

This volume is an important introduction to the study of Florentine charitable institutions and a useful contribution to scholarship on the religious, artistic, and social history of the city.

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Domínguez León, José. *La sociedad sevillana en la época isabelina. Una visión a través de la religiosidad (1833–1868)*. Córdoba: Publicaciones obra social y cultural cajasur, 1999. 588 pp. ISBN 84-7959-271-0.

The end of absolute monarchy in 1834 and the triumph of liberalism began a period of political, social, and economic change in Spain that transformed the country. The transition from the absolutist certainties of the past to a society dominated by an emerging bourgeoisie was conflictive and unsettling. Domínguez León provides a comprehensive study of this process in Seville through a detailed and clear analysis of its institutions, its society, especially the family and its religious life in a time of gradual secularization. There is little, however, on the *hermandades* and *cofradías* once so numerous in the city during absolute monarchy when religion and public life were more deeply intertwined than in nineteenth-century liberal Spain. Spanish liberals had little use for brotherhoods and confraternities embodying the class distinctions of the Old Regime and dependent for their survival on endowments of urban and rural property. In 1841, the government of General Espartero struck the final blow by ordering the sale of property of *hermandades* and *cofradías* for the benefit of the public treasury. Some survived, of course, but as associations of private individuals rather than as public and religious corporations ingrained in the fabric of traditional, hierarchical society.

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Fassina, Giuseppe. *Fraternità monzese tra medioevo ed epoca contemporanea*. Monza: Rotari Club Monza Est e Monda Nord/Società di Studi Monzesi, 1999. 256 pp. ill.; no price, no ISBN

The city of Monza, once part of the Duchy of Milan, is not only rich in history and culture, but also of interest to scholars working on lay religious movements. Giuseppe Fassina's study on the confraternities of Monza from the Middle Ages to the present offers an insight into the city and its community by tracing the origins of several of its confraternities and recounting the religious practices in use not only within its confraternities but also within Monzese society.

The introduction surveys the origins of confraternities and describes the role of religion in Monzese society, explaining how different time periods brought about changes in several religious laws. Each of the chapters that follow focuses on a specific confraternity within the city, presenting information about the customs and costumes typical of that particular group. The third chapter, for instance, talks about the Order of the Umiliati, whose traces can be found in the city to this day, and how it established a school system and a health care system that were available to all those in need. Worthy of mention is also the eighth chapter, which focuses on the Confraternity of Saint Bernadine, later known as the Confraternity of the Gonfalone, a sodality who cared for criminals condemned to capital punishment. The ninth deals with The Roman Order of the Holy Trinity of the Redemption of Slaves, which worked to free Christians enslaved by the Turks. The eleventh examines the Confraternity of Death, dedicated to the practice of flagellation and to other pious and charitable acts. Chapter sixteen examines the importance of the Virgin Mary in Monzese society, and discusses Marian confraternities in the city. The last chapter focuses on the processions honouring God that came to replace the annual carnivals and served as an act of contrition for all society.

The volume's appendix contains a catechism from the School of S. Marta, an itinerary of sixteenth-century processions, and several documents listing the rules and duties of three of Monza's confraternities. The documents selected by the author offer a direct insight into the life of particular confraternities as well as into the role each played within Monzese society. The itinerary of processions gives the exact times and locations at which the various processions were to begin and the places where they were to pass, while also explaining what was to be sung and recited along the way. The book is enriched by numerous pictures and a detailed map of the city pointing out the location of confraternities.

Although encyclopedic in a way, Fassina's volume is an excellent starting point for a more intensive examination of confraternities in Monza as well as a reliable overview of the lay religious situation in this Northern Italian town during the premodern period.

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Newbigin, Nerida. *Feste d'Oltrarno. Plays in Churches in Fifteenth-Century Florence*. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1996. 2 vols. xv, 794 pp. ISBN 88-222-4444-3. L. 176,000

Fifteenth-century Florentine sacred plays, the *sacre rappresentazioni*, were performed in confraternity oratories and in churches both as a devotional expression and as religious spectacle. Although highly popular in their time, they have remained largely misunderstood in our time and have been misrepresented within theatre scholarship pertaining to this period. As Newbigin suggests in the intro-