITIES AND
CIVIC RELIGION IN
RENAISSANCE BOLOGNA**

NICHOLAS TERPSTRA
Luther College, University of Regina, Saskatchewan



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Cambridge University Press 1995

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1995
First paperback edition 2002

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Terpstra, Nicholas.

Lay confraternities and civic religion in Renaissance Bologna / Nicholas Terpstra.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in Italian history and culture)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0 521 48092 2 (hardcover)

1. Confraternities – Italy – Bologna – History – 16th century. 2. Bologna (Italy) –
Church history – 16th century. 3. Italy – Church history – 16th century.

I. Title. II. Series.

BX808.5.I8T47 1995

267'.1824541'09024--dc20 94-37936 CIP

ISBN 0 521 48092 2 hardback

ISBN 0 521 52261 7 paperback

CONTENTS

<i>List of figures</i>	page	xi
<i>List of tables</i>		xii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>		xiii
<i>Preface</i>		xv
Prologue		I
1 The early quattrocento: confraternities, observance movements, and the civic cult		14
2 Lay spirituality and confraternal worship		38
I. Confraternal and mendicant brotherhood		39
II. Collective devotions		49
III. Private devotions		65
IV. Death and dying		68
3 The mechanics of membership		83
I. Novitiate and profession		84
II. Social geography and social standing		93
III. Size, growth, and attendance		98
IV. Expulsion		108
V. Retention		112
VI. Women		116
VII. Summary		132
4 Communal identity, administration, and finances		134
I. Community		134
II. Administration		144

	III. Income, property, and obligations	151
5	Confraternal charity and the civic cult in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries	171
	I. From signorial to senatorial oligarchy	172
	II. From confraternal <i>ospedali</i> to civic poor relief	179
	III. Developing the civic cult	205
	Epilogue	217
	<i>Bibliography</i>	226
	<i>Index</i>	246

FIGURES

P.1	E. Datini, <i>Bononiensis ditio</i> (detail)	<i>page</i>	8
3.1a	Novices proceeding to profession (by year of novitiate): SS. Girolamo ed Anna, 1473-1515		91
3.1b	Novices proceeding to profession (by year of novitiate): SS. Girolamo ed Anna, 1516-55		91
3.2	Novices and professing members added per year: SS. Girolamo ed Anna, 1472-1555		92
3.3a	Geographic distribution of membership: Compagnia di S. Bernardino		95
3.3b	Geographic distribution of membership: Compagnia di S. Maria del Baraccano		95
3.4	Annual membership range: Collegio Laicale di Messer Gesù Cristo, 1442-60		104
3.5	Membership continuity in Collegio Laicale di Messer Gesù Cristo, 1442-81		104
3.6	New memberships in two confraternities, 1536-83		105
3.7a-c	Comparative percentages of male/female recruitment and retention in Bolognese confraternities		121-2
5.1	Confraternal shrines (G. Blaeu, "Bononia docet mater studiorum")		213

TABLES

3.1	Membership in the laudesi and ospedale confraternities	<i>page</i>	101
3.2	Membership in battuti confraternities		101
3.3	Attendance in the Collegio Laicale di Messer Gesù Cristo, 1444-55		107
3.4	Retention rates in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century confraternities		114-15
4.1	S. Domenico income and expenses (1451-79)		154
4.2	S. Ambrogio income and expenses (1539-49)		155
4.3	SS. Sebastiano e Rocco income and expenses (1505)		157

THE EARLY QUATTROCENTO: CONFRATERNITIES, OBSERVANCE MOVEMENTS AND THE CIVIC CULT

From 1385 northern Italy witnessed the relentless advance of Giangaleazzo Visconti. Having secured the territories of Milan by overturning his uncle and father-in-law Bernabò, he proceeded through arms and diplomacy to dominate and in places subject the communes of Romagna, Tuscany, and Umbria. The hastily knit alliances of these communes unravelled before him, and he in turn used their forces to string a tighter noose around the prizes which eluded him. In July 1402, Bologna was the last major city to fall to Visconti. From there he marched to what was to be the final triumph in the siege of Florence. Plague claimed Giangaleazzo and Florence claimed the triumph; the empire which Visconti had shaped over seventeen years quickly disintegrated. Hans Baron noted the effect of Visconti's empire in shaping Florentine republicanism, but there has been less attention paid to those communes whose resistance failed. In the case of Bologna, the Visconti threat was a catalyst which brought together religious and political movements and which turned confraternities more decidedly towards the shaping of the civic cult that had begun with construction of San Petronio.

Bologna's religious response to the Visconti threat focused around a procession and a shrine: the 1399 processions of the Bianchi movement, and the 1401 creation of the shrine of S. Maria del Baraccano. The movement of the Bianchi, taking their name from their white robes, occurred in 1399-1400, with ripples felt through succeeding decades. The Visconti were only one of a series of factors creating the atmosphere of crisis that gave it birth. End-of-century apocalyptic fears and millenarian hopes were fed by recurring plagues, continuing schism in the church, revived factionalism in Bologna itself, and hope in the coming of a true pope and just emperor. All of Northern Italy came under the Bianchi spell in the summer of 1399, as Visconti's diplomacy neutralized France and won over Sienna, Pisa, and Lucca. As

penitents like Francesco di Marco Datini, the merchant of Prato, marched in their tens of thousands through the quarters of Florence and by a circuitous nine-day route through the contado and home again, Modenese penitents brought the Bianchi cry of "Misericordia" to Bologna. The Modenese penitents had been preceded by ambassadors affirming the peaceful purpose of the procession and seeking permission for its passage through Bolognese territory. As in 1260, relations between the two communities were delicate, since Modena had followed other Romagnol and Tuscan cities in breaking with the League of Bologna, leaving only Florence and Bologna allied against Giangaleazzo Visconti. Despite its weakening political position, Bologna gave entry to the procession. A week later, on September 2, 1399, the Modenese arrived marching by parishes behind their standards and singing lauds. They were met outside the city by thousands of white-clad Bolognese – the estimates of contemporary chronicles range from 25,000 to an unlikely 50,000 – for an outdoor mass and sermon. As the bulk of the Modenese returned home, the devotional processions began in Bologna. All stores were closed and, under the stimulation of special indulgences and the direction of four communal officers, a nine-day devotional cycle began within the city. Processions of men and women dressed in white moved church by appointed church through the four quarters. On September 15, the Bolognese Bianchi issued out of the city by quarters, marching behind a troop of one hundred ambassadors on the route to Imola.¹

Francesco di Marco Datini's account of the Florentine processions modifies the image of their pious intention and self-deprivation; many citizens were swept along in a movement which suited their liturgical expectations without seriously changing their lives. Yet there were others who, like their predecessors of 1260 and 1335, attempted to perpetuate some its devotional fervor by founding or renewing confraternities. In Budrio and S. Giovanni in Persiceto, two towns in the Bolognese contado, the Bianchi devotees created confraternities under the title of "Santa Maria della Misericordia," reminiscent both of the characteristic Bianchi cry of "Mercy" and of Mary's role in turning back disaster. In Cento an existing flagellant company was reinvigo-

¹ Hieronymo Bursellis, *Cronaca gestorum ac factorum memorabilium civitatis Bononie ab urbe condita ad anno 1497*, ed. A. Sorbelli, *RIS* vol. 23, Pt. II, p. 66 (22-30). Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, II, pp. 504-5. Guidicini, *Cose notabili*, II, p. 98. M. Fanti, "L'ospedale e la chiesa di S. Maria della Carità," in M. Fanti et al., *S. Maria della Carità in Bologna* (Bologna: 1981), pp. 27-30. I. Origo, *The Merchant of Prato* (Harmondsworth: 1963), pp. 321-5. D. Bornstein, *The Bianchi of 1399: Popular Devotion in Late Medieval Italy* (Ithaca: 1993).

rated. In Bologna itself, the company of S. Maria delle Laudi del Borgo S. Felice embarked on a thorough internal renewal, assuming the new title of S. Maria della Misericordia, and adopting the white robes of the Bianchi. Members drew up new statutes and a new matriculation list, and employed the image of S. Maria della Misericordia characteristic of the Marian devotion of the Bianchi and later to be used by many observant reform confraternities in the city. The image derived from accounts of a French peasant's vision of Mary pleading with a vengeful Christ to be merciful and not bring the world to an immediate, apocalyptic judgment. Depicting Mary as Queen of Heaven standing with arms outstretched to shelter crowds of worshippers under her cloak, the symbol is most often encountered as a miniature heading revised statutes or matriculation lists. Some show white-robed Bianchi in the shelter of Mary; others show a diverse range of men and women, rich and poor, lay and clerical believers, gathering under the protective cloak. The image's longevity shows the continuing influence of the Bianchi's Marian devotion and penitential impetus long after the 1399 processions and their climax in the 1400 Jubilee in Rome.²

Mary's cloak did not shelter Bologna from Visconti troops and propaganda, nor from the factional rivalry which these two fostered within the city. Bologna had no civic humanists like Leonardo Bruni to construct a republican defense against Visconti; it had many patricians who thought a better defense lay in imitating Visconti's signorial power. Carlo Zambecari had established a signory in all but name, and in 1399 Nanne Gozzadini, Giovanni Bentivoglio, and Giovanni da Barbiano joined forces unsuccessfully to take power from him; as the Bianchi were marching, Barbiano was captured and decapitated in the Piazza Maggiore. Zambecari's death in October unleashed a year of bloodshed which had a brief pause in March 1401 when Giovanni Bentivoglio abandoned Gozzadini, allied with the Zambecari, and seized the signory himself, chasing his enemies into the arms of the Duke of Milan and inaugurating an uneasy year of rule.

The Marian devotion triggered by the Bianchi had meanwhile found a more purely local focus in a shrine located on the southeast city wall. The area of the new shrine had long been frequented by un-

² The image of S. Maria della Misericordia predated and long outlived the Bianchi movement. *Laudesi* of S. Francesco had diverse men and women gathered under the Virgin's cloak in a miniature on their 1329 matriculation list (BBA Osp ms. 72, c.3r.), while the flagellants of S. Maria della Morte depicted only themselves, dressed in white robes, in a miniature heading their 1562 statutes (BBA Osp ms. 42, c.3r.).

desirables when, in the late fourteenth century, a man of the neighborhood seeking to improve its moral tone erected a small image of the Virgin sheltered under a lean-to shed or "baraccano." S. Maria del Baraccano attracted enough of a following to be perceived as a security problem by Giovanni Bentivoglio. Fearing that the wall shrine was too easy a conduit for civic malcontents and Visconti spies to exchange information on the city's defenses, he ordered it bricked up. In the legend of the shrine's first miracle, the first wall erected to seal it fell down immediately, as did a second larger wall which followed. Deciding it better to placate than fight forces beyond his control, Bentivoglio then ordered the cult expanded and promoted in a more secure church, under the watchful eye of a loyal confraternity. The change of heart did little to change Giovanni's fortunes. The new church was dedicated and placed under the direction of a well-bred confraternity, but only after the Bentivoglio signore had lost a battle to Visconti troops and his life to a Bolognese mob. Members of the confraternity, established a year after the dedication of the church in 1402, were appointed governors of the shrine and its alms, and were expected to pray continually in rotation for the peace of the *patria*.³

The Bianchi procession and Baraccano shrine illustrate tradition and innovation at work in fifteenth-century Bolognese confraternities. The procession follows the local tradition of artisanal confraternities blending the mendicant and guild ethos and emerging out of popular devotional movements which are themselves triggered by social and political upheavals. Whether flagellant battuti or praising laudesi, these confraternities functioned as the civic memory of the movement, perpetuating its robes, its images, and its language, and doing so through lay inspiration and organization. Mendicant preachers stimulated the devotion, and communal officials approved the procession, but no civic or ecclesiastical authority appointed S. Maria della Misericordia to its new task as the living memory of the events of 1399. Its mandate arose out of the rhetoric of the spiritual companies as the third pillar of popolo society, and out of the notion that civic religion centered around activities like processions and charity. Bolognese citizens remembered the vows they had made during the Bianchi processions every time the lay brothers of S. Maria della Misericordia marched in civic or confraternal processions. The Baraccano shrine and confraternity illustrate innovation in line with the construction of the civic

³ P. Viziani, *Dieci libri della historia sua patria* (Bologna: 1602), pp. 272-3. G. Giovannantonij, *Historia della miracolosa imagine di Maria Vergine detta del baraccano...* (Bologna: 1674). Guidicini, *Miscellanea storico patria Bolognese*. Bologna: Giacomo Monti, 1872. Reprinted Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, 1980, p. 306.

basilica of San Petronio. Its fixed location and its deliberately created, largely functional, and politically safe confraternity demonstrate the more conscious construction of a locus for the civic cult. The shrine of S. Maria del Baraccano was the first major shrine developed within the city walls, and certainly the first to be developed with an eye to its potential as a pilgrimage site. The eponymous confraternity was one of the first to be established for a specific purpose and with a socially restricted membership. It therefore marks a step towards the fabrication of fixed religious symbols under elite proprietorship – a move consistent with the expectations on spiritual companies which nonetheless marked a step beyond the spontaneity, artisanal autonomy, and mendicant spirituality seen in S. Maria della Misericordia. It was as deliberate a creation as San Petronio, but its origins demonstrated that subtle changes had occurred in the civic cult even since that basilica's cornerstone had been laid with great enthusiasm for the revival of the popular commune in 1390. In 1394, against the background of intense factional struggles and the ambitions of Giangaleazzo Visconti, and on the grounds of efficiency, the popolo Council of 4,000 had elected a seventeen-member executive and invested it with legislative power. Authorized to make and suspend laws, imprison or liberate citizens, and nominate the judiciary, the *Sedici Riformatori dello stato di libertà* was intended to reform and so preserve popolo government. In fact, this concentration of oligarchic power quickly overshadowed the existing executive colleges of the *Anziani*, the *Gonfalonieri*, and the *Artigiani*, and the Council of 4,000 itself, and prepared Bologna for signorial rule. Just as the *Sedici Riformatori* represented a political coup taken under cover of the rhetoric of popolo liberty, so the shrine and confraternity of S. Maria del Baraccano represented a move towards elite manipulation of civic religious symbols taken under cover of the rhetoric of confraternities as the third, spiritual pillar of the popolo commune.

This movement was as yet tentative, and would only become apparent after mid-century when the Bentivoglio returned, bringing a strengthened *Sedici* and relative stability in their tow. In the first decades of the Quattrocento, another force more in keeping with their traditions was shaping the spiritual companies. At bottom, confraternities were lay adaptations of mendicant communal life and spirituality. From the later fourteenth century the mendicant orders were shaken by the rise of Observance movements emphasizing the poverty and obedience of their founding *Regulae*, and a contemplative, penitential spirituality. While Giangaleazzo Visconti was the catalyst creating two companies early in the century, it was Observant spirituality and Observant clergy who truly shaped fifteenth-century confraternities,

creating new groups and reforming existing ones. The Dominican Observant Manfredo da Vercelli established a group of lay flagellants in S. Domenico in 1418. Similarly, the Franciscan Observant S. Bernardino da Siena reinvigorated one Bolognese confraternity – which renamed itself “Buon Gesù” in recognition of Bernardino’s devotional focus on the name and symbol of Christ – and inspired the erection of another.⁴ Cardinal Bessarion, a member of the commission which recommended Bernardino’s canonization, was a moving force behind the creation of a Compagnia di S. Bernardino soon after he arrived as Papal Legate in Bologna in 1450. Yet the most important cleric for Bolognese confraternal reform was Nicolò Albergati, Bishop of Bologna from 1417 to 1443, who can be credited with fostering at least four groups and reforming six others. Albergati’s approach to reform brought mendicant spirituality together with the public symbols and shrines of a civic cult, and so at once furthered the confraternities’ spiritual development while also preparing for their greater politicization in the latter half of the fifteenth century.

Born into a prominent Bolognese family in 1357, Nicolò Albergati joined the Carthusian order in 1394 and was serving as Prior of the Certosa outside Bologna when he was elected by the Cathedral Canons to be Bishop of Bologna in 1417. The election’s questionable legality, coming after the deposition of Popes John XXIII and Boniface XIII and before the election of Martin V, initially gave him trouble with the restored papacy. These tensions notwithstanding, Pope Martin confirmed the episcopal election when he realized Albergati could be a loyal and indispensable diplomat assisting the papacy’s post-schism restoration. Eugenius IV subsequently appointed him to the College of Cardinals. His work for the papacy would later put Albergati in bad odor with those Bolognese intent on ensuring that the revived Italian papacy did not jeopardize their autonomy. Despite these impediments to sustained pastoral work in the diocese, Albergati left a remarkable impact on the devotional patterns of fifteenth-century Bologna. Confraternal reform was only part of a program which included establishing new forms of Marian devotion, introdu-

⁴ The Compagnia di S. Domenico may have assisted the Dominican inquisitor. ASB Dem, Compagnia di S. Domenico, busta 1/6415, filza #5/1; busta 7/6421, filza 3. G.G. Meersseman, *Ordo Fratemitatis*, pp. 611–12. The fratelli di S. Maria della Mezzaratta approached S. Bernardino after he preached in Bologna in 1430. Under his direction they took on the devotion to the Holy Name and adopted the new name: ASB Dem, Compagnia di Buon Gesù, busta 9/7631, filza 1. See also AAB, Ricuperi Beneficari, fasc. 665 #4. The old name was not entirely abandoned; revised statutes of 1489 still refer to the “Compagnia di madona sancta Maria da la mezarata dal monte” (BBA Gozz 203 #7).

cing the Lateran Canons and the Gesuati into Bologna, and placing a greater emphasis on the training of both clergy and laity in the fundamentals of the Catholic faith. Albergati immediately conducted a series of pastoral visits around the diocese, arriving at churches on foot and without a retinue to hear confessions, celebrate mass with the priests, and examine closely the lives and livings of his clerics. His personal devotion was austere, moral, and learned in the manner of contemporary Christian humanism, drawing on both the penitential and educational aspects of the contemporary cult of St. Jerome and the *devotio moderna*, which he personally encountered on his many diplomatic legations to northern Europe; when Albergati was President of the Congress of Arras in 1435, Jan Van Eyck made a portrait of him as St. Jerome in his study. The author of many sermons, epistles, and theological treatises, he was also a patron of some of the leading humanists of the early Quattrocento, including Francesco Filelfo, Poggio Bracciolini, and the future popes Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, and Tommaso Parentucelli. Albergati's program of devotional revival for Bologna focused around three symbols: Christ; the Eucharist; and the Madonna. Each was central to Observant spirituality, and Albergati believed that presenting each publicly in a dramatic fashion could foster a popular religious revival. Lay confraternities were the natural vehicle for a lay religious revival, and Albergati relied on them heavily as he worked to expand the local civic cult with more shrines, public plays and demonstrations, and regular processions.⁵

The Imitation of Christ was the main theme in the contemporary devotional revival, and served as the focus of the Compagnia dell'Ascensione di Nostro Signore, commonly called the "Trentatre" in honor of the years of Christ's life on earth. Albergati established the group to lead processions on the first Sunday of every month to a shrine of the Virgin Mary located on the Guardia hill immediately south of the city walls. The Madonna della Guardia shrine had originated in the late twelfth century, but was long overshadowed by the image of the Madonna del Monte on the Osservanza hill a short distance to the east. It played so small a role in the local cult that when a storm severely damaged it in 1395, the Bolognese simply left it in

⁵ P. De Töth, *Il beato Nicolò Albergati e i suoi tempi (1375-1444)*, 2 vols. (Aquapendente: 1922, 1934). G. Fantuzzi, *Notizie degli scrittori bolognesi*, vol. 1 (Bologna: 1783, reprint 1965), pp. 99-133. Albergati conducted his pastoral visits in 1417-18; 1420; and 1425-26, using and annotating an extant 1408 list of all the diocesan churches: L. Novelli, "Manoscritto 2005 della Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna, 'Liber Collecte imposte in clero bon.' con postille del card. Nicolò Albergati," *Ravennatensia* vol. 2 (1971), pp. 101-62. On Albergati as St. Jerome: E.R. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: 1985), pp. 109-11.

ruins. Albergati ordered it repaired and worked to make it a focus of devotional life. To this end, the lay brothers of the "Trentatre" offered their monthly graphic demonstration of imitative piety as they led any who would follow up the steep hill, marching barefoot and bearing a cross and other symbols of Christ's passion. The procession culminated in a service at the shrine in honor of Mary.

Eucharistic piety lent itself less readily to graphic public demonstration, but its meaning could be conveyed through school lessons and in the context of *sacre rappresentazione*, the dramatic presentations mounted at festivals and markets. These became the chief functions of a second confraternity, the Compagnia di S. Girolamo, which had existed as a loosely organized worship group in the Porta Procola quarter since early in the century. This was one of the few youths' confraternities in Renaissance Bologna. By the time of Albergati's first contact with the company in 1417, its members were constructing an oratory and were engaged in a campaign to bring other young people away from taverns and gaming tables and instructing them in the Christian life. Albergati organized the group into a confraternity under the title of St. Jerome, and gave direction to its teaching activity by writing a catechism textbook; the frontispiece to the group's first statutes (ca. 1425-33) shows St. Jerome enthroned and the young lay brothers around his feet teaching little children.⁶ Like the texts which would be used over a century later by Companies of Christian Doctrine, Albergati's catechism built on familiar texts like the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles' Creed in order to teach laypeople about faith's meaning, and it reviewed the Sacraments, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and the virtues and sins in order to teach faith's practice. And like Luther's early protestant Catechisms there was a condensed version for beginners and an expanded version for older youths and adults. Later in the century the lay brothers moved the classroom outdoors, teaching larger audiences through dramatic retellings of Bible stories and saints' lives presented

⁶ There is no consensus on whether Albergati formed or simply organized the company. The case for a pre-existing core of lay devotees is made in two early histories: G.V. Vittorio, *Origine, fondazione e progressi della venerabile confraternita di S. Giralamo* (Bologna: 1698), pp. 8-9. A. Macchiavelli, *Origine, fondazione e progressi della veneranda compagnia laicale sotto l'invocazione de' gloriosi Santi Girolamo ed Anna posta nella via di Bagnomariano*, (Bologna: 1754), pp. 5-6. This position is affirmed by Guidicini, *Cose notabili*, III, pp. 245-6; and Fanti, *San Procolo: Una parrocchia di Bologna dal medioevo all'età contemporanea*, Bologna: 1983, pp. 139-40. The case for Albergati as founder is made by: De Töth, *Nicolò Albergati*, p. 247; and C. Mesini, "La catechesi a Bologna e la prima compagnia della dottrina cristiana fondata dal B. Nicolò Albergati (1375-1444)," *Apollinaris*, vol. 54 (1981), pp. 232-67.

before large crowds at public festivals. These were Tuscan in spirit and composition, but some were altered to give a deliberately Bolognese focus. In one, S. Dominic notes his crusading preaching in Spain, but begs God not to send him to the intractable Bolognese. Another, which the Angel Gabriel opens with "*Deh*, pay thoughtful attention, noble and worthy people of Bologna," elaborates the theme of S. Maria della Misericordia. Thoroughly fed up with a people who multiply their sins by the day, Christ is ready to rain down judgment on earth. Justice offers him three lances with which to plunge the disobedient into the Inferno. Mercy counters with a series of saints who intercede to plead the case of sinners; when this proves unsuccessful, she sends Gabriel to ask Mary to intervene. Mary calms Christ's rage and presents Saints Dominic and Francis to him; Christ commissions the former to head to Spain and preach against Pride, Luxury, and Avarice, and the latter to preach to the whole world of the Passion. The two saints embrace, and as Dominic leaves the stage Francis turns to preach to the crowd. A folio written in 1482 by Tommaso Leoni contains twenty-three *sacre rappresentazioni* which individually present the key events of Holy Week, Christ's Resurrection and Ascension, events from the lives of Mary and the saints and, most ambitiously, a history of the world covering the Old and New Testaments and the lives of leading popes, church fathers, martyrs, and saints. Requiring a cast of hundreds, this presentation ends with the Four Defenders, Saints Petronio, Ambrose, Francis, and Dominic, holding up a model of the city. The teenage confraternal brothers undoubtedly recruited some of the cast from among the young children they were teaching the catechism to, making this an early example of that durable staple of church instruction, the Sunday School Pageant. It is impossible to date these *sacre rappresentazioni* precisely or to determine when the Company of S. Girolamo began staging them; Leoni joined the Company of S. Girolamo before 1465, and his 1482 folio could represent either the beginning of the confraternity's dramatic program or simply the compilation of its various texts in one book.⁷ With their local sponsors, cast, and references, the plays were an important vehicle for spreading the civic religion. Part hectoring, part congratulation, they put Bologna into the larger scheme of eternal history and European Christendom.

For his part, Nicolò Albergati characteristically reinforced S. Girolamo

⁷ V. De Bartholomaeis, *Le origini della poesia drammatica Italiana*, (Torino: 1952), pp. 427-33. A list of first lines and complete texts of two of the fifteenth-century S. Girolamo *sacre rappresentazioni* are reprinted in: G. Vecchi, "Le sacre rappresentazioni della compagnia dei battuti in Bologna nel secolo XV," *AMPR* n.s. vol. 4 (1951-53), pp. 281-324.

mo's educational work with public demonstrations of his patronage. On the opening of a new oratory in 1433, the bishop granted them new pink robes and caps, a sharp and fashionable contrast to the plain black or white robes favored by other local confraternities. Albergati then led them together with the Anziani in a procession from the Bishop's Palace to their new church. The symbols of Albergati's dignity as Cardinal of S. Croce had been raised above the main door of the church and woven into the tapestry before the altar. Lest future generations forget, the brothers had a large painting made of the procession and hung it in the sacristy.⁸

The third and greatest symbol which Albergati used to reinvigorate religious life in Bologna was the Virgin Mary. Although Bologna's patron saint was San Petronio, its local cult was decidedly Marian; Albergati encouraged this devotion to the Virgin and saw lay confraternities as ideal agencies for fostering it. Certainly Mary figured in the *sacre rappresentazione* of the Compagnia di S. Girolamo, but beyond this new processions and festivals underlined Mary's patronage of Bologna. The Compagnia di S. Maria degli Angeli organized popular devotions which had grown from ca. 1412 around an image of Mary located on the outer wall of an all-but-abandoned church in a shabby neighborhood on the south side of the city. The confraternity's name, "degli Angeli," was derived in part from the small angels flanking the image and supporting its protective roof. Albergati encouraged the company to capitalize on the connection in its public processions, and opened the way by granting it permission to participate in the annual display of the Veil of the Blessed Virgin at the nearby church of Santo Stefano. The basilica was a complex of buildings whose oldest parts date to the early Christian era. One part reproduced the Holy Sepulcher in medieval Jerusalem and held additional symbols of Christ's passion, from the bowl in which Pilate had washed his hands to the rooster whose call had signalled Peter's betrayal. These relics brought the immediacy of the Passion to Bologna, and led to the church being known as Holy Jerusalem; any connection with it brought great honor to a confraternity. The brothers of S. Maria degli Angeli made their procession more dramatic by dressing young children as angels to accompany them; in the flickering light cast by the lay brothers' lit torches, the children sang lauds praising Christ and Mary and calling the faithful to come and honor the Virgin's Veil.⁹

⁸ Vittorio, *S. Girolamo*, pp. 14-15.

⁹ G. Roversi, "La Compagnia e la chiesa di S. Maria degli Angeli nella via di 'Truffailmondo'," *Strenna storica Bolognese* vol. 12 (1962), p. 275. Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna* II, pp. 617-18. Guidicini, *Cose notabili* II, p. 618.

A more dramatic and politically more significant procession was already in the works, centered on the shrine of the Madonna della Guardia noted earlier. Three months of near-continuous rain in the summer of 1433 left the fields of the contado a sodden mess and raised real fears about the city's ability to feed itself. The College of the Anziani decreed a three-day procession of clerics, confraternities, and lay people through the city, but there was no change. It then decreed a five-day procession, and later an eight-day procession, but the rain kept pouring. As desperation grew, Graziolo Accarisi, a member of the Anziani, proposed that the Bolognese follow the example of the Florentines who, in times of crisis, appealed for the help of an image of the Virgin which they brought into the city from the suburban town of Impruneta. The Impruneta image had been at the center of a local cult since 1340, and was particularly associated with ending downpours and droughts.¹⁰

Aware of the miracles associated with the Madonna dell'Impruneta, Bishop Albergati and the Anziani agreed to Accarisi's proposal. The chief Marian shrine outside the city, that of the Madonna del Monte, had only frescoed images and so couldn't provide a portable painting for the procession. Attention fell instead on the Madonna della Guardia which had been gaining prominence through the monthly processions of the Trentatre confraternity. Albergati seized on the opportunity to increase the stature of the the shrine further. All that had to be decided was who would bring the image into the city. The canons and confraternity of the Impruneta church performed this honor in Florence, but the Guardia shrine had no clergy associated with it. The Trentatre confraternity would then have been the most likely candidate, but through either Albergati's desire to broaden the number of lay brotherhoods involved in the civic cult, or Accarisi's desire to bring increased honor to his own confraternity of S. Maria della Morte, the responsibility and the honor passed to the latter company instead. Using the Florentine rituals as their example, the brothers of S. Maria della Morte went in procession up the Guardia hill on the first Saturday in July. They lifted the image and by evening had carried it back down the hill to the small church of S. Mattia just outside the Saragozza gate. The following morning a formal procession of all spiritual and artisanal companies, together with magistrates and

¹⁰ Varignana (Cronaca B), *RIS*, vol. 23, Pt. 1, vol. iv, p. 63. M. Fanti, "La Madonna di S. Luca nella leggenda, nella storia e nella tradizione bolognese," *Il Carrobio*, 3 (1977), pp. 181-3. On the Florentine parallels: R. Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience: The Sacred Image," *Studies in the Renaissance*, vol. 19 (1972), pp. 7-41. R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, (New York: 1980), pp. 63-4, 354-5.