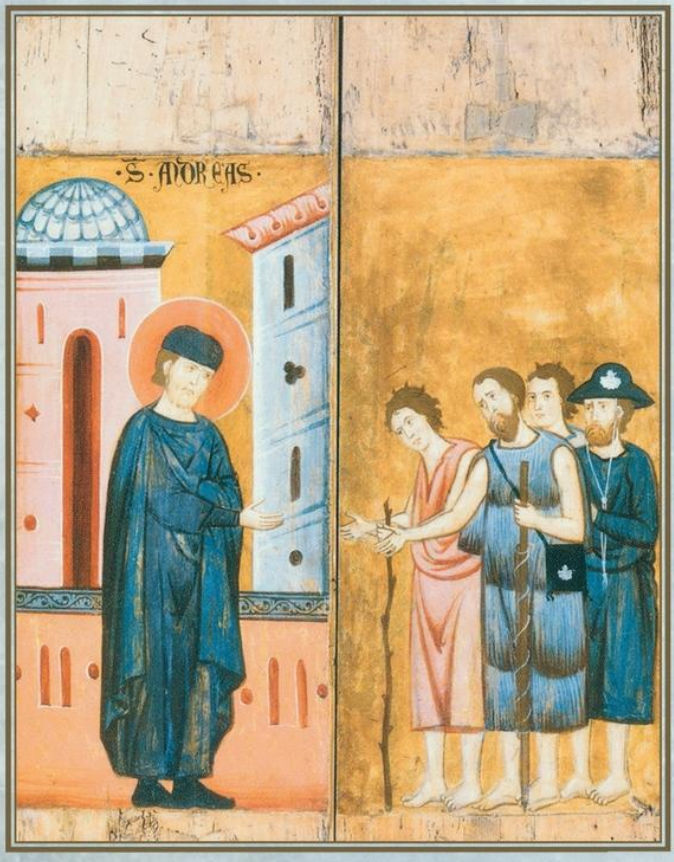
SAINTS AND CITIES
IN MEDIEVAL ITALY



Selected sources translated and annotated by

Diana Webb

SAINTS AND CITIES IN MEDIEVAL ITALY

selected sources translated and annotated with an introduction
by Diana Webb

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My family are best aware of the reasons why 2004–5 has been a difficult year. The dedication rather inadequately acknowledges what I owe to the person who has done most to help me surmount the difficulties.

INTRODUCTION

The saints whose Lives (*vitae*) are translated in this book have in common the fact that they were laypeople (five men and two women) who lived, died and achieved their holy reputations in central or north Italian cities during what may be termed the long thirteenth century. Earliest in date were Homobonus of Cremona and Raimondo Palmario of Piacenza, near-contemporaries and inhabitants of neighbouring cities, who died in 1197 and 1200 respectively; the latest was Enrico ('Rigo') of Bolzano, who died in Treviso in 1315. This was a period of rapid demographic and economic growth in the Italian urban environment; it witnessed much social and political upheaval, accompanied by religious change. It is hoped that the Lives translated here will open a window on to this world by showing how the sanctity of these men and women was perceived and described by observers who were familiar with their social and religious setting, whether as contemporary eyewitnesses or as members of a closely succeeding generation. The chief purpose of this Introduction is to point out some issues which the reader might like to bear in mind while reading the translations. More narrowly focused comments on the Lives are to be found in the short introductions which precede each one.[1]

Five of the Lives translated here were published in *Acta sanctorum* in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. *Acta sanctorum* was a product of the seventeenth-century explosion in religious and historical scholarship, a massive and ambitious project intended to produce a comprehensive edition of the lives of the saints based on the best manuscript sources. Specifically it was the brainchild of the Jesuit Heribert

1 All the saints and many of the issues raised in this introduction are discussed by André Vauchez in *La sainteté en occident aux derniers siècles du moyen âge* (Rome, 1981). All subsequent references are to the translation by J. Birrell, *Sainthood in the later middle ages* (Cambridge, 1997). There are also articles (in Italian) and further bibliography on all the saints mentioned in this book in the alphabetically organised *Biblioteca sanctorum* (12 vols, Rome, 1960–70). Four Lives of thirteenth-century Italian female saints are translated in E. Petroff, *Consolation of the blessed* (New York, 1979). For women's spirituality, see also A. Benvenuti Papi, *'In castro poenitentiae': santità e società femminile nell' Italia medievale* (Rome, 1990); D. Bornstein and R. Rusconi (eds), *Women and religion in medieval and renaissance Italy* (Chicago, 1996). For the urban religious context in general, see A. Thompson, *Cities of God: the religion of the Italian communes 1125–1325* (University Park, PA, 2005).

Rosweyde (d. 1629) and after him John van Bolland (d. 1665), the first directing editor. Bolland bequeathed his name to a group of Jesuits, the Société des Bollandistes, based in what is now Belgium. Their labours have continued to the present day, interrupted only between 1773, when the order was suppressed in the Belgian Netherlands, and 1837.[2]

Acta sanctorum is arranged in calendar order, so that saints commemorated in January appear in one set of volumes, the saints for February in a succeeding set and so on.[3] The volumes are physically large and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were produced with the full panoply of engraved title-pages and Latin dedications to the great and good of the contemporary Catholic world. Inevitably the project was overtaken by the passage of time and the advances in hagiographical scholarship which the Bollandists themselves helped to bring about. For all the energy and assiduity with which they pursued and collected manuscripts it was not invariably the case that Lives were edited from the best possible sources (that of Zita of Lucca is a conspicuous example), and new material naturally kept coming to light. Some of the earlier volumes were later slightly updated, but only a preliminary volume has yet appeared for the month of December. Since 1882 the annual volumes of *Analecta Bollandiana* have made available a stream of editions of individual Lives in a much more compact format, as well as critical hagiographical studies.

Whatever the shortcomings of *Acta sanctorum*, the student of hagiography would find life a lot harder without it; but it has to be acknowledged that some of the procedures adopted by its early editors would now be regarded as unacceptable or simply unnecessary. They were working in a scholarly environment in which Latin was still an international standard language, which accounts for the dress in which the Life of Raimondo Palmario now appears: an eighteenth-century Latin translation of an early sixteenth-century Italian version of the original Latin life, now lost. It was also their common practice to ignore the original chapters or rubrics of medieval Lives and to divide the text into much longer chapters according to their own discretion. It is often therefore the case that a Life, as it appears in *Acta sanctorum*, has lost some of the features that its first readers would have found in it, even when its language is reasonably trustworthy.

2 For a succinct account see M. D. Knowles, *Great historical enterprises* (London, 1963), pp. 3–32.

3 Cited hereafter as *AS*, followed by the month and the volume number within the month.

Miracle collections are another important hagiographical genre; for some saints we have both Life and miracle collection, for others only the one or the other. Limitations of space have forbidden the translation of miracle collections here which are not integral to the Lives. Andrea Gallerani's miracles are so integrated, in an abbreviated form derived from a fuller record now apparently no longer extant. Miracles were often recorded by notaries, sometimes with the intention of providing evidence for a canonisation enquiry; the process was independent of the composition of a Life. Hagiographers often however included one or more post mortem miracles towards the end of a Life, and sometimes, as in the Life of Raimondo Palmario, it is possible to find the source for these stories among the separately surviving notarial records. By contrast, there is no cross-reference between the Lives of Zita of Lucca and Rigo of Bolzano and their extensive miracle collections (which are published in *Acta sanctorum*).[4] The hagiographers of Homobonus of Cremona drew on a record of his miracles which we no longer have. Both the miracles which Umiliana de' Cerchi did in the first three years after her death and her posthumous appearances to her devotees were separately recorded, constituting, together with the Life which is translated here, a hagiographical dossier.[5]

As Innocent III explained when canonising Homobonus, it was official doctrine that miracles post mortem counted for more as evidence of sanctity than miracles performed by the saint *in vita*, which might just be the product of diabolical illusion. The latter nonetheless clearly gratified a profound conviction that if a man or woman was God's chosen the fact would surely be demonstrated during his or her lifetime, and they remained part of the hagiographer's stock in trade. There were several different kinds. Helpful supernatural interventions on behalf of the saint, as when Zita and Rigo remain dry in the rain to the chagrin of mischievous onlookers, shade into the familiar replenishment miracles, for example when the beans that Zita has covertly given to the poor are replaced before her master can find the bin empty or when water is transformed into wine by (or on behalf of) Homobonus, Umiliana, Andrea Gallerani and Zita. Visions and conversations with heavenly visitants are by definition *in vita* experiences. More carefully rationed by hagiographers, at least in this period, are curative miracles carried out by the living saint, but Pier Pettinaio was responsible for several.

4 Respectively in *AS*, April, 3, pp. 510–27, and June, 2, pp. 376–91.

5 The apparitions and miracles are in *AS*, May, 4, pp. 401–7. Some of the apparitions were also included in the Life.

Like Rigo of Bolzano on the one occasion when the latter performed such a miracle, he prudently enjoined the beneficiaries and witnesses of his cures to silence until he himself was dead, a traditional demonstration of humility.

Hagiography: some basic characteristics

Hagiography is not biography, but it has sufficient in common with it for confusion between the two to be unsurprising. The most obvious point of resemblance is structural. Both forms normally follow the life-cycle of the human individual from birth to death, but it was not the hagiographer's business to narrate the events of his subject's life for their own sake, nor to place him or her in a social or historical setting (as the modern biographer usually does) unless that served his overriding purpose, which was to illustrate the saint's possession and exercise of the virtues which justified the claim to sanctity.

This all-important purpose was frequently served by the use of the *topos* or commonplace, which could be anything from a biblical parallel or quotation to a model story derived from an earlier Life and possibly ultimately from a biblical precedent. Miracles furnish particularly obvious examples of this procedure: saints regularly turn water into wine or replenish exhausted stocks of wine or bread or other foodstuffs, as Christ did at the Wedding at Cana and when multiplying the loaves and fishes. The technique could easily spill over into a more thoroughgoing adaptation of a pre-existing model, which would not be regarded as good practice by modern biographers but was far from unknown in medieval and renaissance biography, where, for example, Suetonius's *Lives of the Caesars* provided helpful hints for describing rulers both good and bad. The notion that the individual saint was, like St Paul, a 'vessel of election' and inevitably resembled other saints could not but promote such borrowings. Originality was no more required of the author who described the saint's life than it was of the saint himself.

Sometimes *topoi* are prominently signposted. An example is the episode in which Zita of Lucca borrows her master's cloak to go to church on a bitterly cold night and gives it to a poor man; back home, her master heaps reproaches upon her until the poor man (either Christ himself or an angel) reappears and restores the cloak. Zita's likeness to St Martin, who divided his cloak with the beggar, is specifically pointed out to us. Saints' Lives vary, however, in the extent and in the style with which

they utilise such devices, and it is important not to approach any particular Life with rigid preconceptions about its individuality or lack of it. Where alternative versions of a Life exist, the historian may sometimes need to suppress the impulse to ask which of them gives the most accurate account of the saint's biography. The issue may rather be what model of sanctity the authors had in mind or for exactly what purpose or audience they were writing.

The modern reader of medieval hagiography may sometimes be struck by unconvincing characterisation and muddled chronology. Episodes and examples are produced in the order which the author judges appropriate in order to illustrate the saint's virtues, rather than to tell a connected story or portray a personality 'in the round'. There is an accompanying tendency to treat virtues sequentially rather than as coexisting aspects of a rounded personality. The result is often a somewhat prismatic effect; it is the writer's purpose to depict not a convincing character but rather a series of facets, virtues which one by one catch the light. The aim is to show that the saint at all times epitomised the virtue that is under discussion, whether it be abstinence or humility. If the subject is prudence, he or she always displays a practical wisdom perfectly adapted to the best interests of whoever seeks their counsel. Only rarely does a hagiographer acknowledge that the exercise of one virtue might cut across another or at least modify it. The need to rebuke or edify, for example, might require the saint to abandon his or her normally lowly and submissive demeanour and the silence which is also taken to be an attribute of perfection. Umiliana's unsurpassed humility did not stop her using an extremely tart tongue to repress talk of which she disapproved. Pier Pettinaio could scarcely have achieved the reputation he did as a spiritual counsellor if he had been afraid to speak his mind when appropriate, but his commitment to silence was regarded as so characteristic that artists represented him with his finger laid to his lips. It was, of course, a part of prudence to know when words were required and when they were idle or superfluous; Pier had particularly good judgement in this respect. Zita too knew when to abandon her excessive humility in order to correct members of the household.

A cavalier attitude to chronology is a common characteristic. André Vauchez observes of the Life of Fazio of Cremona (d. 1272), goldsmith, frequent pilgrim and charitable activist: 'The text is very badly composed; events succeed one another without apparent connection and chronological order is not in the least respected.' Vauchez also remarked on the 'imprecision' of the chronology in the Life of Fazio's contemporary Pier

Pettinaio of Siena.[6] As if forestalling such criticism, Pier's Franciscan hagiographer in fact made it plain that he was following not the order of events but what to him was a more important order of inner substance. In expounding the saint's virtues, he drew illustrations from different periods of his life as seemed appropriate, precisely (he said) in order to avert confusion.[7] An event which occurred when the saint had moved to live in the Franciscan convent of Siena may therefore be followed by one which took place while he was still living in his own house in the Ovile district, or while his wife was still alive and they were living near the Dominican church on the other side of town; nor is it made at all clear when he ceased to ply the active trade of making and selling combs. The Dominican syndicate which compiled the life of another Sienese saint, Ambrogio Sansedoni, consisted of four learned men, doctors of theology, but their chronology was little less than chaotic.[8]

It follows from what has been said that the information we might like to glean from hagiography is not necessarily the information its authors were trying or intending to convey. This is not just because their purposes were didactic and edifying. The audience they expected to reach was often already familiar with the saint's life and background as well as with the value-system espoused by the hagiographer. Lives also came in a variety of forms which depended on the purpose to which they were to be put and to some degree on their potential audience. At one extreme there was the full narrative, sometimes intended to accompany and support a campaign for canonisation and therefore including everything about the saint that was deemed necessary or relevant. At the other there was the abbreviated version, arranged in readings (*lectiones*) for liturgical use, which constituted a 'legend' in the literal sense (*legenda*, 'things to be read [aloud]'). Lives also often incorporated material for preaching. The rather short Life of Andrea Gallerani of Siena contains a number of colourful, not to say fanciful, anecdotes which would have served that purpose; a longer version may well once have existed. The Life of Zita of Lucca is much lengthier and includes not only similar improving anecdotal material but a great deal of homiletic content, most of it unacknowledged quotations from Gregory the Great.[9]

6 A. Vauchez, 'Sainteté laïque au XIIIe siècle: la Vie du Bienheureux Facio de Crémone (v. 1196–1272)', *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome*, 84 (1972), p. 19. His remarks on the Life of Pier Pettinaio are in *Biblioteca sanctorum*, 10, cols 719–22.

7 Below, p. 194.

8 *AS*, March, 3, pp. 180–209.

9 See further below, p. 161.

This Life was probably composed within about a decade of Zita's death. It was written, as the author says in obedience to a time-hallowed convention, to preserve the memory of the saint's great achievements from oblivion. Zita's miracles were recorded by a notary in the immediate aftermath of her death, but there is no evidence of a canonisation campaign on her behalf. The Life of Umiliana de' Cerchi is accompanied by a miracle collection and may have been composed with a view to canonisation, but if so nothing came of it. Sometimes Lives seem to have been intended as commemorative accounts written for the pleasure and improvement of the community which conserved the saint's relics. Rufino's Life of Raimondo Palmario, for example, was explicitly written for the benefit of the brethren of the hospital the saint had founded at Piacenza; there is no suggestion that canonisation was envisaged. The Lives of both Pier Pettinaio of Siena and Rigo of Bolzano were written some time after their deaths, apparently to satisfy local and community *pietas*. Unsuccessful attempts had been made to secure Rigo's canonisation many years before.

Lay sanctity

Homobonus of Cremona, canonised by Innocent III in January 1199, was the first of four very different saints whom this pope canonised early in his pontificate. Of the others, Gilbert of Sempringham, who died in 1189 and was canonised in 1202, was the founder of the only uniquely English monastic order. Of an older vintage were the Empress Cunigunde, who died in 1033, and Wulfstan, bishop of Worcester (d. 1095), who were canonised in 1200 and 1203 respectively.[10] Any expectation that the pope was committed to a rolling programme of canonisation was doomed to disappointment, perhaps because he was overtaken by other preoccupations. In particular, anyone who entertained the belief or the hope that the canonisation of Homobonus portended the admission of more pious layfolk of lesser social rank to the number of the officially canonised would have been mistaken.

If Homobonus did not have successors among canonised saints, it was not because there was no one else like him: the strenuously charitable Raimondo Palmario of Piacenza was his almost exact contemporary.

10 For the development of canonisation procedures see E. Kemp, *Canonisation and authority in the western church* (Oxford, 1948) and Vauchez, *Sainthood*, pp. 11–84. Gilbert of Sempringham's canonisation is fully documented in R. Foreville and G. Keir (eds), *The book of St Gilbert* (Oxford, 1987).

Nor was it for want of trying on the part of the rulers and clergy of the Italian cities. Over a century later the bishop and magistrates of Treviso resolved to press for the canonisation of the humble layman Rigo, and there were other candidates both male and female.[11] There were many reasons for their failure. Already in the twelfth century the popes had indicated that canonisation was not going to be devalued by overuse. The complexity, long duration and expense of the procedure, which might be regarded as the necessary corollaries of its solemnity, increasingly made both funds and influential backing indispensable. Political upheaval, long papal vacancies and short pontificates (between 1252 and 1305 the average papal reign lasted little more than three years) all contributed to disrupt enquiries already in hand and to prevent others from ever beginning.

Equally important were the changes in the landscape of sanctity which followed on the appearance of the friars. A high proportion of the few saints to be formally canonised between 1200 and 1500 were members or associates of the mendicant orders, such as Francis, Dominic, Antony of Padua and Peter Martyr in the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas in the fourteenth, or Bernardino and Catherine, both of Siena, in the fifteenth. Much more numerous than canonised saints were men and women, laity and clergy, who were commemorated and venerated locally, as saints had been for centuries, by the communities which had nurtured them, achieving no higher official recognition. Homobonus apart, the saints included in this book all fall into that category.

Was there a specifically lay type of sanctity? The development of an authoritative papal canonisation process, even if relatively few candidates were ever subjected to it, reinforced the sense that there was a verifiable core of attributes by which a saint could and must be identified. Sanctity did not and could not suddenly become something different from what it had once been. In *Quia pietas*, the bull of canonisation of Homobonus (translated here), the pope succinctly summarised the basic criteria on which canonisation was based, above all the simultaneous insistence on posthumous miracles and evidence of holy life. These criteria were not Innocent's invention. Gregory the Great six centuries before had stated that the 'proof of sanctity' lay in virtues rather in 'signs' (a statement quoted, without acknowledgement, by Zita's hagiographer).[12]

11 Vauchez, *Sainthood*, pp. 72–3, lists requests to the papacy for canonisations which remained without result between 1198 and 1431 (some of the saints concerned were canonised in more recent times).

12 See below, p. 164.

Quia pietas provides a model statement of one layman's qualifications for sanctity, firmly placed within a general framework. There are (and can be) no special rules for lay saints. The destination which Homobonus had approached by an unusual and obscure path was the same which Wulfstan and Gilbert of Sempringham had reached by treading in the footsteps of previous bishops and monastic patriarchs. While the investigation of a monk's sanctity might in fact be somewhat differently focused (with more emphasis on bodily austerities, perhaps, and less on practical charity), the imitation of devotional practices that were in origin monastic was a common feature of lay sanctity. There was a deeply engrained tendency to believe that the relevant virtues were most likely to be perfected by monks and other religious professionals; from a clerical viewpoint it may have seemed desirable to encourage the laity in this belief.

There were however cogent pastoral reasons for seeking saints over a broader area. Clerical saints had limited value as role models and sources of inspiration for men and women who were inevitably going to remain 'in the world' for all or most of their lives but must nonetheless be encouraged to lead Christian lives. If there were to be 'lay' saints they must exemplify the indispensable virtues in ways that were appropriate to the lay condition. This was not a brand-new perception in the thirteenth century, but the sanctity of the immediately preceding centuries had been predominantly monastic and clerical. The 'Gregorian reformers' of the eleventh century, with their powerful emphasis on the superiority and separateness of the priestly order, were arguably unlikely to look for sanctity among laymen and less still among women.

In the early tenth century, however, Odo, abbot of Cluny, a monk of the highest possible standing who was alive to the realities of the world around him, had held up the nobleman Gerald of Aurillac as a model of what was achievable by the pious layman.[13] Assiduous prayer and the limited imitation of monastic austerities, such as fasting, were to be accompanied by the practice of the virtues which were accessible and appropriate to a person living in the world: benevolence and obedience to the church, justice and mercy towards social inferiors, practical charity to the needy, pilgrimage. Pilgrimage, an arduous physical

13 Text in J. P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Latina* [hereafter *PL*], 133, cols 639–703; translation in T. F. X. Noble and T. Head (eds), *Soldiers of Christ: saints and saints' Lives from late antiquity and the early middle ages* (London 1995), pp. 295–362. B. Rosenwein, 'St Odo's St Martin: the uses of a model', *Journal of Medieval History*, 4 (1978), pp. 317–31, suggests that Odo's devotion to St Martin, the converted soldier, helped to shape his treatment of Gerald.

activity, was regarded as a penitential exercise suitable for laymen; Gerald went several times to Rome and also to Tours and Limoges. Frequent pilgrimage, whether over long or short distances, remained characteristic of the lay saints of the thirteenth century. [14]

There was nothing urban about Gerald of Aurillac's social setting, but he was, so to speak, the characteristic lay type of his day, the noble who, if unjust, violent and rapacious, could make life a misery for his neighbours and inferiors, both lay and ecclesiastical. By the later twelfth century, attention was increasingly directed to laymen of quite another stamp: the merchants, craftsmen and urban patricians who might not have the knightly capacity to wreak physical havoc but who exerted varying degrees of influence in local society and also possessed wealth which could be tapped for the benefit of the church and of their fellow men. They also of course had souls which needed saving, and there were a lot more of them than there had been in the tenth century.

Andrea Gallerani of Siena (d. 1251) in some respects recalls the older type. He had military experience: it is said that in 1219 he participated in a Sienese expedition against Orvieto and personally killed the leader of the opposing forces.[15] Exiled for a murder, he returned covertly to Siena and hid himself in one of the fortified towers which characterised the Italian urban landscape (Umiliana lived in a 'tower' belonging to her father). On a later occasion Andrea's enemies set an ambush to kill him but in the event could not bring themselves to do so. It is not clear whether this incident was connected with the homicide he had committed, but after his death his victim's brother, Guelfo, was enraged that he should have been so reverently buried by the Dominicans. Struck by 'divine terror', however, Guelfo repented and went barefoot to the church, processing solemnly from the choir to the saint's tomb, a conspicuous witness to his sanctity. Andrea Gallerani did not retire to the cloister to escape violence and feud as St Romuald and St Giovanni Gualberto had done in the tenth and eleventh centuries, but like his social inferior Raimondo Palmario remade himself according to the contemporary model of the lay charitable activist, which he united with the *personae* of the citizen and the noble with a past history of violence.

One eleventh-century glimpse of lay charitable piety in action in a different setting is instructive by contrast. In 1041, the monk Andreas

14 Vauchez, *Sainthood*, pp. 197–9; also Vauchez, 'Sainteté laïque', pp. 30–1.

15 *AS*, March, 3, p. 50.

began work on his section of the lengthy compilation of the miracles of St Benedict which was produced at the abbey of Fleury (Saint Benoît-sur-Loire). Among other reminiscences of his childhood in a noble family he recalls the charitable endeavours of his father Stephanus during a famine year:

> With great fervour and unremitting effort he began to alleviate poverty, to the extent that every day he gave donations, at his own expense, to 200 or more, visited the sick and, confident of his reward, conscientiously kept several infirmaries, constructed for this good purpose, supplied; with his wife he gave honourable burial to a multitude of dead. While they were engaged in this activity it happened that the store of wheat, which contained about ten measures of grain, and from which a crowd of poor people were supplied at a fixed time, began to run out. He was informed of this by his faithful wife, who wanted to know how their work was to continue … He maintained his accustomed faith in God and said, 'Go, don't hesitate, but trust in the strength of God and his servant Benedict, open the container at first light and assuage the hunger of the poor of Christ with what you find in it.' The wise woman gave a believing ear to his command and, after going to the church of the friend of God [Benedict] before dawn, she hastened to the store of alms, which she was amazed to discover so filled and heaped with celestial abundance that she marvelled at the overflowing heaps of grain; nor did this bounty fail for as long as the aforesaid dearth continued. Thus, through the merits of Benedict, the wonders of Elias return, the pious increase of 200 measures is repeated, through the workings of divine mercy.[16]

With filial pride, Andreas gives us a picture of the pious layman in action around the year 1000; but the miraculous element in the story is attributed to St Benedict, the monk-saint, indeed the patron of monks, to whom that layman and his wife were devoted. Two hundred years later it could be suggested that God would perform similar miracles of replenishment and multiplication in response to the merits of a layman such as Homobonus or Andrea Gallerani, not to mention the laywoman Zita.

Andreas was writing in praise of St Benedict, and his frame of reference was that of a monk since childhood. Holiness, in this world-view, was above all a monastic quality; it was not associated even with secular clerks, who often seemed slightly suspect even when they became monks late in life, and certainly not with laymen, who appear for the most part as violent and greedy nobles or as peasants whose 'simplicity' manifests itself in either devout obedience or wilful obtuseness. This was

16 E. de Certain (ed.), *Les miracles de Saint Benoït* (Paris, 1858), 7:10, pp. 266–7.

a conventional monastic attitude, well expressed in a phrase Andreas uses elsewhere to describe one of two brothers from Barcelona who came to Fleury. One had been a monk at Ripoll; the other, brought up from youth as a soldier, was 'obedient to God, so far as is possible for a layman'.[17] Andreas doubtless saw it as to his father's credit that he had offered his son to God and St Benedict as a monk. A shift away from child oblation was among the multiple changes which affected monasticism between 1000 and 1200. Not only the friars but a higher proportion of monks had a lengthier experience of exposure to the world, if only as children, and to that extent they had more in common with their lay contemporaries than many earlier monks had had.

The 'Gregorian reformers' may have been disposed to discern sanctity in the priest or the monk rather than in the layman, but in one light, and especially in its Italian setting, the eleventh-century drive for reform can be seen as an episode in the growth of a more self-conscious urban laity to which the parties in the 'church–state' struggle appealed and from which they recruited. Milan, one of the greatest of the Italian cities, played a central part in the papal–imperial struggle and produced an urban saint for the times, the priest Ariald. Himself the son of minor nobility, Ariald had support among the urban laity, not only among aristocrats who were prepared to take up arms against the other members of their class who dominated the Milanese church, but among lowlier, though affluent, individuals such as the moneyer Nazarius, who offered him hospitality and eloquently denounced clergy who were in no way morally superior to the laymen like himself who sought their blessing. Nazarius himself is represented not as a saint but as a devout witness to the sanctity embodied in the true priest Ariald.[18]

To his biographer, the Vallombrosan monk Andrea of Strumi, it was not so much Ariald's social setting as his modernity that required emphasis. The end of the world was nigh but, as no one knew exactly when it was coming, it remained important to transmit to posterity knowledge of the new saints who equalled the ancients.[19] To Andrea, as to St Augustine, Gregory the Great or Gregory of Tours centuries earlier, sanctity and miracles were vital proofs that God was still at work in the world, and the same sense breathes from the Lives which are the subject of this book. Historic change disposed observers to look for sanctity in

17 *Ibid.*, 4:7, pp. 182–3.

18 Andrea da Strumi, *Vita Sancti Arialdi*, ed. F. Baethgen, *Monumenta Germaniae Historiae: Scriptores* [hereafter *MGH Scriptores*], 30:2, p. 1053.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 1050.

new places and indeed made it highly necessary to do so in order to keep the faith in God's continuing activity and presence alive among the populace. At the same time, as these Lives also demonstrate, there were powerful pressures moulding the representation of lay saints in accordance with established models.

Bishops as urban saints

Characteristic of the Italian cities in the chronological gap between the heroic beginnings of Christianity under the later Roman Empire and the thirteenth century was an ancient category of urban patron saints, the bishops. Among the many reasons why Thomas Becket achieved rapid celebrity in Italy as elsewhere in Europe was the fact that the doughty episcopal champion of ecclesiastical rights against a threatening lay power was a familiar figure in a society which had witnessed not only the incursions of the emperors, down to and particularly including Frederick Barbarossa, but also the rapid growth of a more localised but also sometimes aggressive secular political authority, the commune.

Atto of Pistoia, Ubaldo of Gubbio, Galdino of Milan and Lanfranc of Pavia were only some of the twelfth-century Italian bishops to achieve veneration. Not all of them were 'popular' in the sense of attracting lay as well as clerical enthusiasm, but it was characteristic of bishop-saints (as of holy popes in their special relationship to Rome) that, as well as standing up for the church, they were represented as earning the gratitude of their citizens by a variety of means: obtaining important relics for the city, invoking celestial protection for it against hostile neighbours and vigorously dispensing charity.[20] Bishops were not monks (although monks could become bishops). They lived in the world and served the church in the world. They might be distinguished for humility and other virtues, and of course they had to be punctilious in the performance of their religious duties, but visions, ecstasies and extreme austerity were not such essential features of episcopal sanctity as they tended to be of its monastic counterpart. Their lives in fact help to explain much that might at first sight seem distinctive about

20 On bishop-saints in the civic context, see A. Benvenuti Papi, *Pastori di popolo: storie e leggende di vescovi e di città nell' Italia medievale* (Florence, 1988) and the essays by A. Orselli collected in *L'immaginario religioso della città medievale* (Ravenna, 1985). There is also much that is relevant in M. C. Miller, *The bishop's palace: architecture and authority in medieval Italy* (Ithaca, 2000), especially pp. 157–63.

the sanctity of Homobonus or Raimondo Palmario late in the twelfth century.

Galdino, archbishop of Milan from 1166 to 1176, was a member of the minor Milanese nobility, who became archdeacon and chancellor in the cathedral church of the city and went into exile with his archbishop, Oberto, during the papal schism that was brought about by Frederick Barbarossa in 1158. On the death of Oberto, Alexander III consecrated Galdino as his successor, but his exile continued until the creation of the Lombard League and the restoration of Milan, which had been sacked by Barbarossa in 1163. Galdino re-entered the city amid general rejoicing in December 1165. From the viewpoint from which the extant Life was written, it was a signal proof of Galdino's merits that he now busied himself restoring ecclesiastical property and redecorating the episcopal palace with some splendour. He was assiduous in the performance of the liturgy, to the extent of wearing the lesser clergy out; he was ever mindful of death and of the transience of all earthly things. These were all distinctively clerical virtues, but he also presented a positive face to the urban laity:

> He had received such a gift of speech from God that when he spoke to the people about holy religion it seemed that not a man but the spirit of God spoke in him. The care of the poor, above all other mortals, was his concern; and although in other expenditures and everyday charges he was touched by human avarice, to the poor he was as generous as if he thought that he possessed nothing for himself but everything for them, so that he was believed to live not for himself but for the poor of Christ. He was however no less concerned for those who laboured under want and poverty but were ashamed to beg for alms; anticipating the call of the petitioner he was compassionate and generous to all.[21]

The curious reference to 'avarice' is perhaps a gloss on Galdino's zeal for the restoration of his church's income. A eulogy of his humility follows – some even thought him contemptible because of it – but he was also determined to resist the arrogant. He was vigorous in defence of the church and could not be moved by threats or flattery; but he was so marvellously kind to all as to furnish a model of compassion, and within his own household he was the soul of amiability and good fellowship.

It was not by the unaided efforts of the church that Galdino was enabled to return to Milan, but with the assistance of laymen, that is the mili-

21 Life in *AS*, April, 2, pp. 594–5; also in Boninus Mombritius, *Sanctuarium seu vitae sanctorum*, edited by two monks of Solesmes (2 vols, Paris, 1910), 1, pp. 561–3.

tias of the Lombard League, whose members were happy to espouse the ecclesiastical cause insofar as it was also the anti-imperial cause of urban autonomy. The subsequent spread of heresy in this environment (particularly when the secular authorities seemed to connive at it) indicated that there was no necessary or guaranteed harmony between the civic and ecclesiastical versions of 'liberty'. No sooner had Galdino consecrated all his suffragans and set the church and the city to rights than Catharism began to spread in Milan, to no small degree as a result of the preceding schism. Heresy indirectly claimed the archbishop's life, for it was after a particularly energetic verbal assault on the Cathars from the pulpit of Santa Tecla that he collapsed and commended his soul to God with such signs to the bystanders as he could manage.

The image of episcopal sanctity given in this Life squares, in all essentials, with the portrayal of Galdino's near-contemporary Lanfranc of Pavia (d. 1194) by Bernardo, his successor in the see.[22] Lanfranc too was a warrior against heresy. He surpassed his predecessors in almsgiving (his highly organised daily benefactions are described in some detail) while also greatly increasing his possessions and rents and taking steps to regain properties that his predecessors had lost. He was briefly sent into exile when he quarrelled with his citizens but was restored when 'a friend of the church and enemy of impiety' became *podestà* of Pavia. As the internal contest for control of urban governments intensified, there was increased scope for the factional alignments which, nominally at least, identified themselves as pro-ecclesiastical or pro-imperial and which in the next century would be labelled 'Guelf' and 'Ghibelline'. It was evidently essential to win the most influential members of these societies over to the cause of the church. The defence of ecclesiastical property and privilege must be accompanied by charitable benevolence.

In the closing decades of the twelfth century Homobonus and Raimondo Palmario based their claims to veneration on activities – charity and peacemaking – which were specifically and urgently relevant to their fellow-citizens. Their attributes thus overlapped to some degree with those of the holy bishops of recent times. Like them they exemplified an activist sanctity in which charity was more prominent than extreme forms of spiritual self-development.[23] However, as laymen they were not personally associated, as Galdino and Lanfranc were, with the

22 *AS*, June, 4, pp. 619–30.

23 One version of Homobonus's Life however emphasises the penitential, ascetic elements of his sanctity; see below, pp. 49–53.

defence of ecclesiastical property or jurisdiction. Preaching, other than by example, was not their business. According to Innocent III, Homobonus sternly condemned heretics but, although there were undoubtedly heretics in Piacenza in Raimondo's time, we are not told what, if anything, he had to do with them. Both in what they did and in what they did not do such men were plausible models for imitation.

What might not have been foreseen when Raimondo died in 1200 was that within a few decades the urban apostolate would be to a large extent appropriated by new orders of regular clergy whose hagiography fused the ideals of the active life (*vita activa*) as it might be lived by bishops or laymen with significant elements of monastic sanctity. Henceforth, the ways in which lay aspirants to holiness experienced their lives and were described (often by mendicant biographers) bore this indelible imprint.

There was a considerable overlap between the clerical ideals exemplified by bishops and friars. They had in common a commitment to charity, preaching and other expressions of pastoral care, but there could be tensions between episcopal ideal and religious profession. Friars, like monks, sometimes became bishops (and popes), although not everyone approved. It was not merely humility that might deter an individual friar from accepting such promotion, but the desire to persist in a chosen way of life and a particular form of apostolate which were perceived not to be easily compatible with the episcopal office. A Galdino of Milan or Lanfranc of Pavia expended much energy in defending ecclesiastical property; for the friars, although they later acquired a reputation with satirists for avarice and hypocrisy, the commitment to poverty was of central importance and played a large part in the reputation they enjoyed with the laity. In the thirteenth century bishop-saints, though not unknown, were less prominent in Italy than they had been or than they remained in some other regions, such as England. It has been remarked that thirteenth-century English saints tended to be bishops, while in Italy 'the bishop and the saint were different things'.[24] The Sienese Dominican Ambrogio Sansedoni twice refused a bishopric, and Pier Pettinaio is said to have advised him to do so.[25]

24 R. Brentano, *Two churches: England and Italy in the thirteenth century* (Berkeley, CA, 1988), p. 222 (reprint of original 1968 edition). On episcopal sanctity and its regional and chronological variations, see Vauchez, *Sainthood*, pp. 197–203, 329–58.

25 Below, p. 230.

The urban background

It might well be asked what, if anything, was peculiarly 'urban' (as distinct from 'lay') about the sanctity which is the subject of this book. The demographic, urban and economic changes of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Italy did not pass unnoticed by contemporaries, and, given that those who recorded their observations were most likely to be clergy, it is not surprising that some note was taken of the moral and spiritual implications. One ' Gregorian' bishop, Rangerio of Lucca (d. 1112), was struck by the destructive effects of social and economic change in the urban environment. Reviewing the recent history of Lucca in his vast verse biography of his predecessor Anselm (d. c.1080), Rangerio saw an increasingly ungovernable community, corrupted by affluence and the aping of foreign (notably French) ways, but also enlarged by immigration, which had its own adverse effects. A 'rude' people, sprung from villages and mountains (*genus incultum villis et rupibus ortum*), had come to town in search of an easier life and, finding things not so easy, became embroiled in clashes with the older nobility.[26]

Rangerio's diagnosis has some striking similarities with the one which after another two hundred years of urban growth and factional strife Dante put into the mouth of his ancestor Cacciaguida in *Paradiso*, 16. Cacciaguida complained that Dante's Florence was five times the size of the early twelfth-century city he had known. This enlargement was in itself an evil – the blind bull takes a heavier fall than the blind lamb – but it was also inextricably bound up with an undesirable social mixture deriving from immigration. Would that many families, who had fomented the divisions that had torn Florence apart (and sent Dante himself into exile), had never come to Florence from their rural places of origin to buy and sell! Included in this lament were the Cerchi, who were not only the leaders of the so-called 'White' Guelfs, Dante's party, at the end of the thirteenth century, but earlier in the century had produced one of the saints included in this book, Umiliana.

By 1200 towns in most of Europe were larger and more numerous than they had been. Many shrank in size, at least temporarily, in the plague-ridden years after 1350, but they had by then acquired a collective significance which they would never lose, as centres not only of commercial activity but of government, justice and administration, education, culture and, not least, religious life. In a still overwhelmingly

26 *Vita metrica*, in *MGH Scriptores*, 30:2, pp. 1152–307. The quotation here is from line 4549.