



The Early Humiliati

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This book is the first major study in English of a group of late twelfth-century religious enthusiasts, the early Humiliati, who were condemned by the Church as heretics in 1184 but – in a remarkable transition – were reconciled seventeen years later and went on to establish a highly successful religious order in north Italy.

The Humiliati have been accorded little attention in previous studies both because of the local nature of the order and because of its suppression in 1571, after one of their number made a disastrous attempt to murder Charles Borromeo. Using a combination of a wide range of sources, the nature of the early movement and its processes of institutional development are reconstructed. The book also includes a *Bullarium Humiliatorum*, a calendar of papal and episcopal letters and privileges, which will be of great use to scholars in the field.

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THE EARLY HUMILIATI

FRANCES ANDREWS



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CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	page viii
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	ix
<i>Map</i>	xii
Introduction	i
1 Tradition and history	6
2 The beginnings of the Humiliati: the twelfth-century evidence	38
3 <i>Quia in nullo peccabant</i> : the inspection and approval of the Humiliati 1199–1201	64
4 Rules	99
5 In search of communities	136
6 New members and profession of vows	173
7 Unity and uniformity: the development of a centralised order	202
8 The Humiliati and the Church in the localities	220
Conclusion	248
Appendices:	
I Calendar of papal (and episcopal) letters and privileges concerning the Humiliati	253
II Professions of faith	294
III Wills	304
<i>Bibliography</i>	320
<i>Index</i>	337

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ABBREVIATIONS

See p. 253 for abbreviations used only in appendix I.

<i>AASS</i>	<i>Acta Sanctorum</i>
ACA Milan	Archivio della curia arcivescovile, Milan
Ambrosiana	Biblioteca ambrosiana, Milan
ASBg	Archivio di stato, Bergamo
ASBr	Archivio di stato, Brescia
ASCo	Archivio di stato, Como
ASL	<i>Archivio storico lombardo</i>
ASMi	Archivio di stato, Milan
	Fondo pergamene
470/471 Brera	Buste 470 and 471. Sta Maria di Brera
526 Pta Vercellina	Busta 526 Umiliati di Porta Vercellina
385 Sta Caterina	Busta 385 Sta Caterina alla Chiusa
435 San Marco	Busta 435 San Marco
ASVat	Archivio segreto vaticano
Baldaria	Archivio della Cancelleria della Nunziatura Veneta. Monastero di San Giovanni Battista di Baldaria
ASVer	Archivio di stato, Verona
Ghiara	Fondo di Sta Maria della Ghiara
Beverara	Fondo di San Giovanni della Beverara
ASVic Ognissanti 1–2	Archivio di stato, Vicenza
	Fondo delle corporazioni soppresse. Monastero di Ognissanti buste 1 and 2
AVLodi	Archivio vescovile, Lodi
Bobbio	<i>Codice diplomatico del monastero di S. Colombano di Bobbio fino all'anno mcccviii</i> , 3 vols., ed. C. Cipolla, <i>Fonti per la storia d'Italia</i> , 52–4 (Rome, 1918)

List of abbreviations

Brera	Biblioteca nazionale di Brera, Milan
BF	<i>Bullarium franciscanum</i> , ed. J. H. Sbaralea, vols. 1–IV, (Rome, 1759–68), ed. C. Eubel, vols. v–VII, (Rome, 1898–1904)
BSSS	Biblioteca della società storica subalpina
Casale	<i>Carte varie di Casale e monasteri del Monferrato. Cartari minori</i> , ed. E. Durando, BSSS, 42 (Pinerolo, 1908)
CDL	<i>Codice diplomatico laudense</i> , vols. I, II/I and II/II, <i>Lodi Nuovo</i> , ed. C. Vignati, Biblioteca storica italiana, 2–4 (Milan, 1885)
Chrodegang	‘Regula canonicorum secundum Dacherii recensionem’, comp. J. P. Migne, <i>PL</i> , 89 (Paris, 1863), cols. 1058–96
DBI	<i>Dizionario biografico degli italiani</i>
DIP	<i>Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione</i>
Gesta	<i>Gesta Innocentii III Papae</i> , comp. J. P. Migne, <i>PL</i> , 214 (Paris, 1855), cols. xvii–ccxxviii
Grundmann	H. Grundmann, <i>Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter</i> (Berlin, 1935, 2nd rev. edn. Darmstadt 1961); trans. S. Rowan, <i>Religious Movements in the Middle Ages</i> (Notre Dame, London, 1995)
Ivrea	<i>Carte dello Archivio vescovile d’Ivrea fino al 1313</i> , 2 vols., ed. F. Gabotto, BSSS, 5–6 (Pinerolo, 1900)
Maleczek, Kardinalskolleg	W. Maleczek, <i>Papst und Kardinalskolleg von 1191 bis 1216. Die Kardinäle unter Coelestin III. und Innocenz III.</i> (Rome, Vienna, 1984)
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae historica</i>
Leges	<i>Leges, sectio III Concilia</i> , 3 vols., ed. A. Werminghoff <i>et al.</i> (Hanover, Leipzig, 1906–24)
SS	<i>Scriptores</i> , ed. G. H. Pertz <i>et al.</i> (Hanover, 1826–)
OBP	<i>Omnis boni principium</i> , ed. Zanoni (Milan, 1911), pp. 352–70
Oulx	<i>Le carte della prevostura d’Oulx raccolte e riordinate cronologicamente fino al 1300</i> , ed. G. Collino, BSSS, 45 (Pinerolo, 1908)
PL	<i>Patrologiae Latinae cursus completus</i> , comp. J. P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–64)

List of abbreviations

Potthast	A. Potthast, <i>Regesta pontificum romanorum</i> , 2 vols. (Graz, 1957)
RCM	Rule of Sta Croce Mortara, 'La regola dei Mortariensi', ed. V. Mosca, <i>Alberto, Patriarca di Gerusalemme</i> , <i>Textus et studia historica Carmelitana</i> , 20 (Rome, 1996), appendix 2, pp. 561-97
Register I-II, v-VII	Innocent III, <i>Die Register Innocenz III</i> , ed. O. Hageneder, A. Haidacher, W. Maleczek <i>et al.</i> (Graz, Cologne, Rome, Vienna, 1964-97); I <i>Pontifikatsjahr</i> 1198-9, II 1199-1200, V 1202-3, VI 1203-4, VII 1204-5
RIS	L. A. Muratori, <i>Rerum Italicarum Scriptores</i> , 25 vols. (Milan, 1723-51)
RSB	<i>The Rule of St Benedict</i> , ed. and trans. J. McCann (London, 1952)
RSCI	<i>Rivista di storia della chiesa in Italia</i>
S. Solutore	<i>Le carte dell'abbazia di S. Solutore di Torino. Carte varie relative a chiese e monasteri di Torino e territorio</i> , ed. F. Cognasso, BSSS, 44 (Pinerolo, 1908)
SCH	<i>Studies in Church History</i>
Sulle tracce	<i>Sulle tracce degli Umiliati</i> , ed. M. P. Alberzoni, A. Ambrosioni and A. Lucioni (Milan, 1997)
Vercelli, arcivescovile	<i>Le carte dello archivio arcivescovile di Vercelli</i> , ed. D. Arnoldi, BSSS, 85 (Pinerolo, 1917), pp. 205-452
Vercelli, capitolare	<i>Le carte dello archivio capitolare di Vercelli</i> , ed. D. Arnoldi, G. C. Faccio, F. Gabotto and G. Rocchi, 2 vols., BSSS, 70-1 (Pinerolo, 1912-14)
VHM	G. Tiraboschi, <i>Vetera Humiliatorum Monumenta annotationibus, ac dissertationibus prodromis illustrata</i> , 3 vols. (Milan, 1766-8)
Vitry HO	Jacques de Vitry, <i>The 'Historia occidentalis' of Jacques de Vitry: A Critical Edition</i> , ed. J. F. Hinnebusch, <i>Spicilegium Friburgense</i> , 17 (Freibourg, 1972)
Zanoni	L. Zanoni, <i>Gli umiliati nei loro rapporti con l'eresia, l'industria della lana ed i comuni nei secoli xii e xiii sulla scorta di documenti inediti</i> (Milan, 1911, reprinted 1971)

INTRODUCTION

Heresy lies in the eye of the beholder.¹

The early Humiliati stood at a crossroads between tradition and novelty, orthodoxy and heresy. Latin Europe in the last decades of the twelfth century saw an outpouring of new forms of religious life which Marie-Dominique Chenu has described as an 'Evangelical Awakening': a renewed search for a more intense religious experience focused on the life of Christ and the apostles, as described in the Gospel: the *vita apostolica* and the model of the early Church, the *ecclesiae primitivae forma*.² The most successful of these new movements in the twelfth century, both numerically and historiographically, were the Cathars and Waldensians. The dualist faith of the Cathars took fast hold in the Languedoc and northern Italy and the Cathar Church was acquiring a clear organisational structure separate from that of the Church of Rome. The Waldensians came together in the 1170s as followers of Valdes of Lyons, a charismatic figure who attracted attention by his dramatic conversion to a life of poverty and preaching. When the English churchman and raconteur Walter Map encountered him and his followers at the papal Curia in 1179 he ridiculed their ignorance, but was sufficiently alarmed to observe 'they are making their first moves in the humblest manner because they cannot launch an attack. If we admit them, we shall be driven out.'³ Both Cathars and Waldensians were considered heretics by men of the Church and were

¹ See Moore, 'New sects and secret meetings: association and authority in the eleventh and twelfth centuries', pp. 47–68 on the idea that anxiety (about new forms of religious life) lay in the eye of the clerical beholder.

² Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, ch. 7; see also by the same author 'Moines, clercs, laïcs, au carrefour de la vie évangélique (xii^e siècle)'.

³ Walter Map, *De nugis curialium: Courtiers' Trifles*, ed. and trans. M. R. James, rev. C. N. L. Brooke and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1983), distinction 1, chapter 31, p. 127; trans. from *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, Wakefield and Evans, p. 204.

The early Humiliati

caught in the broad net of the anathema declared in November 1184 by pope Lucius III sitting in council with Frederick I Barbarossa at Verona. Within a generation, the Waldensians had acquired a substantial body of members and, like the Cathars, were becoming doctrinally more remote from the orthodox Church.⁴ The most successful movements in the early thirteenth century, by contrast, enjoyed the support of prelates and popes from the beginning. Francis and Dominic, charismatic preachers who took the meaning of the *vita apostolica* and the *ecclesiae primitivae forma* to new extremes, attracted vast followings and founded orders which were to dominate the pastoral and intellectual life of the thirteenth-century Church.

In this religious drama the Humiliati or 'humble ones' had only a walk-on part, limited first by geography and then by chronology. They first emerged in the 1170s on the north Italian plain between the foothills of the Alps and the Appennines, along the valley of the Po from modern-day Piemonte in the west to the edges of the Veneto in the east. The first references describe both groups of clerics living in community and lay men and women devoted to the religious life in small *ad hoc* associations promoting the catholic faith. In 1184 the Humiliati too, like the Cathars and Waldensians, were listed as heretics by Lucius III and Barbarossa, but by the turn of the century they were sufficiently established to approach the pope in search of approval. By this date, three distinct elements were recognisable: married or single lay men and women living a religious life while remaining in their own homes (later known as the Third order), male and female regulars living in common (the Second order), and clerics based in more formal communities (the First order). In 1201 these groups achieved recognition as three separate orders under one framework of authority.

By the mid-thirteenth century the *ordo Humiliatorum* had seen spectacular expansion. In 1278 Bonvesin da la Riva, himself a Humiliati Tertiary, recorded that there were over 200 houses of the regular 'Second' order and seven *canoniche* of the 'First', in the city and region of Milan alone.⁵ His figures are not without problems, but the measure of success which they convey is undeniable. By the middle of the thirteenth century, the Humiliati had become a major presence in the religious, economic and administrative life of northern Italy.

In the following centuries, the order shrank in both size and prestige and in the 1500s the Humiliati were swept aside by the winds of change

⁴ K. V. Selge, *Die ersten Waldenser, mit Edition der 'Liber Antiheresis' des Durandus von Osca*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1967).

⁵ Bonvesin da la Riva, *De magnalibus mediolani. Meraviglie di Milano*, pp. 81, 83. On Bonvesin, see A. S. Avalle, 'Bonvesin della Riva', *DBI*, xii (Rome, 1970), pp. 465-9.

Introduction

in the Counter Reformation. The male orders were suppressed by Charles Borromeo and Pius V in 1571 with the bull *Quemadmodum sollicitus pater*, the women (by this date Benedictine) left to fade out in a more dignified manner in the following centuries.

The experience of the Humiliati is unique. There are certainly points of comparison with the early experience of the Waldensians: both groups advocated a more active pastoral role for their members, both were condemned in 1184 at least in part because of their insistence on preaching without authority. Like the Humiliati, two groups of former Waldensians, led by Durand of Huesca and Bernard Prim, returned to orthodox obedience during the pontificate of Innocent III (1198–1216). Since the early sources for the Humiliati are sporadic and fragmentary and we are so much better informed about the actions and teachings of the early Waldensians, historians have found it logical to assimilate the two groups. But the parallels, although beguiling, are also restrictive. The reason why we do not have the same type and quality of early sources for the Humiliati is symptomatic. In part this is the result of the fate of the movement centuries later and the dispersal and loss of documentary sources, but it is also because they attracted less attention, fitting relatively smoothly into the religious and ecclesiastical life of northern Italy.

This book sets out to explore the reasons for the unique experience of the Humiliati, tracing their history from the earliest records in the 1170s to the height of their success in the mid-thirteenth century. When we look beyond, though never forgetting, the heretic label, to explore the evidence for the development of the *ordo Humiliatorum* and the relations of this group of religious enthusiasts with the local communities with whom they lived, both ecclesiastical and lay, we find a very different experience from that of even the reconciled Waldensians. In this process the Humiliati can be seen to have as much in common with confraternal groups and with the new and exciting orthodoxies of the thirteenth century, the Franciscans and Dominicans above all, as they do with heretics such as the Waldensians.

The book opens with a preliminary historiographical survey intended to illustrate the issues and debates of present and past research on the Humiliati and clarify the starting point for this study. This is followed by a case-by-case examination of the twelfth-century evidence for the Humiliati, both before and after 1184. Those concerned with the general framework rather than specific local examples may wish to limit their reading of this chapter to the opening pages and the conclusions which explore the impact of the condemnation and the nature of relations between the new movement and prelates in these years.

The early Humiliati

Chapter 3 then focuses on the process of approval at the turn of the century, examining the careers of the individuals involved on both sides of the negotiations, so as to establish a context for the actions of Innocent III and assess the contribution of both the Humiliati themselves and the prelates of the north Italian Church. Chapter 4 outlines the norms established for the order in 1201 and then illustrates the development of observance in the following years by consideration of dispensations on oath-taking, fasting and diet.

The next three chapters (5, 6 and 7) examine the evidence from the first decades of the thirteenth century for the development of the *ordo Humiliatorum*, defined in organisational terms as a network of houses bound by observance of a common rule and centralised administration. Chapter 5 analyses the nature, size and geographical catchment areas of houses, the presence of women, evidence for institutional security, the structural framework and the roles of superiors, both male and female. A pre-condition for the existence of an order was a common sense of identity or participation in a community and, although it is often elusive of illustration, examination of ties between different houses and communities helps to throw some light on this area. Local, city-wide or regional links between houses are therefore examined in some detail.

Chapter 6 uses professions of faith to consider the development of the vows and ritual for entry into the First and Second orders of the Humiliati. These records provide a unique insight into variations in practice, the evolution of uniform, regular observance, and once more, the emergence of a common identity as an order. They also furnish invaluable information about methods of recruitment and the experience of individuals entering the communities.

Chapter 7 returns to the evidence of papal letters to trace uniform observance, papal visitation and the impact of changes introduced in 1246 on the development of an *ordo Humiliatorum*. In particular it explores the activities of the first Master General, Beltramus of Brescia, using the settlement of disputes as a guide to the exercise of authority in the order. Finally, chapter 8 is a first attempt to place the Humiliati of the First and Second orders into a wider pastoral and ecclesiastical context, analysing the development of their pastoral rights, and their involvement in the business of death as well as their relations with other ecclesiastics in the region, both secular and regular.

This book is not intended as a general history of the early Humiliati. Research is still continuing in too many areas to make that as yet a realistic project. It is first necessary to understand the Humiliati as a movement outside and then as an order within the Church. That is the aim of this book. Only once this has been established can the question

Introduction

of their involvement in industry and communal government or their relations with the 'ordinary' people of northern Italy be appraised.

The geographical boundaries of this study are as far as possible those of the early Humiliati themselves in northern and later in central Italy. A conscious attempt has been made to use a variety of sources from across this area in order to complement rather than duplicate the spate of local studies being produced in northern Italy. Evidence for the area of Verona is, however, particularly prolific and has provided the opportunity for greater consideration of some aspects of practice (in particular professions of faith) than elsewhere. This also serves to counter a previous tendency to focus on Milan, certainly the Humiliati city *par excellence*, but not by any means the only one.

The chronological limitations of this study are dictated first by the surviving documents (the earliest date to the 1170s) and second by the nature of my approach. It is intended to explore the transition of a movement into an order. Consideration of a relatively long time span is therefore necessary; however, I have not generally gone beyond the 1270s. In those years a new and different epoch in the history of the Humiliati begins, marked by a protracted dispute with the bishops of Milan, Como and Brescia which led to the negotiation of a new status for the order, entirely free from episcopal intervention.

Heresy lies in the eye of the beholder. Whether the Humiliati should be seen as heretics or not was decided in two ways in this period: condemnation in 1184, reconciliation in 1201. In the 1990s, the Humiliati form a standard part of the undergraduate syllabus for the study of heresy, not religious orders. It is the intention of this book to make a plea for a reversal of that picture; to see the Humiliati as they saw themselves, fighting to defend the religious life in the bustle and tension of the north.

Chapter 1

TRADITION AND HISTORY

. . . una discreta fioritura di studi . . .

Volpe

POINTS OF DEPARTURE

Two weighty works are essential in the hand baggage of any student of the early Humiliati. The first, and still irreplaceable, is the three-volume *Vetera Humiliatorum Monumenta*, published in the 1760s by a young Jesuit scholar, Girolamo Tiraboschi (1731–94), better known to posterity as the author of a monumental history of Italian literature.¹ Tiraboschi taught rhetoric at the Brera Academy in Milan, which had acquired the site, name and archives of a prominent house of the Humiliati.² This gave him easy access to a mass of documentation, including the *Bullarium Humiliatorum*, a substantial collection of papal letters and privileges addressed to the order.³ Many of these he published in the *Monumenta*, together with material unearthed in other archives in Milan and through correspondence with archivists and scholars all over northern Italy in a manner reminiscent of the working practices of the Bollandists and Maurists.⁴ The resulting volumes include an extensive collection of documentation concerning the history of the order down to the sixteenth century, to which Tiraboschi added a careful critique in the form of seven lengthy dissertations.⁵

The second study, and one cast in a very different style, is a volume published in 1911 by Luigi Zanoni: *Gli umiliati nei loro rapporti con l'eresia, l'industria della lana ed i comuni nei secoli xii e xiii sulla scorta di*

¹ G. Tiraboschi, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, 11 vols. (Modena, 1772–95).

² A. Scotti, *Brera 1776–1815. Nascita e sviluppo di una istituzione culturale milanese* (Milan, 1979).

³ Brera AD XVII.

⁴ See, for example, his correspondence with canon Bartoli of Novara in Balosso, 'Gli Umiliati nel Novarese', 86–90.

⁵ See below, p. 21.

documenti inediti.⁶ Zanoni was a star student of the Milanese historian Gioacchino Volpe who later wrote a brief but revealing description of the work being undertaken by this group in the early decades of the twentieth century, relating it to the distinctive political and ecclesiastical climate of the times. The atmosphere, he wrote, had been dominated by christian socialism and opposition to the establishment, characteristics which evoked parallels with Valdes and Francis. He saw it as a time when many people lived between orthodoxy and heresy, with the threat of spiritual sanctions hanging over them. The controversy engendered had influenced the writing of history: 'There was at that time a notable flowering of studies dedicated to the religious or socio-ecclesiastical life, within which there were currents stirred by the tumultuous air beating from outside.'⁷ Such studies were particularly being undertaken by young priests and Volpe praised, among others, the excellent work on the Humiliati by Luigi Zanoni, many of whose conclusions he shared.⁸

Zanoni was one of the scholars appointed to the Ambrosiana library in Milan, which holds in its archives manuscripts of the early chronicles of the order and seventeenth-century studies, as well as notarial documentation.⁹ Like Tiraboschi, Zanoni thus had direct access to some of the sources for his work, but he too extended his research beyond the immediate confines of his own institution to other archives in Milan and elsewhere. In the extensive appendices to his volume he published documents which Tiraboschi either had not found or had not considered worthy of inclusion. These included transcripts of the rule of the First and Second orders, fifteenth-century chronicles of the order and extensive notarial material, illustrating in particular his interest in the communities of Tertiaries and Humiliati involvement in the wool trade and city administration.¹⁰

The approaches of Tiraboschi and Zanoni, separated by 145 years, were naturally very different, reflecting changes in historical writing and in the north Italian Church. Tiraboschi was a young Jesuit, writing in Latin and producing astute and systematic statements on the growth and extent of the Humiliati order in a work crowded with cautious detail, but also with telling insights. Zanoni was another young priest, but, perhaps prompted by the climate of opposition to the establishment

⁶ Zanoni [The Humiliati and their relations with heresy, the wool industry and the communes in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, on the basis of unpublished documents]; L. Zanoni, 'Gli origini degli Umiliati', *Civiltà Cattolica*, 62 (1911), 433–43, 670–80, summarises his arguments concerning their origins.

⁷ Volpe, *Movimenti religiosi*, pp. xiii–xiv.

⁸ *Ibid.*, and p. 55; below, p. 29.

⁹ A. Paredi, 'Storia dell'Ambrosiana', *L'Ambrosiana* (Milan, 1967), part I.

¹⁰ Zanoni, pp. 267–370.

The early Humiliati

bubbling around him, sought parallel themes in the lives of the people he studied. In the process he and another young contemporary, Antonino De Stefano, swept away some of the fabulous accretions to the history of the Humiliati which Tiraboschi's caution had made him reluctant to remove. These fables are nonetheless instructive, reflecting as they do the concerns of the Humiliati and those around them. They also furnish a context for the works of Tiraboschi and his successors and a background to the historiography of the Humiliati in the twentieth century from which the present study derives.

THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

The first surviving attempts at a retrospective account of the origins of the Humiliati are the early fourteenth-century writings of two Dominicans, a circumstance not without significance in view of the association between the two orders during the thirteenth century, though neither author devoted substantial space to the theme. The Bolognese Francesco Pipino (died after 1328) made little more than passing reference to the beginnings of the Humiliati in a general chronicle, while the Milanese Galvano Fiamma (1283–c. 1344) inserted short but differing passages concerning the Humiliati or the actions of Guy *de Porta Orientale*, an early figure linked with them, in three related works.¹¹ Of these accounts the earliest is probably that of Pipino, a writer deservedly better known for a translation of Marco Polo's account of his travels in the East. Pipino's chronicle covers the years 754–1314 and is highly derivative, employing a wide range of sources, but none is given for the brief entry on the Humiliati and there is no need to assume anything more than common knowledge, perhaps acquired through association with members of the order. He records that Innocent gave the Third order their rule in the last year of the reign of Henry VI (which he identifies as 1199, thereby misdating emperor and approval), but projects the history of the order further back, correctly asserting that they had assumed the habit long before this date and remarking that this was before the Friars Minor or Preacher had appeared.¹² There is nothing contentious here, but he goes on to describe the Tertiaries as the founders of the First and Second orders, a point which may have

¹¹ *Chronicon fratris Francisci Pipini*, ed. Muratori, cited Zanoni, pp. 11–12 and n. 1; Galvano Fiamma, *Chronicon extravagans et chronicon maius* (ad an. 1216), pp. 506–773; *Manipulus florum*, col. 632. There is no full edition of Galvano's third history, the *Galvagnana*, Brera AE x 10, fo. 70v, but see now Alberzoni, 'San Bernardo e gli Umiliati', pp. 96–124, who includes the text of the relevant passage, p. 103 n. 22; on Pipino and Fiamma, see Kaeppli, *Scriptores ordinis praedicatorum medii aevii*, 1, pp. 392–5; II, pp. 6–10.

¹² *Chronicon fratris Francisci Pipini*, col. 633.

been of particular concern to the Tertiaries in the fourteenth century, as will become clear.

Fiamma, by contrast, was a prolific and much more imaginative writer, and in his discussion of the Humiliati he made some surprising claims.¹³ In all three accounts he associated Guy de Porta Orientale with Bernard of Clairvaux in the foundation of the Cistercian house of Chiaravalle Milanese in 1135. In the earliest (the *Galvagnana*, written between 1329 and 1340), he then described the 'building' of the *convenio sancti Bernardi* of the Third order of the brethren in the Porta Orientale of Milan by this same Guy and its confirmation by Innocent III, from whose title its name derived.¹⁴ These brethren subsequently founded the order of the Humiliati and carried out visitation of them.

In his second account, the *Manipulus florum*, Fiamma maintained that on his way back through Milan, Bernard himself organised the 'order of St Bernard', now known as the *fratres de Conegio* and whose first house had been built by Guy in the Porta Orientale (a community of Humiliati Tertiaries when Fiamma was writing). He claimed that Guy, who assisted Bernard on that occasion, also went to Rome to receive confirmation of this order from Innocent III and he repeated the association of the name with the pope's title and the role of the Tertiaries as founders and visitors of the First and Second orders. In this version he added that they were exempt from communal taxes in Milan, a detail which enhances the impression that Fiamma was particularly concerned with the fate of the Tertiaries.

As Tiraboschi and Zanoni were well aware, there are some serious problems with Fiamma's account. Acknowledging that the work included fables, Tiraboschi threw doubt on the double role of Guy, pointing out that had he assisted Bernard in 1135 he would have been rather too old to visit Innocent III in 1201.¹⁵ However, he did not reject Fiamma's testimony entirely, arguing instead that 'he mixed truth with the falsehood'.¹⁶ Zanoni was less cautious, dismissing Fiamma as a 'credulous compiler', as many later historians have done (J. K. Hyde described Fiamma as a 'nasty plagiarist').¹⁷ The energy of this dismissal is attractive and it is obvious that Fiamma's history of the origins of the Tertiaries is not entirely trustworthy. However, nor is it simply

¹³ See also Andrews, 'Principium et origo ordinis: the Humiliati and their origins', pp. 149–61.

¹⁴ *Galvagnana*, Brera AE x 10, fo. 70v: 'ab Innocentio tertio dictus est ordo tertius'. For the dates see V. Hunecke, 'Die kirchenpolitischen Exkurse in den Chroniken des Galvaneus Flamma OP (1283–ca. 1344)', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 25 (1969), 111–208, 119–28; see also Alberzoni, 'San Bernardo e gli Umiliati', p. 116 n. 44.

¹⁵ *VHM* I, p. 45.

¹⁶ *VHM* II, p. 36. Also below, p. 22.

¹⁷ Zanoni, pp. 11, 14; J. K. Hyde, 'Medieval descriptions of cities', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 48:2 (1966), 308–40, 336.

The early Humiliati

gratuitous fabrication. His explanation of the name Tertiary as a reflection of the numerical designation of the pope who approved their rule is undoubtedly fabulous. Yet it may also reflect a partisan purpose, since it would forestall any argument that the name depended on their being third in a descending succession, thereby defending the status of the Tertiaries against other Humiliati, particularly clerics, who might claim precedence or special privilege. The claim to early visitation rights over the First and Second orders points to a similar propaganda purpose, while mention of their tax-exempt status renews a theme running through papal correspondence from the time of Innocent III onwards.

The fabulous elements in Fiamma's writing should make us wary, but should not lead us to reject the whole account out of hand. As he perhaps intended, it makes sometimes entertaining reading and yet allows an insight into the preoccupations of the fourteenth-century Tertiaries. Tiraboschi's conclusion that Fiamma 'mixed truth with the falsehood' is almost certainly the right one. This point is perhaps confirmed by recent studies illustrating something of a cult of Bernard among the later Humiliati and the possibilities of a link at one remove between Bernard and Guy *de Porta Orientale*.

The evidence for each point is circumstantial. Bernard was by no means the only saint venerated by the later members of the order and indeed was not listed by a fifteenth-century Humiliati chronicler, John of Brera. Nor can a Bernardine tradition be traced back to the twelfth century. Yet there is sufficient evidence in the form of altar, house and church dedications and artistic patronage to argue that by the fourteenth century members of the order may have cherished particular devotion to Bernard¹⁸ and may have found it easy to believe in an early association of their order with this great monastic leader. This may in turn be linked with notarial evidence showing that Guy *de Porta Orientale*, who was summoned by Innocent III in 1201, was the son of a man bearing the same name who had died in June 1174 and who would have been of the appropriate age to assist Bernard in 1135.¹⁹ Whether or not this did indeed happen, the association with Bernard fits well with contemporary descriptions of the saint's encounter with penitents when he visited Milan, and his attempts to regulate groups of faithful lay people suspected of heresy by encouraging them to come together in fraternities.²⁰ Fiamma, or those from whom he got the tale, conflated

¹⁸ Spinelli, 'La diffusione del culto di San Bernardo', pp. 193–215, pp. 203–4 and n. 29, p. 207 n. 36.

¹⁹ Alberzoni, 'San Bernardo e gli Umiliati', p. 110 n. 27.

²⁰ Landulf of St Paul, 'Historia mediolanensis', pp. 46–7; *VHM* 1, p. 37; Spinelli, 'La diffusione del culto di San Bernardo', pp. 114–15.

episodes at a distance of several generations, constructing an account which could only add lustre to the prestige of the Tertiaries, status which they greatly needed.

Already in the 1240s there had been disputes over the precedence of clerics in the house of San Michele in Alessandria, and in 1272 the Tertiaries had been excluded from the General Chapter of the order. By the fourteenth century the number of Tertiaries seems to have been in serious decline for, although their survival in small numbers is still recorded by the fifteenth-century chronicler John of Brera, they appear to have disappeared from Milan as early as the 1360s.²¹ Fiamma's account may well reflect the desire of Tertiaries to emphasise their primordial role in such a way as to revitalise their movement and re-establish their position.

This suggestion that close association with members of the Third order caused Fiamma to reflect their anxieties in his writings is reinforced by a clause inserted not long after his death in a hospital foundation charter drawn up in the new archiepiscopal palace in Milan in 1346.²² The hospital was established by the Tertiaries of the seven *convenia* of the city and suburbs.²³ It was to be dedicated to St Benedict and St Bernard and built using money and property given by all seven communities. The text of the charter does not claim any other than titular association with Bernard, but repeats the association of the name of the Tertiaries with Innocent III. It asserts that the original members of the order were nobles involved in the vanities and delights of the world who, being brought low, were divinely inspired to abase themselves by adopting a humble life and dress and were thus first and especially called Humiliati. The other two orders arose from the Tertiaries and, although their regular observances differed in many things, they were called Humiliati in their likeness.²⁴

There are clear parallels here with Fiamma's account, in particular in the association of the Tertiary name with Innocent III. Once more, what matters to the author of this charter is the primacy and noble origins of the Third order. The tactic employed to promote these ideas differs, however, from that of Fiamma. Any explicit claims to association with Bernard are omitted in favour of documentable association

²¹ Zanoni, p. 140 and see below, p. 13.

²² Zanoni, pp. 287–91; Alberzoni, 'San Bernardo e gli Umiliati', pp. 125–8.

²³ The Senedogo, Porta Orientale, Porta Nuova, Porta Cumana, Porta Vercellina, Porta Ticino and Porta Romana.

²⁴ Zanoni, p. 288: 'se ad vitam et habitum humilem humilantes fuerunt fratres humiliati primitus et specialiter nominati . . . ex predicto suo Humiliatorum primevo ordine tertio nuncupato processerunt alii duo fratrum ordines, ab eis in multis observantiis regularibus differentes, qui tamen ad ipsorum instar similiter Humiliati vocantur'.

The early Humiliati

with Innocent III, whose instructions concerning alms-giving in his letter laying out the rule for the Third order are repeated in the charter.²⁵ This text provides a literal explanation of the name of the order in that of nobles brought low; however, it fails to explain the reasons for this humiliation. The gap would be filled in a later re-elaboration of the tale.

The accounts of Pipino and Fiamma and the 1346 charter reflect the interests and concerns of the fourteenth-century Tertiaries, keen to emphasise their primacy in view of the increasing difficulties they faced. Yet what is perhaps most surprising is the lack of an account authored by any member of the order at this date, unless it be the 1346 charter. Nor is there any evidence of an interest in the past on the part of members of the First or Second orders, except when concerned to overrule some of the strictures of the founding members.²⁶ Only in the fifteenth century was a Humiliati brother finally to turn his attention to writing a full-scale chronicle of the order. The result echoes some of the themes of the earlier accounts, but reveals a rather different choice of emphases.

JOHN OF BRERA, CHRONICLER OF THE ORDER

John of Brera, as his name suggests, was a brother in the house of the Humiliati of the Brera in Milan where Tiraboschi was later to work. He completed his *Chronicon ordinis Humiliatorum* in 1419, followed by an abridged *Excerptum* in 1421.²⁷ Nothing more is known of John, although it has been suggested that he should be identified with the John of Marliano responsible for a collection of papal privileges compiled between 1408 and 1435, a suggestion which certainly fits with his use of privileges in the chronicle.²⁸

The relatively late date for this first Humiliati-authored chronicle contrasts strikingly with the numerous accounts produced by their near contemporaries the Franciscans and Dominicans from the 1230s and even earlier. This may reflect a desire on the part of the first members of the order to distance themselves from their unfortunate early history,

²⁵ Appendix I, 7; see also p. 104.

²⁶ Below, p. 129.

²⁷ *Chronicon*: Ambrosiana v 9 sup. (a copy compiled 1536–54), *VHM* III, pp. 229–86; *Excerptum*: Ambrosiana G 302 inf. (fifteenth century), Zanoni, pp. 336–44; Ambrosiana G 301 inf. is a seventeenth-century copy made on the orders of cardinal Frederick Borromeo before the Ambrosiana acquired G 302 inf. (received in 1802); Castiglioni, 'L'ordine degli Umiliati in tre codici illustrati dell'Ambrosiana', p. 8. For Federico Borromeo's own interest in the Humiliati, see Wickham Legg, 'The divine service in the sixteenth century', pp. 294–5.

²⁸ Mercati, 'Due ricerche per la storia degli Umiliati', pp. 177–8, 193; the collection of sixty-eight bulls is now Brera AF IX II A2.

Tradition and history

whilst by the fifteenth century changed circumstances may have made an account both more necessary and more desirable. Unwanted outside intervention and the declining circumstances of the order which, according to the chronicler, had shrunk to just thirty-three male and twenty female houses surely inspired John to seek to improve the reputation of the order, underlining its venerable and glorious past.²⁹

John's chronicle includes catalogues of the houses of the order, lists of saints and superiors, as well as details of privileges and constitutional changes. He did not give special prominence to any connection with Bernard. Instead he presented two other accounts of the origins of the order and these, together with the 'Bernard story', were to form the backbone of historical writing on the Humiliati until the early twentieth century. Analysis of them was central to the approaches of both Tiraboschi and Zanoni.

Exile

The first of John's accounts provides an explanation for the origins and 'humble' name of the order in terms of exile. The original outline of the story portrayed a group of noble Lombards, mostly from Milan and Como, sent into exile in Germany by the pious emperor Henry II (1002–24), who suspected their intentions lest they conspire against the empire. After some time in exile, as the narrative explains, they were inflamed by the Holy Spirit to lay aside all worldly pomp and promised to serve God with humility, reflecting that one cannot otherwise ascend to heaven. They put aside their rich clothes and adopted humble dress, wearing robes of ash-coloured, undyed cloth (*baratino*) and came together, agreeing that should God aid them to return home, they would persevere in their devotions. Hearing of this, the emperor called them to him and enquired whether they were indeed given to the religious life as their habits suggested. On replying that this was so, the exiles won imperial permission to return home. Inducing their families to share their new way of life, they began working as merchants and wool-workers and multiplied 'like fish', both within *Lombardia* and beyond. These were the first of the Tertiaries, who, as the chronicler notes, were few in number by his day.³⁰

This version appears to be an elaboration of the account given in the foundation charter of the hospital of St Benedict and St Bernard in 1346. Like that account, it identified the first Humiliati as nobles, but enlarged upon the reasons for their conversion and the origins of the

²⁹ John of Brera, *Chronicon*, ch. 3, p. 231.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, chs. 1–3, p. 230.

The early Humiliati

new order. In doing so it illustrated the origins of the emphasis on humility and labour, both important elements in the later order. It also provided a neat association of the order with none other than the emperor himself. Whether the exile was a traditional tale or invented anew by John, it assigned to the Humiliati a glorious and venerable past which might enable them to contend with the new and expanding orders of the early fifteenth century.

John was living in the community of the Brera, as Tiraboschi was to do 350 years later, and his purpose in writing was very personally associated with the community in which he lived. Although his account of the exile made explicit reference to the Third order and he accepted their greater antiquity, he also placed his own house very early in the history of the order. This chronology was constructed on the basis of a record of a land purchase concerning the community which he had read and shown to other members of the order and which he (mistakenly) dated to 1036.³¹ Such venerable age justified the undoubted prestige of the Brera in the later order.

St John of Meda

The second foundation story recounted by John of Brera took a further step in filling the gaps in the written history of the early order: the lack of a known and saintly founder. That close ties with a founder mattered is easily demonstrated by reference to the frequent efforts of individual Franciscan houses to claim foundation by St Francis or St Anthony, even when extremely implausible. Association with a saintly founder conferred honour and venerability on any community.³²

John drew on a brief and anonymous *Vita* to describe the foundation of the First order by a saintly priest, John of Meda, in the first half of the twelfth century.³³ In four chapters he detailed the early twelfth-century foundation of an oratory at Rondineto near Como for men and women and then related several miracle stories, the most prominent of which again allowed him to underline the importance of his own community. Thus, while staying at the Brera during a preaching journey to Milan, John of Meda was visited by an angelic figure who provided him with enough money to buy abundant food for the whole community.³⁴ He also died there in 1159 and when his body was carried back to Como a healing miracle took place as it passed through the city.³⁵

³¹ *Ibid.*, ch. 10, p. 236. On the correct date of this document, see below, pp. 21, 23.

³² See, for example, A. Sartori, *La provincia del Santo dei frati minori conventuali* (Padua, 1958), p. 224.

³³ Anonymous, 'Vita de S. Joanne de Meda', ed. Suyskens, pp. 343–60.

³⁴ John of Brera, *Chronicon*, chs. 10–11, pp. 236–7.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, ch. 12, pp. 237–8.

Tradition and history

Whether or not John of Brera is to be identified with the privilege compiler, John of Marliano, his text reveals that he was familiar with the papal letters approving the order in 1201, and in the preface to his chronicle he fits the different elements into a wider chronology, though he omits John of Meda here. The exile becomes the 'beginning and origin of the order', followed by the second age marked by the issuing of privileges for the order by Innocent III in 1201 and the approval of the rule *Omnis boni principium*, which he mysteriously attributes to all three orders, although it was clearly not intended for lay people living in their own homes.³⁶ Finally, the third age had begun with the confirmation of the first Master General in 1246, and the later exemption of the order from diocesan authority.³⁷ This tripartite chronology established the venerable antiquity of the Humiliati, linked them to a saintly founder and yet showed sensitivity to the importance of documentary evidence, which was used extensively. It also neatly avoided any direct reference to heresy.

The passage on the first Master General reveals John's other purpose in writing, since it gave him an opportunity to contest the legitimacy of events in his own day. He observed that in 1246 the Master had been elected by the three orders of the Humiliati and that such elections had been conducted regularly until twenty years earlier, since when they had been obstructed. John does not give a precise date or name the cause of the problem, which was the action of pope Boniface IX in appointing Andrea Visconti as both provost of Viboldone and Master General of the order in 1401, but he warns that those responsible would ultimately face judgement.³⁸ His purpose in writing was thus two pronged: both to lend glory to the past of his order and improve its reputation and to appeal to that past as a means of opposing what he considered to be undesirable outside interference in his own day.

LATER WRITERS

Whether or not it was first compiled by John of Brera, the exile story in particular became widely popular with later writers, who subjected it to continual minor modifications. John of Brera himself set the precedent for this by giving two slightly differing versions of the story. As we have seen, in his *Chronicon* of 1419 he dated the exile to 1017 and identified

³⁶ On the rule see ch. 4.

³⁷ John of Brera, *Chronicon*, preface, pp. 229–30; see below, pp. 206, 237.

³⁸ John of Brera, *Chronicon*, preface, p. 230; Spinelli, 'La diffusione del culto di San Bernardo', p. 205 n. 33.

The early Humiliati

the emperor as Henry II (1002–24).³⁹ However, in his 1421 *Excerptum* the emperor intended may have been Conrad II (1024–39), for he wrote only that the exile had taken place ‘before 1036 AD’, a date no doubt based on the Brera document which he believed dated to that year.⁴⁰

The potential for variation of this story was realised in the numerous fifteenth- and sixteenth-century works which mentioned the Humiliati. These ranged from ecclesiastical chronicles (including one by another member of the order, Marco Bossi of Florence) to popular city histories, including that of Milan by Benedetto Corio and general works such as the encyclopaedic and widely published *De inventoribus rerum* of Polydore Vergil.⁴¹ Each author gave their personal adaptation of the tale. As early as 1483 an Augustinian writer from Bergamo, Giacomo Filippo Foresti (1434–1520), ignored the 1036 document in his *Supplementum supplementi chronicarum* to make a chronologically more convincing association of the exile with the conflict with Barbarossa in the 1160s and 1170s. Variations on the eleventh-century version nonetheless remained popular and the fact of the exile itself was widely disseminated.⁴²

In 1571 the male houses of the order were suppressed and the closing years of the sixteenth century produced a new element in accounts of the Humiliati, as studies of the two protagonists of the suppression, cardinal Charles Borromeo and pope Pius V, began to appear.⁴³ In his *Vita* of Borromeo published in 1592, Carlo Bascapè, the General of the Barnabite order, with whom Borromeo had considered uniting the Humiliati, was understandably more interested in the disastrous final years than in the origins of the movement, as was his fellow Barnabite, Giovanni Gabuzio, who published a *Vita* of Pius V in 1605.⁴⁴ Both writers concentrated on the dramatic circumstances surrounding an assassination attempt on Borromeo by a member of the order, Gerolamo Donato, known as ‘il Farina’. As cardinal archbishop of Milan Borromeo had been appointed Protector of the Humiliati in 1560. He had made energetic attempts to reform the much reduced order, but his

³⁹ John of Brera, *Chronicon*, ch. 1. p. 230.

⁴⁰ John of Brera, *Excerptum*, ch. 2, p. 336.

⁴¹ B. Corio, *Historia continente da lorigine di Milano tutti li gesti, fatti e detti preclari, e le cose memorande milanesi in fino al tempo di esso autore* (Milan, 1503), ed. A. Butti and L. Ferrario (Milan, 1855–7); P. Vergil, *De inventoribus rerum* (Venice, 1499–1521).

⁴² For details of these works and others see Andrews, ‘The early Humiliati: the development of an order c. 1176–c. 1270’, pp. 31–43.

⁴³ The bull of suppression is *Quemadmodum sollicitus pater*, in *Bullarum diplomatum et privilegiorum sanctorum romanorum pontificum*, vii, pp. 885–8.

⁴⁴ C. Bascapè, *De vita et rebus gestis caroli SRE cardinalis tituli S. Praxedis archiepiscopi mediolani* (Milan, 1592), book II, 10–12; G. A. Gabuzio, *De vita et rebus gestis Pii V pont. max.* (Rome, 1605), pp. 116–18.

methods had provoked an angry response from some of the Humiliati. This rose to such a pitch that Farina determined to shoot Borromeo with an arquebus on the night of 26 October 1569, while the cardinal was at prayer with his family and servants in a chapel of the archiepiscopal palace. The attempt failed and this was attributed to miraculous intervention: the bullet had glanced off the cardinal's back, leaving him unharmed. The episode was later cited in Borromeo's canonisation process. The consequences for the Humiliati were disastrous. Farina and three accomplices were executed in August 1570 and the male orders were suppressed in 1571.⁴⁵

The reputation of the Humiliati could hardly have reached a lower ebb than in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In 1606, Jacques Auguste Thou published a history of his times typical of contemporary attitudes. Although he dismissed the early history of the Humiliati in five or six lines, he found space for some select inaccuracies, claiming that pope Lucius III (1181–5) had been responsible for approving the order (when Lucius was the pope who had condemned the Humiliati) and suggesting that he gave them the rule of St Benedict, a mistake perhaps based on knowledge of more recent practice and the Benedictine observance of the surviving nuns.⁴⁶ Thou was on firmer ground with more contemporary history and wrote a detailed account of the corrupt practices and libidinous behaviour of the last members of the order and the attempt on Borromeo's life, which were undoubtedly of much greater concern to his audience.⁴⁷

Yet the seventeenth century also saw the beginnings of more critical interest in the early history of the Humiliati. The same techniques of incisive scholarship which were being developed in Belgium by John Bolland, his students and assistants, Jesuits working on the lives of the saints, were also applied to the Humiliati. At the request of cardinal Frederick Borromeo, founder of the Ambrosiana library, Pietro Puricelli (1589–1659), archpriest of the collegiate church of San Lorenzo in Milan and an early *letterato* of the Ambrosiana, set out to make a systematic study of the documentary evidence for the history of the Humiliati held in that library and elsewhere. Puricelli certainly seems to have had no difficulty in obtaining material and was in regular correspondence with some of the surviving Humiliati sisters. His manu-

⁴⁵ See Castiglioni, 'L'ordine degli Umiliati', pp. 27–35; L. Anfosso, *Storia dell'archibugiata tirata al cardinale Borromeo in Milano la sera del 26 ottobre 1669* (Milan, 1913); Besozzi, 'L'ultimo preposito degli Umiliati di Cannobio', pp. 423–38. The events surrounding the attempt on Borromeo's life still provoke strong feeling: O. Clizio, *Il frate che sparò a san Carlo* (Arona, 1984, 2nd edn. 1990), was sold with a publicity flyer 'peccato che fallì il colpo! [Pity he missed!]'

⁴⁶ *VHM* 1, p. 87.

⁴⁷ J. A. Thou, *Historia sui temporis* (Paris, 1606), pp. 768–70.

The early Humiliati

script *Historia ordinis Humiliatorum* contains translations and transcripts of the constitutions and rule of the order, numerous early documents and even the painstakingly prepared parchment copies of vows taken by sisters who had joined the order in the 1560s.⁴⁸ Puricelli did not, however, use this material to challenge earlier accounts of the origins. He was no doubt unwilling to discredit the sisters' treasured traditions, if indeed he himself harboured any doubts. A second manuscript, the *Sacri Humiliatorum ordinis monimenta* [sic], which contains Puricelli's outline for the planned history, shows that, true to his times, the author was more interested in the use of the Humiliati breviary, the Ambrosian rite and the details of the suppression of the male houses, than in the early chronology of the order.⁴⁹ Although this work was never completed or published, his endorsement of 1017 as the correct date for the origins of the Humiliati was to be imitated by numerous other writers, including his close contemporary and friend, the Benedictine Placido Puccinelli who was briefly master of the novices at the ex-Humiliati house of Gessate near Milan and wrote both a history of that house and a chronicle of the whole order.⁵⁰

Puricelli's chronology was destined to set the background to most serious scholarship until the early twentieth century, but the seventeenth century also produced a series of antiquarian studies which dealt with the early history of the Humiliati in the context of city histories. The most notable of these were the works of Pietro Maria Campi (1569–1649) and Primo Luigi Tatti (1616–87). Campi was a canon of the major church of Sant'Antonino in Piacenza and wished to highlight the religious and cultural patrimony of his home town.⁵¹ He included documentation on many matters, which makes his volumes still essential reading, as much has since been lost. For the Humiliati he nonetheless came to the ingenious conclusion that the evidence which he had come across for their origins in the twelfth century must in fact refer to a reform of the order, since he 'knew' from the works of Corio and others, that it had originally been founded in the early eleventh century.⁵²

Tatti, who became superior of the Gallio College in Como run by

⁴⁸ Ambrosiana C 74 inf. edited in 1677 by the Ambrosiana prefect Pietro Paolo Bosca.

⁴⁹ Ambrosiana S 89 sup. The outline, fos. 67r–74v, is followed by a draft of the general preface, fos. 75r–77v.

⁵⁰ *Cronica delle venerande memorie della congregazione umiliata*, Ambrosiana D 88 inf. and H 205 inf., a seventeenth-century copy; S. Schenone, 'La vita e le opere di Placido Puccinelli. Cenni per una biografia', *ASL*, 114 (1988), 319–34, 333–4.

⁵¹ See S. Ditchfield, *Liturgy, Sanctity and History in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the Preservation of the Particular* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 11.

⁵² Campi, *Dell'istoria ecclesiastica di Piacenza*, 1, p. 320.

Somaschi fathers on the site of the early Humiliati house of Rondineto, was equally concerned to promote the reputation of his home town. Perhaps because of the associations with his own college, his real interest lay with John of Meda, whose *Vita* he also apparently wrote.⁵³ He was particularly concerned to prove that the saint was from Como, since other writers had claimed that he came from Milan.⁵⁴ He gave a series of reasons for his assertion, none of which need interest us here, except to observe that he refrains from mentioning those whom he calls 'our writers', as he knows the Milanese would consider them partial, a reminder of the extreme *campanilismo* of these authors.⁵⁵

In the eighteenth century the tradition of writings by authors with personal or local reasons for interest in the early Humiliati continued. Another Barnabite, Francesco Luigi Barelli, included the Barbarossa version of the exile story within a history of his own order.⁵⁶ There were also the beginnings of some serious attempts at revision. The French writer Pierre Helyot, a Franciscan Tertiary, sought to obtain original source material, writing to the Ambrosiana library in Milan for information. He accepted Fiamma's account of Bernard's role in giving the Humiliati a rule in the 1130s and thus rejected John of Brera's date for the origins of the order, arguing that they could not have been without a rule for over a hundred years. He then suggested that the true date for the beginnings of the order was 1117, when Henry V (1111–25) forced several Lombard towns to recognise him as rightful sovereign after the death of countess Matilda in 1115. Thus it was possible to accept both the connection with St Bernard in the 1130s and the role of John of Meda in founding the First order.⁵⁷

Perhaps it was inevitable that Helyot's approach, which moved far outside the bounds of received opinion, should provoke strong criticism. Giuseppe Sassi, who worked at the Ambrosiana from 1703 and may have known of Helyot's correspondence at the beginning of the century, had read his work and set out to disprove his theories. Although Sassi refers only to an *auctor gallice*, no scholar can have been in doubt that Helyot was the French author whose eight volumes had

⁵³ The preface to P. L. Tatti, *Degli annali sacri di Como*, 3 vols. (Como, 1663–1735), refers to this work, published in 1677, but I have been unable to locate it.

⁵⁴ P. Morigi, *Historia dell'origine di tutte le religioni* (Venice, 1569), p. 34.

⁵⁵ Tatti, *Degli annali sacri di Como*, II, p. 376.

⁵⁶ F. L. Barelli, *Memorie dell'origine, fondazione, avanzamenti, successi ed uomini illustri in lettere e in santità della congregazione de' clerici regolari di S. Paolo chiamati volgarmente Barnabiti* (Bologna, 1703), p. 321, no. 19; p. 326, no. 28.

⁵⁷ P. Helyot, *Histoire des ordres monastiques, religieux et militaires et des congrégations séculières de l'un et de l'autre sexe*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1714–19), VI, pp. 152–65.

The early Humiliati

created 'a fog he now wished to dispel'.⁵⁸ Sassi foreshadowed the work of Tiraboschi in his survey of the evidence (as well as in the strong criticism of Helyot). He relied on Puricelli's conclusions to show that the origins of the order had indeed been in 1017 and went on to argue that there could be no basis for the connection with Bernard, pointing out that the accounts of Bernard's life make no mention of it.⁵⁹

Nicolò Sormani (died c. 1777), another scholar from the Ambrosiana, dedicated two studies to the Humiliati. The first was apparently reproduced in very small numbers, being intended mainly for surviving nuns of the order in Varese who had requested that he provide them with information about their institution.⁶⁰ However, thirty years later, discovering that his original work was almost impossible to find, Sormani produced a shorter version as the second section of an account of Milanese saints.⁶¹ His purpose was to exhort: the history of the Humiliati might serve both for spiritual benefit and, in recounting their fall, as a warning never to trust too much in one's own greatness. To accomplish this aim he made extensive use of early manuscript sources and chronicles, providing a catalogue of the privileges received from the time of Innocent III and of the saints and houses of the order.⁶² He frequently cited the fifteenth-century chronicles by members of the order and the widely circulated chronicle of Antonino Pierozzi, the saintly archbishop of Florence (1446–59), who had suggested rather sourly that the exiles had simply made a virtue out of necessity.⁶³ Sormani followed several earlier historians, placing the exile and origins of the Tertiary Humiliati in 1017, followed by the Second order in 1034 and the First order founded by John of Meda in 1119.⁶⁴ He described their involvement in agriculture and commerce as intended to enable them to endow churches, hospitals and holy places and to promote public affairs without fraud or dishonesty, 'for the good of the prince and his subjects'.⁶⁵ The Humiliati were thus awarded a central and very worldly role in the furtherance of good government, and he even associated them with the beginnings of the statutes of Milan.⁶⁶ He gave translations of the rules and papal privileges held in the Ambrosiana and

⁵⁸ G. A. Sassi, *Historia literario-typographica mediolanensis* (Milan, 1745), cols. 247–58.

⁵⁹ Both the 'Vita prima sancti Bernardi', compiled by three authors c. 1155/56 and revised by 1174, and the 'Vita secunda' (c. 1170), include accounts of Bernard's visit to Milan, *PL*, 185, cols. 273–80, 469–524, esp. cols. 499–501.

⁶⁰ N. Sormani, *Breve storia degli Umiliati col testo de' codici manoscritti e diplomi* (Milan, 1739); see also Longoni, 'Origini degli Umiliati a Monza', 21.

⁶¹ Sormani, 'L'origine de' laici regolari, cioè Umiliati', pp. 145–96.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 175–89.

⁶³ A. Pierozzi (Sant'Antonino), *Chronicon* (Florence, 1484), 2, fo. 178.

⁶⁴ Sormani, 'L'origine de' laici regolari, cioè Umiliati', pp. 151, 153–4.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Tradition and history

cathedral archives and discussed the history of the Second and First orders, alleging that the communities of the Second order called themselves 'houses' not monasteries to distinguish themselves from the Benedictines, from whose rule they had adopted many practices.⁶⁷ He also emphasised the separation between men and women in the houses of the Second order.⁶⁸

Two near contemporaries made extensive use of Sormani's work. One of these was Gian Battista Biancolini, who wrote a seven-volume history of the churches of Verona, in the tradition of the work of Campi and Tatti of the previous century. Biancolini quoted long passages from Sormani's translations of key texts, but also provided editions of Veronese material not previously published.⁶⁹ Giorgio Giulini (1717–80), who became official historian of Milan, also made frequent use of Sormani's work and its conclusions in his study of that city.⁷⁰ Both authors' careful transcripts from local archives have yet to be supplanted.⁷¹ Both also accepted the conclusion that the origins of the Tertiaries lay in 1017 but, following Sormani, Giulini used persuasive palaeographical grounds to dismiss as a forgery the document of 1036 which John of Brera and Puricelli had adopted as early proof for the existence of the Brera.⁷²

Girolamo Tiraboschi

As this survey has shown, Tiraboschi was by no means working in a vacuum. Zanoni was later to demonstrate in particular how closely he followed Puricelli's work.⁷³ Indeed, in his preface Tiraboschi himself paid due tribute to Puricelli's authority on the subject of the Humiliati, and he frequently preferred his judgement over that of others.⁷⁴ Like many of his predecessors he also had personal reasons for his interest in the order, since he was living and working on the site of one of their houses. However, in spite of some dependence on Puricelli and close contacts with Giulini, whose opinions he valued to the point of inserting one of his letters in his text, Tiraboschi's work on the Humiliati outshone anything thus far attempted, both in scale and in the quality and depth of his investigation.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 153, 157–74.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁶⁹ Biancolini, *Notizie storiche delle chiese di Verona*, vi, pp. 190–211.

⁷⁰ Giulini, *Memorie spettanti alla storia . . . di Milano*, iii, p. 283, vii, p. 409, viii, p. 32.

⁷¹ See appendix I.

⁷² Giulini, *Memorie spettanti alla storia . . . di Milano*, iii, p. 283; John of Brera, *Chronicon*, ch. 10, p. 236, and above p. 14.

⁷³ Zanoni, pp. 253–5. ⁷⁴ *VHM* 1, p. 20 and preface (n.p.).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 395–400 (Giulini's letter).

The early Humiliati

Initially at least, the concerns of his numerous predecessors determined the areas which Tiraboschi considered. In his first *dissertatio* he examined the bases for the conclusions of earlier writers and, like Sassi, was particularly critical of Helyot.⁷⁶ He accepted the eleventh-century origins for the Humiliati, dating the exile to 1014 and the return to 1019 and associating it with Henry II (emperor 1002–24).⁷⁷ However, he did so only after consideration of all the alternatives and on the basis of meticulous examination of the fifteenth-century chronicles. He also sought to elucidate the eleventh-century political context, examining the activities of Henry I and the failed attempt by Marquis Hubert and Arduin of Ivrea to oppose imperial rule.⁷⁸

In his second *dissertatio*, Tiraboschi discussed the foundation of the First and Second orders and the roles of St Bernard and John of Meda. His consideration of the involvement of Bernard illustrates his methods well.⁷⁹ He first underlined earlier writers' dependence on Fiamma's account, noting that the only dissenter had been Sassi. The fallibility and errors of Fiamma's work were then emphasised and he queried why only the Tertiaries should have taken their name from Innocent III, since the First and Second orders had also been approved by him.⁸⁰ Tiraboschi pointed to the lack of information in other sources, including the lives of St Bernard (as Sassi had done) and the fifteenth-century chronicles of the order, and concluded that a passage referring to Bernard in John of Brera's 1419 chronicle had been interpolated by a later hand.⁸¹ He argued for the lack of any cult of Bernard within the order, as he was not included in the list of Humiliati saints given by John of Brera, although other people's saints, including Homobono of Cremona, had been adopted.⁸² He dismissed arguments concerning the use of seals with an effigy of Bernard, noting that Manni had already shown that this was not the exclusive motif of all houses, since Faenza had used a simple cross.⁸³ Finally, he produced what he considered his strongest argument: the lack of any reference to Bernard in Innocent III's letter of 1201 approving the Third order. Surely Bernard would have been mentioned if the Humiliati way of life had been dictated by him.⁸⁴ Tiraboschi does not conclude his argument by dismissing any link between Bernard and the Third order, but remains cautious,

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 12–15.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–17; Tabacco, 'La storia politica e sociale', p. 126.

⁷⁹ See also Alberzoni, 'San Bernardo e gli Umiliati', pp. 97–9.

⁸⁰ *VHM* 1, p. 33.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁸² John of Brera, *Chronicon*, ch. 39, pp. 285–6.

⁸³ Manni, *Osservazioni sopra i sigilli antichi*, VII, sigillum 8. Four seals now in the Museo Nazionale, Florence, are discussed in Bascapé, 'Insegne e sigilli dell'ordine degli umiliati', pp. 93–4.

⁸⁴ *VHM* 1, pp. 42–3; a point underlined by recent work showing how much this pope admired

suggesting that although Bernard did not give the Humiliati a rule, his example and many sermons might have led them to adopt a holier and more perfect way of life.⁸⁵

The remainder of Tiraboschi's second *Dissertatio* deals with the last of the evidence concerning the origins of the Humiliati. After considering the involvement of Guy de Porta Orientale, he set out to date the beginning of the Second order. Following Giulini's work, he established convincingly, by noting the inaccuracies of the dating and the reference to individuals known to have been alive in the fourteenth century, that the document presented by John of Brera as proof for the existence of the Brera in the eleventh century dated to 1307.⁸⁶ He concluded that the origins of the Brera and of the Second order lay in the 1130s (1136–7) and not before.⁸⁷ Finally and more briefly, he examined the role of John of Meda in the foundation of the First order, suggesting a date of c. 1129 for the foundation of Rondineto and 1140 for the beginning of his order.⁸⁸

The remaining chapters of Tiraboschi's study provide a comprehensive survey of other traditional aspects of the history of a religious order: their rule, privileges, great men, office-holders, a catalogue of houses and in this case, the suppression of the order. However, it is his publication of documents, including John of Brera's original chronicle, the constitutions and in particular, papal and episcopal letters, which makes Tiraboschi's work still essential for any student of the Humiliati. Although not exhaustive, the series of letters and privileges he published includes the first edition of the fundamental three approving the order in 1201. These are not in the *Patrologia Latina* as the registers for the fourth year of Innocent III's pontificate (1201–2) do not survive.⁸⁹

In the wake of Tiraboschi

During the nineteenth century the lines of research laid down by Tiraboschi and his predecessors were not seriously challenged, although an early attempt to reinterpret the evidence had already been made by the Cistercian abbot of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan, Angelo Fumagalli (1728–1804). With strong historical sense, Fumagalli had placed the

Bernard and the Cistercians: B. M. Bolton, 'The Cistercians and the aftermath of the second crusade', *The Second Crusade and the Cistercians*, ed. M. Gervers (New York, 1992), pp. 131–40.

⁸⁵ *VHM* 1, p. 43.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 51–5. He used similar techniques to demolish the claim for an eleventh-century origin for Rondineto inserted in John of Brera's 1419 chronicle by Giorgio Lurasca, a sixteenth-century provost of Viboldone.

⁸⁷ *VHM* 1, pp. 56–9.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 196–212.

⁸⁹ Appendix 1, 7–9; Pasztor, 'Studi e problemi relativi ai registri di Innocenzo III', pp. 287–304.