The Sense of the Past in Saint Antoninus of Florence's Summa Historialis

Brian Nathaniel Becker

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THE SENSE OF THE PAST IN SAINT ANTONINUS OF FLORENCE’S
SUMMA HISTORIALIS

Brian Nathaniel Becker, M.A.
Western Michigan University, 2002

This study examines Antoninus of Florence’s Chronicles for the presence of a “sense of the past.” Through the careful examination of those sections of the Chronicles that are original to Antoninus and the utilization of important scholarly works on medieval and Renaissance Italian literature, it is shown that the Chronicles is characteristic of both a history written in the traditional “medieval” style and the increasingly modern style of historical writing that was coming into vogue during the later part of his life in mid-fifteenth century Florence.

By defining a “sense of history” as containing, and organizing the three body chapters according to, “awareness of evidence,” “interest in causation,” and “sense of anachronism,” the results of this examination show that the Summa Historialis, although evincing an organization and style that might lead scholars to characterize it as fitting the traditional mode, nevertheless possesses some “sense of the past.” This offers a revision to those scholarly studies that were content to dismiss Antoninus’ work as being little more than a continuation of the traditional method of historical writing. Also, the thesis concludes that this ambivalence found in the Summa Historialis was the result of the combination of the author’s monastic intellectual and spiritual training in the Dominican style and his involvement in the secular world in which he was forced to participate as the archbishop of Florence.
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Brian Nathaniel Becker
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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I study the historical thought contained in the *Summa Historialis* of Saint Antoninus of Florence. The *Summa Historialis* or *Chronicles* of Saint Antoninus is a world chronicle in twenty-four chapters, beginning with the creation of man and ending with the last years of his own life. (The vast majority of works on the *Chronicles* refer to these chapters as "titles," so in accordance with these works, I will call them "titles" hereafter). Antoninus began work on the *Summa Historialis* sometime before he was named archbishop of Florence in 1446. At his death in 1459, he had not yet completed it. In composing this work Antoninus drew on the histories of many writers, both preceding and contemporary to him, including Vincent of Beauvais, Giovanni di Colonna, Giovanni Villani, Giannozzo Manetti, Domenico Buoninsegni, Leonardo Bruni, and Poggio Bracciolini. Many modern scholars have dismissed Antoninus as being not a historian, but simply a "compiler" because he used so many other works as the basis of his own. These same historians go even

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2 For a discussion on the dating of the whole work, including individual volumes, see Walker, *Chronicles*, 22-26; and Morçay, *Les Chroniques*, VI-VII, n. 3.


4 The dismissal of Antoninus' *Summa* on these grounds is very common. Among those scholars who have put forward this idea are: Walker, *Chronicles*, 149-ff.; Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, 260; and Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1948), 16.
further, claiming that the archbishop had no "sense of history." Although this assessment of the archbishop's work is in some ways accurate, Bernard Walker and Raoul Morçay have shown that there are sections original to Antoninus in the *Summa Historialis*.\(^5\) By a close examination of these sections it will be possible to discern Antoninus' "sense of history," and subsequently offer a revision, however modest, to the works of those scholars who have claimed that the archbishop completely lacked this element in his work of history.

Antoninus' father was Niccolò, a distinguished Florentine notary public, who died when he was six. His mother was Tomassa di Cenni di Nuccio, of whom little is known.\(^7\) Being physically feeble and showing an affinity for learning, Antoninus joined the Dominican Order in 1406. He quickly rose through the ranks, gaining recognition for his ability as an administrator, his piety, and his charitable work. In 1446, Pope Eugenius IV nominated Antoninus for archbishop of Florence, a post he eventually accepted with reluctance.

When referring to Antoninus' ecclesiastical career before becoming archbishop, Bernard Walker said, "To labor for the betterment of the Church: that had

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\(^5\) I borrow the term 'sense of history' from Peter Burke, who, in his *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969), defines this complex concept as including three factors: a sense of anachronism, the awareness of evidence, and an interest in causation. It is his premise that this "sense of history" is very much a part of the culture of the West since about 1800, developing during the Renaissance (the fifteenth century in Italy, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries elsewhere), and lacking in the Middle Ages, even among the educated.

* Morçay, *Les Chroniques*, supplies a critical text of the passages original to Antoninus in Title XXII of the *Summa Historialis*, as well as a determination of the sources for that part of the work covering the history of the period almost exactly corresponding to the lifetime of the Saint; Walker, *Chronicles*, 53-100, examines the sources for the first XVIII titles of the *Summa Historialis* and describes those sections that are original to Antoninus within these titles.

* This information on Antoninus' life is taken from the first chapter of Raoul Morçay, *Saint Antonin, Fondateur du Couvent de Saint-Marc, Archevêque de Florence, 1389-1459* (Paris, 1913). As far as I am aware, almost (if not) all scholars of the archbishop consider this work the authoritative biography on him.
been his [Antoninus'] sole ambition. As archbishop, the metropolitan see of Florence offered Antoninus many opportunities to demonstrate this ambition. Included in the many areas in which he attempted reform were the replacement of anything displaying opulence in the episcopal palace with things of simplicity and poverty, the reestablishment of the often neglected nocturnal offices in the cathedral, and the requirement of a strict observance of canon law in regard to ecclesiastical vestments, the administration of the parishes, the services in the churches, and the ministrations of the pastors to their flocks. He personally assisted in the relief effort when Florence was struck by plague in 1448, and helped the general populace develop a new found respect for ecclesiastical authority, which had suffered during the course of the Great Schism. He also addressed disorderly clerical behavior and other problems that beset the fifteenth-century Church. Although reluctant to do so, he twice extended his intervention outside the Church, acting in opposition to the powerful Medici faction that ruled the city: once to demand respect for the civic constitutions in 1452, once to assure liberty in civic elections in 1458.

Taking this brief survey into account, one sees that Antoninus approached the writing of his *Summa Historialis* from the perspective of an ecclesiastic who led a life of active involvement in both ecclesiastical and public affairs. Also, because he was a Dominican, he had a certain moral purpose in writing history. William A. Hinnebusch writes: "The study of sacred truth is the Dominican's primary preparation

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1 Walker, *Chronicles*, 12.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., 13.
4 Ibid., but also see Chapter 2 of David Peterson, "Archbishop Antoninus: Florence and the Church in the Earlier Fifteenth Century," Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1985, where he discusses these
for preaching, but when obedience sends him into activities other than preaching, he is then committed to the study of every area of truth which will make his works for souls a success.""12 Therefore, Antoninus did not write history for himself. He used historical writing as a method of conveying moral principles to his audience.

The number of scholarly works devoted to the study of Antoninus' *Summa Historialis* is actually quite small, but those who do make mention of his work dismiss it as little more than a "typical medieval world chronicle."13 The word "medieval" can be quite troubling, but these particular scholars give to it a seemingly limited meaning. For instance, this is what William Hinnebusch writes about the *Summa*: "It was a typical medieval world chronicle, opening with the creation and closing with the last years of Antoninus' own life. According to custom, Antoninus divided the story of man into six ages, the last of which begins with Christ."14 Likewise, Wallace Ferguson writes that the *Summa Historialis* "showed not the slightest sign of the new historical ideas and methods . . . with the Six Ages and the Four Monarchies supplying its chronological structure and determining its historical philosophy."15 Finally, Eric Cochrane tells his readers that Antoninus "was bound by the methods and theses of the high medieval world-chronicles that his mentors in the interventions of Antoninus and also mentions several other minor incidents.


15 Ferguson, *Renaissance in Historical Thought*, 16.
Order of St. Dominic still regarded as authoritative. "Granted, Antoninus’ *Chronicles* is not the primary focus of these works, but these descriptions would lead one to believe that the organization of the *Summa* is what makes it “medieval.” There is little to no discussion concerning the archbishop’s historical philosophy, character motivation, or extent of source criticism.

To my knowledge, there are only two works that deal with Antoninus’ *Summa Historialis* in detail. First, Raoul Morçay is considered by the majority of scholars to be the biographer of St. Antoninus. Morçay devotes a chapter to the *Summa Historialis* in his biography of the archbishop. While he does proclaim the same sentiments as the aforementioned scholars, his analysis is much more detailed. Morçay describes Antoninus as being indifferent to literary style, which was quickly becoming a prime concern for many of the archbishop’s contemporary historical writers. Antoninus also lacked a critical sense according to Morçay. He writes that "in the works of Antoninus, the absence of a critical sense is neither made up for nor compensated for by the particular gifts of the writer: the art of composition and the originality of style."

Second, James Bernard Walker’s 1933 dissertation was devoted to Antoninus’ *Summa Historialis*. While Walker did make several important contributions to the

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17 This does not count the aforementioned *Les Chroniques de Saint Antonin*, because this is an edition of the text, with little commentary other than a small introduction.
19 Especially such Humanists as Leonardo Bruni and Poggio Bracciolini, (Morçay, *Saint Antonin*, 328-9).
study of the *Chronicles*, he too dismisses it as essentially "medieval." In a passage in which the author is describing historiographical innovations made by the archbishop, Walker writes: "Antoninus made a quasi break with the annalistic tradition. Not that he abandoned the chronological order in the development of his narrative; but that he introduced order--logical division--by which the reader was enabled to view first one then the other, of the various aspects under which history might be viewed." Once again, order is mentioned, but the discussion delves no further. In other sections Walker discusses Antoninus' methodology, as well as his concept of history. In these discussions Walker comes to the same conclusion: Antoninus' work is essentially a "medieval" chronicle. The archbishop's concept of history follows that of the majority of medieval writers, who were continuing the tradition of Augustine, and his methodology closely followed the traditional medieval model. This thesis is a revision to these foregoing works.

Antoninus' *Summa Historialis* does contain, as stated earlier, a good portion of material that is original to him; this can be seen from a reading of two works.

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21 The two most important of which are his tracking of the various editions and manuscripts of the work, as well as a discussion of the sources of the middle seventeen titles of the *Summa*, which both Morçay and Schaube had not covered in their works.


23 Walker's idea of the concept of history that dominated the Middle Ages, and which he attributes to Augustine, is as follows: "History taught that the Supreme Ruler of the universe governed all things material and spiritual, and that by intervention through prophecy and miracles He revealed His omnipresent Providence. Religious interest naturally, therefore, controlled every approach to a study of the past. What was known of pre-Christian antiquity was seen only in relation to the Incarnation—the focal point in the story of mankind. The abiding presence of Christ in His Church centered attention on ecclesiastical affairs, and secular interests were viewed in the light of man's destiny and his relation to God. Records of the past furnished examples of how men in all walks of life should conduct themselves in their journey towards eternity. Hence, the historian felt no need of, nor did he even conceive of, an approach that would probe for secondary causes. History was a moral discipline that taught man how to live" (Walker, *Chronicles*, 103).

24 The idea of a medieval historical method, according to Walker, contained the following outstanding characteristics: Christocentric interest, an absence of criticism, a pragmatic approach to materials, and
Bernard Walker exhaustively went through eighteen of the twenty-four titles making up Antoninus' work making line-by-line comparisons with the archbishop's sources. By performing this study Walker was able to determine where there were any sections or passages original to Antoninus. In his University of Paris dissertation, Raoul Morçay analyzed the contents of the twenty-second title of the Summa Historialis. This title is significant because it is the last dealing with general history, all but coincides in its temporal range with the life of Antoninus, and the last four chapters (XIV to XVII) of it are entirely original, except for two lengthy extracts from St. Albert the Great giving a scientific explanation of earthquakes and comets. This title is also of great importance to the modern scholar because it gives the clearest picture of the archbishop's thoughts. Morçay writes: "Most of the events about which Antoninus speaks from his own memories concern ecclesiastical order, because it is to these [affairs] that he had been more or less directly involved." As he approached his own time, it seems that Antoninus became more comfortable, increasingly leaving the trusted words of his "authorities" in their own books and content to write down his own.

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a want of analytic quality in development (Walker, Chronicles, 112).

23 Walker explains in his work that this was necessary because the two previous scholars studying Antoninus' sources, Schaubé and Morçay, worked under the assumption that the archbishop had left a bibliography with the work, but it turned out to be incomplete. Therefore, Schaubé had stopped after analyzing the sources for the first three titles, while Morçay was only concerned with the twenty-second title (Walker, Chronicles, 53-54).

24 The first thirteen chapters of title twenty-two have originality as well, which only gets more frequent as Antoninus enters the fifteenth-century (Walker, Chronicles, 90 ff.).

25 Walker, Chronicles, 91.

26 Morçay, Saint Antonin, 333: "La plupart des affaires dont Antonin parle d'après ses propres souvenirs sont d'ordre ecclésiastique, car ce sont celles auxquelles il avait été plus ou moins directement mêlé."
The approaches that scholars have taken to study and analyze those chronicles written during the periods commonly referred to as the “late Middle Ages” and the “Renaissance” are almost as numerous as the chronicles themselves. Marvin Becker examines the characters contained within chronicles of both these periods to demonstrate authors’ increasing tendency to elevate the city of Florence by “infusing the profane world with sacred idiom.” By tying the single act of a character to the destiny of Florence, the author was able to gain acknowledgement for that city. Herbert Weisinger takes the straightforward approach in his study of reading a number of works spanning all of Europe, and proclaiming that in the period commonly known as the “Renaissance” there were a number of methodological assumptions about the course of history, which in varying degrees, affected contemporary thinking about the past and about the period itself. He then proceeds to focus on six of them: the idea of progress, the theory of the plenitude of nature, the climate theory, the cyclical theory of history, the doctrine of uniformitarianism, and the idea of decline. Contrary to this approach is that of Felix Gilbert, who developed his own method of studying two of the best known historians of the “Renaissance,” Niccolò Machiavelli and Francesco Guicciardini. He puts aside the traditional biographical approach of reconstructing these historians’ writings and investigating their careers in an attempt to explain the genius of their ideas, and

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30 The age of this work is shown here, for he gives no explanation as to what he means by “Renaissance” at this or any point in his article.

endeavors to place them in the context of the prevailing trends and tendencies in the political and historical world of their day.\footnote{32}

The origin of this traditional "medieval/Renaissance" dichotomy employed by the majority of scholars writing within the last 150 years can be traced back to one of the nineteenth century's most influential historians. While the notion of the "Renaissance" can be found as early as the fourteenth century, the actual term was not coined until the mid-nineteenth, due in large part to the 1860 publication of Jacob Burckhardt's \textit{Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy}.\footnote{33} The University of Basel art historian evinced great originality when he wrote:

In the Middle Ages both sides of human consciousness—that which was turned within and that which was turned without—lay as though dreaming or half awake beneath a common veil. The veil was woven of faith, illusion, and childish prepossessions, through which the world and history were seen clad in strange hues. Man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation—only through some general category. It is in Italy that this veil dissolved first; there arose an \textit{objective} treatment and consideration of the State and of all the things of this world, and at the same time the \textit{subjective} side asserted itself with corresponding emphasis. Man became a spiritual \textit{individual} and recognized himself as such. In the same way the Greek had once distinguished himself from the barbarian, and the Arab had felt himself an individual at a time when other Asiatics knew themselves only as members of a race.\footnote{34}

Burckhardt suggests that the period immediately succeeding the "Middle Ages" experienced a "re-awakening," or renaissance, in which man was able to escape his
intellectual enslavement and see himself as a spiritual individual. To Burckhardt, the period he calls the "Renaissance" symbolizes a liberation of man from "the Middle Ages, the church, and Catholicism," and entry into the "modern" world.35

This sharp Burckhardtean distinction between a "medieval" and a "modern" world became increasingly blurred as the writing of history moved through the twentieth century. In their introduction to *Handbook of European History 1400-1600*, editors Thomas Brady, Heiko Oberman, and James Tracy write: "The changes in sensibility after 1918 made the concept of 'the Renaissance'... controversial, disputed, and ambiguous."36 First, the advent and increasing popularity of both economic and social history tended to shift the perceived transition of "older" to "modern" Europe to the much later period between 1750 and 1815, instead of Burckhardt's notion of a fourteenth century transition.37 Secondly, the diminution of individualism's and Christianity's prestige in the high culture of Europe since 1945 has undermined the ability to utilize this concept as an explanation.38 The result of these revisions to Burckhardt's concept is that historians have become cautious in the usage of such broad terms as the "Middle Ages" and the "Renaissance." They are still very much in use, though, because, quite simply, scholars have yet to introduce better terms. In many cases, however, as in the writing of Italian history for example, historians do not necessarily follow the Burckhardtean meaning, utilizing the term to

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36 Brady. *Handbook of European History*, xv.
38 Brady. *Handbook of European History*, xvi.
symbolize a temporal period more than a revolutionary transition between two distinct ages.

Two works of this kind are of utmost importance to this thesis. In his study of fourteenth-century Florentine chronicles, Louis Green raises an objection to those scholars who trace the emergence of new ideas at the end of the Middle Ages by simply identifying the first appearance of novel characteristics in the transitional period before the onset of the "Renaissance" and then linking them with the peculiar conditions of the environment which produced them. Green does not see these studies as necessarily without merit, for certainly a new culture is influenced by its predecessor. He sees them as being insufficient to account for the occurrence of the change itself, unless one assumes that the old "medieval" values could not be adapted to accommodate the particular conditions prevailing in Italy at the time. In essence, one would have to define the two periods, "medieval" and "Renaissance," as being mutually exclusive, one medieval and one modern. This definition, if given, would be completely contradicted by the fact that many ideas and institutions that we would consider "medieval," and have been brought to our attention by many years of scholarship, existed well into the periods we call the "Renaissance" or "Modern." Therefore, Green suggests that we should not put so much emphasis on labels such as "medieval" and "Renaissance," but be content to see the transition period from one era to another as significant in and of itself. This thesis will view Antoninus' *Summa Historialis* as being within this transition period, for many literary elements

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of both the broad eras of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance/Modern Age are present in this work. It is unfair to dismiss the archbishop as simply continuing a chronicle writing tradition with no noticeable innovation, but, at the same time, Antoninus does not comfortably fit alongside his contemporary Florentine history writers.\(^1\)

Peter Burke puts forward a new approach to examining “medieval” and “Renaissance” histories in his essay on the “sense of history.”\(^2\) He defines this complex concept as including three factors, each of which may be found without the others: the awareness of evidence, the interest in causation, and the sense of anachronism. Burke’s premise is that these factors were almost completely lacking in the Middle Ages, which he defines as the period from A.D. 400-1400.\(^3\) He then examines a good portion of later histories, which were written during the period we commonly know as the “Renaissance,” for the presence of these factors. This thesis will put Antoninus’ \textit{Summa Historialis} under the same examination. By looking at the archbishop’s work in this way, I will be able to give a more accurate account of his “sense of the past” than historians have hitherto given. It is not the intention of this thesis to give a general account of Antoninus’ historical work, for this has been done by Bernard Walker, but to disentangle some two or three strands in the historical thought of the archbishop.\(^4\)

\(^{1}\) More information about Antoninus’ contemporaries will be given later in this chapter.

\(^{2}\) Peter Burke, \textit{The Renaissance Sense of the Past}, 1-20.

\(^{3}\) Burke gives several reasons for the medieval writer’s lack of these factors, which include the slow pace of social change, and the relatively small percentage of people who were able to read. (Burke, \textit{Renaissance}, 18 ff.).

\(^{4}\) Burke, \textit{Renaissance}, 1.
In order to place this examination of the *Summa Historialis* into a social and cultural context, the study of other sources, both contemporary and/or geographically similar to that of Antoninus’ work, will be necessary. The two most important of these other historical writings are Leonardo Bruni’s (1370-1444) *Historiarum florentini populi libri XII* and Giovanni Villani’s (1272-1348) *Croniche Fiorentine.*

By supplementing the examination of Antoninus’ work with these sources, the reader will form a better idea of the *Summa Historialis’* place in the Florentine historiographical tradition. To the vast majority of scholars interested in fifteenth-century historiography, Bruni’s work represents “early Renaissance efforts to redefine the form and function of history writing.” This history, therefore, is a demonstration of the very latest trends of the period, namely the mid-fifteenth century, in which Antoninus was writing his *Summa Historialis.*

Leonardo di Cecchio Bruni was born in Arezzo to an obscure grain dealer in 1370. The town of Arezzo had once been the university town of Tuscany, and was...
still a place known for Latin letters in Bruni’s day. He came to Florence after the
death of his parents with the intention of studying law, but soon fell into the circle of
those young men following Coluccio Salutati, who was the chancellor of Florence, a
disciple of Petrarch, and one of the leading men of letters of his time. Under
Salutati’s guidance, Bruni became an exceptional student of Roman history and
literature and learned Greek when the opportunity presented itself; it was Salutati who
procured for Bruni the post of apostolic secretary to Pope Innocent VII, his first
position. Bruni was both witness and participant to the most important events of his
time as papal secretary. During the decade that he spent in this position he saw the
end of the Great Schism of the Western Church, which had divided it into two and, at
one point, three obediences. Witnessing these kinds of events made a significant
impression on Bruni, and would help shape the manner in which he wrote history.
James Hankins writes: “It was not an edifying time to be in papal service and there is
evidence that Bruni’s later secularism was in part a response to the rampant
corruption and lack of principle he observed firsthand in the papal curia, before
leaving John XXIII’s service late in 1414.”

Bruni again witnessed some equally extraordinary happenings upon returning
to Florence after his stint at the curia: Florence’s inconclusive war with Duke

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47 James Hankins, introduction to History of the Florentine People, xii. For more detailed information
on the life and career of Bruni than this chapter has room to give, see: Gordon Griffiths, James
Hankins, and David Thompson, trans. with an introduction. The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni:
Selected Texts (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts & Studies in conjunction
with the Renaissance Society of America, 1987), 21-42; Renee Neu Watkins, trans. and ed. Humanism
and Liberty: Writings on Freedom from Fifteenth Century Florence. (Columbia, South Carolina: The
48 Hankins, introduction to History of the Florentine People, xii.
49 Hankins, introduction to History of the Florentine People, xii.
50 Hankins, introduction to History of the Florentine People, xii.
Giangaleazzo Visconti of Milan ending in 1402, the conquest of Pisa in 1406, a threat to Florentine independence at the hands of King Ladislas of Naples in the 1410's, the fall of the old Florentine oligarchy in 1434, and the rise to power of the Medici.

Finally, from 1427 until his death in 1444, Bruni served as chancellor to the Florentine Signoria, or governing council. 51 James Hankins writes: "Bruni's lifetime was an age of wars, of political unrest, of imperial expansion in the Florentine state, and of revolution and ideological collapse in the Church. And he had a front-row seat." 52 Experiencing dramatic events such as these put Bruni in a better position than most historians of his day to gain a thorough understanding of men and affairs than he could not possibly have acquired outside of political interaction. With this understanding, as well as his God-given intellect and historical imagination, Bruni was able to produce a history of great innovation and importance.

Bruni had already begun work on the first book of his history by 1415, for in that year he wrote a letter to Poggio Bracciolini, who would succeed him as both historian of Florence and chancellor, describing his troubles concerning the collection of material for this book. 53 He continued to work steadily on the history for the remainder of his life, completing the first six books by 1429. 54 In 1439 the first nine

51 Hankins, introduction to History of the Florentine People, xii. The chancellor is roughly equivalent to a modern day secretary for foreign affairs.
52 Hankins, introduction to History of the Florentine People, xiii.
54 Wilcox, The Development of Humanist Historiography in the Fifteenth Century, 3. In The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), p. 611, no. 14, and p. 618. no. 4. Hans Baron gives a great deal of attention to dating the individual books of the first half of Bruni's work. According to Baron, Book II was written during the first half of 1419; Book III in 1420; Book IV in 1421; Books V and VI between the fall of 1426 and the end of 1428. For very detailed information on occasions when Bruni presented portions of his work to the Florentine Signoria, see Hankins, introduction to History of the Florentine People, xi.
books were presented to the Florentine Signoria. The entire work, consisting of twelve books, was ready for copying in 1442, and eventually had its dissemination increased by the Signoria's commission of an Italian translation by the patrician humanist Donato Acciaiuoli, completed in 1473. There is no evidence to suggest, however, that Bruni's *Historiae* was commissioned by the Florentine republic, or that he wrote it as part of his official duties, despite the fact that he presented it formally to the Signoria. Nevertheless, there was a close relationship between the republic and Bruni, which "lends a quasi-official tone to the work." Giovanni Villani's *Chronicles*, however, was written about a century and a half earlier and is a prime example of a late medieval chronicle. This work also serves as an example of one part of the historiographical tradition from which Antoninus' *Summa Historialis*, as well as other fifteenth-century writers' works, evolved. Villani was a merchant, not a government official like Bruni, but this fact did not put him in any worse position to witness many important events of his time.

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2 There is some question as to whether Bruni's work was actually complete at twelve books, or if he had died before finishing the work. For discussions of this question, see: Hankins, introduction to *History*, xi; Wilcox, *The Development of Florentine Humanist Historiography*, 3-4.
4 Once again, there has been scholarly debate on this question. Wilcox, through painstaking research, shows that there is no evidence from any register, record of disbursement, etc. that Bruni was paid by the republic for his work, but does not discount the possibility that the document actually proving he was paid might simply no longer exist (Wilcox, *The Development*, 3-4); James Hankins, on the other hand, believes that it may be inferred from the Signoria's embracing of Bruni's *Historiae* that he most probably was paid for his efforts, (Hankins, introduction to *History*, xi).
6 Ibid., 9-10. Cochrane describes chronicles as a pre-humanist historical writing form, which began over two hundred years earlier as a simple list of city officials. It quickly grew into an instrument for the expression of civic pride and, after further broadening through its contact with high medieval chronicles during the end of the thirteenth-century, became an important source for the later humanist historians. Like Bruni, Villani's work has drawn much scholarly attention. Here is a sample of the bibliography: Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography*, 10-ff.; Louis Green, *Chronicle into History*, 9-ff.; Louis Green, "Historical Interpretation in Fourteenth-Century Florentine Chronicles." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 28, no. 2 (1967), 161-178.
Louis Green writes: "From what we can discover of him, it is clear that Giovanni Villani was very much a typical well-to-do Florentine burgher, living over a time span, the first half of which favoured men of his kind, but the latter portion of which, by bringing problems which affected both the state and the economy with which he had identified his interests, tended to reverse the optimism of his earlier years."\(^6\)

Villani was born no later than 1276, and early in life associated himself with the great Florentine trading and money-lending firm, the Peruzzi Company.\(^2\) From 1300 through 1307 he traveled near and far as the representative of this company, making trips to Rome in 1300 and traveling several times between Bruges and Florence.\(^3\) In the following years he returned to Florence for good and lived as a successful businessman.\(^4\) For the next thirty years Villani lived a life of relative luxury that allowed him to focus his attention on civic affairs. He held a variety of public offices during these years, including Mint Commissioner and Prior.\(^5\) In sharp contrast to the success of his life up to this point was his last decade, in which he was ruined financially and politically with the collapse of the Buonaccorsi firm with whom he held stock, and the diminution of the burghers as a political force, a result of the tyranny of the Duke of Athens.\(^6\) In 1348 Villani died from the Black Death a bitter, poverty-stricken man, but the life he had led made him very suitable to write history. Louis Green writes:

\(^{61}\) Green, *Chronicle into History*, 11.
\(^{62}\) Green, *Chronicle into History*, 11.
\(^{63}\) Green, *Chronicle into History*, 12.
\(^{64}\) Green, *Chronicle into History*, 12-13.

Villani's life followed a pattern very common among Italian merchants of his time. He served as an apprentice in international commerce and banking by traveling throughout Europe, until the time when he was financially secure and could return to his native city to establish himself.

\(^{65}\) Green, *Chronicle into History*, 12-13.
Not only did Giovanni Villani’s lifetime span the most dynamic period in Florentine history, but his experience brought him into contact with most of the areas of activity which decisively influenced its course. He had been at the Papal Court and, as a member of the Peruzzi Company, bankers to the King of France, would have been familiar with, if he did not know at first hand, the intrigues surrounding the clash between Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII. As a civic official, he had immense access to all information available to the Florentine Republic and would furthermore have derived from his various terms of service invaluable experience of practical affairs. 

Villani’s, like most chronicles, begins with a biblical event, the building of the tower of Babel. After quickly tracing the Divine Story, he moves his focus to those events that occurred early in Florence’s history: Caesar’s founding of the city, the Ostrogoths’ destruction of it, and its rebuilding by Charlemagne. There are two major themes to which Villani returns again and again in his work. First, he focuses on the endless changes that the city endured throughout its history. He does this by going over many general events including the rise and fall of emperors, invasions of the city, etc., and the whole time that these things are transpiring Villani asserts that Florence continually gained prestige and prosperity. Second, one finds the theme of the “constant affirmation of Divine Providence and of the instability of the temporal world caused by sin.” Villani, when relating the many instances in which fire had ravaged Florence, believed these catastrophes to be the “judgement of God, forasmuch as the city was corrupted by heresy... [and] through the vice of

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6 Green, Chronicle into History, 13.
7 Green, Chronicle into History, 13-14.
9 Breisach, Historiography, 151.
11 Breisach, Historiography, 152.
licentiousness and gluttony." Examples of this kind abound in Villani's *Chroniche*.

Giovanni Villani was very much a man of his age and many scholars consider his historical work to be the epitome of that age's historical literary genre, the chronicles. While lacking the source criticism and interest in causation that later writers such as Bruni would incorporate into their works, Villani's *Chroniche* has been extremely valuable to historians concerned with the history of Florence.

In my thesis I will examine Archbishop Antoninus of Florence's sense of history in the same manner in which other scholars have looked at works of history contemporary to and preceding his. By examining those portions of Antoninus' work which are original to him, I anticipate finding that while superficially displaying many elements of a chronicle lacking innovation, the archbishop possessed certain elements that were to become fixtures in the historiographical tradition of the "Renaissance," especially a "sense of the past." I conduct this study in terms of the approach to the examination of chronicles put forward by Peter Burke, which includes searching a source for the presence of an awareness of evidence, an interest in causation, and a sense of anachronism. It is also not the intention of this thesis to place Antoninus' work into a broad category such as "medieval" or "Renaissance," but, following Louis Green, to see the *Summa Historialis* as a work more suitably located within the transition period between the traditional method of writing history and the method that developed during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Italy.

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72 Villani, *Chroniche Fiorentine*, 96.
CHAPTER ONE

AWARENESS OF EVIDENCE

In his study *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* Peter Burke claims: “Medieval writers and scholars compared to those of the Renaissance took an uncritical attitude towards evidence.” Furthermore, he asserts that this attitude contains two aspects, one labeled “active” and the other “passive.” The “active” aspect is defined as the mindset that allows the author to invent myths and portray them as factual history, and also to forge documents. The “passive” aspect is simply defined as the acceptance of “authority.” Burke writes: “Men acted as if they believed that because something was written, it must be true; every ‘author’ was an ‘authority’ and what he wrote was ‘authentic’...The relative reliability of sources is rarely distinguished...Historical narratives tended to resemble ‘bricolage,’ compositions from ready-made fragments, for the historian would often incorporate the actual words of the ‘authority,’ making a mosaic of the different authors. There was, anyway, no objection to plagiarism, in history as in literature.”

Other historians agree with the assertions made above by Burke. In his study, *Annalists and Historians*, Denys Hay presents the same message, but with a more cautious tone. Using the well known twelfth century historian William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Regum Anglorum* as an example, he tells his reader that William shows a degree of critical awareness that is much greater than that of his contemporaries. He goes to an extreme that most of his contemporaries are not willing or able to attempt, that being the naming of his sources and a shrewd

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estimation of their value. In addition to this, Malmesbury tells us himself that he had "studiously sought for chronicles far and near" and, through his efforts, was able to acquire "some historians of foreign nations." whose writings concern British History.

Hay stops his praise short of giving William resounding approval, however, and warns his reader that William’s historical “research” would not be considered as such by a historian writing in the period known as “the Renaissance” or another later era. Unlike most chronicles written in William’s day, Hay asserts that his becomes less interesting as he approaches his own lifetime. Hay writes: “He structured early English history with great sophistication but as he progressed into the eleventh century (book III) the narrative was frequently that of a conventional world history, with digressions (as he occasionally called them) on, for instance, popes such as Gregory VII, heretics like Berengar of Tours, exciting tales such as the one about the two priests seduced by profane literature, one of whom returns from Hell to warn the other to become a monk.” The author continues by recounting many other instances in which Malmesbury displays an evidential attitude that is generally characteristic of his time, namely the inability or the unwillingness to examine his evidence critically. It is, however, clear from Hay’s book that William of Malmesbury’s work, and its occasional critical attitude towards its sources, is an anomaly when compared with those of his contemporaries.

Eric Cochrane also agrees with Burke’s claims about the ‘medieval’ historical writer’s tendency to take the word of his “authorities” without question. In his book, Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance, Cochrane claims that one

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6 Hay, Annalists and Historians, 57.
7 Hay, Annalists and Historians, 57.
8 Hay, Annalists and Historians, 58.
9 Hay, Annalists and Historians, 57.
reason for this tendency, at least in thirteenth and fourteenth century Italy, was the author's purpose in writing his history. He explains to the reader that many of the most famous "medieval" Italian chroniclers, such as Compagni or Villani, wrote with the purpose of either the entertainment of themselves and their relatives or for moral counsel, both of whose effectiveness does not depend upon "the veracity or the proper understanding of the event recounted." For this reason, these historians did not trouble themselves with making a causal connection between events, nor did they make any attempt to separate fact from fiction. Cochrane states: "True, they recognized that purely oral tradition was not necessarily binding, and some of them quietly omitted the fantastic stories handed down by the twelfth-century mythmakers about the amorous adventures of Catiline and the military exploits of the Italic founder of Troy, Dardanus. But they assumed that what had been written down was reliable; and whether the writer was a historian, like Sallust, or a poet, like Vergil, or a patriot, like Sanzanome, made little difference." Although both Hay and Cochrane are more reserved in their assessment of authors' treatment of their evidence in the period before the advent of what historians commonly call "the Renaissance," they make the same principal assertion: these historical writers generally scrutinized their evidence with an uncritical eye.

This chapter will focus exclusively on the "passive" aspect of Burke's model for two reasons. First, in the sections of Antoninus' *Summa Historialis* that are original to him there are no instances of document forgery on his part nor does he lend credence to any myths. In fact, there are occasions in which he opts not to

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82 Ibid.
83 Here I follow Burke, who defines a myth as "fiction passing as fact" (Burke, *The Renaissance sense of the Past*, 7).
include certain myths in his work for various reasons that will be discussed later in this chapter. Second, these two aspects of the "uncritical medieval attitude" towards evidence are not necessarily required to appear together, as Burke himself states in the first chapter of his book.\(^4\)

It is the intention of this chapter to examine Antoninus' awareness of evidence, by comparing examples taken from his *Chronicles* with the works of those authors discussed in the introductory chapter. First, the attitude that traditional "medieval" historians such as Dino Compagni and Giovanni Villani have towards their evidence will be discussed, especially as it relates to their *Chronicles of Florence*. This will be followed by an examination of the humanist Leonardo Bruni's *History of the Florentine People* on the same grounds. Finally, the chapter ends with an analysis of Antoninus' work, from which it will be possible to determine where his *Chronicles* falls in relation to the other histories scrutinized in this chapter.

Dino Compagni was a successful merchant and notable political figure, as well as a contemporary of Giovanni Villani. Like his more famous counterpart, Compagni also wrote a history of Florence, but dealing with a much shorter period of time.\(^5\) There are other marked differences between the two works as well. Louis Green writes:

Dino Compagni's chronicle is of narrow compass: a tight, coherent rendering of a single dramatic episode, it has the unity, pace and quality of a literary work. The evil of civic discord arises, triumphs and then consumes itself in the sudden, ominous deaths of its progenitors. By nature, it is less history than *exposé*; not calm, not tranquil.


\(^5\) Unlike Villani, whose work runs from the biblical story of the Tower of Babel up to the fourteenth century, the core of Compagni's work centers around the events of the year 1300-1301, which were crucial to the city of Florence. These events concerned the fracturing of the Guelf Party into the "Whites" and the "Blacks," as well as the ultimate collapse of the "Whites," of which Dino was a member (Daniel E. Bornstein, introduction to *Chronicle of Florence*, by Dino Compagni. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), xxii-xxviii.
measured, untidy with the haphazard interlacing of events, but passionate and as economically drawn together into lines of significance as a play. All proceeds as a repercussion from the vibration of a single centre: It is not a chronicle in the same sense as are those of Giovanni Villani and his successors and, though it illustrates more perfectly in many ways than they do an awakening historical consciousness, it is not the kind of work on which a tradition could have established itself.86

In intention, range, and character, the works of Compagni and Villani differ a great deal, but they both contain good examples of the late medieval writer's attitude towards evidence, a consistent acceptance of authority.

Examples of this attitude abound in Compagni's *Chronicle of Florence*. In his description of the circumstances revolving around the death of the leader of the Black Guelf faction in Florence, Corso Donati,87 Compagni writes:

The people began to settle down. Messer Corso's bad death was talked about in various ways, according to whether the speaker was his friend or enemy...He was killed in this vile manner by a foreign mercenary; and messer Corso's relatives knew full well who killed him, for the killer was immediately sent away by his companions. Everyone commonly said that the ones who ordered his death were messer Rosso della Tosa and messer Pazzino de' Pazzi; and some people blessed them, while others did the opposite. Many believed that these two knights had him killed. And I, wishing to discover the truth, inquired diligently and found this to be true.88

While Compagni is aware that a witness' account of the event might differ depending on the faction to which he belonged, this passage is far from critical. In the end, he accepts the word of the popular majority, saying that he did "inquire diligently" into who killed Corso, but makes no mention of how he went about it. All Compagni

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86 Louis Green, *Chronicle into History*, 18-19.
87 Vieri de' Cerchi and Corso Donati were prominent Florentine Guelf magnates in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. Their group enjoyed a decade of domination in the city until the champion of the people, Giano della Bella, disenfranchised them with the passage of the Ordinances of Justice, in 1293. After engineering Giano's expulsion from Florence in 1295, they split into two factions: the White Guelfs, led by Vieri de' Cerchi, and the Black Guelfs, led by Corso Donati (Bornstein, introduction to *Chronicle of Florence*, by Dino Compagni, xix-xx).
leaves his reader with is the impression that popular opinion was indeed the truth.

In the first example one sees Compagni accepting the oral word of the people, but there are many instances of the unquestioning acceptance of his written sources, as well. In this passage, Compagni describes the foiled conspiracy to kill Charles of Valois, brother of King Philip IV of France, who had been sent to Tuscany to make peace between the warring Black and White Guelf factions by Pope Boniface VIII in 1301. He writes: "A few days after this it was reported that some of the White Party were plotting with messer Piero Ferrante of Languedoc, one of messer Charles's barons, and written agreements were discovered according to which he was to kill messer Charles at their instigation. Messer Charles, who had returned to Florence from the Papal Court, called a secret council of seventeen citizens one night. In this council they planned to seize certain men, declare them guilty, and have their heads cut off."

The significance of this quotation lies with the written agreements that supposedly link Ferrante to the assassination plot. From what Compagni writes, one is led to believe that he accepts the validity of these agreements without reservation, but even Giovanni Villani, who was a supporter of the Black Guelf faction, asserts that these documents were forged by the Blacks as an excuse to further their action against their enemy White Party. Compagni, however, makes no mention of this possibility, and is content to inform his readers that "written agreements were discovered."

The acceptance of "authority" can also be seen in Giovanni Villani's *Chronicle of Florence*. In this first selection, Villani describes the circumstances surrounding the birth of the famous magician Merlin, which the author claims to have occurred around the year 470 AD. He writes:

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* Daniel E. Bornstein, footnote 26 to Book One of *Chronicle of Florence*, by Dino Compagni, 52-3.
In these times, about the year of Christ 470, while Leo, Emperor of Rome, was reigning in Constantinople, was born in Great Britain, which is now called England, Merlin the prophet (of a virgin, they say, by conception or machination of a devil)\textsuperscript{9}, which wrought in that country many marvels by necromancy, and ordained the Round Table of Knights Errant in the time when Uther Pendragon reigned in Britain, which was descended from Brutus, grandson of Aeneas, the first inhabitant of that land, as afore we made mention; and afterwards the Round Table was restored by the good King Arthur, his son, which was a lord of great power and valour, and more gracious and knightly than all other lords, and he reigned long time in happy state, as the Romances of the Britons make mention, and whereof the Martinian Chronicle is not silent when treating of those times.\textsuperscript{92}

This passage clearly demonstrates the extent to which Villani was content to take his sources at face value. One of the things that really stands out in the above text is the way in which the author speaks of legendary characters such as Merlin as if they were truly historical figures performing true historical deeds. Villani does not seem troubled in the least by the uncertainty of these characters' very existence. One comes away with the impression that the author feels no need to question their existence, for they are mentioned in his sources, so they must have existed. What is most telling, however, is Villani's complete acceptance of the information found in the sources that he mentions, namely the Romances of the Britons and the Martinian Chronicle. Nowhere in this selection does he show any reservation about the factual reliability of these works, but instead is simply content to inform his readers that therein the above said events are mentioned. It is especially interesting that Villani does not believe it necessary to question the "romances," which is a literary genre known for its factual embellishment.

Villani gives an even more lucid example of the complete acceptance of his

\textsuperscript{9} Throughout this thesis all parentheses will indicate words and phrases appearing in the actual writings of the various authors, and the brackets will indicate words and phrases that I have added at those places where I believe further explanation is needed.

sources in another passage. In this selection, the author describes the capture and beheading of Conradino, the grandson of Emperor Frederick II of Germany, by Charles of Anjou. Villani sees Conradino’s death as the penalty for the grief he caused the Church during his lifetime. He writes:

And when the king [Charles of Anjou] had Conradino and those lords in his hands, he took counsel what he should do. At last he was minded to put them to death, and he caused by way of process an inquisition to be made against them, as against traitors to the Crown and enemies of Holy Church, and this was carried out...But certainly we may see, both by reason and by experience, that whosoever rises against Holy Church, and is excommunicate, his end must needs be evil for soul and body; and therefore the sentence of excommunication of Holy Church, just or unjust, is always to be feared, for very open miracles have come to pass confirming this, as whoso will may read in ancient chronicles; as also by this present chronicle it may be seen with regard to the emperors and lords of past times, which were rebels and persecutors of Holy Church. 

Once again, Villani has given us a general, wordy account, this time concerning Conradino’s execution. It does, however, give the reader some insight into the author’s thoughts on how sources are to be utilized. It is clear from the selection above that he unconditionally trusts his sources, which in this case are “ancient chronicles.” He does not, however, record which chronicles he has in mind. Nevertheless, Villani shows no ambiguity when he mentions what these chronicles teach him: do not harm the Church or you will be punished by “very open miracles.” The only reason Villani gives us to trust these sources, however, is that they exist.

There are many instances in which Villani accepts not only written, but oral sources, as well. On these occasions, the author gives his reader the impression that

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*The Kingdom of Sicily was highly valued by the Hohenstaufen Emperors of Germany and, shortly after the death of Frederick II, his illegitimate son, Manfred, was given the throne. The papacy was determined to rid Sicily of the Hohenstaufens and offered the crown to Charles of Anjou, who took the island by force and killed Manfred in 1266 (C. Warren Hollister. Medieval Europe: A Short History. 7th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994), 233-34. 

he is a very trusting historical writer. Where Peter Burke says: "Men acted as if they believed that because something was written, it must be true." Villani's work seems to warrant the creation of a similar statement: Men acted as if they believed that because something was said by honorable men, or at least those whom the author thought to be so, it must be true. The author concludes a chapter in which he discusses Robert Guiscard* and his descendants as follows: "These things concerning Robert Guiscard may in part be read in chronicles, and in part I heard them narrated by those who fully knew the history of the kingdom of Apulia." Nowhere, however, does he reveal the identities of these people who knew the history of the Apulian Kingdom so well. The reader is left with nothing to do but trust Villani, and hope that he was a good judge of character.

The next passage demonstrates the author's penchant for accepting oral sources at face value as well. In this passage, Villani relates the story of a Florentine merchant who had a vision concerning the death of Pope John XXI. The author writes:

And a great and true vision should be noted concerning the death of the said Pope, which was seen by one of our Florentine merchants of the Company of Apothecaries, which was called Berto Forzetti, and it is well that this should be told...It came to pass, on the night when the said Pope died, the said man being in a ship on the high seas, journeying to Acre, rose and cried out, "Alas, alas!" His companions awoke, and asked him what ailed him; he replied: "I see a gigantic man in black with a great club in his hand, and he is about to break

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* Burke, The Renaissance Sense of the Past, 7.
* Guiscard was the son of a minor Norman baron named Tancred de Hauteville, and had come to Italy with other Normans to make a name for himself in 1047. He began as a bandit leader, but being so successful at this, eventually climbed the ranks to leader of the south-Italian Normans. The pope recognized Robert's authority in the Treaty of Melfi in 1059, bestowing on him the title of duke, while Robert agreed to become a papal vassal in return. He went on to conquer the island of Sicily, which earlier had been heavily populated by Muslims, and even went so far as to launch a "crusade" against the Byzantines. He died in 1085, in the middle of another Byzantine campaign (Hollister, Medieval Europe, 183-84).
* Villani, Croniche Fiorentine, IV, § 19.
down a pillar, above which is a ceiling." And after a little he cried out again, and said: "He has broken it down, and he is dead." He was asked: "Who?" He replied: "The Pope." The said companions wrote down the words, and the night; and when they were come to Acre, a short time after there came to them the news of the death of the said Pope, which came to pass in the same night. And I, the writer, had testimony of this from those merchants which were present with the said man upon the said ship, and heard the said Berto, which were men of great authority, and worthy of belief; and the fame of this spread throughout all our city.98

Villani gives us a little more reason to believe his sources in this passage, for he does at least tell the reader that he received this information from men actually present at the vision. He does not, however, record any misgivings about possible embellishment by the sailors, nor does he appear to be cautious when accepting the validity of the vision. In the end, anyone reading this selection must still take the author at his word, and hope that these sailors were indeed "worthy of belief."

Leonardo Bruni, who wrote his History of the Florentine People one hundred and fifty years after both Villani and Compagni composed their works, demonstrates a new way of writing history, which contained "all the basic elements that were to identify its successors for the next century and a half."99 First, it was patterned on ancient models in language, style, and form, although Bruni departed from these models at any time they seemed to be inappropriate to his subject.100 Second, Bruni saw the ratio, or the causes of the events described, as the most important element in historical writing as a literary genre of its own.101 Third, history was to contain utility, which for Bruni, meant that it helped to show people what to do and what not to do by describing the actions of those who had lived earlier. In order to accomplish this

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99 Cochrane, Historians and Historiography, 3. I take the following information about Bruni's work from Cochrane.
100 These ancient models were predominantly Livy's History of Rome "ab Urbe Condita" and Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War (Cochrane, Historians and Historiography, 3).
101 Cochrane, Historians and Historiography, 4.
goal, history had to be "true"; the historian's discovery of the truth became the most important aim for Bruni. This differed from the opinions of Bruni's ancient models, for they only assigned marginal importance to the discovery of the truth. Literary style was their chief concern. The search for the truth led Bruni to question many myths that were commonly held as fact by the Florentine people, and assign no more than a role of coincidence to natural phenomena, such as a comet streaking through the sky or an earthquake devastating a town, instead of a causal role. As a result, he introduced an important innovation to the way sources were treated. Eric Cochrane writes:

Rather than following one source for one event and then another for the next, and rather than simply changing the subject when contradictions among the sources became all too evident, he carefully checked what he read in his principal source against all the others. Thus, notwithstanding his proclivity for accepting uncritically the authority of the ancient historians, he became aware that they in turn were dependable only to the extent that their own sources supported them. And this awareness ... marks 'the real beginning of historical criticism.'

To his narrative sources, Bruni added documents from city archives, state papers (scritture di palagio), and private papers of notable Florentine families. The fourth way in which Bruni's history differed from its predecessors was that it was monographic, which meant that he organized his work around a single theme. In this case, the theme was the rise of Florence from obscure origins to an Italian power. He also leaves out any irrelevant events, including those matters over which man had no control, such as natural disasters or economic collapses. Finally, Bruni's history was didactic, and when the event under discussion did not clearly convey its lesson.

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Cochrane, Historians and Historiography, 4-5.
Cochrane, Historians and Historiography, 4-5.
Cochrane, Historians and Historiography, 5.
Cochrane, Historians and Historiography, 5.
Cochrane, Historians and Historiography, 5.
Bruni clarified any ambiguity without hesitation.\textsuperscript{107} These aforesaid elements constitute the most important contained in Bruni’s \textit{Historiae}, and show why his work was so innovative, for many of them first appeared here.

Bruni takes a much more critical view of his sources than his predecessors do. He does not hesitate, when he feels it necessary, to question, revise, and even augment the information he found in earlier histories. In the following passage Bruni questions the Florentine tradition of celebrating the eighth of October as a holiday. The Gothic leader Radagaisus’ defeat at the hands of the Roman general Stilicho, which occurred in the early years of the fifth century AD in the hills surrounding Florence, was commonly thought by the Florentine people to have occurred on this day. The author writes:

\begin{quote}
This great defeat and slaughter of the Gauls some think to have occurred on October 8\textsuperscript{th}, and that is why (they say) the day became a holiday in Florence and why this legend was inscribed on the Florentine temple, namely, that ‘this date saw a glorious victory wherein the city was freed from great dread of the barbarians.’ Our own more diligent researches have established that this victory over the Goths took place in the reign of Arcadius and Honorius, in the consulship of Stilicho and Anthemius, ten years after the death of Theodosius, in the four hundred and eighth year of Christian salvation. We have not found any reliable evidence regarding the precise day. For this reason we shall leave unresolved the claims that have been made about the institution of the holiday and the inscription on the temple.\textsuperscript{108}
\end{quote}

One is able to see from this passage how Bruni’s treatment of evidence is much less trusting and much more critical than either that of Compagni’s or Villani’s. Whereas there are numerous instances found in Villani’s \textit{Chronicle} in which he accepts sources such as temple inscriptions without any skepticism,\textsuperscript{109} Bruni shows his reader...
a more critical approach. After having determined the year in which he believes this event occurred, he was unable to arrive at an exact date. This inexactitude of the results of his research leaves the author unwilling and unable to make a confidant assertion concerning the chronology of Radagaisus' defeat. This evidential treatment differs markedly from that of earlier writers such as Villani, who in some cases used a temple inscription as the only evidence when relating an event to their reader, showing no skepticism of it at all. Bruni, however, has used an inscription as a starting point, and, after further research, is unable to satisfy himself as to the exact date of the event. He is content to leave the matter unresolved rather than be incorrect. The source criticism employed here by the author is obviously more extensive that that of earlier writers.

In other places Bruni not only attempts to revise earlier authors' treatments of a particular historical event, but also to offer his opinion as to why these history writers may have made mistakes. In this selection, Bruni describes the troubles with which Florentia, the town out of which Florence emerged, had to deal in the chaotic years after the fall of the Roman Empire and before the advent of Charlemagne, roughly 475-775 AD. He also ventures an educated guess as to why there had been such ambiguity concerning exactly which warlord was harming Florentia. He writes: "Florentia was razed (according to some) by Attila the Hun or (according to others) by Totila and later restored by Charlemagne after a long period. To us, however, it seems abundantly clear that Attila the Hun was never in Tuscany at all, and that he never crossed to this side of the river Mincio, which flows from Lake Garda to the river Po. Totila, king of the Goths, did, as we have shown, ravage the Tuscan cities which had rebelled against the Goths after Belisarius' victory. I am convinced,

10 The actual date of the battle was August 23, 406 (Hankins, footnote 41 to Book One of History of the Florentine People, by Leonardo Bruni, 489).
therefore, that a confusion of names has led some authors erroneously to mistake Totila for Attila. The ease with which the author comes to his conclusion may fool the reader into believing that there is nothing especially interesting about this passage, but this is not true.

The significance of this section is indeed Bruni’s conclusion. He recognizes that the similarity in the sound of the names Attila and Totila may have confused earlier authors, causing them to place both leaders in the region of Tuscany, but by exercising his common sense, he deduces that Attila the Hun was never in Tuscany, thus doing no pillaging there. Although a very simple realization, it was obviously more than any previous historian, at least those whom Bruni consulted for his work, had put forth to this time, for if it had been mentioned before, there would be no need for Bruni to reiterate it in his work. This is a good example of the extent to which the author examined his sources for explanations as to why a certain author had written what he had. The fact that Bruni shows a concern for the motives of authors preceding him only helps to illustrate the depth of his source criticism compared to earlier writers of history.

The following is another example of how Bruni is able to interpret his evidence so as to give his reader a better understanding of why an author wrote what he did. In this passage, the author relates to his audience how the invasion of Lombardy by Emperor Henry VII was a cause for Florentine exiles to be optimistic that they would soon be able to return to their beloved city. In the course of this relation, Bruni employs a letter by the famous poet Dante Alighieri, who sided with the exiles, as evidence. He writes:

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Bruni, *History of the Florentine People*, I, § 76.

Emperor Henry VII (1274-1313) was the Count of Luxembourg before being elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1308 as an alternative to Charles of Valois (Hankins, footnote 89 to Book Four of *History of the Florentine People*, by Leonardo Bruni, 504).
The news came that Henry had crossed the Alps and had come down into Lombardy. Florentine exiles were flocking to him from every direction, with such confidence in victory that they were already dividing up among themselves the possessions of their enemies. A letter of the poet Dante is extant, filled with the bitterest insults, which he wrote against what he calls 'intrinsic Florentines' while exulting in this hope. Elated beyond measure by his expectation of success, he does not hesitate to attack in the most violent language the men whom previously he used to address in the most honorable terms. I think this should not be set down to frivolity or malignity, since we are dealing with a man of exceptional intellect and learning, but rather to the times. It is not unnatural for victors to take their revenge with a certain amount of scornful talk.

The way in which Bruni interprets Dante's letter is significant, for it gives us a better understanding of his awareness of evidence. The author looks beyond the actual words written in the letter to estimate why Dante wrote what he did, giving his reader a clearer picture of what the great poet's intentions really were. In Bruni's opinion, one must remember that Dante had written this letter at a time when he was about to have his revenge on the city that had deemed those with whom he had sided as outcasts, so it is reasonable to expect his writing to be somewhat bitter. This selection, as the one previous, evinces the extent to which the author concerned himself with any motivation that the authors of his sources may have had in the crafting of their writings. It is quite impossible to imagine an earlier writer, such as Compagni, demonstrating evidential awareness to this degree.

Bruni also augments his narrative sources with original research that he conducted in city archives throughout Italy. In fact, most of the legal documents, such as treaties and laws, that he quotes at length in the Historiae were drawn from these archives. In the following excerpt Bruni uses archival material to dispel the
belief that in response to the aforementioned Conradino's destructive march through Italy in the 1260's, the pro-papal Guelf Party had for the first time created a group of publicly chosen captains to protect their interests. He writes: "Thus for the first time, as some think, there was established a college for the Guelf Party with publicly chosen captains, so that there should be individuals specially entrusted in perpetuity to oversee its interests. But I have discovered that there were leaders of the Party in the city long before that time, and this fact is visible in the public records in many places." Once again, Bruni's willingness to gather evidence from materials outside the usual narrative sources, or chronicles, differentiates him from earlier historians such as Compagni and Villani. Whereas these men were oftentimes content to trust the material they found in chronicles and the word of other people without question, Bruni supplements his narrative sources with relevant documents that he found in various archives. The result of his efforts is a more complete history, both factually and evidentially. The very act of adding these documents to his other sources demonstrates Bruni's wariness of taking the word of a limited quantity of evidence.

It is clear from examining Antoninus' Summa Historialis that the archbishop evinces a deeper awareness of evidence than modern scholars have been hitherto willing to concede. It is true that the Summa contains instances in which the author treats his sources very traditionally and is easily able to be compared to the works of earlier writers such as Villani or Compagni. For example, at the end of a passage in which Antoninus describes an occasion where a very pious Franciscan, Thomasuccio de Foligno, demonstrates his prophetic abilities, he discloses to his reader the source of the information. He writes: "A great deal of this I have heard from those who saw
him [Thomasuccio] and were acquainted with his company."  Like the traditional writers whom we have discussed in this chapter, the archbishop seems content to trust the information he receives from witnesses as true, without questioning it in the least. Furthermore, not only does he trust witnesses, but also certain people who knew of Thomasuccio's reputation. Beyond being incredibly vague, it is difficult to accept these sources as trustworthy without more information. If one cares to look, however, sections of the Summa in which Antoninus does demonstrate a level of evidential awareness completely lacking in the works of traditional writers of history can be found.

Antoninus oftentimes warns the reader about a passage that he uses, because he believes it to be of questionable value. This occurs most often in the sections in which the author discusses the legends of the saints. In the following selection Antoninus has doubts about the validity of the sources employed in the history of Vincent of Beauvais. He writes: "Concerning Saint Tecla, a disciple of the apostle Paul: Vincent placed her history in book x, chapter xlvii. But because this work is

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18 Antoninus. _Summa Historialis_. Tit. XXII, cap. 1, § 6. Quoted in Morcay. _Chronicles_. 3-4: "In illo tempore fuit in dicta civitate quidam sancte conversationis, nomine Thomasuccius, habitum gerens tertii ordinis beati Francisci, vir utique magne abstinentie ac mundi et sui contemptor, qui claruit spiritu prophetie. Hic, inter cetera, prenuntiavit tempus mortis eius. Nam cum ille dominus Trincia semel eum interrogasset de tempore vite sue, sive curiositate ductus, seu derisione, cum communitur dicetur spiritu prophetico futura predicere, respondit ille: "Tantum vives quantum illesa permanebit campana communitatis," quod ita eventit. Nam comiirat in mortem illius dominii, cum signum dedissent ad rumorem suscitandum pulsationem illius campane, in principio pulsationis eius fracta est et ille dominus tunc occissus. Furtur eciam de illo quod, cum ille dominus, iratus contra eum quia arguebat eum de excessibus suis, aliquando decrevisset in ignem iactare facere, pro illo misit. At ille in spiritu pronoscens quid contra eum temptaret, accessit Thomasuccius ad fornaemiam vicinam et ab ea petit ut prunas ardentex ex furno poneret in clamyde eius. Quo facto ad multam instantiam eius, prunas illas <in> clamyde sua clausas detulit coram illo domino, proiciens eam ante ipsum in terram. illesa omno clamyde ipsa, dicens: "Ecce ignis, si me vis comburere" Dominus autem exteritus tanto prodigio, reveritus est eum. Idem eciam prophetaem in scriptis dimisit in rythmis vulgaribus, in qua satis aperte prophetavit excidia plurimarum civitatum Ytalie, que omnia reperuntur impleta diversis temporibus. _Multa de eo audivi ab his qui viderunt eum et conversationem eius noverunt._" My emphasis.

19 As mentioned in the introductory chapter (p. 1), Antoninus incorporated many authors' works into his own _Summa Historialis_, one of which was the _Speculum Historiale_ of Vincent of Beauvais. For more information on Vincent's work, see Hay, _Annalists and Historians_. 64.
counted among the apocryphal scriptures (dist. xv sancta romana) here it will be shortened.  

It is clear from this caveat to his audience that Antoninus is unsure about the source that he is using, but proceeds to utilize it in accordance with Vincent of Beauvais, abbreviating it to support his belief. Although the archbishop does not make much of an effort to verify or detract from the validity of this particular work, by using it he shows us that he was scrutinizing his sources to a certain degree, and was aware that there were degrees of trustworthiness associated with evidence.

The archbishop does not only abbreviate certain authors’ works on those occasions when he has doubts about their validity, but also refuses to relate certain events, in this case miracles, because they are contained in books that Antoninus considers to be unauthentic. In this excerpt, the author explains to his reader why he will not be including certain miracles supposedly performed by St. Jerome after his death. The archbishop writes: “One reads in a certain short work that it is ascribed to St. Augustine, and another [work] to St. Cyril, and even other [works] about many miracles performed after the death of Jerome, and through his intercession. And chiefly concerning three dead people who were resurrected after his [Jerome’s] tunic was placed upon them: who reported the depths and glory shown to them in the afterlife. But because such distinguished doctors as those who follow have not written about them [these miracles], they are not authentic: nowhere in the Speculum historiale of Vincent of Beauvais, nor in James of Voragine’s writings: and also nowhere do other historians make mention of them: for that reason we omit them.”


This passage clearly demonstrates the care Antoninus takes with his sources. He does not place these particular miracles in the *Summa Historialis* for a very important reason: they are contained in books not utilized by the historians whom the archbishop respects as reliable sources, making them unauthentic. The extent to which the author checks one source against another is important here. Earlier historians such as those mentioned above did not demonstrate the ability or willingness to check their sources against each other in order to strengthen the validity of a particular story or event, at least not to the level of sophistication exhibited by Antoninus in the preceding quotation.

One of the most telling displays of the author's critical attitude towards his evidence involves his questioning of the Donation of Constantine, the basis of which was the suspicion of the textual authenticity of his sources. Antoninus exhibits three doubts concerning the events of Emperor Constantine's life and reign, to which he devotes a separate section in the *Summa*. These doubts are: the timing of Constantine's baptism, the finding of the Cross, and the supposed donation made by the Emperor to the Church. We will here focus on the third doubt only, for it contains the most lucid exhibition of the author's questioning of his sources' textual authenticity. The passage is as follows:

The third question concerns the Donation made to the Church by Constantine, and which is contained in the *Decretum* (dist.96, "Constantinus"). But that chapter is not found in the ancient decrees. What, therefore, and how much he gave is not very certain. But it seems that it was at least that which Louis, King of the Franks and Emperor, promises and confirms under oath to Pope Paschal and his successors, which is found in dist. lxiii, "Ego Ludovicus," and which Otto I, Emperor of the Teutons, confirmed to Pope John, *ibid.*, "Tibi."

But the question is disputed up to our own time among canonists and legists, whether the latter grants strengthen what the former chapter so

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mentionem: *ideo illa referre omittimus."

12 For an in depth discussion of all three doubts raised by Antoninus, see Walker, *Chronicles*, 131-40.

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firmly establishes and which theologians for the most part confirm, because it was not a simple grant, but rather a restitution made to the Church in her own right, since all things are under the dominion of Christ, Whose Vicar on earth is the pope, but other things He left to the temporal lords.\textsuperscript{123}

This selection is the only instance in the \textit{Summa Historialis} where the archbishop rejects the textual authenticity of information found in the \textit{Decretum}.\textsuperscript{124} Although it is possible that, as he wrote above, Antoninus was familiar with the most famous attack on the Donation, Lorenzo Valla’s \textit{Declamatio de falso credita et ementita donatione Constantini}, it is unlikely that this work influenced him, beyond inspiring a more thorough investigation of the document.\textsuperscript{125} Whereas Valla’s refutation of the Donation stems predominantly from linguistic arguments,\textsuperscript{126} Antoninus’ concern is that this “chapter is not found in the ancient decrees.” If we take this statement to mean that the ancient manuscripts of Gratian do not contain this passage, as James Bernard Walker does, the archbishop is demonstrating a sense of source criticism.\textsuperscript{127} Antoninus is not merely accepting sources, even one as revered as Gratian’s \textit{Decretum}, at face value. He has gone to the lengths of checking Gratian against earlier source material. Once again, it is not easy to imagine an earlier historian, such

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{124} Walker, \textit{Chronicles}, 139-40.
\item\textsuperscript{125} Valla wrote the \textit{Declamatio} in 1439 or 1440, under the protection of King Alphonsus of Naples, at a time when the king was fighting with Pope Eugenius IV. Antoninus wrote this portion of his \textit{Summa} in 1449 or 1450, so it is highly unlikely that he was not at least familiar with Valla’s work, especially with the controversy it caused (Walker, \textit{Chronicles}, 137-8).
\item\textsuperscript{126} Walker, \textit{Chronicles}, 138.
\item\textsuperscript{127} Walker, \textit{Chronicles}, 138.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
as Villani, going to this trouble.

The archbishop also demonstrates the capacity to discern the authenticity or apocryphal nature of his sources. In the eighteenth title of his *Summa*, Antoninus sets out to compile a list of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas. Although he merely reproduces the list made in the early fourteenth century by the Dominican Bernard Gui, it is the commentary that the archbishop provides with this reproduction that is of interest here. Morçay makes mention of this list in his biography of the saint. He writes: “The catalogue of the works of St. Thomas, which he inserts near the end of his *Chronicles* in a study concerning the holy Doctor, reproduces in its entirety the list established at the beginning of the fourteenth century by Bernard Gui, a Dominican of the Convent of Limoges; but he copied it with mistrust, or at least with caution . . . . In the end, he rejects, after discussion, a *Compendium theologicae veritatis*, which some have attributed to the angelic Doctor, but we know today that the author was a certain Hugh Ripelin of Strasbourg.” The text to which Morçay refers actually mentions a second work that he, for some inexplicable reason, did not name. This is possibly because the unmentioned text is less important to his discussion than the *Compendium*, the full text will be cited here for the sake of thoroughness. Antoninus writes:

And from this it is clear that the *Postillae super Genesim et Ecclesiasten*, which I have seen ascribed to him [St. Thomas Aquinas], and a certain *Compendium theologicae*, which begins: “Theologicice facultatis,” which some also attribute to St. Thomas, are not his works, since they are not enumerated among those listed above. For

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Morçay, *Saint Antonin*, 325-26: “Le Catalogue des oeuvres de saint Thomas, qu’il a inséré vers la fin de sa Chronique, dans une étude sur ce saint docteur, reproduit dans son ensemble la liste établie au début du XVe siècle par Bernard Guidonis, un dominicain du couvent de Limoges; mais il le copie avec défiance, tout au moins avec circonspection . . . Enfin il rejette, après discussion, un *Compendium theologicae veritatis*, que certains attribuaient au Docteur angelique, et dont nous savons aujourd’hui que l’auteur est un certain Hugues Ripelin, de Strasbourg.”

Walker informs us that the text should read “*veritatis*,” not “*facultatis*.” (Walker, *Chronicles*. 142.)
the Compendium that St. Thomas wrote, and of which mention has been made above, begins differently and is much more brief, and treats of only a few subjects. That, however, which begins: “Theologice,” treats very briefly of all theological subjects: of God, of creatures, of angels and men and of other created things; of the Incarnation, of sins, of the virtues, grace and the gifts, of precepts and counsels, of the sacraments and the final judgement, of the Antichrist, of the resurrection of the dead, and of the glory and punishment in the next life; but briefly. Nor is it a work of Albert the Great, as some indeed say, but of some other very learned man who was called Brother Thomas.131

Antoninus approaches these texts differently. He denies authorship of the Postillae to St. Thomas simply because it was not named in the list of Bernard Gui. His discussion of the Compendium, however, is more extensive. The archbishop argues that this particular work cannot be attributed to St. Thomas, because he has read an authentic work by Thomas on the same subject and it contained different material than this Compendium. It is very probable that Antoninus had read the work in question, because at least two copies were housed in the Library of San Marco at the time he lived there.132 Thus, the author shows the ability to make a logical assertion as to the authenticity of this source from internal evidence. While it is not a demonstration of a critical sense on par with a historian such as Bruni, Antoninus does evince a form of it here.

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132 Walker, Chronicles, 143.
CHAPTER TWO

INTEREST IN CAUSATION

The second ingredient contained within Peter Burke’s definition of the “sense of history” is the interest in causation. In his opinion, the medieval period did not produce historians who exhibited this interest. The “medieval” historical writer did not fail to supply his reader with a reason why an event had occurred. According to Burke, what the writer lacked was the ability or the willingness to postulate as detailed a reason as those historians who succeeded him were able to produce.  

Burke explains:

It is not that motives and causes were never mentioned; but rather that: they were not seen as problematic, as controversial, or in need of evidence. Compared to modern ones, medieval histories lacked a middle ground between the ascription of motive to individuals, often done in a somewhat stereotyped way and then incorporated into the narrative without discussion, and extremely general interpretations of history in a theological manner.  

One possible reason for this lack of interest in explanation involves the structure of the histories composed in the Middle Ages. They had a chiefly annalistic framework. The chronicles originated from notes made to signify important events in the margin of Easter Tables. When historians started to write independent historical works, they simply kept this framework. The nature of this structure lent itself to the organization of events in a chronological format, linking one event to the next “solely by the proximity of their respective dates” not by theme. Thus, there

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137 Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance*, 12.
was oftentimes a lack of continuity among these events, which prevented the author from formulating any sort of explanation for them. This would explain why, as Burke notes, "the favourite connective is not 'because' or 'as a result' but 'meanwhile.'" 138

Eric Cochrane expresses this same opinion in his book, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance*. In the last chapter, I discussed Cochrane's claim that the "medieval" Italian chronicler wrote with one of two principal purposes in mind: the entertainment of himself and his family, or moral counsel. Furthermore, I addressed the implications of this claim with regards to the treatment of evidence: because the effectiveness of either of these purposes did not depend upon the understanding of the events being narrated, the chronicler did not feel it necessary to establish any sort of causal relationship between them. 139 There are, however, also implications of this claim regarding these authors' interest in causation. The author had no reason to distrust or attempt to disprove his sources, for this was deemed unnecessary by the purposes for which he wrote. Also, the cause of a particular event was not high on his list of priorities in the writing of his work. Whatever his sources expressed for a cause was satisfactory for his purpose. This is why, as Eric Cochrane says:

they [the chroniclers] usually contented themselves with the report of an event rather than the event itself . . . Whenever they felt impelled, for moralistic or for political reasons, to offer an explanation of what was reported, they never had any trouble finding one in the omnipotent and incomprehensible hand of God or in the omnipresent and tireless hand of the Devil. 140

The same assertion is made to a much harsher degree by William J. Brandt in his book, *The Shape of Medieval History*. He expresses the opinion that the common

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139 See Chapter One, pages 21-2.
"medieval" chronicler treated historical events and persons "stereotypically," which meant the abandonment of a concern for causal process. One result of this was the raising of these events or persons to a category of "universal moral precepts," denying them historicity, or their relationship to a historical context. In a similar vein, it has been argued that causal thinking in the Middle Ages was hindered by the prevalence of a "symbolic mentality," which resulted in the overshadowing of causal relationships by symbolic connection. Marc Bloch expresses this assertion very clearly in his work *Feudal Society*. Bloch writes:

> In the eyes of all who were capable of reflection, the material world was scarcely more than a mask, behind which took place all the really important things; it seemed to them also a language, intended to express by signs a more profound reality. Since a tissue of appearances can offer but little interest in itself, the result of this view was that observation was generally neglected in favor of interpretation.

It would seem that both of these scholars maintain that there were facets to the "medieval mentality" that worked against the historians of that time, denying them the willingness and ability to concern themselves with causation.

Gabrielle Spiegel, while not disagreeing with these assertions, makes an attempt to "modify their harsh implications" in her book, *The Past as Text*. Describing the use of the *exemplum*, or moralizing anecdote, in the literature of the Middle Ages, and its probable source, biblical exegesis, Spiegel argues that:

While the medieval historian may have lacked a specifically modern sense of causation, he nevertheless operated with a set of assumptions about the relationship between events in the past and present reality which, for him, functioned much as modern theories of causality do for us.\(^{143}\)

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\(^{143}\) Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography*.
She claims that, like custom, the exemplum “determined modes of behavior.” It commanded people to pursue them (the exemplum), as well as illuminated universal moral realities. Therefore, Spiegel claims, it forged a relationship between past and present behavior, “which if not fully causal, nevertheless suggests something more than moral exhortation.”144 This becomes clearer when examining the probable source of this particular use of the exemplum, biblical exegesis, which forms the same analogous relationship between historical events and their fulfillment in later times through the use of typological interpretation of the Bible.143 Spiegel asserts that it would have been an easy jump for the monastic chronicler, with his training in the reading of the Bible, to apply this form of scriptural reading to the interpretation of history. She writes: “What is involved is the secularization of typology, its application to the material supplied by history rather than sacred events.” Spiegel wants his reader to keep in mind, however, that he is not asserting that the chronicler was interested in causation to the same degree that later historians would be. She is simply attempting to soften the blow of those historians who attribute to the “medieval” writer of history no causal interest once so ever.

It is the intention of this chapter to determine the degree to which Antoninus demonstrates an interest in causation by comparing examples taken from his Chronicles with those authors’ works that were discussed in the preceding chapters. First, the interest in causation that traditional “medieval” historians such as Dino Compagni and Giovanni Villani show towards past events will be discussed, as it is

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144 Spiegel, The Past as Text, 91.
143 In this type of exegesis the earlier event, analogous to the later, becomes a foreshadowing, or a “type” of it. Spiegel writes: “By means of typological interpretation, the significance of the past is reaffirmed for the present; the old becomes a prophecy of the new and its predeterminant in the sense that its very existence determines the shape and the interpretation of what comes later. In this way, the past becomes an explanatory principle, a way of ordering and making intelligible a relationship between events separated by vast distances of time” (Spiegel, The Past as Text, 91-92).
possible to determine from each of their *Chronicles of Florence*. This will be followed by an examination of the humanist Leonardo Bruni’s *History of the Florentine People* on the same grounds. Finally, the chapter ends with an analysis of Antoninus’ work, from which it will be possible to determine where his *Chronicles* falls in relation to the other histories scrutinized in this chapter.

Dino Compagni’s *Chronicle of Florence* is an excellent example of the traditional attitude towards causation. In the following passage, the author describes the ongoing troubles between the Florentines and their neighbors to the northwest, the Pistoiese, around the year 1300. He writes:

The Pistoiese had given the Florentines jurisdiction over their city and asked them to provide the podestà and captain. The Florentines sent as captain Cantino di messer Amadore Cavalcanti, an unreliable man who broke the Pistoiese law which stipulated that their Elders should be chosen from both of their parties, that is, from the Blacks and the Whites. These two parties, Blacks and Whites, originated from a family called the Cancellieri which had split: some who were closely related were called the Whites, and the rest the Blacks; and eventually the whole city was divided. And they elected the Elders according to this division.

This Cantino broke their law and had all the Elders selected from the White faction. When he was criticized for this, he said in his defense that he had been ordered to do this by the *signori* of Florence. But he was not telling the truth.

The unhappy Pistoiese lived in great turmoil, injuring and killing each other. They were often fined and treated harshly by their magistrates, both justly and unjustly, and a lot of money was squeezed from them. However, the Pistoiese are by nature disagreeable, cruel, and savage men.\(^{146}\)

There are two important things to be drawn from the above text. First, Compagni informs us that Cantino, although assuring the Pistoiese that he was acting under orders, was in fact lying. The author, however, gives us no reason as to why Cantino

would lie, or for that matter, how he knows that the captain lied. It is possible that
Compagni expects his reader to deduce that Cantino lied simply to save himself from
scandal, but we do not know, for he offers no explanation of his own. The second
and most telling point is the author’s statement concerning the character of the
Pistoiese. Compagni is content to explain the behavior of these people as not
necessarily a response to the harsh treatment inflicted on them by their magistrate, but
merely because “the Pistoiese are by nature disagreeable, cruel, and savage men.”
This sort of statement is an excellent example of what Peter Burke refers to as a
“stereotyped moral explanation,” found abundantly in histories contemporary to and
preceding Compagni’s.\textsuperscript{147} In his opinion, it seems that the Pistoiese were not driven to
these rebellious acts; they were militant by nature, and this was explanation enough.

The attribution of a particular event’s cause to divine or diabolic intervention
is a common feature in “medieval” works such as Compagni’s. The following three
selections should suffice to show this. In the first passage the author discusses the
death of Pope Benedict XI and the election of Pope Clement V, the former occurring
in 1304 and the latter in 1305. He writes: “Divine justice, which often punishes in
hidden ways, and takes good pastors away from wicked people who do not deserve
them and gives them [the papal court at Avignon] instead that which their malice
deserves, took from them Pope Benedict. In June, 1305, through the will of the king
of France and the efforts of the Colonna,\textsuperscript{148} the cardinals elected pope messer
Ramondo de Got,\textsuperscript{149} archbishop of Bordeaux in Gascony, who took the name Clement
V.”\textsuperscript{150} In the second selection Compagni ends his description of the woes that the

\textsuperscript{147} Burke, \textit{The Renaissance Sense of the Past}, 16.
\textsuperscript{148} In 1305, the king of France was Philip IV, the Fair, and the Colonna was one of Rome’s most
powerful families.
\textsuperscript{149} Compagni here makes an error, for it was Bertrand de Got (Paul Johnson, \textit{The Papacy}, ed. Michael
\textsuperscript{150} Compagni, \textit{Chronicle of Florence}, III, § 12.
Pistoiese suffered under a Florentine siege by expressing: "Sodom and Gomorrah and other cities which were suddenly swallowed and their inhabitants killed met a much better fate than the Pistoiese, who died in such bitter torments. Oh how the wrath of God assailed them! How many sins had they committed, and of what sort, to merit such a violent judgement?" Finally, the author blames the devil for instigating the incident that led to the open break between the Cerchi and the Donati factions in Florence. He writes:

Because the young are easier to deceive than the old, the devil—that sower of evils—made use of a band of youths who used to ride around together. These youths gathered for dinner one evening, on the first of May, and they grew so arrogant that they decided to confront the Cerchi band and use their fists and swords against them. On that evening, which marks the return of spring, the ladies were accustomed to hold dances in the neighborhoods. The Cerchi youths encountered the Donati band, which included a nephew of messer Corso, Bardellino de' Bardi, Piero Spini, and other companions and followers, who attacked the Cerchi band with arms in hand. In that assault Ricoverino de' Cerchi's nose was slashed by one of the Donati followers (it was said to be Piero Spini, in whose home they took refuge). This blow caused the destruction of our city, because it increased the great hatred between the citizens.

These three selections demonstrate Compagni's willingness to ascribe the causes of events to forces beyond those within the control of humans. He makes no attempt to explain their causes by other more "worldly" possibilities such as social or political factors. The author seems to believe that God engineered a changing of popes to punish the papal court, that Pistoia and her citizens were under siege for some

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152 Vieri de' Cerchi and Corso Donati were prominent Florentine Guelf magnates in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. Their group enjoyed a decade of domination in the city until the champion of the people, Giano della Bella, disenfranchised them with the passage of the Ordinances of Justice, in 1293. After engineering Giano's expulsion from Florence in 1295, they split into two factions: the White Guelfs, led by Vieri de' Cerchi, and the Black Guelfs, led by Corso Donati. The following selection concerns the event that led to the open break between the White and the Black Guelfs in May, 1300 (Bornstein, introduction to *Chronicle of Florence*, by Dino Compagni, xix-xx).
misdeed(s) they had committed, and that the devil’s iniquity was the real reason why the citizens of Florence were divided.

An explanation of an event rendered in a stereotyped moral manner is also found numerous times in Giovanni Villani’s *Florentine Chronicles*. The following three passages demonstrate this very well. One theme to which the author frequently returns in his work is the use of Florence’s ancestral composition as an explanation for the bellicose nature of its inhabitants. After describing the building of Florence by the Romans in the first century before Christ’s birth, Villani informs his reader that the town was populated with the cream of the Roman crop, as well as by any Fiesolan who wanted to live there. Thus, Florentines were actually the descendants of both groups, which in Villani’s eyes, explained his city’s belligerent attitude. He writes: “And note that it is not to be wondered at that the Florentines are always at war and strive among themselves, being born and descended from two peoples so contrary and hostile and different in habits as were the noble Romans in their virtue and the rude Fiesolans fierce in war.” In another place Villani again expresses this same notion: “But our opinion is that the discords and changes of the Florentines are as we said at the beginning of this treatise—our city was populated by two peoples, divers in every habit of life, as were the noble Romans and the cruel and fierce Fiesolans; for which thing it is no marvel if our city is always subject to wars and changes and dissensions and treacheries.” Finally, at the end of a section informing us that many Fiesolans fled to Florence after their city had been captured around the year 1000 AD, Villani evinces this idea again. He states: “And note that the Florentines are always in schism, and in factions and in divisions among themselves,

\[\text{\footnotesize \cite{154} Villani, Croniche Fiorentine, I, § 38.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize \cite{155} Villani, Croniche Fiorentine, III, § 2.}\]
which is not to be marveled at... the Florentines are today descended from two peoples so diverse in manners, and who ever of old had been enemies, as the Roman people and the people of Fiesole; and this we can see by true experience, and by the divers changes and parties and factions which after the said two peoples had been united into one, came to pass in Florence from time to time.”

In these selections the author uses the city’s ancestry to explain why the Florentine people were given to internal bickering. Villani does not put forward any other opinion as to the cause of a given internal Florentine struggle. The reader is not briefed by the author on the particular political or social circumstances surrounding these events, causing the events to lose a great deal of their individuality. To Villani, it seems sufficient enough to explain these events as links in a long chain of interior Florentine conflict whose causes lie in the explosive mixture of the city’s two chief ancestors: the noble Romans and the barbarous Fiesolans. This sort of explanation might seem underdeveloped by today’s standards, but is an excellent example of the extent to which a historian in the Middle Ages was interested in causation.

The stereotyped moral explanation is also found in sections where Villani discusses foreign events. An excellent example of this is the following passage, in which the author describes the events surrounding the rise of the Black and White factions in the city of Pistoia. He writes:

In these times the city of Pistoia being in happy and great and good estate, among the other citizens there was one family very noble and puissant, not however of very ancient lineage, which was called the Cancellieri, born of one Ser Cancelliere, which was a merchant, and gained much wealth, and by his two wives had many sons...and from them were born many sons and grandsons...There arose among them through their exceeding prosperity, and through the suggestions of the devil, contempt and enmity, between them which were born of the other; and the one part took the name of the Black Cancellieri, and the

other of the Whites, and this grew until they fought together, but it was not any great affair. And one of those on the side of the White Cancellieri having been wounded, they on the side of the Black Cancellieri, to the end they might be at peace and concord with them, sent him which had done the injury and handed him over to the mercy of them which had received it, that they should take amends and vengeance for it at their will; they in the side of the White Cancellieri, ungrateful and proud, having neither pity nor love, cut off the hand of him which had been commended to their mercy on a horse manger.

By which sinful beginning, not only was the house of the Cancellieri divided, but many violent deaths arose therefrom, and all the city of Pistoia was divided, for some held with one part and some with the other, and they called themselves the Whites and the Blacks, forgetting among themselves the Guelf and Ghibelline parties; and many civil strifes and much peril and loss of life arose therefrom in Pistoia... 

In this particular text Villani is quite verbose, making this passage a great deal longer than is really necessary to relate the events he discusses. The author also tends to take the motives of one side against the other for granted. For instance, Villani informs his reader that enmity arose between the children of Ser Cancelliere and that they took up sides according to their respective mothers, but he does not tell us why, other than giving the very vague causes of “exceeding prosperity” and “the suggestion of the devil.” Furthermore, the author claims that the act of chopping off the hand of an unfortunate Black Cancelliere by his White counterparts was the trigger that ignited many violent outbreaks between the two parties, eventually dividing the city and spreading to others, but once again, the reader is given very little information. Villani does not inform us of the political, social, economic, and other situations with which Pistoia had to deal at the time, nor does he even attempt to tie any of these circumstance to the rise of the two factions. It is a very general account, but again demonstrates the author’s unwillingness or inability to look for a deeper cause than a vague term or a supernatural force.

Another cause to which Villani frequently attributes events is the intervention

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of divine or diabolic forces. This parallels Compagni, whose use of this particular cause was discussed earlier. In chapter thirty-eight of the fifth book of his *Chronicle of Florence* the author discusses the manner in which the Guelf and Ghibelline parties arose in Florence during the early thirteenth century. It demonstrates clear examples of Villani's use of this cause. At the beginning of this chapter Villani explains:

One M. Bondelmonte dei Bondelmonti, a noble citizen of Florence, had promised to take to wife a maiden of the house of the Amidei, honourable and noble citizens; and afterwards as the said M. Bondelmonte, who was very charming and a good horseman, was riding through the city, a lady of the house of the Donati called to him, reproaching him as to the lady to whom he was betrothed, that she was not beautiful or worthy of him, and saying: 'I have kept this my daughter for you; whom she showed to him, and she was most beautiful; and immediately by the inspiration of the devil he was so taken by her, that he was betrothed and wedded to her, for which thing the kinsfolk of the first betrothed lady, being assembled together, and grieving over the shame which M. Bondelmonte had done to them, were filled with the accursed indignation, whereby the city of Florence was destroyed and divided.\(^{15}\)

Then, after informing the reader that the family of the wronged woman killed Bondelmonte for his indiscretion, the author expresses his distress that such an event should so violently divide his city. He writes: "For which thing the city rose in arms and tumult; and this death of M. Bondelmonte was the cause and beginning of the accursed parties of Guelfs and Ghibellines in Florence, albeit long before there were factions among the noble citizens and the said parties existed by reason of the strifes and questions between the Church and the Empire; but by reason of the death of the said M. Bondelmonte all the families of the nobles and the other citizens of Florence were divided, and some held with the Bondelmonti, who took the side of the Guelfs, and were its leaders, and some with the Uberti, who were the leaders of the Ghibellines, whence followed much evil and disaster to our city . . . and it is believed

\(^{15}\) Villani, *Croniche Fiorentine*. V, § 38.
that it will never end, if God do not cut it short.\textsuperscript{100}

In both of these particular selections one comes to the conclusion that Villani believes the forces of good and evil are active participants in the events occurring on earth. In the first case, the author accuses the devil of inspiring M. Bondelmonte to forsake his betrothed and marry the other woman. Thus, the author believes that these forces have an impact on one’s decision making here on earth, but it is clear that Villani believes that these forces exert a tangible influence on humans, as well. In the second example he does no less than personify God, implying that God would be required to appear and end the fighting between the two factions. These two examples are additional evidence of Villani’s underdeveloped interest in causation, which becomes increasingly evident as we turn our attention to the work of Leonardo Bruni.

In Bruni’s \textit{The History of the Florentine People} one finds, in some places, the use of God and/or the devil as instruments of causation replaced with vague references to a divine power. He has not, however, ceased to attribute the cause of an event to an otherworldly force, for he still does this on occasion. What he does do is rarely use the words “God” or “devil.” For example, in the fourth book Bruni discusses the battle of Campaldino, which took place in June of 1289 between the cities of Arezzo and Florence. During the course of treating this battle, the author describes a miracle that was said to have occurred in Florence just as that city’s troops were completing their victory over their enemy. He writes: “Yet on the following night when the true report at last arrived from the army, and the manner and time when the battle took place was told, it was discovered that victory was achieved in the very same hour it was announced to the sleeping priors. This seems

\textsuperscript{100} Villani, \textit{Croniche Fiorentine}. V. § 38.
marvelous, but we have read of this happening in other places, too. And it is by no
means inappropriate to believe that the divine power by whose generosity victory was
won, with an equal generosity announced his propitious favor instantaneously to the
very persons he had favored.161 This passage is interesting, for it shows Bruni’s
willingness to accept that supernatural forces cause events, but he is not as quick to
assume that these forces and God or the devil are one and the same, like Villani was.
The author is content simply to leave this influence with the vague name of “divine
power.”

In other places Bruni uses abstract concepts to explain the reason for an
event’s occurrence, including fortune.162 This concept was not a new one in Bruni’s
day and had been employed by writers of history since classical times.163 The
following two examples demonstrate the author’s use of this concept well. In this
selection the author is describing the second battle between Rome and its enemy to
the north, Veii, which occurred in 482 BC. After relating to his reader that the
Roman camp had been taken and plundered by the Etruscans, who were then turned
away by the rallying Romans, Bruni writes: “Nothing seems to have contributed more
to the Roman victory than the excessive haste of the Etruscans in sacking the Roman
camp. For when the Etruscans, believing themselves victorious, made a rush for it,
they relaxed their own battle-order more than they should have and so were beaten by
the Romans. Hardly ever has fortune been so treacherous and so fickle as it was that
day. It appeared certain that the Romans had been beaten, but they still won.”164

161 Bruni, History of the Florentine People, IV, § 11.
162 The concept of fortune, or fortuna in Italian, played an important role in the writings of fifteenth and
sixteenth century historical writers. Denys Hay defines it as “the network of interlocking events which
made up the face of destiny.” (Denys Hay, Annalists and Historians, 114), and Renée Watkins defines
it as the external obstacles against which individual human character struggles (Renée Watkins,
Humanism and Liberty: Writings on Freedom from Fifteenth Century Florence, 6).
163 Louis Green, Chronicle into History, 24-25.
164 Bruni, History of the Florentine People, I, § 27.
Later in the first book, after describing the invasion of Rome itself by the Goths and its subsequent pillaging, Bruni explains:

Then a few days later the barbarians departed with priceless booty and a great crowd of captives. Among their prisoners was Galla Placidia, the daughter of Theodosius and sister of Arcadius and Honorius. She was dragged from the luxury of the imperial palace to the rough camp of the Goths (so strangely does Chance sometimes mix all things together), and almighty Fortune constrained her to follow the barbarian lord.\textsuperscript{165}

In these examples we find Bruni both personifying the abstract concept of fortune and attributing to it, at least in part, the causes of the aforesaid events. He does not speak of fortune as demonstrating only human emotional states such as treacherousness and fickleness, but also physical action, as when it constrained Galla to follow the Goths. Whatever human characteristic Bruni might attribute to fortune, however, it is clear that he views this concept as a factor in the causation of events. It would seem that Bruni believes that the Romans defeated the Etruscans, and the Goths captured Galla, because fortune desired it.

Another abstraction that Bruni uses very frequently in his History of the Florentine People is the concept of human nature. While human nature was addressed earlier in this chapter concerning Compagni's characterization of the Pistoiese as "by nature disagreeable, cruel, and savage men,"\textsuperscript{166} Bruni uses the term in a slightly different manner. Unlike his predecessor, who attributes a kind of barbarian nature to only certain groups like the Pistoiese, he believes that all people have more or less the same set of characteristics that make up their natures. The following excerpt demonstrates this well. In Book One Bruni describes the wars between the Romans and the Etruscans, who fought for control of Etruria, which was

\textsuperscript{165} Bruni, History of the Florentine People, I, § 52.

\textsuperscript{166} See pages 47-48, this chapter.
the land north of Rome and the Etruscan homeland. Here, after the author relates the final submission of the Etruscans to the Romans, occurring in the mid-third century BC, he writes:

And although they had subdued the Etruscans by arms, still, after the latter had surrendered themselves and their possessions into the hands of the Roman people, the victors gave them the honorable name of allies. Thenceforward, fear of war receded and Etruria was safe from armed attack, but now she was besieged, as it were, by debilitating leisure. It is a fact of human nature that, when the way lies open to greatness and honors, people are ready to better themselves; when that way is blocked, they become lifeless and do nothing. When their empire had been transferred to the Romans, and the Etruscans could neither gain honors nor put their energies into major enterprises, Etruscan virtue grew completely enfeebled. They were brought low far more by inactivity than by their enemy's sword.  

The wording in this passage is significant. Bruni, although speaking of the Etruscans and their situation, does not singularly endow that people with his believed characteristic of human nature, in this case the laziness of a people who feel that the road to their own betterment is blocked. The Etruscans simply displayed this characteristic during that particular period of their history. It was not a trait exclusive to them.

While the difference between Compagni's and Bruni's words on this subject may be subtle, it does show a difference in attitude towards causation. Compagni's account attributes the internal strife from which Pistoia had been suffering not to any social, political, or economic circumstance, but simply to the barbarian nature of the Pistoiese. Bruni's writing seems more didactic. He explains that people tend to become lazy if they are deprived of the opportunity to excel, but this is not a character flaw innate to the Etruscans, for the Roman seizure of their land had driven them to act in this manner. For Bruni, this same behavior would have been exhibited by any

\[167\text{ Bruni, } \textit{History of the Florentine People. I. § 35-36.}\]
group of people under similar circumstances.

One final matter that must be discussed in regard to Bruni's interest in causation is his excellent understanding of the interconnectedness of events. This is clearly demonstrated in the following selection. Here, the author is concerned with the events surrounding the 1282 uprising against the French forces on the island of Sicily, commonly known as the Sicilian Vespers. He explains:

At this time the son of King Charles [of Anjou], disturbed by the rebellions in Sicily, hastened from France to join his father and came to Florence with a troop of cavalry. He was received with no less applause than if his father had been lord of the city. Also in that year the city sent six hundred well-equipped knights to help Charles. They joined the king near the town of Reggio Calabria as he was making haste to cross over into Sicily. They acquitted themselves with great energy as well as loyalty at the siege of Messina and thereafter in other places.

It seems appropriate to give a brief account here of the rebellion in Sicily and the other events relating to the king, especially as these matters are so interconnected with the affairs of our city that an explanation of the former contributes greatly to the comprehension of the latter. Indeed, one cannot otherwise understand why the expeditionary force was summoned there or why they served in the places they did.

In this passage, Bruni shows us his belief that historical events are not mutually exclusive. He understands that even events occurring in a location as far away as southern Italy or Sicily have the ability to influence the actions taken by the

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* The troubles between the French and the native Sicilians began immediately after the French obtained the Kingdom of Sicily, with the help of the papacy. Their leader was Charles of Anjou, who was a younger brother of St. Louis IX of France, but lacking all his elder brother's upstanding qualities. In 1266 he defeated the Hohenstaufen Manfred, who was an illegitimate son of Emperor Frederick II, and set up a French dynasty over the kingdom. Having become accustomed to Hohenstaufen rule, the Sicilians resented their new French rulers. The tension was so great that on Easter Monday of 1282, after a French soldier had molested a married woman on her way to evening vespers services in Palermo, a riot broke out, which led to an island-wide uprising in which many Frenchman were slaughtered. In the course of the fighting, which lasted for twenty years, the Sicilians offered their crown to Peter III of Aragon, who was Manfred's son-in-law. The end result was that the island remained under the control of the French, while the Aragonese obtained the mainland (Hollister, *Medieval Europe: A Short History*, 233-34).

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Florentine Republic.

It is hard to imagine statements such as this, especially the second paragraph, appearing in a work of history written several centuries before Bruni's. The causal explanations given by men such as Giovanni Villani or Dino Compagni were less sophisticated than those of their fifteenth century compatriot. Whereas the former writers were content to attribute causation of an event to God, the devil, or even the "nature" of a particular group of people, the latter turns to abstract terms, and a vague "divine power" replaces God or the devil. With the addition of an understanding of events' interconnectedness as the above text shows, Bruni looked to the world, not to the heavens, in order to explain their occurrence.

Now we must ascertain where Antoninus' interest in causation as contained within his Summa Historialis falls in relation to the above-examined writers. If one scrutinizes this work, he or she will discover that the archbishop demonstrates a much more developed interest in causation than historians in the past have been willing to concede. It is true that the Summa contains instances in which the author attempts to explain the cause of an event in very traditional terms, and is easily able to be compared to the works of earlier writers such as Villani or Compagni. For example, in the passage below Antoninus discusses Pope Eugenius IV's (1431-1447) ongoing struggles with the Council of Basel (1431-1445), to which he devoted a great deal of time and effort during his pontificate. Eugenius had earlier been forced to disband the council, because he felt threatened by that contingent of cardinals who argued for the supremacy of the council over the pope as head of the Church. The public outcry

170 This ecumenical council affirmed the primacy of the pope against the claims of the conciliarists, who argued that a council of the Church should be superior to the pope. It also worked out decrees of union with several separated Eastern churches including Greek, Armenian, and Jacobite, none of which had any lasting or general acceptance (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., Catholic Almanac [Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1999]), 118.
was so great, however, that he was forced to reconvene it. Antoninus writes:

So that this would not inflict another schism [on the Church] with its poison, Eugenius, residing in Florence, was ready for a council in this condition with the consent of his cardinals and other ecclesiastical prelates, in public consistory, with solemn messages having already been sent out, so as not to appear acting with ill-will, a righteous zeal, or out of spite, hurled the penalty of excommunication against that apostate Amedeus and all his followers. Even if an immeasurable desire had not overcome him and he had wanted to lay open his treasury that he had accumulated over time, he would have extended his obedience enough, which still would not have surpassed the borders of his territory, and as if it had arisen violently from his own. Yet God making the best of a bad situation, allowed greediness to conquer ambition in him [Amedeus], when he did not accede to the diminution of his [Amadeus] money for the exaltation of his [Eugenius'] lofty papal office, he [Amadeus] applied himself to increasing it, reserving for himself the profit of his vacant benefices and overseeing others, from which he accumulated riches. This schism remained, however, continuously until the time of Nicholas V, the immediate successor of Eugenius.\(^{171}\)

This language might seem familiar to us, for we encountered similar phrases earlier in this chapter when we examined writers such as Villani and Compagni. We saw that the attribution of an event’s cause to divine or diabolic intervention was a common feature in the historical works written a century or two before Antoninus’ day. Here the archbishop does the same thing. He informs his reader that God was the influential factor in Amedeus’ decision to not leave his territory hell bent on war. In Antoninus’ view, the Lord has made the “best of a bad situation,” as if He was

personally responsible for abating this threat to the Church and to Eugenius. The similarity of this selection to those of the aforesaid writers of history who preceded Antoninus is undeniable. However, there are sections of the Summa in which the archbishop does demonstrate an interest in causation that was completely lacking in the works of these same authors.

Antoninus demonstrates an understanding of how events are interconnected. This was discussed earlier in this chapter in association with his contemporary Leonardo Bruni. The archbishop understands that no event occurs in a vacuum, and in order to appreciate fully the significance of a given event, one must understand those circumstances that surround it. This is clearly demonstrated by the following two excerpts. First, as Antoninus begins his description of how Florence was changed by the return of Cosimo de' Medici from exile, he informs us that: “At that time a radical change occurred in the Florentine Republic, Cosimo, having been exiled to Venice, returned to the city. But to ensure that the event is fully understood, it is first necessary to explain in detail his exile and its cause.”

Second, in a passage that discusses the general unrest occurring in Bologna in the year 1445 he writes:

When everyone thought that the provinces of Italy were ready to lay down their arms, harmony having been secured among such dukes and people, and there seemed to be no circumstances outside of Italy that would be able to break a peace concluded by such a solemn agreement, Filippo, hating the peace and quiet, and always devoting himself to extreme measures, devised a plan for a fresh war to be incited anew. For as soon as Francesco Piccinino had arrived in Piacenza, that is in the March, the man, impatient in his hatred, convinced Eugenius to drive Francesco out of Piacenza, which

172 Antoninus, Summa Historialis, Tit. XXII, cap. XIX. § 3: “Ea tempestate vehemens in republica florentina mutatio facta est, Cosmo relieato Venetias, in civitatem reducto. Sed ut plenius negotium intelligatur, oportet prius relegationem eius et causam enarrare.”

175 Here Antoninus refers to Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan, who rampaged through the countryside of Tuscany in the early 1440’s, in an attempt to further his ambitions of ruling Northern Italy (Cecilia M. Ady, The Bentivoglio of Bologna: A Study in Despotism [London: Humphrey Milford for the Oxford University Press, 1937]), 21.
was his by occupation. Having been promised both troops and money for this purpose, he turned the pope’s mind to wars, and he made him angry toward Francesco because Bologna had not been set free and to be quick to avenge wrongs, not so much his own as those of the Church, so that he incited war against that man.174

Antoninus shows us a great deal in these two passages. In his view, the impact that the exile and the return from exile of Cosimo de’ Medici had on the city of Florence cannot be fully understood without a complete relation of the surrounding circumstances which led to their occurrence. This shows his reader that he is well aware that events have a progression of sorts, from one to the next. In other words, events build on each other. The second example demonstrates the same concept. The Italian peninsula was not mysteriously enveloped by a sudden renewal of war. There was a powerful driving force behind this bellicose activity, namely Philip. Although Antoninus does not explain why Philip is so anxious for the renewal of war, as we might expect another historian such as Bruni to do, he does give us more information than his predecessors would have. The very fact that he goes into such detail concerning Philip’s plans for inciting war anew shows the archbishop’s interest in causation to be on a much deeper level than Villani or Compagni.

Although the archbishop does occasionally attribute the cause of an action to supernatural forces such as God or the devil as mentioned above, he also shows the ability to stop short of this attribution in his search for causation, thus differentiating himself from earlier writers such as Villani or Compagni. He demonstrates this well in the following passage in which he relates the story of the famous Joan of Arc. The

174 Antoninus, Summa Historialis, Tit. XXII, cap.XI, § 16: "Cum existimarent omnes Italie provincias ab armis esse quietaturas, inter tales duces populosque firmata concordia, nullaque res videretur fore qua tam solemni federe pax facta violari posset, at Philippus pacem quietemque odiens, semper novis rebus incumbens, viam excogitavit novi belli ex integro excitandi. Nam postquam Franciscus in Picenum, id est Marchiam, venerat, Eugenio persuasit vir impatiens uti ut Franciscum pelleret Piceni possessione. Ad id cum copias suas tum pecuniamopollicitus, pontificis animum ad bella inclinavit et Francisco ob non restitutam Bononiam infensus, promptumque ad injurias ulciscendas, non tan suas quam ecclesia, perpulit, ut illi bellum moveret."
archbishop begins his account with the advent of Joan to the king's service. This was a time when the king of France was in a perilous situation; the king of England had been furnishing aid to the French king's adversary, the duke of Burgundy, which aided the monarch in regaining much of the land he had recently lost to the English King. Antoninus describes the life and times of this fellow saint as follows:

At that time, however, a certain girl presented herself to the King of France, a country girl, accustomed to nourishing her flock, saying that she had been sent to assist his army, being around eighteen years of age, she provided them with a great deal of information concerning the waging of war and seizing cities. This girl rode close to her men as a soldier; she went into battle with them, uncovered her enemies' ambushes and performed many other deeds with deserving admiration: which however were guided by her soul, soon this was known. It was believed by most that the inspiration of God was the cause. Indeed there seemed to be nothing disgraceful about her, nothing superstitious; in no way did she disagree with the truth of the faith, she frequently celebrated the sacraments of the confession and communion and she attended sermons. And after many victories for the king of France, she was captured in a battle with the Burgundians along with the supplies of the French king; she was undone by these victories.175

With a story such as Joan of Arc's it would have been relatively simple for Antoninus to give credit for her accomplishments solely to God, but as this text makes clear, he stops short of doing this. He does mention that most people have attributed her spectacular achievements to Him, but the archbishop never definitively declares that he believes it himself. It must be mentioned, however, that it is difficult to discern to what extent Antoninus does or does not believe in the validity of God’s involvement in Joan’s deeds, for he offers no alternative explanation for their occurrence. What

175 Antoninus, *Summa Historialis*, Tit. XXII, cap.IX, § 7: “Tunc autem obtulit se regi Francie quedam puella, filia rustici, assueta gregem pascere, dicens se missam ad adiuvandum exercitum eius, etatis XVIII annorum vel circa, que in multis eos instrueret in bellando et civitates capiendo. Hec equitabat apte, ut miles; in exercitu ibat eum eis, insidias inimicorum detegebat et multa alia admiratione digna agebat: quo autem spiritu ducta, vix sciebatur. Credebatur magis spiritu Dei. Nichil enim inhonestum in ea videbatur, nichil superstitionis; in nullo a veritate fidei discrepabat, sacramenta confessionis et communionis frequentabat et orationes. Et post multas victorias regis Francie, in uno conflictu cum Burgundionibus copiarum regis Francie capta. ab eis occisa est.”
we can take away from the passage is that he does not specifically lend credence to
divine intervention regarding Joan’s accomplishments. He seems to be content
merely to inform his readers of the opinion of others concerning the matter, leaving
us to wonder what his own might be.

Antoninus also ascribes the causes of events solely to human origins in the
Summa Historialis. In this excerpt the archbishop describes the tenor of Rome at the
time of Pope Eugenius IV’s ascension to the See of St. Peter. The picture that he
presents is not a pleasant one. He writes:

Undoubtedly the firmness and uprightness of Pope Eugenius became
known, I will recount ever so briefly the intrigue of the lawyers and
the cunning of the women, which was manifest in the city during his
time. A certain Roman, not of feeble rank, stole certain garments not
of little value; he was seized by a senator of the city for his crime and
came to be sentenced to die. When the senator devoted his attention to
the matter, the relatives of this Roman and his friends were not able to
remove the cause from the man’s hands; from this they acquired
lawyers, who dutifully argued in public consistory the senator’s cruelty
against this man, proposing that these garments yielded little value,
like the wood suitable for a fire of which a lord would not bother to
accept. Therefore, since in so vile a manner the senator seemed to
proceed more harshly than fairness dictated, he [the accused Roman]
begged his reverence to undermine the pending cause of the other side.
But neither the lies of the lawyers nor the entreaties of his friend
produced their desired results, nor did it have the force to be removed
from the judicial investigation of the senator, who pronounced the
penalty of hanging on him. But as he was being led to his death, there
was his mother meeting [him] in the street, with women crowded
closely together, she came towards her son, pretending to kiss and bid
him one last goodbye. When they all had given place to her, having
bent down to her son, she cut the rope around his neck and hands with
a razor that she had bought with her. And having been helped by the
bystanders, fleeing through the crowd, a brawl having broken out
between the family of the senator and the multitude of people present,
that convict fleeing among those present, whoever yielded place to
him, ducking into a certain house, he escaped death.174

174 Antoninus. Summa Historialis. Tit. XXII. cap.X: Utque innotescat constantia et iustitia Eugenii,
fallacia advocatorum et astutia mulierum, quod tunc in urbe existente accidit brevissime referam.
Romanus quidam non infime condicionis pannos quosdam furatus est non modici valoris; captus a
The preceding quotation makes no allusion to any other cause of these events than human actions. It also shows that Antoninus was able to comprehend that a complex interplay existed between those participating in these events. It was not a divine power that helped the man to avert his own death, but the ruckus caused by all of his supporters in response to the touching scene of a mother wishing her son a final goodbye. It is true that the archbishop does not give his reader as much information as he could have, for he could have tried to explain why the prosecuting senator was so bent on having this man executed. However, he goes into great detail describing the situation. It is certainly more information than Villani would give us if he were to write something on this subject, but conversely, falls short of possessing Bruni’s penchant for detailed explanations.
CHAPTER THREE

SENSE OF ANACHRONISM

Burke describes the sense of anachronism as the third aspect of what he considers to be the "sense of history" in historical writing. He claims that the medieval writer of history, in most cases, did not take the differences in quality between the past and the present very seriously. It was not that these writers did not realize differences existed between the past and present; for example, they were well aware that the people of classical times were not of the Christian faith. Rather, they did not place a great deal of value on these differences, or especially concern themselves with change over time. Burke adds: "Medieval men lacked a sense of the 'differentness' of the past. They saw it in terms of the present; they projected themselves back on to the men of the past."

William J. Brandt and Georges Lefebvre make this assertion with even greater harshness by denying that the "medieval" chronicler possessed the ability to distinguish any uniqueness among historical events. In the previous chapter we discussed Brandt's opinion that the stereotypical way in which the chronicler treated historical events and persons prevented him from concerning himself with causal process. The raising of these events and persons to a category of "universal moral precepts" was the result, which, in turn, refused them their historicity. Another result of the elevation of these events and persons to such a lofty level, as Brandt says, was a very weak sense of anachronism. It prevented the chronicler from

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177 He has many names for the 'sense of anachronism,' which he uses interchangeably throughout his work, they include the sense of historical perspective, the sense of change, and the sense of the past (Burke, The Renaissance sense of the Past, 1).
178 Burke. The Renaissance sense of the Past, 1
179 Burke. The Renaissance sense of the Past, 6.
180 See Chapter Two, pages 45-46.
“distinguishing the particularity of historical phenomena and separate them from universally valid moral principles.” The same assertion is made by Georges Lefebvre in his work, *La Naissance de l’historiographie moderne*. He argues: “The inferiority of [the chroniclers’] criticism appeared in the complete absence of the idea of historical development. For them, the past was half fable, conventional, one fixed time for everyone, or on the contrary, and much more frequently, something similar to the present. Perhaps never since primitive times has anachronism been cultivated to the same degree.”181 His indictment of the chronicler seems to be even more harsh than Brandt’s, but it is clear that they both agree that a sense of the “differentness” of the past to the present was not only lacking, but barely there, if at all.

Gabrielle Spiegel, as with her opinions concerning the chronicler and his interest in causation contained within the preceding chapter, does not take so harsh a stance on this question as either Brandt or Lefebvre. While he does concede that “to the very degree that men in the Middle Ages sensed the reality of the past, they were incapable of perceiving with equal acuteness its distance,” he warns his reader not to take this to mean that these same “medieval” men whole-heartedly believed that everything was permanent and immutable.182 The opposite is actually true. These men were both philosophically and religiously conditioned to appreciate the mutability of everyday occurrences. This is shown very clearly, Spiegel asserts, in numerous texts originating in the Middle Ages, which refer to these everyday occurrences as “temporalities.”183 To the chronicler, the writing of history was a way


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of preserving the reality of time. Spiegel writes: "history creates a 'time-space' that
saves the things of the moment and establishes their relation to what has happened
and will happen."184 So, the proof that the chronicler was able on some level to
appreciate change over time, for Spiegel, was simply in the fact that they wrote
history.

The following example, taken from the Florentine History of the thirteenth-
century chronicler Ricordano Malespini and employed by Burke, is an unusually clear
example of an author having no sense of anachronism. It is given here in order to
help the reader obtain a better understanding of this concept. As Malespini discusses
the career of the Roman traitor Catiline, the author informs us that this Roman
married a woman named Belisea after he had killed her husband.185 One day, "when
queen Belisea was at Mass in the church of Fiesole on Easter morning," the centurion
went up and spoke to her.186 The problems with this passage are obvious. First,
Malespini must not have realized, or did not put much stock in, the fact that the
ancient Rome in which Catiline and his wife lived did not have the same political
structure as that of his own day. Indeed, it is interesting that the author thought
Catiline to be a king. Second, it must be stated that it would have been very difficult
for Belisea to attend a mass, on Easter morning no less, when she lived before the
time of Jesus Christ, a fact that Malespini himself knew!187 This excerpt, as stated
above, is an unusually clear example of an author having no sense of anachronism.
The historians utilized in this chapter, however, do not exhibit the lack of this concept
to such an extent.

184 Spiegel, The Past as Text, 95.
185 Burke, The Renaissance sense of the Past, 1.
186 Burke, The Renaissance sense of the Past, 1.
187 Burke informs his reader that twenty pages further on in Malespini’s work he makes mention of the
Italian town of Lucca being named Lucca “at the time that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary”
(Burke, The Renaissance sense of the Past, 2).
It is the intention of this chapter to determine the degree to which Antoninus demonstrates a sense of anachronism, by comparing examples taken from his *Summa Historialis* with those authors' works, which were discussed in the preceding chapters. First, the sense of anachronism that traditional "medieval" historians, such as Giovanni Villani, demonstrate will be discussed, as it is possible to determine from his *Chronicles of Florence*. This will be followed by an examination of the humanist Leonardo Bruni’s *History of the Florentine People* on the same grounds. Finally, the chapter ends with an analysis of Antoninus’ work, from which it will be possible to determine where his *Chronicles* falls in relation to the other histories scrutinized in this chapter.

Giovanni Villani does realize that there were peoples living in an earlier time than his not of the Christian faith. This follows what Burke tells his readers about most traditional medieval writers. In the following selection, Villani is concerned with the story of a man named Dardanus, who built a city called Dardania, which was to become the famous city of Troy. He writes: “Dardanus, as he was commanded by the answer of their god, departed from Fiesole with Apollinus, master and astrologer of his father, and with Candanzia his niece, and with a great following of his people, and came into the parts of Asia to the province which was called Phrygia (Frigia).” It is granted that this is a relatively simple example, but it demonstrates the current point being made none the less. The author is clearly aware that Dardanus is not a Christian, for he tells us that “their” god, thus differentiating it from the God in which

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108 Unlike previous chapters, Dino Compagni’s *Chronicles of Florence* will not be examined in the current chapter. The purpose of his work was to elucidate a single topic, namely the factional strife occurring in Florence at the end of the thirteenth century, especially the years 1300-1301. The short scope of his work, as well as the proximity of the period covered to his own time, makes an analysis of it regarding his sense of anachronism very difficult. Compagni’s lack of material is not a hindrance to the purposes of this chapter, however, for there are ample examples to be found in Villani’s work demonstrating the traditional “medieval” sense of anachronism.

Villani believes, commanded Troy’s founder. However, the fact that he understands two peoples separated by millennia worship different divine entities is a small achievement. In other places of Villani’s work we see an equally underdeveloped sense of anachronism.

An important characteristic that sets a traditional medieval historical writer, such as Villani, apart from later writers, like Bruni, is his lack of historical curiosity. One area in which this deficiency clearly manifests itself is in a discussion of ancient ruins. The medieval writer essentially took these monuments for granted. Peter Burke explains: “People seem not to have wondered how they [ancient ruins] got there, when they were built, or why the style of architecture was different from their own.” There are many instances in which Villani is guilty of possessing this attitude. In the following excerpt the author relates to his reader how the great leader Charlemagne used his power to rebuild Florence, which had been earlier destroyed by barbarian invasions. He writes:

> With that host of the Emperor Charles the Great and of the Romans there came whatsoever master-craftsmen there were in Rome, the more speedily to build the walls of the city and to strengthen it, and after them there followed much people; and all they who dwelt in the country around Florence, and her exiled citizens in every place, hearing the tidings, gathered themselves to the host of the Romans and of the Emperor to rebuild the city; and when they were come where today is our city, they encamped among ancient remains and ruins in booths and in tents. The Fiesolans and their followers, seeing the host of the Emperor and of the Romans so great and powerful, did not venture to fight against them, but keeping within the fortress of their city of Fiesole and in their fortified places around, gave what hindrance they might to the said rebuilding.

Villani gives us no information on these ruins, other than that they were “ancient.”

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92 Villani, *Croniche Fiorentine*, III. § 1.
He does not seem to possess any interest in how or why they had come to be there. The author gives his reader the impression that he considers these remains as simply part of the landscape of the area, rather than manmade structures with a history of their own. It would seem that Villani believed the origin of these "remains and ruins" was not important enough to mention, giving us a clear example of his limited historical curiosity.

The attitude that Villani and his contemporaries have towards law is also an area that demonstrates their underdeveloped sense of anachronism. Like ancient ruins, law was something that was taken as a given. Laws were part of a society's past and present; they were not so much created, as they were discovered. This is shown in the following passage, in which Villani discusses the reworking of Florence's current statutes at the close of the thirteenth century, with the purpose being to curb the civil discord ripping the city apart at the time. He informs us that the most wise and powerful men in Florence came together "to correct the statutes and our laws, as by our ordinances the custom was of old to do." It seems that the author believes corrections can be made to the laws because the customs of the city say that it is acceptable to do so. He does not appear to be concerned about the circumstances in which these customs began, or when they began, for that matter. It is enough for him to know that the customs "of old" exist, although this is very unspecific.

The sense of anachronism evinced by the above mentioned historian differs markedly from that shown by the famous Florentine historian Leonardo Bruni, as we shall now see. Like Villani, he discusses the ancient ruins of Florence in his History of the Florentine People. It is remarkable how much more detail he gives his reader.

\[1^{19} \text{ Villani, Croniche Fiorentine, III, § 4.}\]
\[1^{24} \text{ Villani, Croniche Fiorentine, VIII, § 1.}\]
however. Speaking of the same Florentine ruins as Villani, he writes:

And there still exists today remains of ancient buildings that must command our admiration even amidst the present splendor of Florence. There is the aqueduct that brought water to the city from sources seven leagues away, and the great theaters, at that time placed outside the walls, for the popular sports and spectacles. These theaters are now located within the city limits and built over with private residences. Also, the temple where the baptistery is now located is an outstanding ancient structure which the pagans dedicated to Mars.

Out of nostalgia or love for their old homes, the colonizers seem to have consciously imitated Rome in their planning of the city and in the construction of buildings. They built themselves a capitol and a forum, in the same configuration as was found in Rome, and they had baths for public cleanliness and an arena for watching games and spectacles. The temple of Mars was built in the same spirit of emulation, for it was to this god that the Romans, superstitiously, traced their ancestry. They were so eager to affirm their relationship to Rome, in fact, that they liked to copy less important structures as well, even at tremendous expense. They brought water in by aqueduct which was reasonable in Rome where all the local water was chalky, but superfluous in Florence where perfectly pure water springs up in abundance. It seems likely, moreover, that their private houses matched their public buildings in magnificence, though the evidence that this was the case is less abundant.

Whereas Villani merely mentions the “ancient ruins” among which Charlemagne’s men encamped, Bruni gives us a great deal more information. He not only informs his reader of the various kinds of structures that these colonizers built, but how they attempted to lay out the town in emulation of their beloved Rome. He demonstrates a thorough knowledge of certain ruins and their locations, including the temple that used to stand where the baptistery does now, and “which the pagans dedicated to Mars.” This description does not merely take these ancient remains and ruins as a given, as Villani’s does. Bruni is most definitely interested in why these structures

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15 Earlier in this same section, but not quoted here, Bruni informs us that Roman veterans, who had served under the famous general and later dictator, Sulla, founded Florence.

16 Bruni, History of the Florentine People, I, § 4-5.
were built and how they got there.

Another way in which one can see that Bruni's sense of anachronism is more developed than that of his preceding writers of history is the distinctions he makes concerning the evolution of language over time. Bruni was a Humanist, meaning that one of his chief concerns in writing was to emulate the eloquent Latin style and word usage of the classical world's most distinguished authors. Therefore, he was well aware that language and words changed over time, in both meaning and spelling. For there would be no need to make a conscious effort to emulate classical authors in these areas if the manner in which they wrote had not changed in the period between classical times and Bruni's own day. For this reason, it is not surprising to find the following passage in his work. Here, after the author describes how the Roman settlers of the neighboring hills around Florence started to form settlements in the Arno river valley, he writes: "The new city located between these two waterways [the Arno and Mugnone rivers] was at first called Fluentia and its inhabitants Fluentini. The name lasted for some time, it seems, until the city grew and developed. Then, perhaps just through the ordinary process by which words are corrupted, or perhaps because of the wonderfully successful flowering of the city, Fluentia became Florentia." The author does not give us any further information on this topic, but it is clear that he realizes the way in which words are used and spelled change over time. Having an understanding of this important concept, Bruni exhibits what is not as prevalent in the works of earlier writers such as Villani and Malespini.

One can also learn much about Bruni's conception of the "differentness"
between the past and present by looking at the words themselves that he uses in his writing. There are numerous instances in his *Historiae* where he does not use the language that one might expect, instead opting to utilize a word or phrase that is associated with an earlier time period, usually ancient Roman. This practice tends to "classicize" the description that he gives; thus, again demonstrating his awareness of the change that has occurred in the way Latin has been written over the years. For example, after a horrendous loss suffered by the Florentine army at the hands of its neighboring city of Siena, Bruni informs us that certain Florentine citizens decided to leave the city. He tells us that "grief began anew for those who were leaving behind in one moment their country, *their homes* [my emphasis], and everything they held dear." What is interesting is that he does not use an ordinary, generic term for "their homes," such as *domus suum*, but *penates*, a word that was very significant in ancient Roman life. Bruni individualizes and adds greater importance to the homes of these fleeing people by employing an archaic word out of its historical context.

Word usage of this type abounds throughout his work. In referring to the Guelf Party, which was a political organization controlled by the Florentine oligarchy and utilized in the ongoing struggles with their Ghibelline enemies, he uses the term *optimae partes*. This is very similar to the term employed by classical Roman writers such as Cicero and Caesar in speaking of the aristocratic element in a society,

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200 *Penates* did not literally mean “home” in the ancient Roman world, but “household gods,” or “spirits of the cupboard or pantry.” Every household had their own personal set of *penates*, which served as guardians of the home. This function, needless to say, gave the *penates* a very significant place among the other worshipped gods of the ordinary Roman (Hankins, footnote 40 to Book Two of *History of the Florentine People*, by Leonardo Bruni, 492; Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 362 n. 14).
202 Bruni, *History of the Florentine People*, II, § 86.
He also refers to the Florentine Baptistery as antiquus Martis templum (old temple of Mars) or Martis aedes (temple of Mars) in several places, making reference to the legend that there was once a temple dedicated to this god on the same site. In order to utilize words in this manner, a writer must have a sophisticated sense of the ways in which the present is qualitatively different from the past. All of these examples demonstrate well that indeed Bruni had this sense.

We will now discern Antoninus' place among these other writers of history. It must be admitted at the outset, however, that this particular aspect of Burke's model is the most difficult of the three to hold up to the Summa Historialis of the archbishop and come to as certain a conclusion as with the first two. This is the case for a simple reason. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Antoninus is predominantly a compiler in the early titles of his work, meaning that he is content to restate previous authors' relations of events, sometimes even verbatim, instead of writing his own accounts of them. This presents a problem for one concerned with his sense of anachronism, for it is very difficult to ascertain the archbishop's feel for the "differentness" of those living well before him if he has not written anything on his predecessors of much earlier times. It is true, as also mentioned in the introductory chapter, that Antoninus does place some original passages in his early titles, but they simply do not contain any significant, usable examples for the purposes of this chapter. Therefore, it has become necessary to draw on what is to be found in the latter titles of his Summa Historialis, which is difficult, because the latter titles treat events much closer to the archbishop's own time period. These latter titles, however.

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304 Bruni, History of the Florentine People, II, § 101; also, IV, § 13.
305 Hankins, footnote 70 to Book Two of History of the Florentine People, by Leonardo Bruni. 494.
306 See pages 1-2 of the first chapter.
307 See page 2 of the first chapter.
do yield enough information to give us at least some idea of his 'sense of anachronism.'

There are instances in which Antoninus demonstrates a limited understanding of the differences between the past and the present. The archbishop, at times, takes the same attitude to Villani on the law. Just like his predecessor, he tends to see law as something that has always been there from time immemorial. In the following example, Antoninus is ending his retelling of Vincent of Beauvais’ account of the friendship between two men, Amicus and Amelius. He augments this account by expressing his doubts as to the validity of the tale. If it is fiction, the archbishop tells us, it proves to be a touching story of real, true friendship. If it is true, however, he writes: “This that has been said and written about Amicus and Amelius: it can be doubted as to whether it is truly history or fiction put forth in order to show the powerful force of friendship. . . . But, if it was truly history: which, however, other historians have not mentioned: it is very much singular and venerable: but not impossible for Him, who is capable of all things when He wishes. Yet, it is contrary to the universal and common law of God, as well as the peculiar [law] of the Church. For the law of God prohibits homicide let alone parricide: which Amelius committed, albeit for the curing of Amicus, and the law of the Canon forbids a duel: which Amicus entered upon for Amelius due to the dishonor brought about by him: because of this it is not to be imitated.”

It is clear from the above that the author sees law as something all encompassing and immutable. He does differentiate between the law

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Antoninus, *Summa Historialis*, Tit. XIV, cap. III, § 3. Quoted in Walker, *Chronicles*, 126: “Hec que dicta et scripta sunt de Amico et Amelio: utrum sit vera historia an fictio edita ad ostendendum potentem vigorem amicitie dubitari potest...Si autem fuit vera historia: quam tamen alii historiographi non ponunt: valde miranda et veneranda est: non tamen impossibilis et qui omnia potest quam voluerit. Et quia in aliquibus est contra communem et publicam legem dei et privatam canonum prohibet enim lex dei homocidium nedum parricidium: quod Amelius perpetravit etsi pro sanatione Amici et duellum vetat lex canonum: quod suscepit Amicus pro Amelio de stupro perpetrata ab eo: ideo in his non imitanda.”
of God and that of the Church, but he goes no further, completely leaving out secular law. It seems to be of no concern to him whether these offenses are allowed under the laws of kings and princes. It would be difficult to imagine a passage of this type appearing in the work of a historian such as Bruni, who wrote at around the same time as Antoninus, but was much more concerned with secular matters, as we have seen.

Antoninus does show a certain ability, however, to differentiate between what was and was not in vogue in a particular time period. In the following passage the archbishop explains to the reader why he has doubts about certain miracles that were said to have occurred during the life of St. Hilary (c. 315-368) and were in connection with a Pope Leo. He is troubled because this particular pope is not mentioned in any of the chronicles that he has consulted, not even as an antipope. Antoninus knows that there was a Pope Liberius at that time, but no Leo. He writes:

In truth, because no one is clearly to be found at that time to have been in the papacy named Leo: therefore, in agreement with the history of these miracles above, where both Vincent [of Beauvais] and Joco [John of Colonna] said that it may be stated that Pope Liberius, who was well disposed towards Constantine and other Arians, had two names: and was called both Leo and Liberius. For the custom had not yet been introduced into the Church: that upon the creation of a pope, his name was changed. Indeed, it is clear that this Liberius was pope at the time of Hilary. Or perhaps there was some other antipope called Leo around that time in Church history, but neither in the tripartite nor in the chronicle of Jerome is any of this mentioned: therefore, it is considered an uncertain matter.

Arianism was the most troublesome of the Church's early heretical movements. Its main tenant was the denial of the divinity of Christ. Authorized by Arius of Alexandria, this movement went to the extent of organizing its own churches and hierarchies, and raised general havoc in the Church for several centuries. Finally, it was condemned at the famous Council of Nicaea in 325 AD (Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., Catholic Almanac, 113).

The archbishop evinces something important in this paragraph; he is at least somewhat aware that there is change over time. He agrees with both John of Colonna and Vincent of Beauvais that this Pope Leo was possibly known by two names, which is nothing out of the ordinary. He adds, however, that the reason for this could be due to the practice of a newly elected pope choosing a different, more papal, name had not yet come into style. Thus, he implies that this possible explanation must be eliminated from consideration. He is aware of the practice of the early Church’s popes to not change their names, and that this differs from the practice of the later popes, who adopt a new one. By giving this explanation, Antoninus demonstrates an awareness of change over time.
CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have examined Archbishop Antoninus of Florence's "sense of history" in the same manner other scholars have examined works of history contemporary to and preceding it. By examining those portions of Antoninus' *Summa Historialis* original to him, I have shown that while superficially displaying many elements of a chronicle lacking innovation, the archbishop possessed certain elements that were to become fixtures in the historiographical tradition of the "Renaissance," especially a "sense of the past." I have conducted this study in terms of Peter Burke's approach to the examination of chronicles, which includes searching a source for the presence of an awareness of evidence, an interest in causation, and a sense of anachronism. In addition, it was not the intention of this thesis to place Antoninus' work into a broad category such as "medieval" or "Renaissance," but to follow Louis Green's manner of viewing chronicles, which entails viewing the *Summa Historialis* as a work more suitably indicative of the transition period between the traditional method of writing history common in the Middles Ages and the method that developed during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Italy. The final appraisal is that the *Summa Historialis*, although evincing an organization and style that might lead scholars to characterize it as fitting the traditional mode, nevertheless possesses some "sense of the past." Thus revising those scholarly studies that were content to dismiss Antoninus' work as being little more than a continuation of the traditional method of historical writing.

This thesis would be remiss, however, if no attempt were made to explain the ambivalence that faces the reader of Antoninus' *Summa Historialis* as he or she turns from one page to the next. Those sections of the archbishop's work original to him are a hodgepodge of accounts of historical events; some demonstrating what modern
scholars would consider to be representative of the age in which he wrote, and the others evincing little to no innovation when compared with earlier chronicles written in a truly ‘medieval’ manner. As we have seen in his Summa, Antoninus goes to the extreme of rejecting the textual authenticity of information found in one of the most revered texts produced during the Middles Ages, the Decretals, thus showing an impressive depth of source criticism. On the other hand, the archbishop is guilty at times of evincing an attitude towards his evidence that is entirely uncritical, as with his relation of the Franciscan Thomasuccio’s demonstration of prophetic abilities. The same equivocal attitude can also be found with regards to the archbishop’s interest in causation and sense of anachronism as has been shown in Chapters Two and Three of this thesis. How is it possible for such contrasting methods of historical writing to appear within a work written by one man? The answer lies in Antoninus’ unique position among his contemporary writers of history.

Before Antoninus reluctantly accepted the position of archbishop of Florence in 1446, which was to be the apogee of his rise through the ranks of secular ecclesiasticism, we must remember that he had his start as a simple Dominican Friar. Being feeble of body from an early age, Antoninus joined the Order of Preachers as a youth of only seventeen years. As with any member of the order, the future archbishop received monastic training in the Dominican style, which significantly influenced the manner in which he would write his history. The objectives of the Dominican way of life are contemplation and the practice of apostolic activity. They can not be pursued without constant study, ultimately leading one to “grasp the supernatural truths of the faith which he needs to propagate them zealously and clearly.” For the purposes of this conclusion, we will focus on this “constant study”

These examples can be found on pages 38-39 and 35-36 of Chapter One, respectively.

Hinnebusch, Dominican Spirituality, 18.
that is expounded in the *Dominican Constitutions*.

The *Constitutions* exhort the members of the Order to study assiduously sacred truth “as a fundamental means for attaining the Order’s ends,” namely the care of souls. St. Dominic made it clear on many occasions that this study of and search for sacred truth should be conducted by the reading of the Holy Scriptures. He not only exhorted his friars often to this end, but also forbade a priory’s establishment without providing it with a professor as well as a prior, incorporated an academic code for students, and allowed the friars “to read, write, pray, sleep, and also, those who wish, to stay up at night to study.” Thus, Antoninus’ monastic training taught him to focus on extensive Biblical study with the ultimate purpose being the saving of souls. In addition to this, as William A. Hinnebusch explains: “The study of sacred truth is the Dominican’s primary preparation for preaching, but when obedience sends him into activities other than preaching, he is then committed to the study of every area of truth which will make his work for souls a success.”

So, from Antoninus’ perspective as a Dominican trained scholar who chose to write a work of history, it was less important for his purposes to engage in a complex search for the cause of an event, or a relation of it to another earlier event, or even a criticism of the source from which it came. Antoninus had as his foremost goal in writing history the care for his reader’s soul, which he hoped to save by putting forward a work “declaring the praises of the Lord, and his Powers, and his wonders which he hath done .... That they may put their hope in God and may not forget the works of God: and may seek his commandments.” In one sense, then, the archbishop was simply writing history.

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213 Hinnebusch, *Dominican Spirituality*, 16.
214 Hinnebusch, *Dominican Spirituality*, 16. Here Hinnebusch is citing a passage from the *Dominican Constitutions*.
215 Hinnebusch, *Dominican Spirituality*, 16.
216 In the Prologue to his *Chronicles*, Antoninus opens with these lines from Psalm Ixxvii, which he follows with a commentary in which he vaguely sets out his intentions in the writing of this work.
in the manner in which his monastic training had taught him to do so. Thus
explaining the occasions in which he demonstrated an underdeveloped "sense of
history."

One must remember, however, that Antoninus' life spanned a period rife with
change in the field of Italian historiography. The archbishop lived in an era that was
in transition from the traditional, or what modern scholars view as the "medieval,"
manner of writing history to what is considered to be the modern style, which
includes such innovations as a high degree of source criticism and a more thorough
search for causation. Antoninus' position as the archbishop of Florence and more to
the point how he conducted himself as archbishop gave him ample exposure to any
changes occurring within his archdiocese. As mentioned in the introduction to this
thesis, Antoninus spent his time as archbishop working for the betterment of the
Church, performing services such as reforming the manner in which the episcopal
palace functioned, as well as taking a personal interest in the administration of his
rural parishes. Additionally, he was even forced on occasion to intervene in secular
affairs against the powerful Medici rulers of the city. It is difficult to imagine that
with the extent to which Antoninus paid attention to detail and evinced a nature that
was so inquisitive and inclined towards learning, he would not have also been
intimately aware of how the writing of history was changing around him, for it was a
subject so near and dear to his heart.

The ways in which he presumably found history to be changing, however,
were not always at odds with his own intellectual training. I believe that this in
certain cases allowed Antoninus to integrate new ideas into the Summa Historialis,
thus providing it with sections of writing that displayed a much more modern tenor

(Walker, Chronicles, 105).
*See pages 3-4 of the introduction to this thesis.*
than earlier works. A perfect example of this is the correlation found between the Dominican search for sacred truth and Bruni’s attempt to discover truth through the writing of history. As mentioned both above and in the introduction to this thesis, Antoninus was trained in the Dominican Order, which has as its chief objective the care of souls through the attainment of sacred truth from biblical study. Whereas Bruni believed history was to contain utility, which meant that it helped to show people what to do and what not to do by describing the actions of those who had lived earlier. In order to accomplish this goal, history had to be “true;” the historian’s discovery of the truth became the most important aim for Bruni.

If one examines both of these notions carefully, a remarkable similarity between the two can be seen. It seems that Bruni’s search for truth is simply the secular expression of the monastic Dominican idea of the search for sacred truth. Both of which have essentially the same purpose: to set an example for the general population as to how one should behave by relating events of the past and pointing out the appropriate and inappropriate ways in which their predecessors had carried themselves. It is clear that Antoninus would not have had to stray too far from his intellectual and spiritual training to embrace and apply such ideas to the study of history. Thus explaining his ability and/or willingness to demonstrate a relatively sophisticated understanding of such concepts as causation, anachronism, and source criticism. The era in which the archbishop lived made his writing style possible, for modern historical writing did not exist for men such as Villani and Compagni to utilize.

In my opinion the ambivalence evinced by Antoninus in his *Summa Historialis* was the result of his monastic intellectual and spiritual training in the Dominican style and his involvement in the secular world in which he was forced to
participate as the archbishop of Florence. Unlike other contemporary writers, he saw
the world in which he lived with a combination of excitement and concern. He was
excited because the writer and scholar within him realized the ways in which the
practice of historical writing was changing, and he wanted to explore these changes
that men such as Leonardo Bruni and other Humanists were developing. On the other
hand, he had been a religious since he was seventeen and had received the majority of
his education from monks who were trained to study in a very traditional manner.
Therefore, Antoninus was not initially prepared to produce history in any other way
than he had been taught, which must have concerned him. Thus, in the end he
produced a work of history that was a combination of both styles. While in many
ways containing no innovation when compared with his predecessors’ works written
in what modern scholars would label a ‘medieval’ style, the author of the *Summa
Historialis* does display to a remarkable degree an awareness of evidence, an interest
in causation, and a sense of anachronism. This is something that previous scholars of
Antoninus’ work did not take into consideration.
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