

attracting members. Furthermore, he argues that this fraternity was itself part of the piety—that engaging in "brotherly love" by being part of a confraternity was itself perceived as a good work that would help towards salvation. He also shows, however, that brotherly love was not always an ideal that was put into practice. The confraternities relied on their priors to cover their yearly deficits, and this meant that the highest positions were dominated by the wealthiest brothers. In addition, the confraternities themselves contained sub-groups, "cliques," which competed for power within the larger group. However, the author argues that this could be a source of vitality as well as of dissention and conflict.

This book provides a great deal of information and detail about, and many interesting interpretations of, the operation of penitential confraternities in Marseilles through the entire Early Modern era.

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Bornstein, Daniel E. *The Bianchi of 1399. Popular Devotion in Late Medieval Italy*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993. x, 232 pp. ISBN 0-8014-2910-2. US \$32.50.

In this volume Bornstein examines the phenomenon of the Bianchi, white-robed penitents who joined "orderly but enthusiastic" processions to promote peace in rural and urban Italy in the summer of 1399. Bornstein argues that the contemporary perception of the Bianchi as exhibiting ordinary, orthodox devotional behaviour makes the group an ideal source for a study of mass belief in this period. Examining the members of the 1399 processions, he suggests that the conventional argument that clerical, orthodox views always exist in conflict with the naturally heterodox beliefs of the masses is inaccurate, and that clerical and lay beliefs can exist in harmony at times when the pressures of secular society act on both groups and religion meets the social and spiritual needs of the people (pp. 5-7). The Bianchi, for instance, encompassed "rich and poor, learned and unlettered, laity, mendicants, and priests" (p. 6), all united by one goal: to work for peace and harmony in their plague-ridden, violent communities.

Throughout his work Bornstein is careful to note that while contemporaries asserted the spiritual unity of the members of the Bianchi, a study of the mass of documents concerning the group reveals that it

remained independent of the control of church leaders and that regional and local variations in its spiritual activities were common. In his third chapter, for instance, he studies contemporary chroniclers' descriptions of the movement of Bianchi processions through northern and central Italy, and notes that the processions took a slightly different form in each area. In central Italy, for example, where the plague was not the problem it had become in the north, the processions were marked by rejoicing and a festive atmosphere not found in regions where disease was spreading (p. 83). Wherever the processions took place, however, the Bianchi generally reflected contemporary ideas of orthodox spirituality. In the fourth chapter Bornstein examines examples of the *laude* sung by the Bianchi as well as accounts of miracles performed by members of the group in support of the argument that the spirituality of the Bianchi was "part of the common currency of religious belief that circulated throughout all levels of late medieval society" (p. 161). Finally, although their activities were sanctioned and even encouraged by the clergy, the Bianchi maintained an independent relationship with ecclesiastical authorities, remaining "slightly aloof" (p. 164) from rituals initiated by clerics and religious orders.

Bornstein concludes the volume with a discussion of the significance of the Bianchi to the history of belief in medieval Italy. He argues that the group's importance "lies not in any imagined role as the fountainhead of novel developments, but rather in the way it throws into relief the traditional institutions and practices of the religious culture of late medieval Italy" (p. 199). Bornstein suggests that late medieval society was able to accept the heterodoxy of the devotional activities of the Bianchi because the history of popular devotion encompasses periods of "active christianization" in which differences in beliefs between masses and elites are observed and commented on, and periods of "popular orthodoxy" in which varieties of beliefs are tolerated and there is a "complacent" assertion of the similarity between clergy and laity (p. 212). Because the processions of the Bianchi took place during the latter period, Bornstein argues that differences between the elite orthodox beliefs and popular spirituality found in the Bianchi's rituals were ignored by both clergy and laity in favour of a shared desire to work for peace in their communities (p. 203).

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