CAMBRIDGE

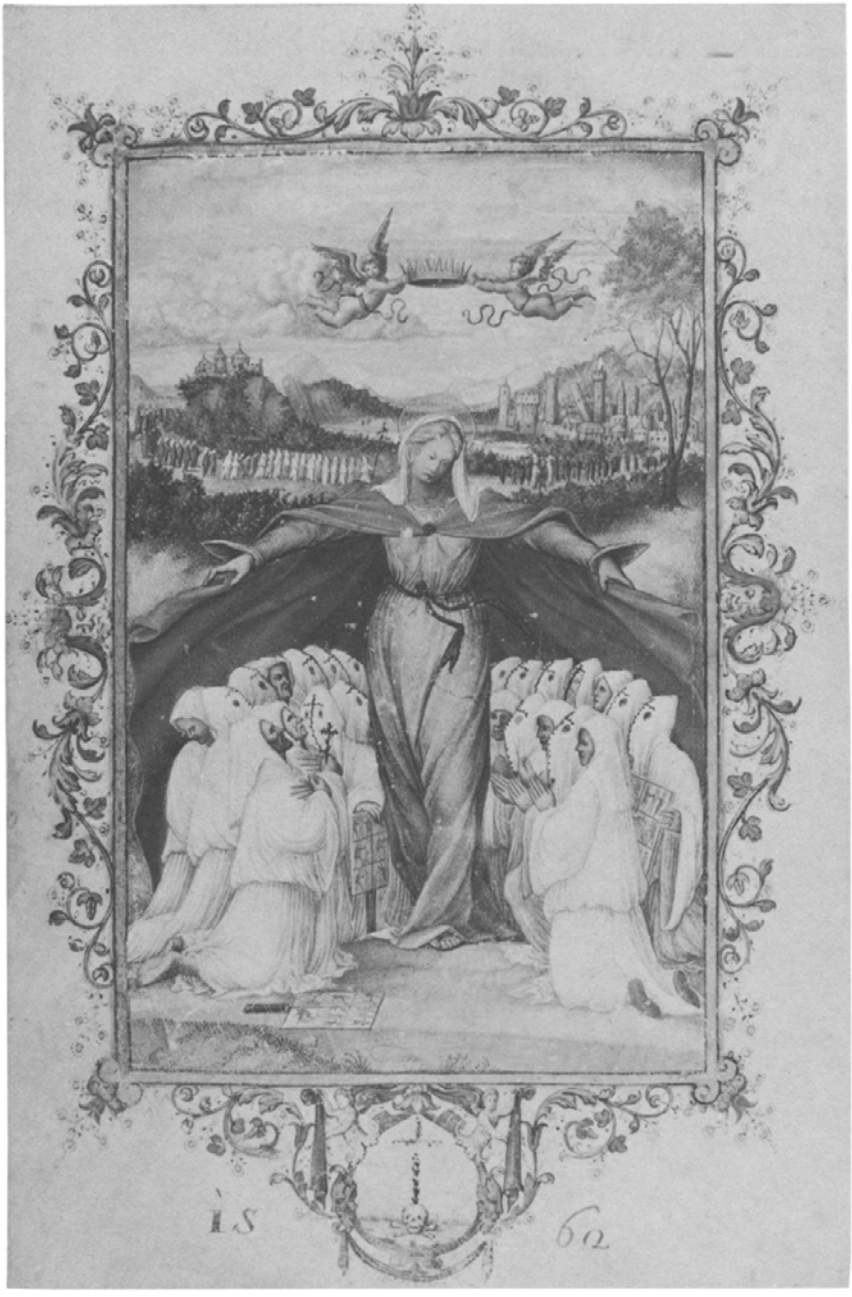
Cambridge University Press
0521531136 - Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century
Christopher F. Black
Frontmatter
More information

ITALIAN CONFRATERNITIES IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521531136 - Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century
Christopher F. Black
Frontmatter
More information



The Madonna and Brothers of the Confraternity of S. Maria della Morte, Bologna, Miniature from the frontispiece for the 1562 Statutes (see pp. 82, 108, 219). [The brothers in the foreground wear full processional robes; some show hoods pulled over to preserve anonymity; some show the painted boards used when escorting the condemned to execution. The background illustrates a confraternity procession with Cross, outside Bologna, with its tell-tale leaning tower.] Reproduced courtesy of the Library of L'Archiginnasio, Bologna.

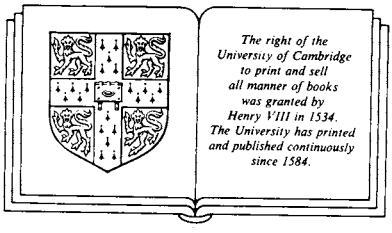
© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521531136 - Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century
Christopher F. Black
Frontmatter
More information

ITALIAN CONFRATERNITIES IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

CHRISTOPHER F. BLACK
Department of Modern History
University of Glasgow



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

NEW YORK • NEW ROCHELLE • MELBOURNE • SYDNEY

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521531136 - Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century
Christopher F. Black
Frontmatter
More information

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 1989

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 1989
First paperback edition 2003

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

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Black, Christopher F.
Italian confraternities in the sixteenth century/Christopher F. Black.
p. cm.
Bibliography.
Includes index.
ISBN 0 521 36487 6 hardback
1. Confraternities–Italy–History–16th century. 2. Italy–
Church history–16th century. I. Title.
BX808.5.18B53 1989
267′.18245–dc 19 88–27456 CIP

ISBN 0 521 36487 6 hardback
ISBN 0 521 53113 6 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2003

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521531136 - Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century
Christopher F. Black
Frontmatter
More information

CONTENTS

List of illustrations *page* vii

Preface and acknowledgements ix

List of abbreviations xiii

Map of Italy xiv

1 Setting the scene 1
1 Images of lay confraternities, and the book's focus
2 Catholic Reform, Counter-Reformation, and confraternities
3 Attitudes to salvation and 'good works'
4 The problem of sources

2 Confraternities: what, where, for whom? 23
1 Types of confraternities and their historical evolution
2 Membership of the confraternities
3 Counting confraternities and their members

3 Control and sponsorship 58
1 State and episcopal involvement
2 Positive sponsorship of confraternities
3 Archconfraternities
4 Confraternities and parochial control

4 Internal organisation and religious life 79
1 Statutes and officials
2 Councils and general assemblies
3 Enrolment, discipline and expulsion
4 Feast-days and private confraternity devotion
5 Forty-Hour devotions: *Quarantore*
6 Flagellation
7 Rosary devotion
8 Death and the afterlife

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521531136 - Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century
Christopher F. Black
Frontmatter
More information

5 External religious devotions 108
1 Processions
2 Plays and sacred representations
3 Pilgrimages

6 Confraternities and finances 122

7 Attitudes to poverty 130
1 Some modern attitudes
2 Contemporary attitudes
3 The preferred poor

8 Poverty: needs and general responses 151
1 The need for help
2 Government responses to crises and needs
3 The value of the assistance offered

9 Confraternity philanthropy: 1. Hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, and ill 168
1 Priorities
2 Alms-giving: discrimination and selection
3 Dowries for poor girls
4 Hospices, housing and hospitals
5 Abandoned children
6 Girls and women at risk

10 Confraternity philanthropy: 2. The imprisoned, ignorant and dead 214
1 The confined poor
2 Imprisoned and condemned
3 Religious education
4 Cheap loans
5 Burying the dead

11 Confraternity buildings and their decoration 234
1 Confraternity buildings
2 Confraternity art: pedagogy and propaganda
3 Paintings: processional and philanthropic

12 Conclusions and suggestions 268

Appendix I Populations 283
Appendix II Currencies 286

Bibliography A Manuscript sources 287
B Printed works 290

Index 310

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521531136 - Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century
Christopher F. Black
Frontmatter
More information

ILLUSTRATIONS

1 Scuola di S. Maria e S. Cristoforo dei Mercanti, Venice. Exterior.
2 Scuola di S. Giorgio degli Schiavoni, Venice. Lower room with V. Carpaccio's paintings.
3 Scuola Grande di S. Rocco, Venice. Sala dell'Albergo, with Jacopo Tintoretto's *Crucifixion*.
4 Nicolo di Liberatore (L'Alunno), *Gonfalone dell'Annunziata* (Pinacoteca, Perugia)
5 Pietro Perugino, *Madonna della Consolazione* (Pinacoteca, Perugia)
6 Palma il Giovane, *Offering of Alms for Souls in Purgatory*, Scuola di S. Fantin, Venice
7 Palma il Giovane, *Gaining of Indulgences for Souls in Purgatory*, Scuola di S. Fantin, Venice
8 Jacopo Tintoretto, *Last Supper*, S. Polo, Venice.
9 Jacopo Tintoretto, *Last Supper*, S. Marcuolo, Venice.
10 Jacopo Tintoretto, *S. Rocco among the plague-stricken*, Church of S. Rocco, Venice.

Acknowledgements Plates 4–5 courtesy of the Foto Soprintendenza di Beni Ambientali Artistici Architettonici e Storici dell'Umbria, Perugia, plates 1–3 and 6–10 courtesy of Osvaldo Böhm Fotografo, Venice.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521531136 - Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century
Christopher F. Black
Frontmatter
More information

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A study of confraternities or religious brotherhoods in the early modern period should not be a narrow exercise in ecclesiastical history, but a wide-ranging social history. Though these largely voluntary associations were designed primarily to prepare members for the afterlife, they were fully involved in the social, political and cultural life of the community. Potentially, they could affect all men and women, as members, as the recipients of charity or as the subjects of ecclesiastical and social control. Confraternities organised Sunday schools and funerals, hospitals and orphanages, were patrons of art and music, harboured and pursued heretics, provided dowries and escorted condemned men to the scaffold. In studying these fraternal organisations in sixteenth-century Italy, this book deals with a key transitional period, when they expanded in numbers and diversified their activities in response to religious and socio-economic crises. Confraternities have attracted the attention of a variety of scholars with different specialisms—ecclesiastical historians and social anthropologists, art historians and students of guilds, musicologists and folklorists. Most of the literature on Italian confraternities has had a narrow focus. A few medievalists have attempted a broader survey across the peninsula. This book is however the first attempt to cover a range of confraternities throughout Italy during the early modern period, and to look at them from many different angles and perspectives.

My study combines archival research in Perugia, Bologna and Venice with a survey of the work of many kinds of historians who have covered, between them, a considerable area of Italy. It should have something to offer anybody who has an interest in early modern Italy. Those who have encountered confraternities in a limited context may appreciate having a wider view of their pervasiveness and roles. For non-Italianists as well as Italianists this book is also intended as a contribution to the study of Catholic Reform and Counter-Reformation, and to the discussion of philanthropy in early modern Europe.

While this book is intended to be comprehensive—in its span of geography and topics—I am only too aware of the gaps, of the archives, books and articles not consulted, (or consulted at the wrong moment without the opportunity to return to them in the light of other reading), the questions that have not been answered. It is hoped that by digesting, or at least indicating the existence of, a considerable amount of material, by raising a large number of issues while suggesting rather fewer solutions, this book will stimulate others who can spend longer in Italian archives and libraries, to proceed with further research.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521531136 - Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century
Christopher F. Black
Frontmatter
More information

As this book is aimed at those who do not read Italian as well as those who do, I have given most quotations cited in the text in translation (mine or others'). If the original Italian or Latin text is not readily accessible, or the phraseology is considered important for a specialist, this is given in the notes. Where the meaning is obvious, or where an English translation would not be very meaningful, the Italian has been retained. Quotations in the notes, primarily designed for the more specialist readers, are normally in the original, without a translation. Titles of confraternities and other institutions are not translated and churches, saints and personal names are given in their Italian form (e.g. S. Rocco, Carlo Borromeo), except in obvious cases where the anglicised version is very well known (e.g. St Peter's). Names of famous places appear in their English form.

My road towards this study has been long and twisted; many people have contributed to it. For some years I was preparing a book on the post-tridentine Church in Italy; my colleague Bruce Collins suggested that my discussion of confraternities merited a separate short study of them on its own. This book, later than anticipated and with many more ingredients, is the outcome.

The production of a first book, unlike an article or conference paper, allows the author to thank many people, and repay many debts of gratitude. A model history teacher, R.W. Harris, first showed me the delights of Italian culture, classical and Renaissance. Through the good offices of Erna Low, a stimulating guide, mentor and generous friend to many young people, I studied at the foreign students' university in Perugia; so began a love-hate relationship with that enigmatic city. I owe much to the encouraging supervision of Peter Partner, and to Roberto Abbondanza, the then director of the Archivio di Stato in Perugia, who made it a welcome and efficient place to study in the 1960s for my postgraduate research on Renaissance Perugia.

During a sabbatical year in 1975–6 I was able to undertake major researches on the post-tridentine Italian Church. Generous grants from the British Academy and the Carnegie Trust enabled me both to study in Perugian archives and to travel throughout Italy looking at churches, oratories and paintings from Milan to Naples and Lecce. The Carnegie Trust and the Court of Glasgow University have generously funded subsequent visits to archives and libraries in Perugia, Bologna, Rome and Venice, as well as excursions to ecclesiastical buildings and works of art in other cities. Stimulated by Brian Pullan's studies of Venetian confraternities, particularly the *Scuole Grandi*, I took a particular interest in Perugian confraternities as part of a broader study of post-tridentine church and society. I am grateful to the officials of the Sodalizio Braccio Fortebraccio for permission in 1975 to consult their private archive housing (it must be admitted rather inadequately because of their limited resources) the records of Perugia's three most important confraternities to which the Sodalizio is heir.

Having decided to publish first on confraternities I was able to use a sabbatical term in 1983 to write the first draft of this study. Since then the critical comments and encouragement of several Readers for Cambridge University Press have caused new dimensions to be added, more forthright conclusions to be drawn, and the text to be expanded. Some advice so offered was mutually irreconcilable in one book, but I trust all Readers will feel that what I have accepted and acted upon has produced an improved study that at least partly justifies their painstaking efforts. To them, and my

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521531136 - Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century
Christopher F. Black
Frontmatter
More information

supervising editor Richard Fisher, I am profoundly grateful. The rewriting process since 1983 has enabled me to add archival material from Bologna and Venice, and examples from early printed books–especially on attitudes to poverty–which have contributed to a more rounded study.

In producing this book I have incurred a number of other debts great and small. In Perugia–besides those already mentioned–I am appreciative of the help and encouragement of Mario Roncetti, Director of the Biblioteca Augusta, and his staff, and grateful to Giovanni Antonelli and Paola Pimpinelli, Director and Secretary of the Deputazione di Storia Patria per l'Umbria, to Don Costanzo Tabarelli, archivist of the Archivio di San Pietro, and to Professor Ugolino Nicolini. Hospitality and encouragement shown years ago to a lonely research student by Contessa Elisabetta Oddi-Baglioni (who also helped me gain access to a private family archive), and the Principessa Barberini are still fondly remembered. I am grateful to Francesco Santi and the photographic staff of the Pinacoteca for supplying illustrations of the works of Perugino and Alunno (5 and 4). In Bologna I have been most grateful for the Istituto per le Scienze Religiose–a specialist library which is an efficient and pleasant place to work–and to its staff. There I have benefited from suggestions from Professors Daniele Menozzi and Giancarlo Angelozzi. At the library of the L'Archiginnasio the deficiencies of its facilities are more than compensated for by the cooperation and friendliness of the staff at all levels that I have encountered. I am also grateful for permission to use an illustration from one of their archival volumes (frontispiece).

In Venice I am indebted to all those connected with the Fondazione Giorgio Cini at S. Giorgio Maggiore for inviting me to a Seminario in April 1984, where I could air my views on Italian confraternities, meet others similarly involved (in an atmosphere of generous hospitality), and reawaken my tastes and sensibilities when I felt most jaded. The international fraternity of Venetian scholars have collectively and severally provided much help and encouragement, particularly Alex Cowan, Nick Davidson, Giuseppina De Sandre Gasparini, Richard Mackenney, Paola Pavanini, Brian Pullan, and Bill Wurthmann. Richard Mackenney and Nick Davidson introduced me to the Venetian Archivio di Stato, and saved me much time by guiding me through its resources. I am particularly indebted to Brian Pullan, not only for the initial stimulus –reflected in the notes and bibliography below–of his *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice* and other published work, but also for his comments on an earlier draft, for securing an invitation to Venice, and for general encouragement and advice.

To Roberto Rusconi I am likewise heavily indebted both for access at a crucial moment to his own study of confraternities prior to publication, and for advice and stimulating companionship.

In Glasgow my colleague Thomas Munck has valiantly wrestled with various drafts, providing valuable suggestions and emendations. I am grateful to several generations of tolerant Honours students taking courses on the Counter-Reformation and on Poverty in early modern Europe, on whom I have inflicted various ideas, puzzling examples and unspellable names. Some have been stimulated to read and write about confraternities, and provided valuable feedback. Pat Ferguson made a valuable contribution in typing and improving the first version of this book. I am particularly appreciative of the services of the Inter-Library Loan organisation across the globe.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521531136 - Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century
Christopher F. Black
Frontmatter
More information

For permission to consult unpublished theses I thank Oliver Logan, Anthony Wright, Richard Mackenney and Bill Wurthmann. Unpublished material given in lectures and seminars by the last two has also proved valuable, as acknowledged in appropriate places in the notes. Michael Bury, besides helpful advice on religious art some years ago, has recently contributed some points about Umbrian confraternity banners in advance of his book on the subject. Maria Calace Torre kindly sent an unpublished paper on Bari confraternities.

It is argued below that confraternities could be in life and in death a more helpful community than the family. When it comes to writing books the family is hard to bypass, or finds it difficult to escape involvement–for good or ill. My parents generously supported me through student and research days, though sometimes doubting the wisdom of my historical pursuits. I hope they will accept this as in some way a return on their investment of faith and charity in my work over many years. The book has in various ways been affected by the adoption of foundling twins from Colombia, and chapter 9 perhaps reflects academic interests they aroused. As so often, there is also a suffering spouse to whom one owes most. Elizabeth's medieval and theological interests have saved me from various errors and misconceptions; her more recent experience in supervising postgraduate students of stylistics and linguistics has been applied in valiant efforts to loosen my contorted syntax and overcrowded paragraphs. Neither she, nor others who have been so helpful, are responsible for the sins of omission and commission remaining in this text. Finally, in place of fraternity assistance we have had by adoption and grace the support of Jessie Gardner, as a sorority on her own helping the family, making it easier to pursue my researches, and quietly encouraging this enterprise through its long gestation.

Christopher F. Black
Glasgow, June 1988

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521531136 - Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century
Christopher F. Black
Frontmatter
More information

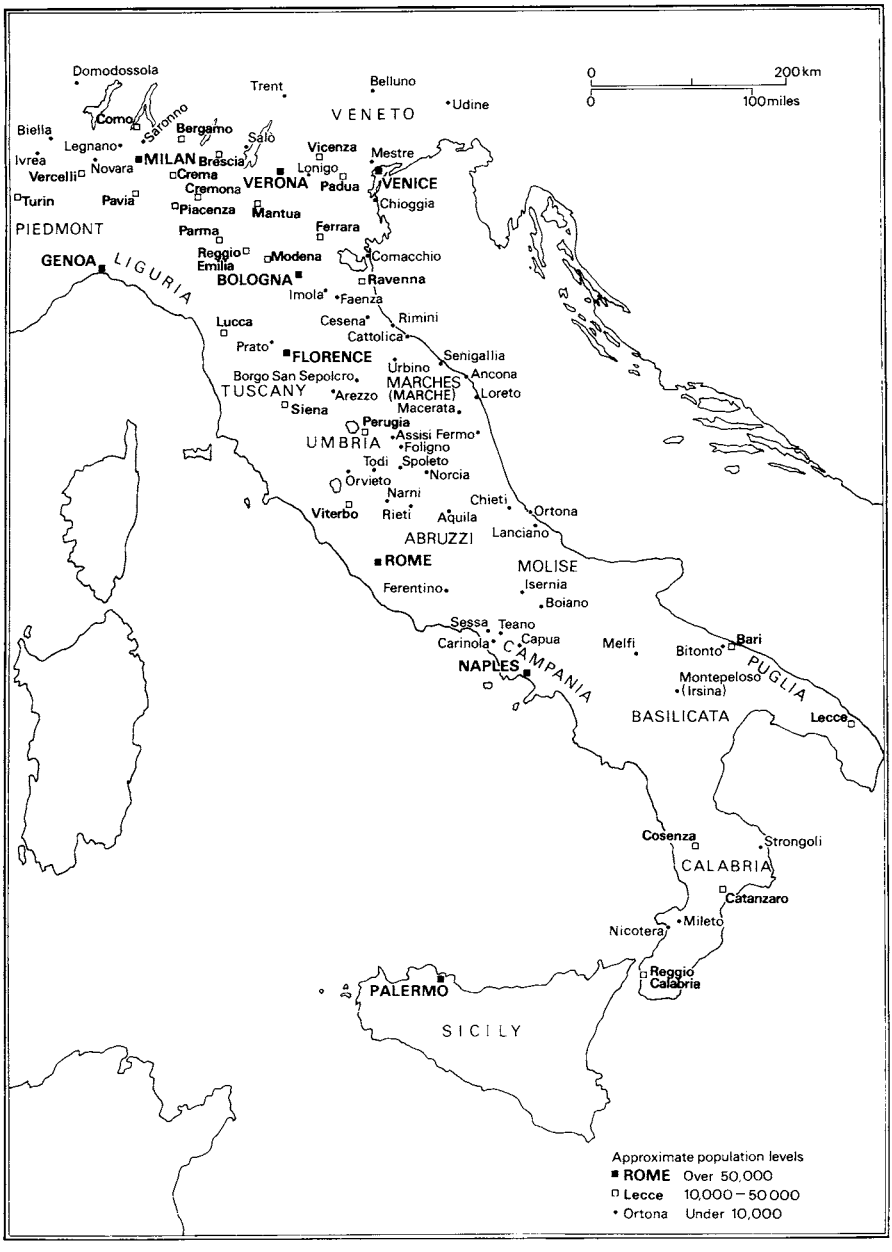
ABBREVIATIONS

AA.VV.	Various Authors (Autori Varii)
AEM	*Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*
ASP	Archivio di Stato, Perugia
ASPietro	Archivio di San Pietro, Perugia
ASVen	Archivio di Stato, Venice
BCB	Biblioteca Comunale, Bologna. (L'Archiginnasio)
BCP	Biblioteca Comunale, Perugia. (Biblioteca Augusta)
Bibl. Vat.	Biblioteca Vaticana
Bol. Ist	Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, Bologna
Bol. Ist. BAB	Istituto per le Scienze Religiose. Biblioteca Archivescovile di Bologna. (The section now housed in the Institute)
BSPU	*Bollettino della Deputazione di Storia Patria per l'Umbria*
COD	*Concilium Oecumenicorum Decreta*
CT	*Concilium Tridentinum*
EHR	*English Historical Review*
F.O.	Fondo Ospedale [in BCB]
J. Ecc. H.	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
RSCI	*Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia*
RSI	*Rivista Storica Italiana*
RSLR	*Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa*
RSRR	*Ricerche per la Storia Religiosa di Roma*
S.	San, Santo, Santa [Saint]
SBF	Archive of the Sodalizio Braccio Fortebraccio, Perugia
SS.	Santissimo, Santissima, Santissimi (Most Saintly, Most Holy); or Santi (Saints)
TLS	*The Times Literary Supplement*

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521531136 - Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century
Christopher F. Black
Frontmatter
More information



Map of Italy

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org