

“To Live Piously and to Help the Needy Poor”: The Consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna, in Bergamo

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Summary: This essay explores the activities of the Italian consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna in Bergamo, through an analysis and translation of the Regola (Rule) that governed it for nearly five centuries. Written in Latin in 1363–65, and republished in Italian in the late sixteenth century, the statutes and other primary source documents of this confraternity reflect the (admittedly modest) aspirations, disappointments, and achievements of one group of Bergamo’s citizens as they sought to achieve the “sacred miracle” of brotherhood. The essay also compares the consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna to other Bergamasque confraternities, especially the large and powerful Misericordia Maggiore (MIA), with a particular focus on how confraternities in Bergamo supported lay and clerical education. Specific topics include the membership, organization, and social purpose(s) of a rather ordinary confraternity, here considered both as an individual case study and as a vehicle of comparison with similar pious associations.

INTRODUCTION¹

In many ways the Consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna, founded in 1363 and disbanded in 1806, was remarkably ordinary. It was neither the first nor the largest confraternity in late medieval Bergamo. It did not outlast its brethren to emerge triumphant in the modern age. It could not boast of a distinctive apostolate within the city, nor were its leaders especially renowned in other areas of civic or political life. Apart from the tall column in front of the building from which the church derives its name, and some notable paintings inside by Lorenzo Lotto, Gian Battista Moroni, and Gian Paolo Cavagna, the parish church in which the brothers met boasted few decorative or architectural attributes worthy of note. Like S. Alessandro himself,² the origin and

¹ We wish to thank Konrad Eisenbichler and the two anonymous reviewers of *Confraternitas*, as well as Lester Little, Sandro Buzzetti, and John R. Clark for advice on the translation. The title phrase comes from p. 4a of the 1589 version of the Rule (as in note 3 below) that governed the consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna: “di vivere piamente, & di aiutare con la elemosina i poveri bisognosi.”

² The patron saint of Bergamo, S. Alessandro (St. Alexander) was a Roman soldier in the late third century who, following his own conversion, refused to cooperate with the persecution of fellow Christians. After a series of arrests and escapes across northern Italy, he was decapitated on 26

activities of the consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna contain a mixture of fact and myth. Yet, the example of this group merits close examination for what it can tell us about the membership, organization, and social purpose(s) of an Italian confraternity, both as an individual case study and as a vehicle of comparison with similar pious associations.

More precisely, this essay explores the activities of the consortium through an analysis and translation of the *Regola* (Rule) that governed it for nearly five centuries. The statutes and other primary source documents of this confraternity reflect the (admittedly modest) aspirations, disappointments, and achievements of one group of Bergamo's citizens as they sought to achieve the "sacred miracle" of brotherhood. This introductory essay to the translation of the confraternity's statutes compares the consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna to other Bergamasque confraternities, especially the large and powerful Misericordia Maggiore (MIA), with a particular focus on how confraternities in Bergamo supported lay and clerical education. It is not intended to be a comprehensive history of S. Alessandro in Colonna, but rather to provide a descriptive introduction and necessary context for an understanding of the earliest statutes of the confraternity, which are here translated into English for the first time.³

An analysis of the regulations that guided the confraternity from the late Middle Ages to the dawn of the nineteenth century can shed light on the priorities and preferences that its members expressed. Issues pertaining to governance, spirituality, membership, civic responsibility, and charity are illustrated in the various redactions of the Rule; some aspects remain the same while others change in response to internal demand or external stimulus. For example, the brothers of S. Alessandro in Colonna were always responsible for the physical maintenance and decoration of the parish church as well as the spiritual well-being of the parishioners. By the late sixteenth century the

August (his feast day) in Bergamo in the year 303 AD. According to local tradition, the church of S. Alessandro in Colonna, and the column in front of it, mark the site of his martyrdom. On S. Alessandro's martyrdom in Bergamo, see Lumina, 3–9, and Knox, 93–95 and 245–46.

³ See Appendix 1 for the English text of the 1363 Rule. The Latin text of the Rule is in Little, 207–19. The initial version of the Rule of S. Alessandro in Colonna was composed and confirmed by members in 1363, and it received episcopal approval in 1366. This 1363 Rule, today in the Biblioteca Civica "Angelo Mai" of Bergamo (hereafter BCBg), Sala I, D, 5, 2, contains stamps from the parochial vestry, suggesting that it was originally held in the parish archive. The second version of the Rule was revised toward the end of the sixteenth century and published by Comino Ventura in 1589 in quarto, with the title *Regola del Ven[erabile] Consortio di Santo Alessandro in Colonna, ove oltre gli Ordini si contengono anche l'Origine, l'Antichità, e i Confini suoi* (Bergamo: Comino Ventura, 1589) (hereafter, *Regola* [1589]). The 1589 *Regola* is conserved in the BCBg, in the Archivio Parrocchiale di S. Alessandro in Colonna (hereafter APSACol), and in the Biblioteca Statale di Cremona. In 1767 Francesco Locatelli of Bergamo republished an identical version of the 1589 *Regola*, in a slightly larger format but with the same pagination and content. Lumina, 202–29, reproduces the frontispiece, table of contents, and initial thirteen pages of the 1767 edition. On the Misericordia Maggiore (MIA), see note 48 below.

brothers were paying for candles, crosses, chalices, books, banners, linens, and oil inside the church; they also paid the salary of the sacristans, musicians, organist, chaplain, and parish priests. In addition, every three years they provided a new black robe to each of the clerics who attended the parish school, and offered housing in the *casa del consortio* to visiting preachers and guests.⁴ As we shall see, the brothers insisted upon church attendance, annual confession, alms-giving, and other activities designed to foster the spiritual success of the *confratelli* (brothers). Comparisons between a large, wealthy, city-wide confraternity like the MIA, and a small parish-based consortium of more limited means like S. Alessandro in Colonna, can help to illuminate how such different associations faced similar challenges. The issue of education is privileged here because the schooling of lay and clerical boys was widely considered a primary responsibility of communes, confraternities, and churches alike, and thus this issue provides a lens through which we can track the priorities of the confraternity.

Consistent with the unsung nature of its history, the lay brotherhood of S. Alessandro in Colonna has received minimal attention from scholars.⁵ Nevertheless, the parochial archive of S. Alessandro in Colonna contains many documents about the history of the parish, the church, and the consortium. Among the most useful are the multiple volumes entitled *Libro delle Parti* (Book of Actions), which record the activities and expenses of the confraternity on a day-by-day basis.⁶ This rich, untapped resource provides an excellent entry point for a local history. Also useful is the *Libro dei Debitori* (Book of Debtors), which contains a two-page entry for each individual debtor to or creditor of the confraternity, with the charges arranged chronologically.⁷ The

⁴ Regola [1589], 8b–10a.

⁵ The Italian monograph of Lumina is the only book-length study; while it provides a comprehensive look at the history of the church, as well as transcriptions of the most important documents, it contains some significant errors and the section on the consortium is only five pages long. Emilio Pedroni's newspaper article of 1964 provides a quick and popular summary of key points in the history of the church. Knox devoted a chapter of his 1999 dissertation on church reform to S. Alessandro in Colonna's effort to become a cathedral; aside from the work of Christopher Carlsmith (cited in this note below), Knox's is the only substantive work in English on the church of which we are aware. Luigi Paganoni described all the parish churches in the diocese of Bergamo (1974); V.E. Gasdia authored a brief work (1924) that examined the history of the parish; Angelo Mazzi wrote a cogent piece about the history of the S. Alessandro column (1925). Carlsmith surveyed the educational actions of this and other confraternities in "Le *scholae* e la scuola" (in Italian) and again (in English) in his monograph *A Renaissance Education*. One reason for the absence of scholarship may be the very limited hours of the parochial archive.

⁶ Known variously as *Libro delle Parti* or *Libro delle Terminazioni*, these thick volumes contain Latin entries, occasionally punctuated by Italian marginalia. For the purposes of this study, we consulted the years 1549–67, 1567–73, 1573–84, 1584–91, 1591–99, 1599–1607, and 1607–14; additional volumes cover 1614–23, 1623–36, and 1637–67. These are kept in the APSACol (as in note 3 above). To the best of our knowledge, the volumes prior to 1549 have not survived.

⁷ APSACol, *Libro dei Debitori*.

archive contains some notarial acts recorded by the consortium's official notary, extracts of testaments in both manuscript and print that detail property left to the consortium, and additional account books, correspondence, and administrative documents.

THE CONSORTIUM AND THE *RULE* IN CONTEXT

The consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna was formally instituted on 11 November 1363.⁸ Inside an eponymous church on the west side of Bergamo,⁹ the notary Bertolamino Giovanni di Turcenì recorded the names and professions of eighty-one "good and faithful men living in the parish of S. Alessandro in Colonna" who wished to live piously and to help the needy poor.¹⁰ In a gothic cursive script that extends across seven pages of yellow vellum, bound between sturdy wooden boards covered in red leather, the notary set out in Latin a preface and fifteen *capitoli* (chapters) that governed the purpose and organization of this lay brotherhood.¹¹ Three years later, a minor modification to the Rule was added by the notary Leonardo Aliprandi and both documents were approved by the bishop Lanfranco de Saliverti on 3 January 1366. Through successive bouts of plague and civil war, as well as intermittent rule by the Visconti of Milan and the Malatesta of Rimini, the confraternity's Rule remained unchanged. At least nine other confraternities existed in and around late medieval Bergamo, nearly all of whom authored a set of statutes to govern themselves.¹² Some followed the rule of St. Benedict, originally composed in the sixth century; others looked to the Templars, or the so-called Rule of St.

⁸ The founding date of 11 Nov. 1363 appears in the 1589 published version of the Rule, 4a, and is confirmed by Lumina, 51. The founding document prepared by notary Bertolamino de Turzenis, as in Appendix 1, bears a date of 10 Dec. 1363, or one month later. Little, 63, notes that S. Alessandro in Colonna was among the last Bergamasque confraternities to create a rule or founding statute. Knox, 246, argues that the earliest record of a church on this site is from a land transaction in 1133; other evidence suggests this date may be close to the date of the church's founding. Receipts dating back to 1302, as well as the preface to the 1363 statutes, suggest that the consortium had existed informally prior to 1363.

⁹ The medieval church collapsed in the fifteenth century, with reconstruction in 1447 and consecration in 1474. In his 1575 apostolic visitation to Bergamo, Archbishop Carlo Borromeo described the building as "very large", and it was further enlarged in the early seventeenth century with expansion of the choir (Knox, 250–51). Subsequent modifications and rebuilding in the eighteenth century provided its current form, with the exception of the bell tower which was begun in 1842 and completed in the twentieth century. On the history of the building, see Lumina, 9–41 and 60–88, but note the doubts expressed by Knox, 246n4 about some of Lumina's claims.

¹⁰ *Rule* [1363], Preface, paragraph 2.

¹¹ Little, 207–08, provides a detailed physical description of the codex.

¹² These confraternities and their respective Rules are the subject of Lester Little's *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, which includes transcriptions of each Rule as well as a lengthy scholarly introduction.

Augustine, or to contemporary civic statutes.¹³ These confraternities engaged in a variety of philanthropic and religious activities; *primus inter pares* was the MIA, which rapidly rose to a position of prominence on account of its prestigious membership and substantial testamentary bequests.

In 1427 Bergamo passed under the control of the Venetian Republic and remained politically beholden to the *Serenissima* (Most Serene Republic) for three and a half centuries. With the exception of military matters and higher education, which were closely monitored by the two Venetian officials in residence, Bergamo enjoyed considerable freedom under Venetian rule. Confraternities and other pious organizations, such as hospitals or orphanages, were allowed to organize themselves as they wished. Humanist schooling, printing, and other cultural markers of the Renaissance came to Bergamo later than to other towns of Northern Italy. Bergamo was administratively unusual because a portion of its territory fell within the arch-diocese of Milan; thus some conflict was inevitable as different families and institutions looked either to Milan or to Venice for support. For the most part, Bergamo considered itself a loyal subject of the Venetian Republic, but when a strong archbishop (such as Carlo Borromeo) ruled Milan, Bergamo's ecclesiastical hierarchy could not afford to ignore him. Bergamo also boasted of its devotion to the Church; as the 1589 Rule of the consortium put it, "our city of Bergamo must be praised for its most assiduous loyalty to the holy Church and for its incomparable piety toward the poor."¹⁴

In addition to the consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna, which bore primary responsibility for the church and its parishioners, a smaller confraternity was instituted in 1507 to tend to the chapel of Corpus Domini and to provide services related to the Eucharist. This *Scola del SS. Sacramento* (Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament) mimicked the administrative structure of the larger consortium, including the same titles for its officers and a similar Rule to govern its activities.¹⁵ Beginning in the 1540s, it organized an annual procession on Good Friday and another to celebrate the Feast of Corpus Domini, as well as funeral processions and distribution of alms. By 1700 it was sponsoring almost 1500 Masses each year.¹⁶ The two organizations collaborated on some ventures, and argued bitterly on others; it is worth nothing that each confraternity appointed two or more of its officers *alle lite* (for legal affairs) to administer lawsuits and judicial proceedings in defence of its respective rights.

The most celebrated disagreement between the two confraternities occurred over the course of more than four decades (1523–1565). This bitter and prolonged dispute concerned the inheritance of a childless resident

¹³ David Knowles, 16–58; Little, 67–68.

¹⁴ *Regola* [1589], 3a: "si glorii la città nostra di Bergamo d'un diligentissimo colto delle Chiese sacre, & d'una incomparabile pietà verso i poveri."

¹⁵ Lumina, 55–58.

¹⁶ Lumina, 56.

of the parish named Amighino da Mariano.¹⁷ In 1523, shortly before his death, Amighino had composed a will in which he left everything to the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament. The inheritance came with several stipulations: (1) Amighino da Mariano must be interred under the altar of the chapel in the church of S. Alessandro in Colonna; (2) a priest must be hired to say Mass every day at that altar and, in addition, to say another daily Mass in the church of S. Leonardo; and (3) all of the income from Mariano's assets must be distributed to the parish poor annually. To ensure that his wishes were carried out, Mariano added that if the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament were unwilling or unable to carry out his requests, the entire inheritance would be transferred to the consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna.

Not surprisingly, the brothers of S. Alessandro in Colonna soon found fault with the administration of the Mariano legacy. As noted in a brief history of the event penned by the confraternity of S. Alessandro in Colonna, "with the assistance of the Devil in sowing discord, there was born between the leaders [of the two confraternities] dissension and argument; it was more costly and more prolonged than it should have been, given that the subject matter was about piety and charity."¹⁸ The case was fought in tribunals in Bergamo, Venice, and even Rome; it was ultimately settled by the *podestà* (governor) on 26 January 1553. However, so much bad blood remained between the two confraternities that accusations of bad faith and incompetence were hurled back and forth for another decade. Each year more than half of the income from Mariano's bequest was spent in legal fees until, finally, the bishop brokered an agreement whereby the money was used not only for Masses and alms, but also, beginning in the late 1550s, to support twelve clerics who served in the church and who attended the parish school.

After more than two centuries without any modifications, the members of the confraternity agreed in the later sixteenth century that the Rule needed to be updated.¹⁹ The leader of the confraternity, Bonifacio Agliardo, led this effort to codify traditional practice and to introduce necessary changes. The most obvious change was one of length; the 1363 Rule had consisted of fifteen brief paragraphs and a lengthy list of signatories, but the 1589 version ran to

¹⁷ On the controversy over Amighino da Mariano, see *Regola* [1589], 11a–13b.

¹⁸ *Regola* [1589], 11b: "non mancando il Demonio di seminare discordia: nacque tra i Reggenti di quel tempo il Consortio, & la Scola, dissensione, & litigio, più dispendioso, & più lungo, che alle materie soggette non si conveniva; parendo elle esteriormente cose, religione, & pietà concernenti."

¹⁹ *Regola* [1589], 4b: "La forma delle quali leggi, & statuti nel corso di dugento [duecento] & più anni; essendo il loco d'habitatori, & il Consortio di facultà accresciuti, & la qualità dei tempi, & i costumi de gli huomini grandemente cambiati & immutati, ancor essa è invecchiata & in dissuetudine andata." A few years prior to this decision, the brothers petitioned successfully in 1543 for a papal bull from Paul III (Alessandro Farnese) that proclaimed the right of confraternal officers and chaplains to decide "without any impediment or disturbance" how to celebrate the divine offices and how to carry out the wishes of deceased testators (*Regola* [1589], 10b). Lumina, 51, claims that the Rule was revised in 1571 but provides no evidence in support of this date.

more than sixty-five pages. Three-quarters of the new text concerned descriptions of the various posts to be held by confraternity members: in addition to the offices of president, minister, treasurer, and notary that had previously existed, there were now regulations to guide those in charge of legal affairs, school matters, church buildings, real estate, and so forth.

In addition to the fact that the confraternity had increased its membership and its endowment (as well as its bureaucracy), three other factors may have contributed to the desire to revise the Rule. First was the protracted lawsuit with the confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament, which surely convinced the confraternity of S. Alessandro in Colonna to be more specific about its intentions and activities. Second, the Council of Trent (1545–63) had recently concluded its deliberations and issued a series of important decrees designed to standardize ecclesiastical practice and to increase episcopal oversight of local institutions. Some of these Tridentine initiatives, such as the requirement to establish a diocesan seminary, had been implemented immediately by Bergamo's eager bishops Federico Cornaro (1561–77) and Girolamo Ragazzoni (1577–92), both of whom were close to Carlo Borromeo. Borromeo himself conducted an apostolic visitation of Bergamo in 1575, leaving a trail of remonstrations and orders behind him.²⁰ This intense episcopal activity in late sixteenth-century Bergamo may have inspired (or required) the brothers to revise their own Rule. A third motivation for the revised Rule came from the destruction of Bergamo's cathedral of S. Alessandro in 1561 as part of the Venetian project to rebuild the walls surrounding the city. As Giles Knox has pointed out, the consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna attempted to upgrade its status from a parish church to a cathedral church by wooing the canons of S. Alessandro and redecorating the church of S. Alessandro in Colonna in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century with fresco cycles of the life of S. Alessandro in order to broaden the church's appeal beyond the parish and to capture more of a "civic identity".²¹ The revised version of the Rule was published in Italian by Comino Ventura in 1589 and republished in an identical version by Francesco Locatelli in 1767.

Throughout its history, the primary goals of the consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna included assistance to the poor, maintenance and decoration of the church, and cultivation of the Christian virtue of its members. The Consortium also sponsored schools, organized processions and concerts, managed its properties, provided rudimentary health care, and engaged in other charitable acts. Such activities are sometimes implied and sometimes explicit in the 1363 and the 1589 versions of the Rule, respectively, but there can be no doubt that the confraternity was very active. By the late sixteenth century it had amassed an endowment of around 4,000 lire, largely destined for its charitable work. By the eighteenth century it had acquired hundreds of acres of vineyards, olive orchards, pasture, and arable land. The Consortium

²⁰ Roncalli, *Gli Atti della Visita Apostolica di San Carlo Borromeo*.

²¹ Knox, 244–76.

of S. Alessandro in Colonna continued as an independent entity until 1806 when it, along with many other institutions of the *ancien regime*, were disbanded in favour of more centralized, secular bureaucracies. The “*Fabreria*” that assumed responsibility for the charitable actions of S. Alessandro in Colonna continued to operate until 1866 when most of the property passed to the Italian State, which then assumed responsibility for church maintenance and welfare of parishioners.²² According to Mario Lumina’s history of the church, published in 1977, the *Fabreria* remains the official administrator of the church, but it has scarce financial resources and thus little authority. The church has continued to serve the needs of its parishioners, and its day-to-day requirements are met by the parish priest, the civic government, and the residents of the neighbourhood. To the best of our knowledge, no trace of the confraternity remains.

ANALYSIS OF THE RULE

The 1363 Rule of S. Alessandro in Colonna resembles the statutes of about nine other late medieval confraternities and pious associations in Bergamo that had previously set down their bylaws and procedures.²³ As Lester Little has noted, the Rules of Bergamo’s medieval confraternities look more to contemporary civic statutes than they do to their monastic predecessors.²⁴ Biblical passages were largely excised from these confraternity statutes, while both the structure and the script itself follow the model of notaries. To put it bluntly, by the fourteenth century the influence of lawyers and merchants on confraternal organizations had eclipsed that of monks and clergy. Thus the Rule of S. Alessandro in Colonna is more concerned with organization and regulation than with devotion and liturgy. It lays out details about membership, elections, and responsibilities and makes only passing references to spiritual benefits and charitable responsibilities.

Who were the members of the consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna? They were drawn overwhelmingly from within the parish, and any male resident who wished to join could do so. Note the emphasis on inclusiveness, displayed in the opening chapter: “anyone ... can become a member of the present consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna, and must be received if he has sought to join this consortium, and must be treated and accepted as a member of this consortium, and must be listed in the register of the aforesaid

²² Lumina, 54–55.

²³ Little, 57–82. These included: the *Misericordia Maggiore* (MIA) of Bergamo, the Consortium for Assisting Prisoners, the Congregation of Flagellants, the *Misericordia* of Nembro (a neighbouring village), the Consortium of the Hospital of S. Sepolcro of Astino (another neighbouring village) and the Consortiums of S. Alessandro in Colonna, of S. Alessandro della Croce, of S. Michele, of S. Pancrazio, and of Santa Caterina.

²⁴ Little, 69–70.

consortium.”²⁵ In common with the membership requirements of other confraternities, candidates had to be honest and of “good standing and reputation.” Members who brought scandal upon the confraternity might be warned up to three times and then were to be expelled.²⁶ Also in common with most of Bergamo’s confraternities, there is no mention of female members. (The confraternity of the Misericordia Maggiore is a notable exception here, as Maria Teresa Brolis has demonstrated.²⁷) The 1363 Rule reveals that S. Alessandro in Colonna drew members from an array of professions, including bakers, notaries, lawyers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, papermakers, and toolmakers, as well as weavers, spinners, dyers, and tailors.²⁸ Thus the membership was drawn primarily from the artisanal and merchant classes; it was these small merchants and artisans who chiefly populated the neighbourhoods of S. Leonardo and S. Stefano where the parish of S. Alessandro in Colonna was centred. Day laborers and rural farmers were unlikely to join. The statutes do not specify any kind of membership fee; the exclusion of poorer members has more to do with the expectation of future donations and alms to the society, an onus that those living close to subsistence could not afford to bear. No minimum age was specified and (unlike some other confraternities in Bergamo) no provision was made for “temporary” membership.²⁹

How was the consortium organized? In keeping with local tradition (i.e., the example set by the MIA), twelve members were selected to serve one-year terms as “presidents” (sometimes translated as “councillors”). One “minister” was selected to serve as executive officer. Four “sub-ministers” were tasked with distribution of alms. Two were elected as “general treasurers” with fiduciary responsibility to manage the confraternity’s real estate, furniture, alms, and other resources. The statutes sought to achieve a delicate balance between autonomy and control for the treasurers. Thus the two treasurers could, independently or together, buy and sell property, or sign and void contracts, in the interest of the consortium. However, certain restrictions existed to police the treasurers’ actions and to ensure financial stability and transparency. For example, approval by two-thirds of the other ministers was usually required for any significant transaction, such as a contract that exceeded nine years’ duration, or the alienation of property donated to the consortium.³⁰ The consortium also stipulated the appointment of additional officials, such as syndics or *credenarii* (councillors), to assist the officers of the society with various responsibilities. The four ministers assigned to distribute

²⁵ Rule [1363], chap. 1.

²⁶ Rule [1363], chap. 9. The MIA of Bergamo required prospective members to be faithful, law-abiding, and free of the taint of heresy (Little, 71).

²⁷ Brolis, “A Thousand and More Women”; idem, *La matricola femminile*.

²⁸ Little, 73; we are grateful to have his translation of all these terms.

²⁹ Little, 71–72.

³⁰ Rule [1363], chaps. 10–14. See also the 1366 modification (as in Appendix 1, Document 2), which sought to clarify the exact responsibilities of the treasurers in this regard.

alms around the parish were limited to a two-year term that could not be immediately repeated.³¹ The brothers were required to meet at least once per year in their own church to read out the statutes.³² This annual meeting also served as a general assembly where decisions could be taken with a vote of the entire membership.³³

What benefits did membership confer? Like their brethren in other confraternities, the members of S. Alessandro in Colonna would receive assistance in the event of illness or death. They were encouraged to attend funeral masses for their brothers and to participate in the saying of a dozen Our Fathers and a dozen Hail Marys, as well as to join in the processions to visit the sick at home.³⁴ The confraternity also expected to provide subsidies to poverty-stricken members and their families in the form of goods (e.g., wood, wine, grain) or in cash. Clothes were also provided to those who needed them.³⁵ Less tangible are the benefits that come with membership in any organization: the opportunity to expand one's social network, for example, or the chance to exercise leadership and increase one's visibility.

The statutes include only one specific reference to the distribution of alms, which seems odd given that this was often a major focus of confraternities in this period. In *capitolo* 11, the treasurers of S. Alessandro in Colonna are enjoined to submit a report every fifteen days concerning the income received and "on that same day before dinner to give that money away for the love of God, and to distribute it among the sick and the poor and the needy living in this neighbourhood."³⁶ Biweekly distributions probably would have enabled the confraternity to keep its eye on those most in need, without overly straining its budget or the commitment of its members. It is possible, too, that additional almsgiving occurred beyond the minimum required in the statutes; for example, at Christmas, Easter, and the many other feast days in the Christian calendar.³⁷ And, doubtless, the consortium was especially active in times of famine, war, and epidemic, each of which were familiar challenges to residents of late medieval and early modern Bergamo.³⁸

³¹ *Rule* [1363], chap. 13.

³² *Rule* [1363], chap. 10. Other local confraternities met from two to six times per year (Little, 71).

³³ *Rule* [1363], chap. 10. The 1589 version includes additional detail, stipulating that each year four of the officers were reappointed in order to provide continuity while the remaining eight were replaced in order to provide a fresh perspective. However, as the outgoing members were delegated to choose their successors, dramatic changes in policy or membership were rare.

³⁴ *Rule* [1363], chaps. 4, 6.

³⁵ Little, 75–76, provides other examples of mutual assistance.

³⁶ *Rule* [1363], chap. 11.

³⁷ *Regola* [1589], 7b, specifies that at Christmas and at Easter, additional gifts may be given to the neighbourhood poor, to orphans, to reformed prostitutes, and to mendicants of both sexes.

³⁸ *Regola* [1589], 7b, explicitly recognizes the need to distribute additional quantities of bread in times of famine, and authorizes the minister to deliver up to four times the usual quantity.

We have few estimates of the confraternity's budget in the fourteenth or fifteenth century. However, the 1589 *Regola* estimates that the consortium assisted up to 2,000 poor people each year and routinely distributed the sum of 4,000 lire per year.³⁹ The 1589 *Regola* also demonstrates a more hierarchical and organized structure for distribution of alms. Rather than having four ministers responsible for compilation of city-wide lists of the poor, the confraternity now subdivided its parish into seven *contrade* (zones), each of which had a specific minister assigned to it.⁴⁰ Four of the zones were inside the Serio River and three were beyond it. The minister responsible for each zone was called a *canevaro*. Accompanied by a notary and at least two other ministers, the *canevaro* was expected "to visit and to note with diligence all of the poor from house to house within the contrada."⁴¹ This census of the poor began in early January, with all results carefully tabulated in the confraternity's books.

What were the obligations that accompanied membership in this confraternity? As noted above, someone from the confraternity had to attend the body of a deceased *confratello* and ensure proper burial services.⁴² Confession was required at least once per year, preferably at Easter, as well as attendance at the church on Sundays and major feast days.⁴³ All members were expected to participate in the general meeting in January and in the annual feast of the patron saint on 26 August. A gift was expected from each member on the feast day of S. Alessandro.⁴⁴ It is, however, worth noting the various caveats and loopholes that appear in these statutes. For example, in *capitoli* 4, 5, and 6, members were required to fulfill their various obligations *iusto impedimenta cessante* (barring any just obstacle), a phrase that seems purposefully vague. Similarly, in *capitolo* 7, members who failed to do their duty "because of forgetfulness" were explicitly declared not to have committed a sin.⁴⁵ The brothers of S. Alessandro in Colonna met less often to read out their rule than virtually every other confraternity in Bergamo.⁴⁶ Such loopholes do not necessarily suggest that this confraternity was lazy, only that its rules seem to offer looser interpretations of what was actually required.

³⁹ *Regola* [1589], 6a.

⁴⁰ *Regola* [1589], 5a. The neighbourhoods included Cologno (current via Quarenghi); Colognola (current via S. Bernardino), Osio (current via G.B. Moroni), Broseta, Prato (current via XX Settembre), and the area formerly known as the upper and lower meadows of S. Alessandro.

⁴¹ *Regola* [1589], 6a: "questi secondo il nome antico si chiamano Canevari: ciascuno de i quali in principio dell'anno, insieme con due almanco de gli altri Reggenti, & col Nodaro, vā vedendo, & con diligenza notando tutti i poveri di casa in casa della Contrada à lui designata."

⁴² *Rule* [1363], chap. 6.

⁴³ *Rule* [1363], chaps. 3–4.

⁴⁴ *Rule* [1363], chap. 5.

⁴⁵ Little, 71, notes similar loopholes for other confraternities.

⁴⁶ Little, 70–71.

What consequences existed for members who misbehaved? The concept of “social discipline” is one that has been examined carefully and merits mention here, too. *Capitolo* 9 “established and ordered that any member of the current congregation who has been known by his neighbour to have caused turpitude or scandal to the congregation should be admonished by the minister of the aforesaid congregation.” If three such warnings were amassed, then the offending member was to be expelled. In addition, the brothers were expected to submit denunciations about each other, in secret, to the officers of the consortium. Those officers were in turn required to “affectionately chastise” their brothers about the sin or vice.⁴⁷ In other words, the *confratelli* of S. Alessandro in Colonna were responsible for policing each other in order to guarantee the reputation of the confraternity and its members.

THE CONSORTIUM AND THE MIA

The history of confraternities in Bergamo is dominated by the Congregation and Fraternity of Saint Mary of Mercy. Known to all as the Misericordia Maggiore and often abbreviated as the MIA, it was the largest, wealthiest, and most prestigious confraternity in the city. Founded in 1265 and still extant today, it rivaled the powerful *scuole grandi* (large brotherhoods) of Venice and has drawn the attention of scholars for generations.⁴⁸ The MIA drew its members, both male and female, from all over the city and its impact was felt on a similarly wide scale. By contrast, the consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna was a parish confraternity, recruiting *confratelli* from within its neighbourhood and distributing services largely to its own parishioners. In this regard the brothers of S. Alessandro in Colonna are typical of a majority of Italian confraternities, while those of the MIA are exceptional. The MIA is also exceptional regarding the size and range of its archive, which includes thousands of medieval parchments, letters, maps, budget ledgers, and bound serial volumes documenting more than seven hundred years of activity.⁴⁹ The parochial archive of S. Alessandro in Colonna, while rich in a few areas, pales in comparison.

⁴⁷ *Rule* [1363], chap. 9. Naturally the Rule is a prescriptive document, and thus reflects intention rather than reality. The *Libro delle Parti* would likely discuss any actions of discipline taken against the members, but that is beyond the scope of this essay.

⁴⁸ Cossar, *Transformation of the Laity*; idem, “The Confraternity of the Misericordia Maggiore in Bergamo”, 400–04; Brolis, “Confraternite bergamasche bassomedievali”; idem, *La matricola femminile*; *La Misericordia Maggiore di Bergamo fra passato e presente*; Barachetti, “La Domus Magnus e il Collegio della Misericordia”; Locatelli, “La Casa della Misericordia di Bergamo”. The MIA will celebrate its 750th anniversary in 2015. Parallels to the MIA as a “maxi-confraternity” in other cities can be found in the work of David D’Andrea on Treviso, or Nicholas Terpstra on Bologna, or Brian Pullan on Venice.

⁴⁹ BCBG, Archivio MIA. It fills several rooms at the Biblioteca Civica “Angelo Mai”, in addition to many additional notarial volumes at the Archivio di Stato di Bergamo.

The confraternity of S. Alessandro in Colonna admired the MIA, particularly the latter's stewardship of the church of S. Maria Maggiore in the city centre; indeed, in the 1589 version of the Rule, the brothers of S. Alessandro in Colonna identified the MIA as a model, even as they recognized their own shortcomings: "even if it [the Consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna] is very much weaker than the MIA, it is nonetheless its emulator and imitator as regards administration and government, and among these pious works of the city it does not hold last place."⁵⁰ It was clear from the beginning that despite superficial similarities, the two organizations were quite different in terms of resources and scope. The two confraternities also differed in that the MIA was exempt from episcopal oversight while S. Alessandro in Colonna was subject to regular pastoral visitations.⁵¹ The consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna also did not have complete control of the church interior (as the MIA did for S. Maria Maggiore), for individual families within the parish of S. Alessandro in Colonna retained the right to intervene in the decoration of individual chapels.

The difference between a parish confraternity and a city-wide confraternity can be seen clearly through a specific case study about schooling. In addition to almsgiving, comforting the poor, and other instances of charity, both the MIA and S. Alessandro in Colonna promoted education at the primary and secondary level. Both hired teachers, founded schools, and offered scholarships to lay and clerical students alike. Both included this responsibility for education in later redactions of their respective Rules. Yet, the two confraternities followed quite different approaches in terms of the scope and scale of their efforts. The MIA offered scholarships to hundreds and hundreds of students beginning in the fourteenth century; it established a school and later a seminary in Bergamo; it founded a residential college in Padua for university students; it partnered with Jesuits, Somaschans, Theatines, and even the bishop of Bergamo in repeated attempts to promote literacy and numeracy across the city. These examples—and there are many, many more—can be found over more than five centuries and had an incalculable effect upon the history of Bergamo and the Veneto.⁵² One historian of the MIA, Giuseppe Locatelli, opined more than a century ago that "in Bergamo the history of the MIA is the history of schooling."⁵³ Although Locatelli is mistaken about the monopoly exercised by the MIA in this regard (there were multiple options for schooling in Bergamo), his point about the broad reach and longevity of the MIA is certainly accurate.

⁵⁰ *Regola* [1589], 4a: "Ci è questo Consortio nostro di S. Alessandro in Colonna, il quale, ancor che sia di gran lunga più debole di quello della Misericordia Maggiore: nondimeno, circa la amministrazione & governo, è suo quasi emulo, & imitatore, & tra queste pie opere della città, l'ultimo luogo non tiene." The translation is by Knox, 248.

⁵¹ Knox, 248.

⁵² Carlsmith, *A Renaissance Education*, 80–122.

⁵³ Locatelli, "L'istruzione a Bergamo", 58.

THE CONSORTIUM AND EDUCATION

The confraternity of S. Alessandro in Colonna, on the other hand, exhibited much more modest aims in terms of schooling. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that its objectives were much more specific and tailored to the needs of its members. Despite its origins in the fourteenth century, the confraternity did not mention education of children as a goal of its consortium until a meeting of 29 May 1556, nearly two hundred years after its founding, when the consortium declared that it wished to provide intellectual and moral instruction for those boys whose parents could not afford to maintain them in school.⁵⁴ The confraternity initially hired two teachers to instruct local *chierici* (altar boys) in Latin grammar and singing. In keeping with its focus on the parish, however, the confraternity required these boys to assist in the parish church and clearly expected them to serve in the parish full-time once their education was complete. The confraternity also required the *maestro* (schoolmaster) to not teach students anywhere else while under contract with the consortium. One year later (1557), the confraternity declared that it wished to teach thirty of the “most poor and most able” boys of the neighbourhood how to read, write, and be proficient in grammar.⁵⁵ This motion was targeted at lay boys rather than *chierici*. The confraternity would continue to support both groups of boys for decades to come. In 1560 the Rev. Alessandro Beroa, variously described as a *pedagogo* (pedagogue) or a *ripetitore* (instructor), left his position in a school run by the MIA in order to work for the school recently established by S. Alessandro in Colonna. Beroa informed the MIA that he had been offered a better job as chaplain and *preceptor scolarium* (schoolteacher), whereupon the MIA granted him permission to leave. Beroa then taught for the confraternity of S. Alessandro in Colonna from at least 1560 to 1567.⁵⁶ This dual focus on both lay and clerical instruction — which was also true of the MIA — is worthy of note, for it reflects the broader transformation of confraternities from brotherhoods of religious devotion to lay associations that promoted charity and civic well-being. These two confraternities in Bergamo continually sought to achieve a balance between instruction for secular boys and training for those destined for the priesthood.

In 1574 the confraternity of S. Alessandro in Colonna issued a series of *capitoli* (chapters) to formalize its expectations for the incoming grammar master. He was to teach Greek and Latin for a period of three years; he could not dismiss his students without express permission of the consortium; he was to receive a handsome annual salary of forty gold *scudi*, the use of a house near the parish church, and some grain and wine at harvest time. This contract resembles those issued to teachers employed by the MIA.⁵⁷ Also

⁵⁴ APSACol, *Libro delli Parti* (1549–1567), f. 127r (29 May 1556), and f. 128v (19 June 1556).

⁵⁵ APSACol, *Libro delli Parti* (1549–1567), f. 146v (11 Apr. 1557).

⁵⁶ Carlsmith, *A Renaissance Education*, 95.

⁵⁷ Carlsmith, *A Renaissance Education*, 80–115.

similar was an additional provision that allowed the *maestro* to enroll additional private students and boarders at a fee to be determined by him and the individual parents.⁵⁸

As noted previously, the confraternity of S. Alessandro in Colonna published a revised version of its Rule in 1589 with the city's official printer (*urbis impresor*), Comino Ventura. This time it included specific mention of the confraternity's actions with regard to instruction of students:

[The consortium] has at all times taught forty poor children to read and write. And furthermore twelve clerics are diligently trained in grammar, in music, and in ecclesiastical ceremonies in preparation for service in this and other churches ... and their teachers are members of this confraternity, to whom each child ... gives four lire per year. From this two benefits result: first, those poor boys (who otherwise would not have the means) learn to read and to write; secondly, the instructors can more easily earn additional money to support themselves.⁵⁹

Claiming that the confraternity had taught children "at all times" is somewhat disingenuous, since this activity had begun only three decades earlier. The author's attempt to extend the confraternity's history of supporting education backward in time probably stemmed from a desire to glorify the consortium's history; perhaps the author also sought to match the MIA's long pedigree in this area. We see once again the strong emphasis upon supporting and protecting the members of the parish, be they young boys or older men. Naturally this education also benefited the parish overall by providing more literate parishioners. The dual emphasis upon both clerical and lay education is also evident in this excerpt from the 1589 Rule.

The revised Rule further makes clear the lasting influence of Renaissance humanism upon the methods of instruction favoured by the confraternity. The boys were expected to master a humanist curriculum, as seen in the Rule's instructions to all teachers: "When it comes to [instruction in] letters, suggest to them that they imitate Cicero, the master of the art of writing and speaking; and make them (as much as possible) not only devour all of Cicero but also digest him and absorb him (if that is possible) into their own blood."⁶⁰ This tradition of "devouring" a text goes back to Ezekiel the prophet in the Hebrew tradition and to Seneca's letter to Lucilius in the Latin tradition; the latter described the reading process as akin to a bee's consumption of marjoram and thyme to produce honey. This topos was picked up by Quintilian, then by

⁵⁸ Carlsmith, *A Renaissance Education*, 123–27, offers more detail on the early years of S. Alessandro in Colonna's educational ventures, including analysis of the 1574 *capitoli*.

⁵⁹ *Regola* [1589], 8a.

⁶⁰ *Regola* [1589], 8b, 36a.

Augustine, and later by humanists such as Petrarch, Erasmus, and Montaigne.⁶¹ The confraternity was probably influenced by Petrarch's famous comment that "I ate in the morning what I would digest in the evening; I swallowed as a boy what I would ruminate upon as a man. These writings I have so thoroughly absorbed and fixed, not only in my memory, but in my very marrow, these have become such a part of myself, that even though I should never read them again they would cling in my spirit, deep-rooted in its inmost recesses."⁶²

In terms of education, then, while the actions of the MIA and of S. Alessandro in Colonna are parallel, the purpose, scope, and intended audience differed. S. Alessandro in Colonna kept its eye and its purse strings firmly focused on the needs of the parish, with consequently more modest results. This narrow scope is replicated in the actions of other Bergamasque confraternities that pertained to schooling.

CONCLUSION

The statutes of the consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna portray a rather ordinary confraternity in Bergamo between the fourteenth and the eighteenth centuries. To judge from the confraternity's Rule and complementary primary sources, this brotherhood engaged in a variety of religious, civic, and philanthropic activities designed primarily to benefit its own parishioners. Those actions included sponsorship of students and teachers; decoration of the church; organization of religious services; supervision of its members' spiritual and physical health; and employment of chaplains, choirmasters, and other officials.⁶³ In comparison with other local confraternities of a similar size, S. Alessandro in Colonna shares numerous characteristics in terms of membership, governance, and so forth. In comparison with the much larger and more well-funded Misericordia Maggiore, as we have seen, S. Alessandro in Colonna could not really compete. Nevertheless, the parish confraternity of S. Alessandro in Colonna is a useful illustration of the "typical" aspirations of a lay parish confraternity in late medieval and early modern Italy.

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⁶¹ My thanks to G. Orazio Bravi for this insight.

⁶² Jeanneret, "The Renaissance and its Ancients", 1043–1053, esp. 1049–1051. The translation from Petrarch is Jeanneret's.

⁶³ The 1589 *Regola* captures some of these responsibilities in an early section [5a]: "tutti i redditi e le entrate del consorzio sono di anno in anno parte a beneficio dei poveri, massimamente tra confini del borgo abitanti, et parte nella celebratione dei divini officii, secondo la disposizione de testatori eseguita; et nella manutenzione della fabrica et ornato della chiesa di S. Alessandro in Colonna, e colto divino in essa."

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Church of S. Alessandro in Colonna (photo: Barbara Savà)
(for more images, see <http://alessandra-creativefamily.blogspot.ca/2010/04/la-chiesa-di-s-alessandro-in-colonna.html>)

RULE OF THE CONSORTIUM
OF S. ALESSANDRO IN COLONNA, BERGAMO⁶⁴

[208] In the name of the Lord, amen. Having assembled before their reverend father and brother in Christ, Lanfranco, Bishop of Bergamo by the grace of God and the apostolic see, Guillelmus, son of Alexander, son of Bergonzius, and Johannes, son of master Rampollus Mascaron, the two ministers and treasurers of the consortium of S. Alessandro; [209] Alexander Uliveni and Lanfranchus Bassoni of Calcinate, beneficiary priests of the church of S. Alessandro in Colonna, Bergamo; Alexander, son of Bella, cobbler; Johannes, son of Canzius, pelterer; Guarnerius, son of Domofollus of Albegno; Johannes who is called Zenonus of San Paolo d'Argon, cobbler; Peter, son of Bertulinus, son of Clericottus; Betinus called Rubeus, cobbler; Martinus, son of Bentinus, son of Benus of Ferrara; Bonomus of Ambivere, baker; Jacobus Gandalie; Mafeus called Rex of Villa,⁶⁵ tailor; Bertramus, son of Pulinus of Bonate;⁶⁶ Peterzinus, wine-carrier; Zenettu, son of Mazollus; Johannes, son of Girardus, son of Vegius of Trescore; Jacob, son of Albertus, the German; and masters Donatus Agliardi and Bertramus de Spalenzis, all of them members of the aforesaid consortium, do exhibit and present to the bishop with due reverence, in their own names and in the names and on behalf of all the other members of the aforesaid consortium as listed in this document, the following two documents:

[Document 1:]

In the name of Christ. Whereas the consortium of the ancient parish of S. Alessandro in Colonna in the neighbourhood of St. Stephen in the city of Bergamo had its origin in time immemorial; and whereas this confraternity has always been managed and directed by good and faithful men living in the parish of S. Alessandro of Colonna in the neighbourhood of St. Stephen in the city of Bergamo; and whereas everyone living in the aforesaid parish has been, until now, nominally a member of this consortium, since to this day the consortium did not have a set rule of living in writing, only in custom: the [members] wish to provide for the aforesaid consortium a set order or rule of life in writing, and to produce a set roster in which all those who wish to be members of the aforesaid consortium, so long as they live in the aforesaid neighbourhood and parish, must have themselves recorded. And no one

⁶⁴ The translation is based upon the transcription of the 1363 Rule published by Little, *Liberty, Charity, Fraternity*, 208–19. We have followed Little in leaving the personal and family names largely in Latin, clarifying patronymics when appropriate; we have rendered the names of the consortium, the neighbourhoods, and the towns (where known) in modern Italian; the rest of the text is in English.

⁶⁵ Referring to Villa d'Almè, Villa d'Ogna, or Villa di Serio.

⁶⁶ Referring either to Bonate Sotto or Bonate Sopra.

may be considered a member of this consortium unless he is recorded in this roster.

Therefore on the 10th day of the month of December 1363, in the first indication, everyone was solemnly called forth from the aforesaid parish, door to door, personally or according to their residence and family, by Girardus de Gabo, a servant of the commune of Bergamo, at the request of Albertus, son of Zambellus Tasche of Meda; Johannes, son of Peter Verzeri, pelterer; Betinus, son of Januarius of Ubiale; and Venturinus, son of Guillelmus de Medici of Spirano; that is, the ministers of the aforesaid consortium, elected according to ancient and long-standing custom, because everyone who wanted to be named as a member of the aforesaid consortium needed to be present on that day at that hour at the church of S. Alessandro in Colonna specifically in order to set out and to complete the document written below, and also to have their names recorded in the roster of the aforesaid consortium. And, specifically in order to fulfill those conditions written below, the undersigned from the aforesaid parish were all assembled, namely:

The aforesaid masters Alexander de Ulivenis and Lanfranchus Bassoni of Calcinate, both beneficiary priests and rectors of the church of S. Alessandro in Colonna; Johannes, son of master Henricus de Lottis, cleric and beneficiary of the aforesaid church; master Rogerius, son of master Conradus of Solza, merchant; master Simon, son of master Mafeus de Urio; Bertolaminus, called Bertellus of Trescore, merchant; Tulinus, his son; Albertus, son of master Zambellus Tasche of Meda, administrator; Boniacobus, son of master Juvenalis of Torre;⁶⁷ Guillelmus Amigini de Mariano, *incerator*;⁶⁸ Johannes, son of master Bonincontrus of Trescore, craftsman; Bonincontrus, his son; master Guillelmus, son of master Bonifacius Cucchi; Peter, son of Talienus, merchant; Johannes, son of master Leonardus of Trescore, craftsman; Alexander, son of master Bonifacius de la Turre; Zuchinus of San Pellegrino, cobbler; Zinettinus, son of master Paganus de Zannis of Trescore; Johannes, son of master Rampollus Mascaron, merchant; Venturinus, son of Guillelmus de Medici of Spirano; Obertinus, son of Andriolus of Solza, notary; Johannes, son of Peter Verzeri, pelterer; Bertolaminus, son of Franciscus Adelasio, notary; Johannes, son of Venturinus of Scano al Brembo, notary; Betinus, son of Benus Ferrari, cobbler; Betinus, son of Januarius of Ubiale, cobbler; Laurencius, son of Peter who is called Clericus of Zogno; Bernardius, son of master Guillelmus de Cuchis, merchant; Betolaminus, son of Johannes de Turzenis of Lallio, notary; Guillelmus, son of Alexander, son of Bergonzius; Leonardus, son of Guillelmus de Aliprandis, notary; Riva, son of Peter de Dosellis, notary; Antonius of Gronfaleggio, notary; Bonomus, son of Albertus who is called Clericottus de Carteniatica; Martinus, son of Johannes de

⁶⁷ Referring either to Torre Pallavicina or Torre de Roveri.

⁶⁸ An *incerator* spread wax on cloth to make it waterproof.

Antia, cobbler; Johannes, son of Paganus of Cumenduno, smith; Fachinus of Villa, pelterer; Bertraminus, son of Johannes, son of Paganus of Lecco; Johannes, son of Guarischus of Villa, pelterer; Tomaxius, brother of Zambonus Barianus, pelterer; Anselmus, son of Bonommus of Lonquelo, cooper; Vilanus of Villa, keeper of a granary; Johannes called Comparinus, tailor; Zambonus de Curte, merchant; Jacobus, son of Lafranchius of Zogno, pelterer; Ziliolus, son of Bonettus of Zogno, pelterer; Johannes called Faba de Peterzolis of Bonate, pelterer; Baxianus, son of Peter of Ubiale, pelterer; Johannes, son of Scamizzius, pelterer; Johannes, son of Peter of Sorisole; Peterbonus, son of Johannes de Leverene who is said to be from Castagneta; Guarnerius, son of Domofollus, witness; Zenolus, son of Leone of Milano, witness; Alexander, son of Johannes, son of Bella, cobbler; Venturinus, called Marzolus; Johannis of Valle Imagna, tailor; Peterzolus, son of Paxius Zereze, launderer; Zenonus of San Paolo d'Argon, cobbler; Recuperatus de Mascarariis, pelterer; Baronus, son of Bonomius de la Gessia of Endenna, cobbler; Obertus, son of Fachinus de Lazaronibus de Urio, witness; Betonus, son of Vinianus Barzizza, witness; Peter, son of Zambonardus of Albino; Johannes his son, dyer; Betinus, son of Bonomus de Gariboldis of Zogno, cobbler; Benedictus, son of Guarnerius, son of Damafollus; Nadinus son of Jacobus, son of Albertus of Trescore, cooper; Peter, son of Johannes of Bagnatica, witness; Peter, son of Zoannus of Castione della Presolana, smith; Girardus, son of Johannes de Gabo, servant of the commune of Bergamo; Johannes, son of Tomazius Oberti; Jacobus, son of Bonallus, cobbler; Venturinus, son of Peter de Villa of Capriate S. Gervasio who is said to be from Borfuro, wine-carrier; Blinus, son of Henricus, who is called Truyta de Sextariis of Ponte San Pietro; Johannes called Smeraldus, witness; Recuperatus of Stezzano, carpenter; Georgius, son of Mazolus Girlande, witness; Bergaminus, son of Marcius of Treviolo, cobbler; Bertulinus, son of Peter, son of Onetus de Fanonibus, wooden clog-maker; Jacobus de Brolo, witness; Betinus, son of Pecius of Tagliuno, carpenter; Venturinus of S. Paolo d'Argon, cobbler; Ambroxius, son of Paxus Deylinis, carpenter; and Bonomus de Girardellis of Brusaporto.

[211] All these people are from the aforesaid parish, all wish to be members of the aforesaid consortium, and all have sought to have their names listed on the roster of the consortium. Each and every one of them has testified at the request of the aforesaid notary, Bertolaminus, who received the name and occupation of each of them and their commitment or their ability to be committed to faithfully observing the rule of the aforesaid consortium as written below, and the sections or statues compiled and organized by those named above. And all of the aforesaid members concordantly and unanimously, with no one disagreeing, after invoking the name of Christ and of his mother the Blessed Virgin Mary and of S. Alessandro, in this manner stipulated, established, and ordered the following:

[212] 1. First: they established and ordered that anyone of good standing and reputation living in the neighbourhood of S. Stefano in the City of Bergamo and in the aforesaid parish of S. Alessandro in Colonna may become a member of the present consortium of S. Alessandro in Colonna, and must be received if he has sought to join this consortium, and must be treated and accepted as a member of this consortium, and must be listed in the register of the aforesaid consortium.

2. Item: Let there be one register or one book in which every member of the present consortium shall be inscribed. And let this book remain in the custody of the ministers or treasurers of the aforesaid consortium.

3. Item: They established and ordered that every member of the present consortium and society shall be bound and required to receive penance for his sins at least once each year so long as he shall live, either from his own priest or from another adequate priest, according to the permission and will of his own priest on this matter, so that he can safely receive communion on the holy day of Easter or on another feast day in the year without prejudice to his soul.

4. Item: They established and ordered that every member of the aforesaid consortium and society shall be required to devoutly visit the church and altar of S. Alessandro in Colonna on every Sunday and on the feast of the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, unless there be some just impediment, shall be required to say there seven Our Fathers and seven Hail Marys for the benefit of his own penance and in remission of his sins and for the remedy of the souls of deceased members of the society and benefactors of the consortium.

5. Item: They established and ordered that every member of this society, barring any just impediment, shall be bound and required to be present and to participate in the feast day of S. Alessandro each year at the church of S. Alessandro in Colonna, and that he shall be required there, together with the ministers [of the consortium],⁶⁹ to make a gift according to what seems [appropriate] to them.

6. Item: They established and ordered that if it comes to pass that any member of the aforesaid consortium should die, each member of the aforesaid consortium shall be required, if he is conveniently able to, to go to honour the body of the deceased; and that the ministers of the consortium shall be responsible for calling together the members of the aforesaid consortium for this purpose.

⁶⁹ Here, we are assuming that *ministris suis* refers to the ministers of the consortium, as it does throughout the text. It could, however, refer to the servants of the member's household, which would alter the sense greatly.

[213] 7. Item: They established and ordered that if any member of the aforesaid consortium should pass away, on the day on which he died or on the following day each member of this society shall be required to say 12 Hail Marys, barring any just impediment, for his soul and in remission of the sins of the aforesaid deceased, but if [this duty] has been neglected on account of forgetfulness caused by the items listed in the previous two headings, these men should not be considered to have fallen into sin.

8. Item: They established and ordered that if it should happen that any member of the aforesaid consortium should fall sick and does not have the resources to keep himself supplied with food and drink and clothing, the treasurers and ministers of the aforesaid consortium shall be required to provide assistance to the ill man from the assets of the aforesaid consortium. And every member of the aforesaid consortium shall be bound to notify these treasurers or ministers of the aforesaid consortium if he has seen any other member of the aforesaid consortium in this condition.

9. Item: They established and ordered that any member of the current congregation who has been known by his neighbour to have caused turpitude or scandal to the congregation should be admonished by the ministers of the aforesaid consortium or by those presiding over the aforesaid consortium. And if, after being warned, he does not correct himself after three warnings or denunciations, he shall be expelled from the present society. And every member of the society shall be required to tell the ministers or treasurers of this society in secret if he knows or might know anything concerning any grave sin [committed by] any member of the present fraternity. And let those ministers, after the matter has been made known to them, affectionately chastise and warn those members who have been denoted and denounced because of a grave sin or vice.

10. Item: They established and ordered that all the members of the aforesaid society are bound and required, unless there be any just impediment, to gather at the church of S. Alessandro in Colonna every year on the Calends of January and to have the rule of the present society and congregation read among the members of the aforesaid consortium thus gathered. For this purpose: so that every member of this society can preserve its rule. [214] And every member of this society has permission to speak out at this gathering and say openly if he knows or might know anything that should be done or ordered that might be useful to the aforesaid consortium. And in this gathering and society two ministers and general treasurers must be chosen⁷⁰ and confirmed, at least one of whom [should be selected] from those two men who were ministers in the previous year, so that at least one of them may be knowledgeable about the affairs of the aforesaid consortium. These men may remain in office as long

⁷⁰ *Eligantur* could have the sense of “elected” here.

as the society wishes. And if they are deposed, let those documents, accounts, monies, and any moveable goods whatsoever belonging to this aforesaid consortium remain in the care of either one or both of these men so that they can have recourse to these things on behalf of the affairs of the consortium. And let those two treasurers and ministers, either together or individually on behalf of the both of them, there and then be solemnly appointed as syndics and procurators for each and every present and future lawsuit, debate, and controversy of this consortium, and for every article of these lawsuits.⁷¹ And these syndics are empowered to make investments and leases of the property of the aforesaid consortium that may not exceed nine years; and to end and revoke these investments and leases if it is expedient; and to demand and receive payments from any rent, and from any debtor of the aforesaid consortium who is found to owe anything to the aforesaid consortium; and to produce letters of payment and acquittal for any debtor of this consortium in regards to that which he has paid to one or both of them; and to appoint in their place either one or many syndics and procurators to fulfill those duties mentioned above, once or many times, if it is expedient; and to substitute and revoke these other syndics and procurators. And whether these ministers and treasurers are expressly appointed or not, nevertheless they shall have all the aforesaid permissions and powers to carry out and administer [their duties] as written above, and shall be understood as syndics in order to carry out and administer the aforesaid matters as written above. And [they also established and ordered] that four ministers should likewise be chosen. One of these ministers should live in the neighbourhood of S. Stefano, two of them should live in the neighbourhood of S. Alessandro in Colonna and of S. Leonardo within the city walls of Bergamo, and the fourth should live outside the walls of the city of Bergamo, in the outer suburbs. And these ministers and treasurers should be chosen in the way that seems best to the aforesaid society, or to the greater part of those people who have gathered there.

11. Item: They established and ordered that one or both of the aforesaid treasurers who will have custody over the funds of the aforesaid consortium shall be bound [215] and required to give a [report] to the aforesaid four ministers or to some of them about the funds of the aforesaid consortium, according to the means and incomes of the aforesaid consortium. And those ministers are bound and required on that same day before dinner to give away that money for the love of God, and to distribute it among the sick and poor and needy living in the aforesaid neighbourhood beginning at the via Lapacano and then traveling onward, through the whole of the aforesaid neighbourhood, all the way to the end of the aforesaid parish, revisiting all the ill [who are] living in

⁷¹ We diverge from Little's punctuation at "... dicti consorcii. Et ad omnes ..." We believe it makes more sense to declare them syndics and procurators for all lawsuits, and also for every article of every lawsuit, and then to treat investments in another sentence.

the aforesaid neighbourhood, and providing them with assistance from the resources of the aforesaid consortium.

12. Item: They established and ordered that the aforesaid two treasurers and general ministers and the aforesaid four ministers shall be bound and required on the aforementioned Calends of January as soon as they have been elected to the aforesaid offices to choose 12 councillors⁷² from this society, or two for each of them. Those twelve councillors, together with the aforesaid six ministers, or two-thirds part of these councillors and ministers, shall be able to buy, sell, exchange, and lease [property], both in perpetuity and for a given period of time, and can receive payments and produce documents of receipt and acquittal. And the syndics and procurators can appoint in their place and on behalf of the aforesaid consortium one or many people to manage and transact the affairs and lawsuits and doings of the aforesaid consortium, both in court and outside it, and can recall these people. And these men can produce and oversee all other matters, just as the whole community and congregation of the consortium can, until they have been revoked or others have been elected in their place.

13. Item: They established and ordered that the aforesaid four ministers elected to distribute the aforesaid alms must step down and be free from office for two years immediately following the end of their term of office.

14. Item: They established and ordered that the two aforementioned ministers and general treasurers cannot sell any immovable item or anything held in perpetual inheritance; nor rent out any property of the aforesaid consortium in *emphyteusis* or in perpetual inheritance or for a period longer than nine years without the consent and deliberation of two-thirds of all the ministers and councillors [216] of the aforesaid consortium or of the greater part of the aforesaid consortium. However, the aforesaid two ministers and general treasurers, either independently or together with one or many of the aforesaid four ministers, can produce confessions and contracts of payment for anyone paying anything to the aforesaid consortium.

15. Item: They established and ordered that this consortium or a gathering of this consortium shall have a book or summary register upon which shall be written and noted all pieces of land, and anything held in perpetual inheritance, and all the goods of the aforesaid consortium, and likewise all the documents of receipt which will be made concerning rentals of those things held in perpetual inheritance in the name of the consortium; and that the ministers of the aforesaid consortium shall ensure that all renters of the properties held

⁷² In the Latin, *credendarii*. This is an unusual word, but may have been in common use in Bergamo, derived from one of the community organizations there known as the “consiglio di credenza.” Storti Storch, *Scritti sugli statuti lombardi*, 39.

in perpetual inheritance by the aforesaid consortium shall accept documents of receipt concerning the rental contract which they will fulfill. And they will swear that they must fulfill this lease from the consortium every year perpetually in order that the law of this consortium may be preserved; and that the aforesaid register must be renewed every twenty years.

All the aforesaid chapters, statutes, and regulations were compiled and read and publicized, and also confirmed and approved by all those listed above, as specified and described above, with no dissenters. Each and every one of the acts and deeds described above took place on the 10th of December 1363, in the first indiction, in the neighbourhood of S. Stefano in the city of Bergamo in the neighbourhood and church of S. Alessandro in Colonna, with these witnesses present, having been specially called and sought out for that purpose: Johannes, son of Zambellus, son of Zochus de Plodis of Mapello who is called Johannes; Raynetto Jacopo, son of master Peter de Barienis; Salvino, son of Pecinus of Mozzo, an inhabitant of the neighbourhood of Canallis; Nadino, son of Zambellus, who is called Zerutus of Prezzate, butcher; and Fenino, son of Johannes Findari of Treviolo; who confirm that they recognize the aforementioned Bertolaminus, notary, and all and each of those listed above. And likewise the aforementioned Bertolaminus, notary, asserted that he recognized all and each of those listed above.

I, Bertolaminus, son of Johannes de Turzenis, a public notary of Bergamo by imperial authority, was present for all the aforesaid things, having been sought out, [217] and I signed in confirmation.

I, Johannes, son of Venturinus de Scano, public notary of the sacred palace of Bergamo by imperial authority, at the request of the aforementioned Bertolaminus, notary, also signed.

[Document 2:]

In the name of Christ, amen. On the 6th of January 1366, in the fourth indiction, in the neighbourhood of S. Alessandro in Colonna in the quarter of S. Stefano in the city of Bergamo, next to the great altar of the aforesaid church, in a public and general gathering, the congregation and society of the ancient parish of S. Alessandro in Colonna was thereby called together, gathered, and united specifically in order to complete and explicate the things written below. In this gathering were present:

Master Alexander de Ulivenis, a beneficiary priest of the church of S. Alessandro in Colonna; Johannes, son of master Bonincontrus de Zannis of Trescore, and Guillelmus, son of Alexander, son of Bergonzius, the two ministers, syndics, and treasurers of the aforesaid consortium; Bonommus, son of Venturinus of Ambivere; Jacobus Bonaiuni Carosi; Ambroxius, son of

Paxius Aylini of Bonate; and Johannes called Faba de Presezzis of Bonate, the [four] subministers of the aforesaid consortium; master Guillelmus de Cuchis; Bertolaminus called Bertellus de Zannis of Trescore; Bertrammus, son of Pulinus; Guarnerius, son of Domafollus; Johannes Oberti; Zenonus of San Paolo d'Argon; Johannes, son of Peter de Verzeris; Johannes, son of Peter, son of Zambonardus; and Peter de Castione, the [nine] councillors of the aforesaid consortium; Johannes, son of master Henricus de Lottis, cleric of the aforesaid church; Donatus Agliardi; Bonifacius of Torre; Alexander of Torre; Vilanus of Villa, keeper of a granary; Teutaldus de Carteniaticha; Alexander, son of Bella; Zenolus, son of Leone of Milano; Bertulinus, son of Bertolaminus called Bertellus de Zannis of Trescore; Bernardus de Cuchis; Bonommus de Carteniaticha; Bonommus, son of Venturinus of Scano al Brembo; Johannes, son of Girardus of Trescore; Guillelmus, son of Amiginus de Mariano; Jacobus, son of Albertus the German of Lallio; Laurencius of Zogno, son of Peter who is called a cleric; Bonomus de Endenna; Jacobus of Zogno, pelterer; Mafeus who is called Rex of Villa, tailor; and Betinus called Rubeus of Stezzano, cobbler, members of the aforesaid consortium.

And these aforesaid ministers and subministers and councillors are more than two thirds of all [218] the ministers and subministers and councillors of the aforesaid consortium, as each and every one of the aforesaid ministers, subministers, councillors, and members solemnly declared and testified at the request of the aforementioned notary, Leonardus. And the rule of the aforesaid consortium was read out among this congregation by the aforesaid notary, Leonardus, in the common tongue, to the comprehension of all bystanders. And there, the aforesaid ministers, subministers, councillors, and members of the aforesaid consortium, wishing concordantly and unanimously, with not a single man in disagreement, for the good of the institution and the betterment of the aforesaid consortium, to add to and subtract from the aforesaid rule and to modify the aforesaid rule in the section of the rule written below — because they are not modifying the rule itself nor those things contained in it except in the section written below, but rather are affirming and corroborating the rule — do stipulate, provide, order, and declare that:⁷³

Those two men who are the ministers, syndics, general treasurers, and agents of the aforesaid consortium and society, together with six of the councillors of the aforesaid society and consortium, are empowered, obligated, and allowed to rent, lease, sell, change, and alienate the houses, lands, good, and possessions of the aforesaid consortium as seems best to them, without anyone opposing them; and also to give, lease, and rent those homes, lands, and possessions held in perpetual inheritance and in *emphyteusis*; and to make investments, both held in perpetuity and in the short-term and long-term;

⁷³ We diverge from Little's punctuation here. Putting the comma after *permutare*, rather than *derogantes*, yields a better translation.

and to annul these investments; and to revoke both letters and instruments of testimony, to make and receive agreements and payments, and to bargain in any way whatsoever.

And their syndics and procurators are able, in their place and on behalf of the aforesaid consortium, to establish, oversee, and manage negotiations and lawsuits for the aforesaid consortium both in court and outside of it, and to revoke them, and to produce and to oversee all other matters, and they have all manner of permissions and authority over making, speaking, and arranging all and every negotiation of the aforesaid consortium.

Moreover, the two aforesaid ministers or general treasurers can make testimonies and contracts of payment and of release from debt and of acquittal for anyone paying anything to the aforesaid consortium, and can also receive in the name of the aforesaid consortium all testimonies and make all renunciations and protestations whatsoever — just as the whole of the aforesaid consortium and all the members of the consortium can — until they have been revoked or others have been elected in their place, without contradicting a certain section of the aforesaid rule of the aforesaid consortium whose contents are written below, and without having produced or set forth anything contrary to it. The content of this heading is:

Item [14]: They established and ordered that [218] the two aforementioned ministers and general treasurers cannot sell any immovable item or anything held in perpetual inheritance; nor rent out any property of the aforesaid consortium in *emphyteusis* or in perpetual inheritance or for a period longer than nine years without the consent and deliberation of two-thirds of all the ministers and councillors of the aforesaid consortium or of the greater part of the aforesaid consortium. However, the aforesaid two ministers and general treasurers, either independently or together with one or many of the aforesaid four ministers, can produce confessions and contracts of payment for anyone paying anything to the aforesaid consortium.

The summoned and notarized witnesses present for this were Antoniolus, son of Bergaminus of Gaverina Terme, cobbler; Franciscus, son of Lafrancus Bellane de Russis; Aminus, son of Lafrancus de Scanzorosciate of the city of Bergamo; and Peter, son of Guillelmus de Gozziis of Ciserano. And I, Leonardus de Aliprandis, notary, do declare and testify that I recognized all of these men.



Church of S. Alessandro in Colonna (photo: Barbara Savà)
(for more images, see <http://alessandra-creativefamily.blogspot.ca/2010/04/la-chiesa-di-s-alessandro-in-colonna.html>)