

‘That peace shall always dwell among them and true love be upheld’: Charity, the Seven Works of Mercy, and Lay Fellowship in Late Medieval and Early Reformation England

by

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(History)
in the University of Michigan
2014**

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For my grandmother, Edwinia M. Middleton

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Kit French and Tom Green for their constant support, encouragement, and advice. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to Gwyn Awai, Christine Asidao, and Kiyana Horton for their innumerable kindnesses. Lastly, I would like to thank the Medieval Academy, the Center for the Education of Women, and the Institute for Research on Women and Gender for generously funding my research.

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Abstract

This study utilizes legal documents, literature, religious drama, art, and material culture in a two-fold examination of the gendering of the Christian virtue of charity as effected through the works of mercy. First, it explores charity as a “religious ideology” imagined by clerics, who sought to shape lay conduct through a catechetical program that both implicitly and explicitly advocated different methods of charitable living for men and women. By situating clerical pedagogy within medieval gender theories, this dissertation considers how the clergy adapted their teachings on charity to accommodate men’s and women’s social roles. Second, focusing on the county of Lincolnshire, it investigates the different ways men and women responded to this clerical educational initiative in their religious practices and in daily life. By foregrounding the central role women played in the practice of the works of mercy, and considering ecclesiastical mechanisms of control and uniformity in conversation with the varying responses of the laity (reception and practice), this project demonstrates that late medieval catechesis had deeper social resonance than scholars have hitherto allowed.

Charity was a fundamental component of medieval Christian doctrine, essential to understanding medieval piety. Therefore, this dissertation’s assessment of the effects clerical didactic efforts had on ordinary English men and women as they practiced their religion sheds light on a crucial aspect of medieval culture. It considers the influence of the clergy’s educational program by examining the laity’s performance of charity through an investigation of their charitable bequests, the corporate behavior of parish guilds, and sanctions against disobedience found in ecclesiastical and civic court records. By thus addressing the relationship between

prescription and action between 1388 and 1534, this study traces evolving interpretations of a key Christian value, charity, at a crucial time in Christian history. In addition, this dissertation explores the gendered conceptions of charity that complicated the relationship between religious instruction and practice. While gendering charity gave women's work a spiritual imperative and religious significance, it simultaneously reinforced traditional gender roles. Finally, a focus on the local contexts of lay catechetical appropriation demonstrates that pre-Reformation religious education affected laypeople more profoundly than earlier Reformation scholars had imagined.

Introduction

As a result of the Gregorian reform movement, the seven sacraments became the defining elements of Christian religious belief and practice in the twelfth century; they remained so throughout the course of the Middle Ages. The sacramental experience for medieval people was “profoundly social.”¹ In particular, the sacraments of baptism, communion, and penance provided a religious framework that helped delineate communal boundaries. Baptism both constituted and entered one into the Christian community of believers, while the Eucharist and penance maintained one’s position in that community.² The sacramental ritual of the Eucharist, which enacted charity and communal harmony, was the central rite of the medieval Church. Eucharistic piety and its attendant language helped clerics fashion a moral worldview in which “reception of the Eucharist could be experienced beneficially only by those who lived in a certain type of virtue, or who made amends for trespasses through the penitential system of the Church.”³ This penitential system operated both internally and externally—penitents’ contrition reconciled their souls to God and the payment of “penitential debt” in the form of the performance of good works made restitution for sin.⁴ In short, admittance to the Church’s Eucharistic community required adherence to a doctrine of religious charity, which was most

¹ Eamon Duffy, “Lay Appropriation of the Sacraments in the Later Middle Ages,” *New Black Friars* 77 (1996), 59.

² Norman P. Tanner and Sethina Watson, “The Least of the Laity: The Minimum Requirements for a Medieval Christian,” *Journal of Medieval History* 32 (2006), 398.

³ Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1.

⁴ Barbara H. Rosenwein and Lester K. Little, “Social Meaning in Mendicant Spiritualities,” *Past and Present* (1974), 24.

ideally expressed through sacralized good works called the seven works of corporeal and spiritual mercy. These merciful works memorialized the physical and spiritual sufferings of Christ. As such, lived charity, which demonstrated the love of God through benevolence towards one's fellows, was a seminal component of medieval Christianity.⁵

Charity as expressed through the works of mercy played a central role in the medieval Church's catechetical program. Theologians conceptualized charity as a debt owed in satisfaction for Christ's sacrifice on the cross; the Crucifixion was a work of mercy that Christ performed to redeem humanity.⁶ The purchase of humanity's sins with Christ's life represented a contract between God and mankind.⁷ Therefore, upholding the contract with merciful works as debt payment was integral to both the salvation of individuals and communities. On Judgment Day, Christians would answer to Christ about their practice of works of mercy, and these answers would determine how he separated the saved from the damned. The centrality of charity to salvation made its correct enactment a chief preoccupation of medieval Christians. Clerics exhorted laypeople to charitable living with sermons and produced prescriptive and proscriptive works for spiritual guidance. Pious laypeople in turn used the practice and language of charity to

⁵ According to theologians like Thomas Aquinas, there were three cardinal virtues on which the life of a good Christian should be based: charity, hope, and faith. Of these three virtues, charity was widely considered to be the most important and the foundation upon which the other two rested, Gustaf Holmstedt, ed., *Speculum Christiani: A Middle English Religious Treatise of the 14th Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 46. Thomas Aquinas deemed charity to be the seminal Christian virtue. In his *Summa Theologiae*, he wrote that "Charity is higher than faith or hope, and, consequently, than all the virtues," and also that "There can be no true virtue without charity," James W. Brodman, *Charity and Religion in Medieval Europe* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University Press of America, 2009), 26. Christian charity was tripartite. It was comprised of three types of love: firstly, the love of God, secondly, the love of self, which made peace between the spirit and the flesh, and thirdly, the love of neighbor, Thomas Frederick Simmons, ed., *The Lay Folks Mass Book* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 52.

⁶ Federico Botana, *The Works of Mercy in Italian Medieval Art, c. 1050-c.1400* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2011), 3.

⁷ Ibid.

inform their social interactions with one another. Although charity was an organizing principle in medieval society, which both clergy and laypeople used to structure and negotiate social relationships, scholarship on the subject has been narrow in scope. Modern scholars have primarily limited the meaning of charity to financial relief—drastically underestimating the wide range of connotations it had for medieval people. Early scholarship on charity has not looked at charity as a comprehensive religious ideology.⁸ As a result, many historians have failed to explore possible variances in the interpretation of charity by the clergy and laity, consider the different ways in which men and women understood charity and then practiced it, examine changes in the meaning of charity over time, or look at the differences in the meanings and practice of charity in urban and rural contexts. Charity also included amity, neighborliness, religious fellowship, and affectivity as expressed by endeavoring to live in harmony with one's fellows, performing good works for the benefit of one's neighborhood, and strengthening the bonds of local community.

This introduction first briefly traces the development of charity's role in medieval religious practice to situate it within the broader history of medieval piety. It then examines the emergence of a lay piety centered on the Seven Works of Mercy, and argues that late medieval lay piety can be characterized by an understanding of religion in which salvation was an active

⁸ The concept of charity as a “religious ideology” is borrowed from James W. Brodman's work on charity in medieval Europe. Brodman argues that religious charity constituted an ideology, and was not just a set of institutions. Alms were only one dimension of religious charity, which was the love of god as demonstrated through love of one's fellows, 9. Charity included affect and practice—it was a system of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Before Brodman's book, Miri Rubin's *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* was one of the only works devoted to medieval charity. In line with Brodman's criticisms that historians have focused on charitable institutions to the detriment of trying to understand charity as widely encompassing religious and social ideology, Rubin looks ecclesiastical institutions without much attention lay charity performed at the parish level. See Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

participatory process. Next, it surveys some of the historiographical debates concerning the study of medieval charity, and defines the key concepts of community and neighborliness. Laypeople could achieve salvation through an outward performance of the works of mercy that was motivated by an inner state of Christian charity. This understanding of charity was deeply influenced by mendicant piety, especially that of the Franciscans, who added to the practice of the works the element of affective interpersonal bonds between Christians. Practicing the works of mercy expanded opportunities for salvation by enabling laypeople, particularly women (and even the poor), to actively demonstrate love for God using their neighbors and fellows as vehicles for redemptive charitable works. The affective aspects of late medieval charity broadened the conceptions of the works of mercy, and made the interpersonal relationships between neighbors central to lay piety. Scholars have been slow to recognize the expansive nature of late medieval ideas about charity. Therefore, ultimately, this introduction and the chapters that follow, advocate for an expansion of the definition of charity to include the structuring of interpersonal relationships for a more accurate understanding of late medieval religious practices.

Charity as a Religious Ideal

The earliest patristic writings enjoined Christians to practice charity. The concept of charity, however, did not remain static over the course of the Middle Ages. Due to the influence of ecclesiastical reform movements and the emergence of urban-oriented mendicant orders, religious instruction regarding the character and proper practice of charity underwent a number of changes over the course of the late medieval period.⁹ The theologians of the early church

⁹ In her work on charity, Eliza Buhrer argues that early medieval Latin writings conceived of charity, or *caritas*, as the divine love between God and humanity, and that this type of love was

were deeply concerned with explicating and elucidating the doctrine of charity for the benefit of the community of believers. They advocated for an understanding of charity—in the broadest sense of the term—that relieved both spiritual and material suffering, and that was reciprocal in nature. For example, in the late fourth century, the Patriarch of Constantinople, John Chrysostom (d. 407) wrote that charity was not mere words, but a way of taking care of others “and a putting forth of itself by works, as, for instance, by relieving poverty, lending one’s aid to the sick, rescuing from dangers, to stand by them that be in difficulties, to weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice.”¹⁰ His conception of charity coupled the financial relief of material circumstances with the compassion and love characteristic of Christian fellowship. St. Hilary of Poitiers (d. 367) and Pope Leo the Great (r. 440-61) stressed the reciprocal character of charity explaining respectively “perfect love satisfies every obligation of a universal charity, since he who bestows upon another as much as he does upon himself does not remain in debt to anyone for anything” and “Let those who want Christ to spare them have compassion for the poor.”¹¹ Augustine (d. 504) likened the works of mercy to the sacraments of baptism and penance; works of mercy helped to constitute the Church as did baptism, and they

often viewed of in opposition to the affection that one was meant to cultivate for their neighbor. Taking her definition from Paul in Corinthians, she argues that early understandings of *caritas* understood it to be the “bond of love between man and God,”—any care for the poor was of secondary import, “From Caritas to Charity: How Loving God Became Giving Alms,” in *Poverty and Prosperity in The Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, eds., Cynthia Kosso and Anne Scott (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2010), pp. 114-5. She posits that charity as poor relief did not start with the mendicants in the thirteenth-century, but can be found earlier in Old English and Carolingian homilies. I argue that late medieval conceptions of charity encouraged the love of God through love of neighbor, and that this love of neighbor was affective and material.

¹⁰ Brodman, 11.

¹¹ Ibid.

reconciled the sinner to God and community in the way that penance did.¹² For Christians, the practice of charity would please God, but more importantly would secure his favor. God rewarded the charity and mercy Christians showed to each other with his own divine charity and mercy.

The twelfth century was a turning point in the conception and practice of charity in medieval Europe. Two intellectual shifts characterize this turning point; first, a shift in the conception of poverty, and second, a shift in thinking about the ideal Christian lifestyle and proper way to demonstrate love for God. James Brodman argues that “there arose, beside the sanctified poverty of the monk, the material need of the pauper, whose want was hallowed through an association with Christ.”¹³ Theologians like Ambrose, Peter the Chanter, Stephen Langton, and Thomas Aquinas asserted that poverty was a burden on the poor, and the relief of that poverty through charity constituted acts of restitution (to God), justice (towards the poor), and the proper stewardship of wealth and goods.¹⁴ Addressing the material needs of the less fortunate became imbued with a spiritual imperative; wealthy laypeople could achieve salvation through pious giving, and the poor acquired a sanctified position in society as well as a spiritual currency in the form of prayers offered for their benefactors. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries also witnessed debates surrounding the ideal Christian lifestyle. Ascetics like Bernard of Clairvaux argued for the contemplative cloistered life of monks and nuns, while Innocent III, Francis of Assisi, and Thomas Aquinas felt an active life of charity towards neighbors and

¹² Allan D. Fitzgerald, “The Seven Works of Mercy,” in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, 558.

¹³ Brodman, 15.

¹⁴ Rubin, *Charity and Community*, pp. 58-64.

fellows would be the most pleasing to God.¹⁵ This latter active was one “apostolic action,” and was suited to pious laypeople living in the world. The performance of merciful works to Christ’s poor was a hallmark of this apostolic lifestyle.¹⁶

Innocent III played a pivotal role in promoting the active life, encouraging charity, and reforming clerical and lay religious education. In his influential 1195 treatise, *De miseria condicionis humanae*, he linked charity, the works of mercy, and neighborliness by arguing that the uncharitable offended both God and neighbor by withholding the debt they owed to God and failing to love their neighbors as they loved themselves. This failure would be rectified on Judgment Day when God would abandon them, saying, “Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire.”¹⁷ He also wrote two additional works on charity and alms in the early thirteenth century, the *Libellus de eleemoysna* and the *Encomium Caritatis*. In the *Libellus de eleemoysna*, Innocent III characterized charity as “a life-long commitment to the well-being of one’s neighbors,” advising, “It is good to pray, but it is better to give alms because alms do both, descend toward one’s neighbor and ascend toward God...it is better to pray with works than with words.”¹⁸ He encouraged an “activist spirituality” in the *Encomium Caritatis* by privileging an active life of virtue over monastic models of asceticism and contemplation.¹⁹

Innocent III’s notion of an “activist spirituality,” which encompassed active charity and promoted virtuous secular living became codified when he presided over the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. In addition to addressing issues of heresy, which sought to define the boundaries of the Church (as a community of believers) and legislating against the establishment

¹⁵ Brodman, 4.

¹⁶ Ibid., 16.

¹⁷ Ibid., 21.

¹⁸ Ibid., 23.

¹⁹ Ibid., 25.

of new religious orders, the Council attempted to standardize and improve clerical and lay religious education. It decreed that all Christians were obligated to make an annual confession of their sins to their parish priest at Easter in order to do penance and in preparation to receive communion. The immediate consequences of this decree were two-fold; parishioners needed to be educated on basic Christian tenets so that they could avoid sin and fully understand the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist. And parish priests needed to have the proper knowledge of Christian doctrine to provide their parishioners with fundamentals of the faith.²⁰ Annual confession provided parishioners the opportunity for salvific contrition, penance, and reconciliation as well as giving local clergy a chance to assess parishioners' understanding of religious doctrine and correct errors in belief if necessary.²¹

The emergence of mendicant movements, like the Franciscans and Dominicans, in the early thirteenth century had a significant influence on the development of ideas about charity. They advocated for a shift away from privileging the contemplative spirituality of the cloister towards the broadening of the avenues of salvation for laypeople by encouraging active good works in secular life. Innocent III's Fourth Lateran Council formally sanctioned the Franciscan order, and the following year in 1216, Pope Honorius III licensed the Dominicans. While both orders were based in medieval cities, mendicant preaching and writings enjoyed a wider audience than just city-dwellers. The Franciscans in particular offered novel understandings of poverty and charity. In his *Regula non bullata* (1221), Francis of Assisi wrote:

And let them love one another as the Lord says: 'This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you' [Jn 15.12]. And let them show their love by

²⁰ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale, 1992) pp. 53-4.

²¹ Gillis Kristensson, ed., *John Mirk's Instructions for Parish Priests*, Lund Studies in English 49 (1974), pp. 114-117.

the works they do for each other, according as the Apostle says: ‘Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.’ [1 Jn 3.18]²²

In this text Francis advocated for a “fraternal charity,” which unlike the internal fellowship of the cloister, was oriented outward towards the world, where the notion of “fraternity” included all Christians.²³ Francis connected the spiritual concept of charity as love of God and neighbor with the idea that this love could be manifested in the physical world through deeds—in particular the works of mercy.

Franciscan and Dominican friars also contributed to the medieval corpus of writings on the deadly sin of wrath, which may have influenced contemporary understandings of charity and the works of mercy. Thirteenth-and fourteenth-century Dominican writers William Peraldus (d. 1271), John (Jean) Gobi, and John Bromyard (d. 1352), authored Latin texts that “presented the abstract moral teachings of scholastic authors in more concrete and familiar terms”—particularly those regarding of wrathfulness.²⁴ In these texts, the writers presented wrath as a sin in which the sinner robbed God of his rightful and righteous prerogative to administer justice and punish the wicked.²⁵ God was likened to the patriarch of a household, whose responsibility was to care for, and if need be, avenge wrongs done to members of his family and other dependents. A second characteristic of these mendicant writings on wrath was the idea that the soul was God’s home—wrathfulness offended God because it invaded “his home or temple in the human soul,

²² Cited in Gert Melville, *Aspects of Charity: Concern for One’s Neighbor in Medieval Vita Religiosa* (Berlin: Hopf, 2011), VIII.

²³ Melville, VIII. Melville discusses the ways in which fraternal charity in a monastic setting was bounded by the physical space of the cloister. Monks (and nuns) practiced a charity that was chiefly contemplative and primarily focused on the cloister. It was the mendicant orders who disseminated ideas about fraternal charity to laypeople that made salvation in a secular context an attainable reality for the average layperson.

²⁴ Marc B. Cels, “God’s Wrath against the Wrathful in Medieval Mendicant Preaching,” *Canadian Journal of History* (2008), 217.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 217.

defiles it, burns it, and replaces God's toppled image of gentleness with a demonic image."²⁶

Mendicant writers frequently used this domestic imagery because it resonated with contemporary conceptions of the home as its own kind of inviolable sacred space—"attacks against the medieval house were considered serious provocations that could not be dismissed."²⁷ According to medieval confessors' manuals, the only remedies for wrath were charity, forgiveness, and meekness.²⁸

In describing God's relationship to the human soul and his fatherly prerogative to mete out justice in household terms, mendicant texts on wrath may have (intentionally or not) opened up interpretive spaces for women's charitable practices—in particular, the charitable spiritual work of admonishing sinners. Thomas of Chobham (d. 1230) wrote in his *Manual for Confessors* that "it should always be enjoined upon women to be preachers to their husbands,

²⁶ Cels, pp. 223-224.

²⁷ Ibid., 224.

²⁸ Ibid., 221. Cels cites Thomas Aquinas as an example of an author who made this argument, which was then later cited in numerous confessors' and preachers' manuals. Prescriptive literature from the fourteenth-century, like Augustinian John Mirk's *Festial* and the anonymous friar-authored "How the Good Wife Taught Hir Daughter Poem," connected the themes of wrath, charity, meekness, and domesticity. Felicity Riddy suggests that the "Good Wife" poem was written by a teaching friar, "Mother Knows Best: Reading Social Change in a Courtesy Text," *Speculum* 71 (1996), 71. Mirk taught that those who were wrathful lived out of charity with their fellows, meaning that they existed in a state of deadly sin, far away from God's love, Ibid., Vol. 1, 151. Mirk also instructed his sermon audience that Christians needed to turn away from wrath and embrace the virtues "of kindness, of loue and charite, of pes and rest," Ibid., 114-5. If they failed to do so, when Christ "comyþ into þe hows of your soule, and fyndeth þer any stynkyng þyng of wraþ or of envy or of any oþer dedly synne, he woll not abyde þer: but anon he goþe out, and the fende comyþe yn and abydyþe þer," Ibid., 115. "comes into the house of your soul and finds there any stench of wrath, envy, or any other deadly sin, he will not abide there, but instead go out. The Fiend will come in there and dwell." Mirk was presenting theological ideas in quotidian terms familiar to medieval women, which resonated with their seasonal work responsibilities. Mirk addressed his message to both male and female sermon-goers, but explained charity with analogies drawn from housework, proper household management, and domestic life—a strategy that might have engaged female listeners in particular, French, *Good Women*, 22.

because no priest is able to soften the heart of a man the way a wife can.” He went so far as to suggest that women speak of religious matters to their husbands in an alluring fashion “even in the bedroom, in the midst of their embraces.”²⁹ Female preaching was encouraged, but only in the privacy of the home, and restricted to matters of morals and religion. Thomas of Chobham also noted that women who failed to persuade their husbands to turn away from sin would be held responsible for those sins.³⁰ By the fourteenth-century, wrath was the sin that wives were most frequently called upon to admonish and correct with “fair” and “meeke” words.³¹

In England, Archbishop Pecham’s Council of Lambeth (1281) expanded upon the efforts of Innocent III and the mendicant orders by establishing a concrete catechetical syllabus aimed at creating an active Christian religiosity centered on charity.³² Pecham’s goal was to standardize and improve both clerical and lay religious education by setting guidelines for Christian catechism. Charity was the organizing principle of this program, which was called *De informacione simplicium*, and more commonly referred to as the *Ignorantia Sacerdotum*. The syllabus was comprised of seven elements of Christian doctrine: the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the two precepts of the Gospel (i.e. the twin laws of charity), the seven works of mercy,

²⁹ Waters, 98-9.

³⁰ Sandy Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 67; see also Sharon Farmer, “Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives,” *Speculum*, vol. 61 (1986): 517-543.

³¹ Furnivall, *Babees Book*, 38.

³² Pecham was a Franciscan, which may have influenced the way he conceived of the elements of the faith that were essential for catechism. The Franciscans were especially concerned with Christ’s suffering and the role confession and penance played in satisfaction for the Crucifixion, Kevin E. Lawson, “Learning the Faith in the Later Middle Ages: Contributions of the Franciscan Friars,” *Journal of the Religious Education Association* (2012), pp. 139-157. Pecham’s syllabus focused on sin and its remedy, but also promoted an active communal religion that centered on both communal harmony and individual salvation. See R.N. Swanson, “Pastoralia in Practice: Clergy and Ministry in Pre-Reformation England,” *Nederlands Archief Voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 83 (2003), 104-127.

the seven principle virtues, the seven deadly sins, and the seven sacraments of grace. Ideally, the purpose of this schema was to create a uniformity of education, belief, and practice. Parishioners were to receive a quarterly vernacular exposition of these seven seminal Christian teachings at their local parish church.³³ In order to fulfill the demands of the Council of Lambeth, clerics expounded an educational program based on Pecham's dictates through vernacular sermons and prescriptive literature, and laypeople commissioned didactic wall paintings and stained glass windows for the religious edification of their communities.³⁴ Clerics hoped these reforms would

³³ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale, 1992), 53. See also Leonard E. Boyle, *Pastoral Care, Clerical Education, and Canon Law, 1200-1400* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1981); Geoffrey F. Bryant, *'How thow schalt thy paresche preche': John Myrc's Instructions for Parish Priests* (Barton-on-Humber: Workers' Educational Association, 1999); Roy Martin Haines, *Ecclesia Anglicana: Studies in the English Church of the Later Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); P. Hodgson, "Ignorantia Sacerdotum: A Fifteenth Century Discourse on the Lambeth Constitutions," *Review of English Studies*, XXIV (1948), 1-11; W.A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955); John Shinnars and William J. Dohar, eds., *Pastors and the Care of Souls in Medieval England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998).

³⁴ See Alexandra Barratt, "Works of Religious Instruction," in *Middle English Prose*, ed. A.S.G. Edwards (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1984): 413-32; C. David Benson, "Piers Plowman and Parish Wall Paintings," in *The Yearbook for Langland Studies, Volume 11*, eds., John A. Alford and Andrew Galloway (Asheville, NC: Pegasus Press, 1997), 1-38; Leonard E. Boyle, "The Oculus Sacerdotis and Some Other Works of William of Pagula," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th Series, 5 (1955): 81-110.; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale, 1992); Katherine French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), *The Good Women of the Parish* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Vincent Gillespie, "Doctrina and Predicacio: The Design and Function of Some Pastoral Manuals," *Leeds Studies in English*, New Ser., 11 (1980 for 1979), 36-50; Miriam Gill, "Female Piety and Impiety: Selected Images of Women in Wall Paintings in England After 1300," in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, eds., Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) 101-21, "Preaching and Image: Sermons and Wall Paintings in Later Medieval England," in Carolyn Muessig, ed., *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 155-180; E.A. Jones, "Literature of Religious Instruction," in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture*, ed. Peter Brown, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007): 406-422; H.G. Pfander, "Some Medieval Manuals of Religious Instruction in England

help them to inculcate a “basic religious competence” and spiritual self-discipline in laypeople, better preparing them to receive the sacraments of grace as administered by the clergy.³⁵

Focusing on lay religious self-regulation within the sacramental framework provided by the Church and Christocentric piety, clergymen counseled laypeople to follow Christ’s example as they lived an active life in the secular world, and encouraged them to participate in their own salvation.

Charity, while central to salvation, could be a diffuse concept. Through the works of mercy, clerics distilled it into a practical set of guidelines, which both governed social relationships and sacralized interpersonal contacts. Following Archbishop Pecham’s Council of Lambeth in 1281, the Seven Works of Mercy became the basis for the catechesis of the laity. The performance of the works of mercy—feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, relieving prisoners, burying the dead, and housing strangers—was inextricably tied to the events of Judgment Day and the ultimate goal of all Christians—salvation. At the judgment of souls, Christ would ask each man and woman if they had done these merciful deeds on his behalf (and symbolically directly to him), damning the remiss, and saving the dutiful. Clerics used the Seven Works of Mercy to shape and inform Christian conduct; the

and Observations on Chaucer’s Parson’s Tale,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 35 (1936): 243-58; G.H. Russell, “Vernacular Instruction of the Laity in The Later Middle Ages in England: Some Texts and Notes,” *Journal of Religious History* 2 (1962): 98–119; John Shinnars and William J. Dohar, eds., *Pastors and the Care of Souls in Medieval England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998).

³⁵ Nicole R. Rice discusses the vernacular devotional literature inspired by thirteenth century reforms as reimagining “cloistered modes of discipline as ways to inculcate independent modes of self-control, returning readers to the supervision of confessors and the social structures of the larger lay community.” New confessional legislation called upon laypeople to regulate themselves within a larger framework of institutional supervision. See Nicole R. Rice, *Lay Piety and Religious Discipline in Middle English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), x-xii.

works of mercy promoted charity (understood as the love of God and neighbor) and provided a structure for charitable practice.³⁶ The works of mercy were especially suited to laypeople practicing a pious lifestyle outside of the shelter of the cloister because they allowed the laity to contemplate and memorialize Christ while simultaneously emulating his good works (and those of his apostles) in the course of their everyday social interactions. Charity as realized through the performance of the Seven Works of Mercy was therefore a seminal theme in contemporary prescriptive works for the instruction and correction of the laity.

While charity and the works of mercy were important throughout the entire medieval period, the way that both were characterized and presented to clergy and laypeople did not remain static. Ideas about charity and the works of mercy underwent changes in the mid-fourteenth century. Earlier writings about charity highlighted either affective bonds, such as the love between God and humanity, or monetary alms, presented the neighbor as everyman, characterized the poor as recipients, but not providers of charity, and conceived of fraternal correction and admonishing sinners as the province of priests and the cloistered. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century works offered readings of these aspects of charitable practice that combined elements of earlier patristic and mendicant thought, especially the writings of Augustine and Francis of Assisi, with contemporary concerns. These later medieval understandings of charity encompassed the concept of neighborliness (loving God through loving one's neighbor), which was actualized through the works of mercy. Both Augustine and Francis of Assisi foregrounded the active love of neighbor in their piety—Augustine advocated loving one's neighbor for God's sake, while Francis cultivated a love of neighbor that reflected Christ's own love for humanity.³⁷

³⁶ Brodman, 9.

³⁷ Melville, IX.

Neighbors and the poor were meant to be the recipients of charity that arose from these affective bonds. Whereas charity had previously been thought of as relieving material suffering, fourteenth-century authors, possibly influenced by Augustine and Francis, imagined charity and merciful works not only as financial aid, but also as feelings and actions that fostered and maintained community.³⁸

By developing a vernacular instructional program based on living ‘in charite’ and performing good works, clergymen encouraged their parishioners to practice “good neighborhood”—namely, “the avoidance of strife and encouragement of amity on the one hand, and charity and hospitality on the other.”³⁹ In its simplest formulation, contemporaries defined charity as “the ende and perfection of al the commandementes of God,” which “standeth in the love of God above al thyng, and thy neyghbour as thyself.”⁴⁰ An individual’s relationship with God was conceptualized as tied to their relationship with their neighbors; for the medieval Christian, religion was a combination of faith and doing good works in the world. A Christian’s ability to participate in the rites of the Church, especially its most central rite—the Mass, was contingent upon their state of “charite” with their neighbors. Performing the works of mercy enabled laypeople to fulfill God’s commandment to love thy neighbor. Although all Christians were enjoined to practice the type of works-based charity expressed in the concept of “good neighborhood,” gender and status-based notions of appropriate pious behavior often dictated the

³⁸ Augustine viewed Christian mercy as “participation in Christ and in the church,” as a “means and sign of the unity of Christians,” Fitzgerald, 558. Augustine referred viewed good works as contributing to the unity of the church, arguing that those who did not perform the works of mercy “have torn its unity, that is the unity of the tunic of charity,” Augustine as quoted in Fitzgerald, 558.

³⁹ Annabel Gregory, “Witchcraft, Politics, and “Good Neighborhood” in Early Seventeenth-Century Rye,” *Past and Present* 133 (Nov. 1991), 56.

⁴⁰ E. Ruth Harvey, *The Court of Sapience* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 159.

methods and means of that practice.⁴¹ There was a range of charitable behavior deemed acceptable by the clergy and laity that was predicated on the gender and status of the charity-giver and their social, economic, and legal circumstances. Thus, charity had different meanings for medieval men and women.⁴² It also had different meanings for the poor.

In accordance with religious doctrine, fourteenth-century sermons and devotional literature exhorted laypeople to charitable living. The *Lay Folks Mass Book* (c. 1375-1400) warned that peace could not exist without charity, instructing laypeople that “In that pes may thu nought be, 3if thu be out of cherite.”⁴³ Therefore, Christians were told to pray for peace and charity at every opportunity, and especially at the Mass.⁴⁴ The Mass was essentially a ceremony of peace and reconciliation where the individual Christian could expect harsh spiritual sanctions for seeking God’s mercy and forgiveness if they did not show mercy and forgiveness to others.

⁴¹ See Anna Dronzek, “Gendered Theories of Education in Fifteenth-Century Conduct Books,” in Kathleen Ashley and Robert Clark, eds., *Medieval Conduct: Texts, Theories, Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Beth Allison Barr, “Gendering Pastoral Care: John Mirk and His Instructions for Parish Priests,” in *Fourteenth-Century England*, Vol. IV, ed. J.S. Hamilton (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006), 93-108, *The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2008); Alcuin Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended* (Oxford: Clarendon Press); Patricia Cullum, “‘And Hir Name was Charite,’: Charitable Giving by and for Women in Late Medieval Yorkshire,” in *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society c. 1200-1500*, ed. P.J.P. Goldberg (Wolfeboro Falls, NH: Alan Sutton Publishing Inc., 1992); Katherine French, *The Good Women of the Parish* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Ruth Mazo Karras, “Holy Harlots: Prostitute Saints in Medieval Legend,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1 (1990), 3-32, “Gendered Sin and Misogyny in John of Bromyard’s ‘Summa Praedicatorum’,” *Traditio* (1992): 233-257.

⁴² Patricia Cullum and Katherine French have argued that men’s charity was frequently monetarily based, while women’s charity was expressed in the locus of the home and through the allocation of household resources such as food, drink, and clothing to the needy. See Cullum, “Gendering Charity in Medieval Hagiography,” in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, eds., Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 135-7; French, *Good Women*, 185.

⁴³ Simmons, *The Lay Folks Mass Book*, 49.

⁴⁴ Susan Bridgen, “Religion and Social Obligation in Early Sixteenth-Century London,” *Past and Present* 103 (1984): 67.

Those who were wrathful could not experience divine charity, and as such were actually risking damnation in attending the Mass unworthily.⁴⁵ The edifying and reconciliatory nature of the Mass itself provided parishioners with the opportunity to reflect on both spiritual and temporal relationships. The liturgy constituted the focal point of medieval religion, and the Mass was its seminal component. The Mass was a ceremony that simultaneously restored the world and constituted the Church.⁴⁶

Church doctrine taught that the salvation of the individual Christian was intimately tied to the salvation of the community as a whole. Clerics instructed the laity that the sacramental performance of the priest and the assemblage of faithful as witnesses to the Sacrament constituted the church. The Host was both a source of corporate unity and human community.⁴⁷ The clergy sought to instill the virtue of charity in their parishioners because it encouraged “mutuality in seeking salvation” by establishing and affirming social bonds. For the clergy, the Mass was the ultimate expression of charity with its focus on reconciliation and the wholeness of the community.⁴⁸ Laypeople themselves were cognizant of the unifying and corporate message of the Mass. They understood that attendance constituted a community building experience, which strengthened their individual bonds with God, as well as those within the community of

⁴⁵ See John Bossy, “The Mass as a Social Institution,” *Past and Present* 100 (1983) 48-61; Susan Brigden, *New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors, 1485-1603* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 43; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale, 1992), pp. 94-95; Erbe, pp. 130-1; Woodburn O. Ross, *Middle English Sermons* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940) 62; Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 63-65.

⁴⁶ Duffy, 91.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93. Although the late Middle Ages saw changes in devotional practices, such as the individual use of primers during religious services, increase in private masses for the well-to-do, and pewing, or private seats in the nave, all of which seemed to suggest a growing individualism in lay religious enthusiasm, contemporary evidence still reveals that lay piety remained public and corporate, with a focus on “mutuality in seeking salvation,” Duffy, 131.

⁴⁸ Thiery, pp. 242-9.

believers. While attending mass and witnessing the elevation of the Host bestowed blessings and protection upon parishioners in charity with their neighbors, it was considered sinful to attend while out of charity with ones fellows.⁴⁹ John Mirk's *Festial*, a fourteenth-century cycle of Middle English sermons, advised priests to admonish parishioners "that none of you come thus to goddes borde but yf ye be in perfyte loue and charite, and be clene shryven and in full purpose to leue your synne."⁵⁰ The *Lay Folks' Catechism* (c. 1357) was quick to note that damnation was the punishment for those who came to prayer out of charity, admonishing "whan men seye godys seruyse in gret hate and envye with owte deuocion and reuerence they take godys name in vayne for they aske here owne dampnacioun in seyng of the Pater noster."⁵¹ And of taking communion without charity, the *Lay Folks' Catechism* warned that "he that takes it worthily, takes his salvation, and who-so unworthily, takes his dampnation."⁵² Laypeople themselves could use these warnings as justifications for forcing reconciliation in front of the entire congregation by pointing out if one of their neighbors remained out of charity with them during services.⁵³

Eamon Duffy has characterized the affective relationship that the precepts of the gospel and the Mass ideally created between Christians as one of "holy neighborliness."⁵⁴ "Holy neighborliness" was in essence the religious dimension of community, which included both

⁴⁹ Thomas Frederick Simmons and Henry Edward Nolloth, eds., *The Lay Folks' Catechism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1901), 38.

⁵⁰ Bridgden, *Religion and Social Obligation*, 73.

⁵¹ Simmons, *The Lay Folks' Catechism*, 38.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 66.

⁵³ This exact scenario played out in now famous court case from 1529, where neighbors Johanna Carpenter and Margaret Chamber had an altercation about Chamber's worthiness to receive communion, W.H. Hale, ed., *A Series of Precedents and Proceedings in Criminal Causes Extending from the Year 1475 to 1640* (London, 1847), no. 340. The case is discussed in further detail in Chapter Three.

⁵⁴ Duffy, 138.

living and dead members, and was at its core a manifestation of Christian charity. The idealized relationship between the individual Christian and his neighbor was given a spiritual and moral imperative by its origin in the Holy Scriptures, especially in the Ten Commandments and Gospel of Matthew. The aspiration of neighborliness was expressed in scriptural language.⁵⁵ Where fourteenth- and fifteenth-century prescription diverged from earlier religious tradition was in the characterization of who exactly constituted a neighbor. Theologians like Alcuin (d. 804), argued “if perhaps anyone wonders who is his neighbor, he should know rightly to say that every Christian is his neighbor, because we are all sanctified sons of God in baptism, so that we are spiritually brothers in perfect charity.”⁵⁶ However, by the late Middle Ages, clerics encouraged a hierarchy of charity based on a more exclusive conception of the neighbor.⁵⁷ The *Lay Folks’ Mass Book* instructed its audience that peaceful relations between Christians, especially with one’s neighbor, were paramount. The text included short prayer, which encouraged each Mass participant to silently recite the following:

My hert to be in pese & rest,
& redy to loue alle maner of men:
My sib men namely, then
Neghtburs, seruandes, & ilk sugete,
felouse, frendes, none to forgete.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Naomi Tadmor, “Friends and Neighbours in Early Modern England: Biblical Translations and Social Norms,” in *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe, 1300-1800*, eds., Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter, and Miri Rubin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 150.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Owen Phelan, “The Formation of Christian Europe: Baptism Under the Carolingians,” Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Notre Dame, 2005, pp.110-111.

⁵⁷ Brian Tierney, *Medieval Poor Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 57.

⁵⁸ Simmons, *Lay Folks Mass Book*, 52. The *Lay Folks’ Mass Book* was originally written in either Latin or French by Dan Jeremy, and then translated into English in the fourteenth-century.

This prayer differentiates between those who were neighbors and those who were kinsmen, servants, fellows, or friends. Unlike Alcuin, the author of the *Lay Folks' Mass Book* did not consider a neighbor to be “every Christian.”⁵⁹

Early medieval writing on charity and poverty viewed the poor as the vehicles through which the wealthy could attain salvation by providing them with monetary alms.⁶⁰ With the rise of cities and the merchant classes in the twelfth-and thirteenth centuries, wealth became a fraught blessing for the rich. Luke 18:25 taught that it was easier for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get to heaven. Rich merchants and landowners responded to the soul-imperiling elements of wealth by giving monetary alms and establishing foundations for the sick and poor.⁶¹ The role played by the poor in these transactions—alms exchanged for a chance at salvation, could be passive. They received charity, but were unable to reciprocate it in a material fashion. Augustine taught that almsgiving was both “giving and forgiving”; it was open to everyone, and was not confined to material gifts (“in hoc genere eleemosynae, nullus est pauper”).⁶² The alms he had in mind that the poor were able to give were spiritual works of mercy—prayers, forgiveness, and correction. Fourteenth-century prescriptive works for the clergy and laity, like the *Speculum Christiani* (c. 1350-60), *Doctrinal of Sapience* (written c. 1380-90/printed c. 1489), and the *Speculum Sacerdotale* (early 15thc.) imagined an expanded role for the poor in Christian society.

⁵⁹ It seems like clergy were still expected to practice a universal neighborliness through their obligations to perform clerical hospitality. The change seems to be that laypeople were being encouraged to practice a hierarchy of charity and a more exclusive neighborliness.

⁶⁰ See Melville, pp. 103-7.

⁶¹ Melville, 107; See also Rubin, *Charity and Community*, pp. 58-64.

⁶² Fitzgerald, 560.

Where Augustine imagined the poor could perform the spiritual works of mercy usually reserved for clerics, texts from the fourteenth-and fifteenth-centuries took this a step further. They encouraged the poor to practice these spiritual works, but added kindness and affective fellowship to the Augustinian notion of alms. Like the *Lay Folks' Catechism* (c. 1357), the *Speculum Christiani* was an extremely popular devotional compilation in the Middle Ages.⁶³ In its presentation of the Ten Commandments, the text connected spiritual works with the deadly sins. The fifth commandment, thou shalt not kill, was conceived of as having both physical and spiritual components. Giving bad counsel or setting a bad example for one's neighbor, hating, envying, or back-biting a neighbor made the offender a "man-sleer," just as if they had committed actual murder. In the *Speculum Christiani*, alms include feeding and clothing the poor, but also simple acts of kindness. The example is given of the poor, who have nothing material to give, but can give a "worde of comfort or of gud reson" as an act of charity and mercy.⁶⁴

Similarly, the *Doctrinal of Sapience*, an instruction manual for priests, taught that those with limited material means could perform them by quenching the thirsty with the small kindness of giving a cup of water, which called to mind Christ's thirst as he languished on the cross.⁶⁵ The *Doctrinal* equated alms with the works of mercy, and warned that all Christians—rich, poor,

⁶³ Originally composed in the mid-fourteenth century, the *Speculum Christiani* is extant in sixty-six manuscripts, was one of the first books printed in England (c. 1478-80), and was reprinted in four additional editions before the Reformation. Much of the content reflects Archbishop Pecham's catechetical schema, and the compiler in fact uses a number of long direct quotations from Pecham's Constitutions, Gustaf Holmstedt, ed., *Speculum Christiani: A Middle English Religious Treatise of the Fourteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), clxxxii.

⁶⁴ Holmstedt, pp. 40-4.

⁶⁵ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 69; See also John 19:28.

religious, and secular alike were bound to perform good works or face damnation.⁶⁶ For those lacking in means, the text suggested the spiritual alternatives of prayer, admonishment, and instruction to giving material charity. Thus, the poor could “fede” others “by deuote oroyson and good admonicyo[n] wyth good example and good techynges”⁶⁷ Here, the poor are encouraged to perform both spiritual and corporeal charity—with their prayers, instruction, and correction becoming the food that nourished the souls of the wayward. In the conception of the works of mercy presented in the *Doctrinal*, every Christian can make a charitable contribution to the community of believers. Finally, the *Speculum Sacerdotale* echoed the themes of the *Speculum Christiani* and *Doctrinal* by teaching that even the poorest Christian could do a kindness by giving his fellow a drink of water as a performance of the corporeal work.

The spiritual works of mercy had traditionally been considered the particular province of priests, monks, nuns, and other contemplatives.⁶⁸ As such, a contemplative lifestyle offered limited access to holiness; it was difficult for most Christians to achieve since most laypeople were unable to renounce their ties to the secular world and live in monastic confinement.⁶⁹ By the later Middle Ages, however, the movement towards a Christocentric piety and focus on the apostolic life opened up new opportunities for lay spirituality.⁷⁰ Contemporary prescriptive texts encouraged laypeople to perform some of the clerical spiritual works. In particular these works

⁶⁶ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 85. The text characterizes alms as charitable actions Christians perform or “doo,” not only as material relief to be given, 86. Alms also included keeping others out of deadly sin, 85.

⁶⁷ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, pp. 85-6.

⁶⁸ P.H. Cullum, “Gendering Charity in Medieval Hagiography,” 135.

⁶⁹ W. Nelson Francis, *The Book of Vices and Virtues* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 220.

⁷⁰ Claire Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 4-6.

were admonishing sinners, bearing wrongs patiently, forgiving trespasses.⁷¹ As we have seen, some authors imagined the poor fraternally correcting of their fellows; late medieval authors also encouraged wives to practice this type of admonishment within the home.

In fourteenth-century literature, such as friar-authored poem, “How the Good Wife Taught her Daughter,” wives were counseled to perform the charitable admonishment of sinners in the household by quieting their husband’s wrath.⁷² Since the wrathful lived outside of God’s charity, wives who performed this spiritual work of mercy were invested with the responsibility of safeguarding their spouse’s soul. The characterization of the wife’s words as fair and meek invoked a clerical tradition of using the allure and sweetness of wives’ speech to persuade men to become better Christians.⁷³ In the context of the household, wives were allowed (in the sense of licensed and encouraged) to undertake the spiritual stewardship of their husband’s souls through charitable admonishment. This admonishment required women to cultivate the meekness and temperance required to be the legitimate correctors of wrathful behavior. It gave them the ability

⁷¹ The spiritual work of praying for the living and dead remained important for both clergy and laity to practice over the course of the Middle Ages. In terms of clerical prescriptive writing, instructing the ignorant and counseling the doubtful appear to have remained works clergy felt were specifically appropriate for clerics. However, chapters three, four, and five demonstrate that laypeople took on the instruction of the ignorant and performed this work in their parishes through the sponsorship of religious drama, art, and educational institutions.

⁷² Rickert, 38.

⁷³ Waters, 98-9. Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues*, 67; Farmer, “Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives,” *Speculum*, vol. 61 (1986), 517-543. The idea of wifely admonishment of wrath maintained currency through the fifteenth-century as well. The fifteenth-century *Book of the Knight of the Tower*, taught wives that their “parte” in the running of the household was to admonish and correct her husband’s wrath and impiety in the locus of the homes, Offord, 35. Since the wrathful lived outside of God’s charity, wives who performed this spiritual work of mercy (admonishing sinners) were invested with the responsibility of safeguarding their spouse’s soul. The characterization of the wife’s words as fair and meek invoked a clerical tradition of using the allure and sweetness of wives’ speech to persuade men to become better Christians, Sharon Farmer, “Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives,” *Speculum*, vol. 61 (1986): 517-543. These texts are considered in more detail in Chapter Two.

to help manage “God’s house” in the human soul, and permitted them to perform charitable correction that complemented Divine punishment. The idea of wifely admonishment of wrath maintained currency through the fifteenth-century as well. The fifteenth-century *Book of the Knight of the Tower*, taught wives that their “parte” in the running of the household was to admonish and correct her husband’s wrath and impiety in the locus of the homes.⁷⁴

Historiographical Survey of Scholarship of Charity

Traditional scholarship on charity in medieval England and on the Continent has demonstrated that the history of charity is often actually the history of poverty or poor relief.⁷⁵ Similarly, W.K. Jordan’s seminal study of late medieval and early modern charity, *Philanthropy*

⁷⁴ Offord, 35.

⁷⁵ Ian W. Archer, “The Charity of Early Modern Londoners.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, Vol. 12 (2002), 223-244; Ilana Ben-Amos, “Good Works and Social Ties: Helping the Migrant Poor in Early Modern England,” in *Protestant Identities: Religion, Society, and Self-Fashioning in Post Reformation England*, eds., Michael Macdonald, Muriel McClendon, and Joseph P. Ward (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 125-140. Elaine Clark, “Institutional and Legal Responses to Begging in Medieval England,” “Social Welfare and Mutual Aid in the Medieval Countryside,” *The Journal of British Studies* 33, no. 4 (1994): 381-406; P.H. Cullum, “Poverty and Charity in Early Fourteenth-Century England,” in *England in the Fourteenth Century*, ed., N.J. Rogers (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1993), pp. 140-151; Christopher Dyer, “Poverty and its Relief in Late Medieval England,” *Past and Present*, No. 216 (2012), pp. 41-78, “The English Medieval Village Community and Its Decline,” *The Journal of British Studies* 33, no. 4 (1994), 407-29; Sharon Farmer, *Surviving Poverty in Medieval Paris: Gender, Ideology, and the Daily Lives of the Poor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Paul A. Fideler, “Introduction: Impressions of a Century of Historiography,” *Albion* 32 (2000), pp. 381-407; Marjorie McIntosh, “Local Responses to the Poor in Late Medieval and Tudor England,” *Continuity and Change* 3 (1988), pp. 209-245; Ben McRee, “Charity and Guild Solidarity in Late Medieval England,” *The Journal of British Studies* 32, no. 3 (1993), 195-225; Phillip R. Schofield, “Approaching Poverty in the Medieval Countryside,” in *Poverty and Prosperity in The Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, eds., Cynthia Kosso and Anne Scott (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); Marjorie McIntosh, “Poverty, Charity, and Coercion in Elizabethan England,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35 (2005), pp. 457-479; Nicholas Terpstra, *Cultures of Charity: Women, Politics, and the Reform of Poor Relief in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); J.A.F. Thomson “Piety and Charity in Late Medieval London,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 16 (1965), 178-199; Barbara Wisch and Diane Cole Ahl, eds., *Confraternities and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Italy: Ritual, Spectacle, Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

in England 1480-1660, surveyed the gifts and bequests made to charities between 1480-1660 in ten English counties.⁷⁶ His objective was to explore the changing aspirations of society as reflected by charitable benefaction; however, his conceptions of both charity and benefaction were very limited. Jordan essentially defined charity as alms, and critiqued medieval charitable benefaction as casual, ineffective, undisciplined, and wasteful.⁷⁷ He privileged the contributions of the gentry and merchant aristocracy while overlooking the charitable works performed by neighbors, guild members, and the parish. More than twenty years later, Susan Brigden looked at how religious beliefs affected social obligation in early sixteenth-century London, and attempted to determine whether or not London was a “Christian community in charity” in “Religion and Social Obligation in Early Sixteenth-Century London.”⁷⁸ While Brigden viewed charity more inclusively than many other scholars, she did not look at it as a religious ideology, explore possible differences in its interpretation by the clergy and laity, or examine changes in the meaning of charity over time. Several years after Brigden’s article appeared, Miri Rubin published a study of charity in medieval Cambridge.⁷⁹ Rubin’s *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* looked at the doctrinal origins of the ideal of charity through an examination of theological and canonistic writings on poverty and charity, prescriptive literature, sermons, and civic and ecclesiastical records. She explored the ways in which ideas about charity underpinned the foundation of charitable institutions, like hospitals, almshouses, and chantries. She argued that the nature of almsgiving and charity changed with the advent of the

⁷⁶ W. K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England 1480-1660* (George Allen & Unwin LTD: London, 1959).

⁷⁷ Jordan, 19.

⁷⁸ Susan Brigden, “Religion and Social Obligation in Early Sixteenth-Century London,” *Past and Present* 103 (1984), 69.

⁷⁹ Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Black Death. Wealthy almsgivers' conception of those deserving poverty, and subsequent charitable giving, contracted as they began to view the able-bodied poor with suspicion and hostility. Thus, almsgiving became a more limited endeavor than it had been in the high Middle Ages. Marjorie McIntosh's recent *Poor Relief in England, 1350–1600* examines charity in the form of institutional and monetary support of the poor from the late medieval period through the passage of Elizabethan Poor Laws of 1598 and 1601.⁸⁰ She found that traditional distinctions between deserving and undeserving poor were untenable, and argues that changes in donors' priorities rather than the population being provided with alms and support accounted for shifts in charitable provision. My project departs from Rubin and McIntosh's work in that I look at charity as a broadly understood ideology, which not only encompassed and informed the unequal vertical relationships between almsgivers and the needy, but the horizontal relationships between individuals and their neighbors as well. Charity was not only limited to financial relief in times of poverty, but also included amity and fellowship on a daily basis.

Although focused on Continental charity, Brian Pullan's *Poverty and Charity: Europe, Italy, Venice* and John Henderson's *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* and James W. Brodman and Gert Melville's more recent studies have important implications for the examination of medieval charity in England.⁸¹ Both Pullan and Henderson define charity

⁸⁰ Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England, 1350–1600* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁸¹ Brian Pullan, *Poverty and Charity: Europe, Italy, Venice* (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1994), *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: The Social Institutions of a Catholic State, to 1620* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971); John Henderson's *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). Although there is a considerable body of work on charity and lay piety in France and Germany, Italianists have dominated the field. Italian scholarship provides the most useful methodological model for my own work because of the variety of sources exploited and the breadth of activities examined. Research on lay religious brotherhoods in Italy is particularly useful because it is broad in scope. In the 1960s social historians working

primarily in terms of monetary poor relief, but they expand their examinations of charitable activities into the discussion of confraternities and religious brotherhoods. Confraternity studies provide a useful model for examining local piety in England because the breadth of confraternal charitable activities is on par with those of Lincolnshire parishioners, guild members, and testators. Henderson's work is also relevant because he argues that piety and charity in the Florentine Middle Ages were not discrete concepts, which I found to be true in Lincolnshire. In *Charity and Religion in Medieval Europe*, Brodman surveys medieval charity and almsgiving. Unlike previous scholars, however, he advocates for an expansion of the definition of charity, arguing that religious charity constituted an ideology, and was not just a set of institutions. Alms were only one dimension of religious charity, which was the love of god as demonstrated through love of one's fellows. While Brodman's expanded notion of charity provides a useful conceptual framework, much of his study actually focuses on institutionalized charitable

on Italy began to expand the range of confraternal activities from primarily financial support and funerary to include the roles lay brotherhoods played in inhibiting or exacerbating political factionalism, operating as "civilizing" agents and enforcers of civic order, patronizing art, civic buildings, and music, peacekeeping movements, and the provision of dowries. Although focused on guilds, this Italian scholarship is useful for the encompassing way that it treats charity and charitable activities. Some scholarship on England is starting to be more expansive in scope, however the majority of work still limits the ways in which charity is defined and enacted. Italianists like Nicholas Terpstra, Pamela Gravestock, Christopher Black, and Konrad Eisenbichler have recognized that broad swathes of society benefited from religious charity, like the poor, orphans, youths, prostitutes, widows, unmarried young women, and condemned prisoners. By focusing on these broader aspects of charitable activity, scholars of Italy have been able to create a more comprehensive and complete portrait of medieval charitable practices. See Christopher F. Black and Pamela Gravestock. *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Burlington: VT, 2005), *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Konrad Eisenbichler, "Italian Scholarship on Pre-Modern Confraternities in Italy," *Renaissance Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (1997): 567-80; Nicholas Terpstra, *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Ronald F. E Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1982).

endeavors on the Continent. He explores the active religious life as practiced by pilgrims, confraternities, hospitallers, and saints concentrating primarily on charity as organized almsgiving and hospitality. Gert Melville edited a collection of essays dealing with the evolution of monastic and mendicant charities. The essays in this collection explore the ways in which both charity in the cloister and charity in the world varied over time, geographical location, and historical context. Monastic charity focused inward towards the cloister, while the mendicant movements of the thirteenth-century encouraged an outward-looking charity.⁸² Both the monastic and mendicant notions of charity provide interesting points of entry into late medieval charitable practice. In line with Nicole R. Rice's work on devotional literature, an examination of late medieval vernacular prescriptive works demonstrates that clerical authors were inspired by thirteenth century reforms—reimagining “cloistered modes of discipline as ways to inculcate independent modes of self-control, returning readers to the supervision of confessors and the social structures of the larger lay community.”⁸³ Lay piety operated on a spectrum between monastic and mendicant modes of piety depending on the context. The chapters that follow illustrate that lay charity expanded or contracted according to its setting—guild charity was the most exclusive, operating much like monastic piety, while end of life charity was the most inclusive.

Community, Parish, and Neighborhood

The focal point of local religion for late medieval people was the parish, and its sub-unit, the neighborhood. The relationships created within these associations were maintained by the bonds of charity and served as a support system for Christian's from birth to death. The parish

⁸² Melville, X.

⁸³ Rice, pp. x-xii.

was “the framework in which believers executed their religious obligations,” obligations that centered on charity and the works of mercy.⁸⁴ The laity received the sacraments that made them a part of the larger Christian community at the parish church, and these sacramental milestones were witnessed by one’s kin and neighbors. Although all late medieval Christians were born into a parish community, much as they were born into a family, and belonged to the smaller geographical community of the neighborhood, the definition of community is not self-evident; it has been contested by many scholars. Gervase Rosser and John Bossy have characterized a community as a voluntary and homogenous grouping, each concluding that the coercive elements of the parish made it an unsuccessful community.⁸⁵ Other scholars such as Miri Rubin and Katherine French have argued against the notion of a harmonious, uniform, static definition of community, conceiving of community instead as dynamic, “multivalent,” and flexible, as well as adding the elements of gender and status to the analysis of communities.⁸⁶ There were coercive elements to parochial membership, such as tithes and the synodal dictates that laypeople maintain the nave and churchyard. However, the formation of guilds and other

⁸⁴ Rubin, *Charity and Community*, 237.

⁸⁵ John Bossy, *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), “Blood and Baptism: Kinship, Community and Christianity in Western Europe from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries,” in *Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and the World* (Studies in Church History 10, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 129-43, “The Mass as a Social Institution,” *Past and Present* 100 (1983), 29-61, “Holiness and Society,” *Past and Present* 75 (1977), 119-137; Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 21-27; Virginia Reinburg, “Liturgy and the Laity in Late Medieval and Reformation France,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 23, no. 3 (Autumn, 1992): 526-547; Gervase Rosser, “Communities of Parish and Guild in the Late Middle Ages,” in *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion, 1350-1750*, ed. S. J. Wright (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 29-55.

⁸⁶ French, *People of the Parish*, pp. 21-27; Rubin, “Small Groups: Identity and Solidarity in the Late Middle Ages,” in *Enterprise and Individuals in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. J. Kermode (Wolfboro Falls, NH: Alan Sutton, 1991), 132-150.

sub-parochial groups based in the parish church, the provision of vessels and vestments above and beyond those required by synodal statute, the collective aspects of parochial sacred hospitality, and ubiquity of testamentary bequests for parish church fabric all demonstrate that parishioners willingly invested in the parish.⁸⁷ Katherine French defines community as “the repeated interactions over time of a group of people with shared goals, interests, concerns, and ideals,” and points out that, “at times coercion from both within and without arose to maintain community.”⁸⁸ For the purposes of defining community, this dissertation takes its lead from French’s scholarship. But the communities under investigation in this dissertation also conceived of community as a set of affective bonds rooted in notions of Christian fellowship and caritative religious obligation. The geographical bounds of these communities were dependent upon their religious motivations—parochial communities defined themselves by the physical boundaries of their parishes, guilds defined community by organizational membership that included the living and dead as well as those living locally and abroad, testators defined

⁸⁷ French, *People of the Parish*, 22.

⁸⁸ French, *People of the Parish*, 24; For more on community see also Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Christine Carpenter, “Gentry and Community in Medieval England,” *Journal of British Studies* 33 (1994), 340-80; Christopher Dyer, “The English Medieval Village and Its Decline,” *Journal of British Studies* 33 (1994), 407-29; Christopher Haigh, “Community and Communion in Post-Reformation England,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (2000), 699-720; Steve Hindle, “The Keeping of the Public Peace” in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1996); Martin Ingram, “Communities and Courts: Law and Disorder in Early-Seventeenth-Century Wiltshire,” in *Crime in England, 1550-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Alan Macfarlane, *Reconstructing Historical Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), “History, Anthropology and the Study of Communities,” *Social History* (1977), 631-652; Christopher Marsh, “‘Common Prayer’ in England 1560-1640: The View from the Pew,” *Past and Present* 171 (2001), pp. 66-94; Craig Muldrew “The Culture of Reconciliation: Community and the Settlement of Economic Disputes in Early Modern England,” *Historical Journal* 39, 4 (1996), 915-942; Miri Rubin, “The Eucharist and the Construction of Medieval Identities,” in *Culture and History, 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities, and Writing*, ed., David Aers (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 43-63.

community the most broadly, and made testamentary bequests to those belonging to an encompassing Christian community of believers.

This dissertation takes the parish as its main analytical unit. Examination of piety at the parochial level allows for an investigation and comparison of religious activities on a parish-to-parish basis.⁸⁹ As the smallest unit of ecclesiastical administration the parish is the ideal unit of analysis to consider the effects of ecclesiastical influence at a local level because it allows for the mechanisms of ecclesiastical control and uniformity (pedagogy and episcopal correction) to be considered in conversation with the varying responses of the laity (reception and practice). Early writing on the parish took the Reformation as a starting point, and read the events leading up to it

⁸⁹ French, *People of the Parish*, 24. For more on the parish see W.O. Ault, "Manor Court and Parish Church in Fifteenth-Century England," *Speculum* 42 (1967), pp. 53-67, "The Village Church and the Village Community in Mediaeval England," *Speculum* 45 (1970), pp. 197-215; Clive Burgess, "Time and Place: The Late Medieval Parish in Perspective," in *The Parish In Late Medieval England*, 2006, 1-28; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*; Katherine L. French, "Competing for Space: Medieval Religious Conflict in the Monastic-Parochial Church at Dunster," *Journal of Medieval and Modern Studies* 27 (1997), 215-244, *The People of the Parish, The Good Women of the Parish* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Katherine L. French, Gary G. Gibbs, and Beat A. Kümin, eds., *The Parish in English Life, 1400-1700* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); F.A. Gasquet, *The Parish in Mediaeval England* (London: Methuen, 1909); Polly Ha and Patrick Collinson, eds., *The Reception of Continental Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Steve Hindle, "Beating the Bounds of the Parish: Order, Memory and Identity in the Local English Community, c. 1500-1700," in *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Michael J. Halvorson and Karen E. Speirling (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2008); Beat Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish, c. 1400-1560* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996); Emma Mason, "The Role of the English Parishioner: 1000-1500," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 (1976), 17-29; Judith Middleton-Stewart, *Inward Purity and Outward Splendor: Death and Remembrance in the Deanery of Dunwich, Suffolk, 1370-1547* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2001); Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety*; Gary Shaw, *The Creation of a Community: The City of Wells in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); R. N. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215-1515* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Robert Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); S. J. Wright, *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion, 1350-1750* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

as inevitable. For example, A.G. Dickens' major work, *The English Reformation* argued that dissatisfaction with the late medieval church made reformation necessary, progressive, and widely accepted by the English people. In the 1980s and 1990s, revisionists like Eamon Duffy, Christopher Haigh, and J.J. Scarisbrick contested Dickens' thesis by arguing for a reassessment of the late medieval Church. Duffy posited that the medieval Church, especially at the parish level, was vibrant and vital, and that parochial religion flexibly accommodated the broad spiritual needs of the populace. In contrast to Dickens, Duffy's work utilized documents generated by orthodox clergy (sermons and prescriptive works) and laypeople (churchwardens' accounts, guild records, and wills) as well as material culture to demonstrate that far from large numbers of people feeling alienated from the Church or being confused by Latin mass and the mysterious activities of a priest, laypeople directly participated in the life of their parish churches in a wide variety of ways. Laypeople actively engaged with the Church through monastic houses and chantries by giving alms, praying for the dead, participating in saints' cults, and going on pilgrimage. More locally, they played a central role in their own spiritual lives and those of their neighbors through participation in the parish and its guilds.⁹⁰ Since then, scholars like French, Rubin, and Gary Shaw have challenged Duffy's characterization of the medieval parish as uniform and harmonious. While the parish *was* vibrant and flexible, it could also be a socially

⁹⁰ A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London: Batsford, 1989); Christopher Haigh, *The English Reformation Revised* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society Under the Tudors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), "Communion and Community: Exclusion from Communion in Post-Reformation England. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51, no. 4 (2000): 721-40; Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England: Holding Their Peace* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998); Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation* (New York: Penguin, 2005); J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

and religiously coercive, riven by conflict and its mediation as well as power, status, and gender inequities.⁹¹

Churchwardens' accounts have become an important source for the study of the parish. Clive Burgess and Beat Kūmin have done extensive work on these documents, alternately arguing for their limitations and utility as historical evidence. Burgess has identified numerous limitations in the use of churchwardens' accounts accurate records of lay piety. Churchwardens' accounts are not standardized documents—accounting and recording practices vary from churchwarden-to-churchwarden and parish-to-parish.⁹² Not all of a parish's activities are recorded in churchwardens' accounts, especially those outside the purview of parochial authorities; these often tended to be activities related to endowed lights, chantries, and parish guilds.⁹³ Unpaid voluntary and altruistic donations and activities are also infrequently recorded in churchwardens' accounts.⁹⁴ Although limited in their ability to provide a comprehensive view of parochial activities, they are still an important resource because they record the ways in which parishes collectively allocated their resources for communal benefit. In this way they are important documents for measuring the extent to which late medieval Christians enacted or rejected religious instruction on creating and maintaining parochial communities in charity.

An investigation of neighborliness is a natural extension of a study of parochial charity,

⁹¹ French, "Competing for Space," 216.

⁹² Burgess and Kūmin, "Penitential Bequests and Parish Regimes," 620.

⁹³ Burgess, "Pre-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts and Parish Government," 308-10; Kūmin, "Late Medieval Churchwardens' Accounts and Parish Government: Looking Beyond London and Bristol," 96. See also Ken Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community*, 102, 115; French, *People of the Parish*, *passim*; Kūmin, *The Shaping of a Community*, *passim*.

⁹⁴ Kūmin, "Late Medieval Churchwardens' Accounts and Parish Government: Looking Beyond London and Bristol," 96.

as we can understand neighborliness as essentially charity in practice.⁹⁵ As we saw above, the love of one's neighbor was viewed as reflective of an individual's love of God, and was best expressed through the works of mercy, which put the Christian in mind of Christ's own travails at the hands of his detractors and tormentors. To be merciful was to endeavor to be Christ-like and would be looked upon well on the Day of Judgment.⁹⁶ The neighborhood, as a smaller sub-unit of the parochial community, served many of the same functions as the parish, but on a more localized, micro-scale. For those living within its boundaries, it became both an extended kinship network and a surrogate for insufficient kinship relations for those living within its boundaries. While feuding neighbors were often the cause of community conflict, the clergy and laity alike aspired to create and nourish charity in their neighborhoods. Neighbors were meant to be the primary recipients of charitable and merciful works according to church doctrine and devotional texts. As such, laypeople expected their neighbors to serve as godparents for their children, visit them during times of illness, attend marriages, baptisms, and funerals, care for neighborhood widows and orphans, mediate disputes, and act as witnesses in court cases. Neighbors also gathered together to provide material relief for those in need by organizing fund-raising communal feasts, like help-ales to sustain the poor and bride-ales to provide marrying

⁹⁵ Devotional and prescriptive literature taught that neighbors should be the primary recipients of merciful works. See Simmons, *Lay Folks Catechism*, 76; Josephine Waters Bennett, "The Mediaeval Loveday," *Speculum* 33, no. 3 (1958), 351-70; Brigden, "Religion and Social Obligation," pp. 67-112; Michael Clanchy, "Love and Law in the Middle Ages," in *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Daniel E Thiery, "Plowshares and Swords: Clerical Involvement in Acts of Violence and Peacemaking in Late Medieval England, c. 1400-1536," *Albion*, 36, no. 2 (Summer, 2004), pp. 201-222, "Welcome to the Parish. Remove Your Cap and Stop Assaulting Your Neighbor," in *Reputation and Representation in Fifteenth-Century Europe*, eds., Douglass Biggs, Sharon D. Michalove, Sharon D. and Compton Reeves (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 235-65, *Polluting the Sacred: Violence, Faith and the 'Civilizing' of Parishoners in Late Medieval England* (Boston: Brill, 2009).

⁹⁶ Brigden, "Religion and Social Obligation," 102.

couples with money and domestic supplies for their new household.⁹⁷

Until the recent studies of neighborliness conducted by Naomi Tadmor and Keith Wrightson, most treatments of the topic were primarily concerned with its decline.⁹⁸ Tadmor examines the language of neighborliness in early modern religious texts, noting a semantic shift from the Old Testament usage of the terms “friend” and “neighbor” as distinct from one another, to the conflation of the two in English vernacular religious writing.⁹⁹ She looks at the ways in which norms of neighborliness were taught, learned, and re-interpreted in Protestant catechetical works.¹⁰⁰ Although Tadmor found that the aspiration of neighborliness was not a “straightforward reflection of an organic experience,” the language used to circumscribe the relations between neighbors reveals that good neighborhood was a powerful ideal, which held a great deal of social, cultural, and religious currency.¹⁰¹ Keith Wrightson’s work on the subject of neighborliness includes a re-examination of the narrative of the decline of neighborliness in

⁹⁷ See Judith M. Bennett, “Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England,” *Past and Present*, no. 134 (1992): 19-41, “Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England: Reply,” *Past and Present*, no. 154 (1997), 235-42; Maria Moisa, “Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England,” *Past and Present*, no. 154 (1997), 223-34.

⁹⁸ Scholars have pointed to the increasing accusations of witchcraft over the course of the sixteenth-century as evidence for the decline of neighborliness. This decline resulted from, or accompanied, what Christopher Hill identified as the “rise of a spirit of individualism” which effected the atomization of the parish, Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London: Panther, 1964), pp. 469-471. See also Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors*; Anne Reiber DeWindt, “Witchcraft and Conflicting Visions of the Ideal Village Community,” *Journal of British Studies* 34 (1995), 427-463; Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970); Lawrence Stone, “Interpersonal Violence in English Society, 1300-1980,” *Past and Present* 101 (1983), pp. 31-3; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner, 1971); Keith Wrightson, “The ‘Decline of Neighbourliness’ Revisited,” in *Local Identities in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*, eds., Norman L. Jones and Daniel Woolf (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2007), 19.

⁹⁹ Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter, and Miri Rubin, eds., *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe, 1300-1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 10.

¹⁰⁰ Tadmor, 158.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 167.

Reformation England and a study of mutual obligation and changing social relationships in the same period.¹⁰² Through an investigation of Protestant writings, ecclesiastical and secular legal documents, and studies of crime and demography, Wrightson found that neighborliness did not decline in the early modern period, but rather changed in meaning, with the obligations accompanying good neighborhood becoming “more narrowly defined and more confined in their applicability-its reciprocities more restricted in their accessibility.”¹⁰³ In spite of these changes, neighborliness retained a spiritual significance, only the ways in which good neighborhood was performed kept up with broader societal change. Wrightson argues that there was “a continuum of ‘belonging’” that characterized neighborly relations.¹⁰⁴

While Tadmor and Wrightson’s work represent important re-examinations of neighborliness in early modern England, there is a lacuna in the study of pre-Reformation good neighborhood; to date, there are no studies that treat the late medieval or early Reformation period. Scholars have not explored how medieval neighborliness was defined, who was counted as a neighbor, what constituted a neighborhood, to whom charity and neighborliness were owed, or how these ideas were adapted over time as notions of community changed. For medieval people, good neighborhood was a religious undertaking informed by the seven works of mercy; therefore failure to examine neighborliness yields an incomplete picture of late medieval religion

¹⁰² See Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*; James Sharpe, “‘Such Disagreement Betwyx Neighbours’: Litigation and Human Relations in Early Modern England,” in *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West*, ed., John Bossy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 167-187; Lawrence Stone, “Interpersonal Violence in English Society,” 32; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*; Keith Wrightson, “The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England,” in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, eds., Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 10-46, “Mutualities and Obligations: Changing Social Relationships in Early Modern England,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 139 (2006), 157-94.

¹⁰³ Wrightson, “The Decline of Neighbourliness Revisited,” 38.

¹⁰⁴ Wrightson, “The Politics of the Parish,” 19.

in practice. Additionally, although much of the work on neighborliness deals with the subject of witchcraft, no studies consider the ways in which good neighborhood was a heavily gendered enterprise.

Locus for Study

The geographical area of focus for this dissertation is the county of Lincolnshire. The county of Lincolnshire is located in the northeastern part of England. It was the second largest county in medieval England, and over the course of the Middle Ages rose to great economic, social, and religious prominence. However, by the early fourteenth century the county underwent a slow decline in regional influence and importance due to a change in patterns of communication: as road and shipping routes shifted, Lincolnshire's geographical isolation increased, and traffic in port towns like Boston shrank.¹⁰⁵ It was a highly integrated county, which boasted a large degree of interaction between urban centers like Boston, Louth, Spalding, and Grimsby, and smaller rural parishes, such as Frampton, Kirton, and Long Sutton.¹⁰⁶ In addition to the city of Lincoln, the boroughs of Boston, Grantham, Grimsby, Bourne, Horncastle, Louth, Stamford, and Spalding were amongst the most highly populated commercial centers in the entire country. The county was one of the country's most important producers of wool and fabric for domestic and foreign consumption, and its maritime trade and fishing industries were

¹⁰⁵James D. Stokes, ed., *Records of Early English Drama: Lincolnshire*, vol. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) pp. 369-374; For more on the county of Lincolnshire see Thomas Allen, *The History of the County of Lincoln from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (London: J. Saunders Jr., 1834); Dorothy M. Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire* (Lincoln: The Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 1990); William Page, *The Victoria County History of Lincolnshire*, vol. 2 (London, 1906); Graham Platts, *Land and People in Medieval Lincolnshire* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1985); E.M. Sympson, *Lincolnshire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913); William White, *White's History, Gazetteer and Directory of Lincolnshire* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co., 1882).

¹⁰⁶ Stokes, vol. 2, pp. 369-374.

important to the local and national economies. The region was also a large exporter of grain, cloth, and wool while also importing timber, cloth, fish, and wine.¹⁰⁷ Medieval Lincolnshire was characterized by a great deal of regional diversity, being comprised of some of the most populous urban settlements in the country as well as a great deal of smaller, agricultural, nucleated villages and hamlets.¹⁰⁸ It was medieval England's largest diocese and the bishop of Lincoln remained one of the most prosperous ecclesiastical landholders until the fifteenth century.¹⁰⁹

Lincolnshire is an ideal place to examine the role of charity in religious instruction and performance because of its regional diversity and wealth of surviving archival material. Although it is a difficult task to find sources generated by medieval laypeople that offer a more or less unmediated view into their life experiences, the substantial survival of wills, court documents, and civic and guild records for the county provides an excellent starting point for an investigation of lay religious practices. While there is a large and diverse body of extant ecclesiastical and parish records for Lincolnshire, and scholarship in the last thirty or so years has focused intensely on the parish, there is to date only a single monographic study on medieval religion in the county. The majority of work on Lincolnshire has been produced by the History of Lincolnshire Committee on behalf of the Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology. As part of their local history project, the Committee commissioned twelve volumes on various aspects of the county's history from prehistory to the twentieth century. Three of the volumes deal with medieval Lincolnshire, with only Dorothy Owen's *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire* devoted to medieval religion in the county. Owen's study is essentially an

¹⁰⁷ Stokes, vol. 2, pp. 369-374, 385-403.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 372.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 380-385.

institutional history, focusing primarily on ecclesiastical administration, monastic foundations, and the proliferation of the orders of friars in the towns; she only allots a single chapter to the Church's relationship with the laity. The most recent scholarship on Lincolnshire has been the work of James Stokes on Lincolnshire drama for the Records of Early English Drama (REED) project, published in 2009. Besides the aforementioned publications, most historical studies of Lincolnshire have been confined to the examination of a single city or town, like those of medieval Lincoln, Boston, Louth, or Grimsby.¹¹⁰

As an investigation of local religion in medieval Lincolnshire has yet to be undertaken, my dissertation fills a lacuna in the scholarship on the county and adds to our understanding of religious practice prior to and during the early years of the Reformation. In addition to the sources typically used by historians to study the parish—churchwardens' accounts, guild records, and wills—there are extensive civic records, Episcopal visitation records, and church court records for Lincolnshire. Therefore, Lincolnshire's surviving medieval parish and ecclesiastical records afford an unmatched view into both the laity's behavior and the clergy's attempts at correcting and proscribing that behavior. My dissertation expands upon previous work on

¹¹⁰ See Duke Dulcie, *Lincoln: The Growth of a Medieval Town* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974); Edward Gillet, *A History of Grimsby* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970); J.S. Hartley and Alan Rigers, *The Religious Foundations of Medieval Stamford* (Nottingham, 1974); J.W.F. Hill, *Medieval Lincoln* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), *Tudor and Stuart Lincoln* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956); A.E.B. Owen, *The Medieval Lindsey Marsh: Select Documents* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 1996); S.H. Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby: Growth and Decline* (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1993); J. E. Swaby, *History of Louth* (London: A. Brown & Sons, Ltd., 1951); Alan Rogers, *The Making of Stamford* (Leicester: University of Leicester Press, 1965), Edward Pishey Thompson, *The History and Antiquities of Boston and the Villages of Skirbeck, Fishtoft, Freiston, Butterwick, Benington, Leverton, Leake and Wrangle: Comprising the Hundred of Skirbeck, in the County of Lincoln* (Boston: John Noble, 1856).

Lincolnshire by focusing not only on the clergy's educational endeavors and their impact on lay religious practice, but also lay reception or rejection of religious instruction.

Methodology

The doctrine of charity served as the foundation of religious education for the clergy and laity in the Middle Ages. Including much more than almsgiving, it provided a conceptual framework that structured social relationships according to Christ's precept to love God and neighbor. For medieval Christians, living in a "state of charity" meant undergoing a process of social integration based on the sacramental program of the Church. However, this social integration did not mean the same thing for men and women; therefore, consideration of the role of charity in late medieval religion requires attention to the different ways in which men and women were educated and the different ways in which they practiced religious principles. While the concept and language of charity provided clerics with a powerful motivational tool and provided laypeople with a vivid and potent call to pious action, this call to action needs to be understood as impacting men and women differently. A few scholars have demonstrated that the Seven Works of Mercy were easily adaptable to women's household activities and domestic duties, but medievalists in general have still ignored how gender shaped local religious practice. This study therefore considers how men and women were educated in religion and how gender informed religious practice. Given the nature of the sources, it is not possible to prove conclusively that clerical pedagogy caused particular lay religious practices. However, there is evidence that clerical catechesis, at the very least, influenced the ways in which laypeople thought about and practiced charity. The different reception by men and women of directives to practice charity through the Seven Works of Mercy is evident in their actions, or lack thereof, as detailed in parish records, wills, and court documents.

My contribution to the reconstruction of pre-Reformation English catechesis and religiosity is important for measuring the effects of clerical didactic efforts on men and women. By examining the laity's performance of charity in their charitable bequests, and in the corporate behavior of parish guilds—both particularly important sources for women's religious activities, and sanctions against disobedience found in ecclesiastical and civic court records, this study is able to measure the influence of the clergy's educational program on practice. Addressing the relationship between proscription and action shows how interpretations of charity evolved from the late fourteenth century up to the Act of Royal Supremacy (1534). In the process, I reveal that gendered conceptions of the principle of charity complicated the relationship between religious instruction and practice; in effect, gendering charity gave women's work a spiritual imperative and religious significance, while simultaneously reinforcing traditional gender roles. Although gendered notions of appropriate behavior dictated the methods and means of charitability, practicing the works of mercy allowed women to participate in an active spiritual life and to contribute to their community and parish as well. Finally, the local contexts of lay catechetical appropriation present a more encouraging picture of the impact of pre-Reformation religious education on lay religious practice than often allowed by Reformation scholars. I advocate for a reassessment of lay piety removed from Reformation-dominated polemic.

Chapters one and two of my dissertation examine the efforts of ecclesiastical authorities to standardize and improve clerical and lay religious education. I survey clerically authored sermons, devotional literature, and catechetical texts as well as lay-sponsored religious drama and church adornment to assess how closely didactic works aimed at the education of the clergy and laity followed the official Church's formal catechetical schema, what role the Seven Works of Mercy played in the clergy's educational efforts, and how gender and geographical contexts

informed catechesis. While the first half of my project focuses on religious instruction and clerical proscription, the last three chapters of my dissertation concentrate on lay practice. I use Brodman's notion of an "ideology of religious charity" as a framework within which to explore parochial charity as an affective lifestyle, and not simply a set of institutions. I examine the lay enactment of the doctrine of charity through the performance of the Seven Works of Mercy in the county of Lincolnshire through an investigation of documents produced by laypeople as well as clerics.

Chapter Three examines the performance of charity and the Seven Works of Mercy at the parish level through an investigation of churchwardens' accounts and ecclesiastical visitation records. I argue that while the laity were receptive to clerical teachings, they actively sought to make the doctrine of charity relevant to their individual and communal social lives. Looking at descriptive and corrective documents in conversation with one another reveals that while laypeople aspired to create and maintain communities in charity, they frequently fell short of this ideal. However, laypeople sought to address issues of uncharity by utilizing ecclesiastical institutions of correction for their own purposes. Chapter Four argues that religious guilds sought to create ideal Christian communities in microcosm through the practice of charity and the Seven Works of Mercy. Guild members conceived of these communities as voluntary spiritual families. The communities created by parish guilds were quasi-monastic in nature, and based their pious activities on concentric circles of charitable obligation. Finally, Chapter Five explores charitable bequests in wills and what end-of-life charity reveals about the difference between men's and women's practices of Christian fellowship and neighborliness as they prepared for death. It argues that scholars have traditionally defined charity too narrowly to encompass the wide range of activities perceived of as charitable by late medieval people, that the Seven Works of Mercy

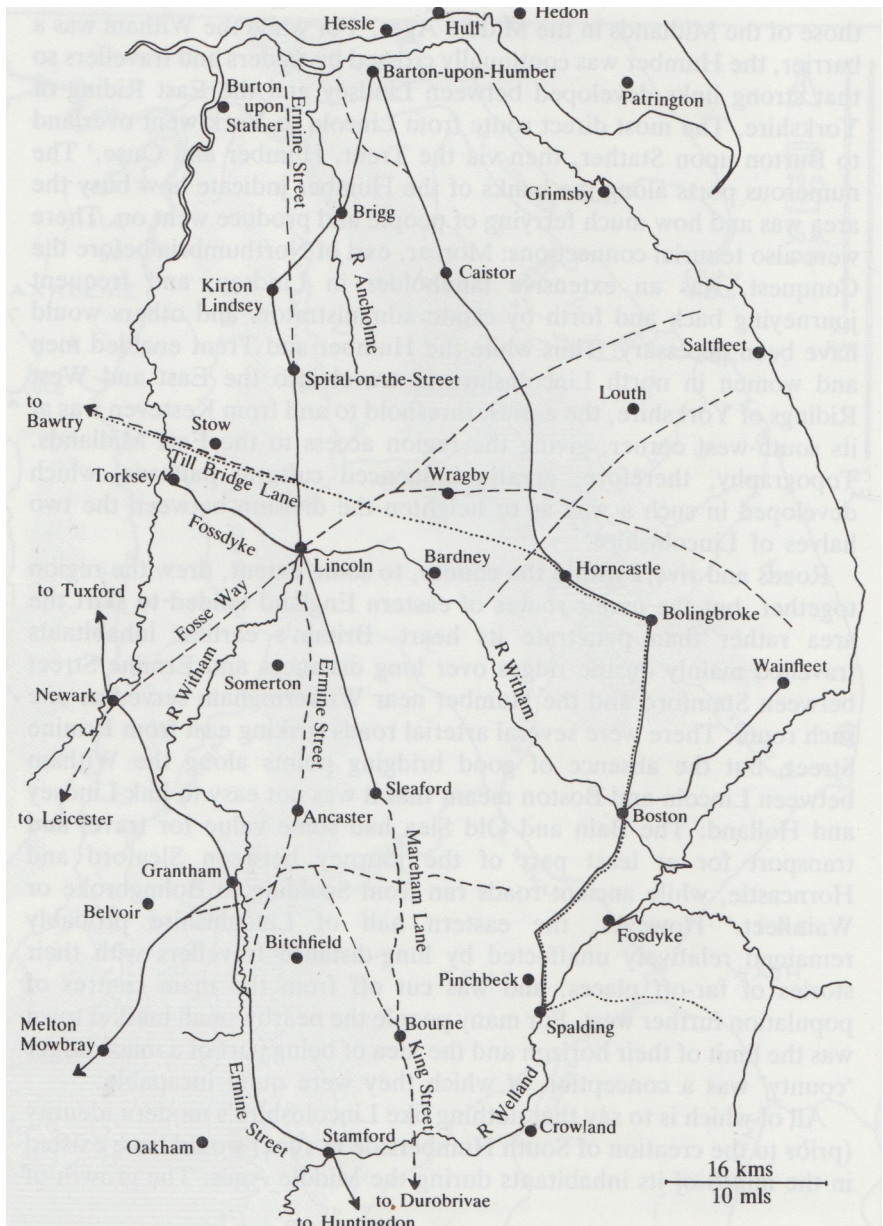
played an important but locally determined role in testamentary piety, and that a gendered performance of the works of mercy served as an organizing principle for testamentary charity.



Map 1 Medieval Dioceses of England

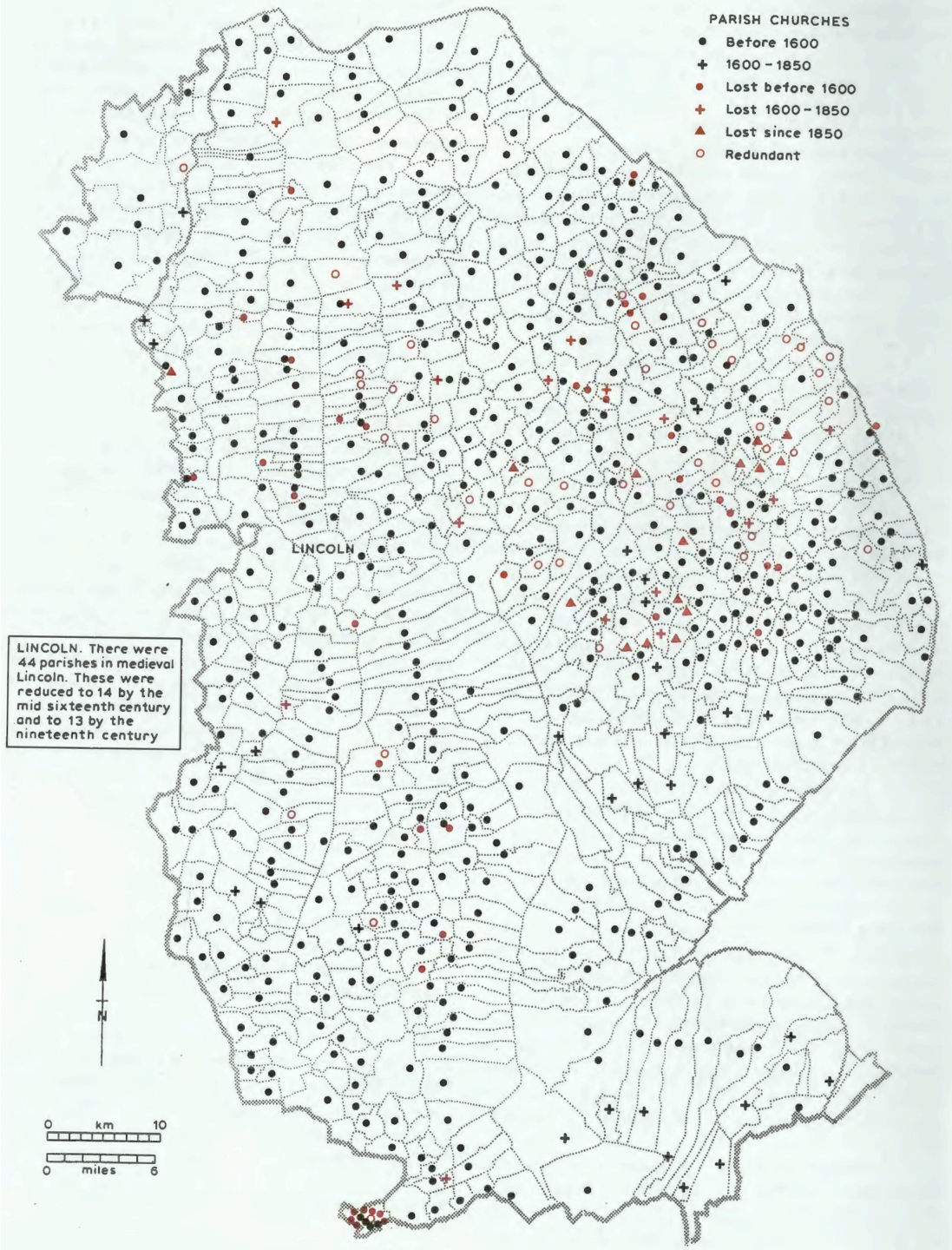
Adrian Fletcher, "Medieval English Cathedrals," May 21, 2014.

<http://www.paradoxplace.com/Photo%20Pages/UK/English%20Cathedrals.htm>



Map 2 Principal Routes and Centers in Medieval Lincolnshire
 Graham Platts, *Land and People in Medieval Lincolnshire*
 (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1985), 4, fig. 2.

PARISH CHURCHES



Map 3 Medieval Parish Churches in Lincolnshire
 Stewart Bennett and Nicholas Bennett, eds., *An Historical Atlas of Lincolnshire*
 (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1993), 46.

ECCLESIASTICAL BOUNDARIES



Map 4 Medieval Ecclesiastical Boundaries in Lincolnshire
 Stewart Bennett and Nicholas Bennett, eds., *An Historical Atlas of Lincolnshire*
 (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1993), 50.

Chapter 1
‘for the helthe of his soule and of the soules of alle hys peple’:
Vernacular Instruction for Parish Priests

In the thirteenth-century both continental and English ecclesiastical authorities attempted to standardize and improve clerical and lay religious education; this had the immediate consequence of bringing to the fore the need to better educate parish clergy. In order to adequately perform their clerical duties, parish priests needed to have the proper knowledge of Christian doctrine to provide their parishioners with fundamentals of the faith.¹ In England, Archbishop Pecham’s Council of Lambeth in 1281 furthered the Fourth Lateran Council’s efforts to regularize religious practice. At Lambeth, Archbishop Pecham’s Council devised a comprehensive catechetical program for the instruction of the laity called *De informacione simplicium*. This educational schema is more commonly referred to as the *Ignorantia Sacerdotum* based on its opening paragraph, which explained, “the ignorance of priests casts the people down into the ditch of error, and the foolishness and lack of learning of clerics, whom the decrees of canon law order to teach the sons of the faithful, is all the worse when it leads to error instead of knowledge.”² Because there was no system of seminaries or divinity schools, clerical education was piece-meal and often haphazard.³ There were also no consistently applied

¹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580*. (New Haven: Yale, 1992), pp. 53-4.

² Geoffrey F. Bryant, ‘*How thow schalt thy paresche preche*’: *John Myrc’s Instructions for Parish Priests* (Barton-on Humber: Workers’ Educational Association, 1999), 3.

³ Beth Allison Barr, *The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2008), 23.

standards for measuring clerical competency for pastoral duty; therefore Pecham's constitutions at the very least provided clergy with a concrete syllabus of the fundamentals of Christianity. Pecham based his catechetical program on the Ten Commandments, the Creed, Christ's directive to love God and neighbor, and the seven works of mercy, principle virtues, deadly sins, and sacraments of grace. Parishioners were to receive a quarterly vernacular exposition of these seven seminal Christian teachings at their local parish church.⁴ In order to fulfill the demands of this program established by the Council of Lambeth, a corpus of literature aimed at the instruction of the clergy emerged. Many early instructional manuals were in Latin, but by the late-fourteenth century clerics were producing vernacular didactic works for parish priests, who lacked the benefit of a University education or extensive knowledge of Latin. In his work on medieval vernacular instruction, G.H. Russell points out that of Latin works that "there is little doubt that many of the parish priests of England would have found such treatises quite beyond the range of their linguistic and theological knowledge. They needed something much simpler, and that in the mother tongue."⁵

John Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests* (c. 1380-1400), a versified vernacular adaptation of William of Pagula's *Oculus Sacerdotis* (c.1320), was one of the first English manuals of pastoral instruction. While vernacular devotional literature and confessors' manuals flourished from the fourteenth century onward, few manuals expressly addressed the instruction of priests and social aspects of their cure of souls.⁶ Therefore works like Mirk's *Instructions* and

⁴ Duffy, 53.

⁵ G.H. Russell, "Vernacular Instruction of the Laity in the Later Middle Ages: Some Texts and Noted," *The Journal of Religious History* 2:2 (1962-1963), 102.

⁶ I chose *Instructions for Parish Priests* and the *Doctrinal of Sapience* for analysis because of their relative popularity, linguistic accessibility, and explicit designation as texts for the instruction of the clergy. Both texts were written in the late fourteenth century. *Instructions for*

the *Doctrinal of Sapience* became invaluable tools in the education of parish clergy, providing priests with practical information on the proper performance of the sacraments, especially that of penance, and strategies for how best to minister to parishioners. Through a comparative analysis of the vernacular pastoral instructional manuals *Instructions for Parish Priests* and the *Doctrinal of Sapience* this chapter argues that these didactic texts 1) presented charity as expressed through the seven works of mercy as an integral part of Christianity's "economy of grace," 2) trained priests to think about charity in social terms, and 3) utilized specific gendered pedagogical strategies to encourage priests to use charity as a means to structure social relationships through the practice of good neighborhood.⁷ Both Mirk's *Instructions* and the *Doctrinal of Sapience*

Parish Priests between 1380-1400, and the *Doctrinal of Sapience* in 1388-9. *Instructions* survives in seven manuscript versions, Bryant, 7. It was the most popular late medieval manual for pastoral instruction, Kristensson, 9; H.G. Pfander, "Some Medieval Manuals of Religious Instruction in England and Observations on Chaucer's Parson's Tale," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 35 (1936), 252. The *Doctrinal* was originally a French work. It survives in twenty-four French manuscript versions and twenty print editions. Eleven of the French print editions were published before Caxton translated and published it himself in. According to Joseph Gallagher, Caxton chose to translate and print the *Doctrinal* because it seemed to him that it would be a very marketable work as an English pastoral manual. Caxton printed one edition and there are thirteen extant copies of this work. Caxton made no changes of his own to the content of the *Doctrinal*, so his 1489 print edition is a verbatim translation made from his French source material. Gallagher, *The Doctrinal of Sapience*, pp.7-10. Other popular late medieval vernacular devotional works like Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne* (1303), Dan Michel's *Ayenbite of Inwyt* (c. 1340), Dan Gaytrige's *Lay Folks' Catechism* (1357), the *Speculum Christiani* (c. 1350-60), *Ordynarye of Crysten Men* (1502), *Floure of the Commandements* (1510), and *Exonatorium Curatorum* (1532) contained some of the catechetical elements of the two texts under consideration in this chapter, but imagined a primarily lay readership. See Vincent Gillespie, "Doctrina and Predicacio: The Design and Function of Some Pastoral Manuals," *Leeds Studies in English* 11 (1979), 36-50; Pfander, "Some Medieval Manuals of Religious Instruction," 243-58.

⁷ Eamon Duffy uses the phrase "economy of grace" to describe the patron/client relationship between saints and the living wherein in exchange for homage paid in the form of altars, lights, and masses, saints offered protection to the living and intercession for the dead, *Stripping of the Altars*, 183-90. The notion of an "economy" can also be applied to the relationship between Christ and Christians, which prescriptive manuals characterize as one of sacrifice and repayment. Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests* teaches that Christ purchased the sins of humanity to free

closely followed Pecham's seven-point program in their instruction of "symple prestes," and presented a flexible reading of the corporeal and spiritual works of mercy, which taught priests to encourage the limited practice of the spiritual works by the laity within a domestic context. While they are similar in basic content, each manual utilizes different pedagogical strategies to impart religious teachings. Mirk's text focuses on sin, confession, and penance, with the works of mercy presented as remedies for sin. Performing them as penance would both lessen suffering in Purgatory and be rewarded on Judgment Day. The *Doctrinal of Sapience* addressed the same audience as *Instructions*, but used pedagogical techniques more commonly employed in the education of the laity—vivid narratives, moralizing *exempla*, and guided visualization drawing on religious art and church décor. As the unlearned clergy these manuals were meant for came from the same social milieu as their parishioners and likely had only slightly more religious knowledge than them, it is not surprising that similar methods were used to educate both clergy and laity. Despite using different instructional techniques, both works valorize women's piety and envision female parishioners as partners in the religious education of the family—a strategy also used in the prescriptive literature examined in Chapter Two.

The Fourth Lateran Council's dictate *Omnis utriusque sexus* made clerical instructional manuals a necessity. It required all Christians of age to annually make confession and receive communion—a requirement that would prove challenging for clergy and laity alike.⁸ The

them, Gillis Kristensson, ed., *John Mirk's Instructions for Parish Priests*, Lund Studies in English 49 (1974), 81; Likewise, the *Doctrinal of Sapience* tells its audience that Christ bought sinners with his blood, Gallagher, pp. 142-145.

⁸ Leonard Boyle, "The Fourth Lateran Council and Manuals of Popular Theology," in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed., Thomas J. Heffernan, Tennessee Studies in Literature 28 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 30-4; Edward Cutts, *Parish Priests and Their People in the Middle Ages in England* (New York: E.S.Gorham, 1914); Roy Martin Haines, *Ecclesia Anglicana: Studies in the English Church of the Later Middle Ages*

Church's growing emphasis on the importance of the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist, made confession integral to participation in Christianity's salvific regime. Sinners lived in a state of spiritual disease that placed them outside of God's charity; however they could be redeemed through God's mercy, which took the form of reconciliatory sacraments. The local parish priest "tending spiritual ills when hearing confession and imposing penance was compared to a physician tending wounds. He was required to enquire into the circumstances of sin and sinner in order to provide right council and remedy."⁹ As sacred doctors, priests heard confession, prescribed remedy for sin, and then brought the sinner back into the ambit of God's charity and the community of believers by administering the healing Eucharist. Thus the process for absolution was confession with true contrition, absolution, and satisfaction through

(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), "Between Reform and Reformation: The English Church in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41 (1990): 647-78; Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Jo Ann H. Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling 1340-1548* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Ann Eljenholm Nichols, "The Etiquette of Pre-Reformation Confession in East Anglia," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 17 (1986), 145-163; John Shinnors and William J. Dohar, eds., *Pastors and the Care of Souls in Medieval England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 169-70; Joan Simon, *Education and Society in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966); H. Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Middle Ages*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993; R.N. Swanson, "Problems of the Priesthood in Pre-Reformation England," *The English Historical Review* 105 (1990), 845-869, "Pastoralia in Practice: Clergy and Ministry in Pre-Reformation England," *Nederlands Archief Voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 83 (2003), 104-127.

⁹ Peter Biller, "Confession in the Middle Ages," in *Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages*, eds., Peter Biller and A.J. Minnis (York: York Medieval Press, 1998), 7. "The image of doctor and medicine was commonplace in early medieval penitentials," as was the tradition of viewing Christ himself as a doctor, Biller, 8; see also R. Arbesmann, "The Concept of 'Christus Medicus' in St. Augustine'," *Traditio* 10 (1954), 1-28; J.T. McNeill, "Medicine for Sin as Prescribed in Penitentials," *Church History* 1 (1932), 14-26.

penitential prayers and works of mercy. After this process, Christians were allowed the receipt of the holy sacrament as a remission of sin.¹⁰

In order to conduct confession and administer communion and penance, clerics needed to understand these tenets of Christianity before they could be expected to teach parishioners in the rudiments of the faith. While the English ecclesiastical hierarchy followed suit by making their own promulgations regulating catechesis—the Council of Oxford (1222), Bishop of Lincoln, Robert Grosseteste’s Constitutions (1239), Bishop of Hereford, Walter Cantilupe’s Constitutions (c. 1240), the Council of Lambeth (1281), and encouraged pastoral usage of manuals such as Thomas of Chobham’s *Summa de penitentia* (c.1216), Robert Grosseteste’s *Templum Domini* (c. 1238-45), Archbishop Pecham’s *Ignorantia Sacerdotum* (1281), and Bishop Quivil of Exeter’s constitutions and *Summula*—it was not until the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that pastoral literature was available in the vernacular and reflected “a comprehensive approach to pastoral care and included contemporary theology.”¹¹

¹⁰ Mirk’s *Instructions for Parish Priests* instructs priests to ensure that parishioners understand the meaning of the Eucharist by asking, “Leuest also in fulle a-tent/How þat holy sacrament/Is I-3eue to mon-kynne/In remyssyone of here synne?/Be-leuest also, now telle me/þat he þat lyueþ in charyte/Schale come to blysse sycurly/And dwelle in seyntes cumpany,” Kristensson, 117; Norman Tanner and Sethina Watson, “Least of the Laity: The Minimum Requirements for a Medieval Christian,” *Journal of Medieval History* 32 (2006), 405.

¹¹ Barr, *Pastoral Care*, 28; see also Leonard Boyle, “The Oculus Sacerdotis and Some Other Works of William of Pagula,” in Leonard Boyle, *Pastoral Care, Clerical Education, and Canon Law* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1981), 81-110; C.R. Cheney, *English Synodalia in the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford, 1941); D. L Douie, *Archbishop Pecham* (Oxford, 1952) 134, 138-142; Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, pp. 192-5. Archbishop John Stafford of Bath and Wells ordered that Pecham’s Constitutions be translated into English and placed in every church in his diocese for the use of the parish clergy. In England, Franciscans played a particularly important role in preaching and the authorship of manuals of pastoral care. Bishop of Lincoln, Robert Grosseteste instructed Franciscans at Oxford from 1229-1235. He wrote the Latin *Templum Domini* (c. 1238-45) as a confessional and instructional manual for clergy. Archbishop Pecham was also a Franciscan. For more on Franciscan writings in England see D.L. Jeffrey, *The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska

In order to standardize lay religious practice and belief, the medieval Church first had to produce a better-educated clergy. Medieval pastoral training was heterogeneous in nature.¹² Most priests were educated through attending mass and listening to sermons, in much the same way that the laity were educated, and by the informal tutelage of other clerics.¹³ While there were song and grammar schools, which provided elementary and secondary education, and universities, which provided the training for bachelor and advanced degrees, the majority of English parish priests did not have access to the type of academic education needed for advancement within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Instead, parish priests were “the mean clerics who came from middling families, lacked regular salaries, often subsided on the generosity of local parishioners, rarely obtained benefices, and yet shouldered the bulk of pastoral responsibilities.”¹⁴

Educational standards for parish priests were not exceedingly rigorous. Progression through the minor orders of porter, lector, exorcist, and acolyte to the major orders of subdeacon and deacon required a basic literacy. To enter the major orders of priest or bishop often required at the very least a vow of celibacy and the literacy skills to pass an ordination exam.¹⁵ Scholars

Press, 1975); Kevin E. Lawson, “Learning the Faith in the Later Middle Ages: Contributions of the Franciscan Friars,” *Journal of the Religious Education Association* (2012), pp. 139-157; B. Roest, *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction Before the Council of Trent* (Brill: Boston, 2004), Nicholas Rogers, ed., *The Friars in Medieval Britain* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2010), pp. 25-40.

¹² Barr, “Gendering Pastoral Care: John Mirk and His Instructions for Parish Priests,” in Jeffrey S. Hamilton, ed., *Fourteenth Century England IV* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2006), 95, *The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2008), 23.

¹³ Barr, *Pastoral Care*, 24.

¹⁴ Barr, *Pastoral Care*, 25; P. H. Cullum, “Learning to Be a Man, Learning to Be a Priest in Late Medieval England” in Sarah Rees Jones, ed., *Learning and Literacy in Medieval England and Abroad* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2003), 139.

¹⁵ Barr, *Pastoral Care*, 24; Cullum, “Learning to Be a Man,” pp. 139-142.

have noted that even those two requirements, at least for a parochial level position were not steadfast—ordination exams tested only basic skills, and complaints of clerical incontinence remained widespread throughout the middle ages.¹⁶ In the fourteenth century, educational standards for priests declined as a result of the Black Death, while at the same time the decimated clerical population was overburdened with pastoral responsibilities and strapped financially as their livings declined in value.¹⁷ Beth Barr has argued that the decline in clerical educational standards and consequent decline in the status of the priesthood in the fourteenth century prompted ecclesiastical authorities to shift their models for educating the clergy—“the wane in formal educational standards coincided with a waxing of vernacular pastoral literature.”¹⁸ The growth of vernacular pastoral literature in the late fourteenth-century was part of an effort to enhance clerical education.¹⁹ Local clergy with few more opportunities for advanced education than their parishioners were able to learn hagiographical and biblical stories, prayers and creeds, and the workings of penance and confession from vernacular pastoral manuals like John Mirk’s *Instructions for Parish Priests* and *Festial* as well as the *Lay Folk’s*

¹⁶ Barr, *Pastoral Care*, 24; Cullum discusses the frequency of romantic attachments and broken engagements between women and young men in the minor orders, “Learning to Be a Man,” pp. 145-150.

¹⁷ Barr, *Pastoral Care*, 26; see also William J. Courtenay, “The Effect of the Black Death on English Higher Education,” *Speculum* 55:4 (1980), 696-714; Cullum, “Learning to Be a Man,” 138; William J. Dohar, *The Black Death and Pastoral Leadership: The Diocese of Hereford in the Fourteenth-Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); J.A.H. Moran, “Clerical Recruitment in the Diocese of York, 1340-1530: Data and Commentary,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34:1 (1983), 19-54.

¹⁸ Barr, *Pastoral Care*, 27; see also Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 189-243; Vincent Gillespie, “Vernacular Books of Religion,” in Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475, eds. Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 317-341; W.A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955).

¹⁹ Barr, *Pastoral Care*, 22.

Mass Book.²⁰ Vernacular pastoral manuals provided local clergy with edifying *exempla* and sermons, catechisms, and penitentials, and in a departure from earlier Latin manuals, they also gave clerics pragmatic advice about how to care for their parishioners on a quotidian basis.²¹ Fourteenth-century didactic texts fulfilled the spirit of thirteenth-century ecclesiastical reforms by making catechistic material available in the vernacular to clerics and laypeople alike.²² Texts like Archbishop Thoresby of York's 1357 vernacular translation of Pecham's Constitutions, the *Lay Folks Catechism*, and the works produced by John Mirk allowed both clerics, with limited opportunity for advanced learning, and their parishioners access to ecclesiastically approved manuals for self-education. The authors of pastoral manuals encouraged clergy and laity (in the case of *Lay Folks Catechism* with a forty-day indulgence) to take on a measure of sanctioned responsibility and control over their spiritual instruction within a pedagogical framework based on the doctrine of charity.²³

John Mirk, the author of the popular pastoral manual, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, was an Augustinian canon-regular. He eventually served as the Prior of Lilleshall Abbey in

²⁰ Barr, *Pastoral Care*, 27; see also Christopher Harper-Bill, *The Pre-Reformation Church in England*, 44; Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, 28; R.L. Storey, "Ordination of Secular Priests in Early Tudor London, Part One," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 33:1 (1989), 122-131.

²¹ Barr, *Pastoral Care*, 27; see also Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation*; John Lawson and Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (London: Methuen, 1973), 42-90.

²² Barr, "Gendering Pastoral Care," 93; Bryant, 6; David B. Foss, "John Mirk's Instructions for Parish Priests," in *The Ministry: Clerical and Lay: Papers Read at the 1989 Summer Meeting and the 1989 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, eds. William J. Sheils and Diana Wood, 131-140 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 132; Pantin, *English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, 189.

²³ God's charity allowed salvation through the sacraments of the church—in particular the Eucharist that reconciled Christians to God and one another, and penance in the form of the works of mercy, which made satisfaction for sin. Christians were counseled to adhere to Pecham's syllabus for love of God, and were expected to demonstrate that love with obedience to the commandments and good works.

Shropshire. He probably started his clerical career as a vicar at the church of St. Alkmund, Shropshire, where he had the cure of souls and attended to parishioners—experience reflected in his pragmatic and sympathetic treatment of pastoral responsibility to the laity.²⁴ While performing pastoral duties at St. Alkmund’s, Shrewsbury, Mirk was likely influenced by his parishioners’ specific pastoral needs and expectations, and these experiences informed the ways he in turn instructed his clerical audience.²⁵ He authored three manuals for pastoral care, *Instructions for Parish Priests* (c. 1380-1400), the *Festial* (c. 1380-90), a collection of Middle English sermons, and the *Manuale Sacerdotis*, a learned Latin treatise on clerical duties (c. 1414).²⁶ Mirk wrote his *Instructions for Parish Priests* for local clergy “þat haue no bokes of here owne, And oþer þat beth of mene lore.”²⁷ Mirk explained his purpose for writing *Instructions*: “3ef thow be not grete clerk look thow moste on thys werk: for here thow my3te fynde & rede, that þ be-houeth to cone nede, how thow schalt thy paresche preche, and what þe

²⁴ Barr, “Gendering Pastoral Care,” 94; A.J. Fletcher, “John Mirk and the Lollards,” *Medium Aevum* 56 (1987), 217-224; Kristensson, 10.

²⁵ Scholars have argued that preaching was not unidirectional; lay concerns influenced the style and content of sermons. It is likely that this was the case for other aspects of pastoral care as well. For more on sermons see Katherine French, “Medieval Women’s History: Sources and Issues,” in *Understanding Medieval Primary Sources*, ed. Joel Rosenthal (New York: Routledge, 2012) 203-4.

²⁶ Both *Instructions for Parish Priests* and the *Festial* were contemporaneous with the Lollard movement of the late fourteenth century. The *Festial* contains sermons that challenge the anti-sacramental and anticlerical beliefs of the Lollards by emphasizing the primacy of the Church’s authority and promoting a works based conception of salvation, but the Lollards are not mentioned in Mirk’s *Instructions*. For Lollardy and the *Festial* see Judy Ann Ford, *John Mirk’s Festial: Orthodoxy, Lollardy, and the Common People in Fourteenth Century England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), pp. 143-8.

²⁷ Kristensson, 175; See also. Foss, “John Mirk’s Instructions for Parish Priests,” 131-140; Herbert Stroup, “John Mirk: Tutor to England’s Medieval Preachers,” *The Bulletin* 47/3 (Summer 1967), 26-38; Karl Young, “Instructions for Parish Priests,” *Speculum* 11 (1936), 224-31. *Instructions for Parish Priests* survives in seven manuscripts from the fifteenth-century, but scholars agree that it was written in the late fourteenth-century, Barr, “Gendering Pastoral Care,” 95.

nedeth hem to teche.”²⁸ Mirk echoed almost verbatim Pecham’s *Ignorantia Sacerdotum* and William of Pagula’s *Oculus*, when he explained to priests:

God seyeth hym-self, as wryten we fynde,
That whenne þe blynde ledeth þe blynde,
In-to þe dyche þey fallen boo,
For þey ne sen whare-by to go.
So faren prestes now by dawe:
They beth [so] blynde in goddess lawe,
That whenne þey scholde þe pepul rede
In-to synne þey do hem lede.²⁹

Mirk advised priests to “rede þys ofte, and so lete oþer.”³⁰ In this way, priests with limited means could train themselves to learn about appropriate pastoral care, and perform the spiritual work of educating the ignorant. It consists of 1934 versified lines divided into three sections: 1) proper priestly comportment and behavior, 2) instruction of the laity, and 3) administration of the sacraments.³¹ The majority of the work—about 1222 lines, deals with confession and penance. Mirk imagined his audience of parish priests to be drawn from a similar background as the laypeople to whom they would minister.³² Therefore, what he taught the

²⁸ Kristensson, 68.

²⁹ Ibid., 67; This idea is drawn from Matthew 15:14: “if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit”; see also Barr, “Gendering Pastoral Care,” 96; Shinnars and Dohar, pp. 141-142. Mirk omitted an explanation of the two precepts of the Gospel. Pecham’s seven-point syllabus required that clergy and laity know the Ten Commandments, Creed, two precepts of the Gospel (i.e. the twin laws of charity), the Seven Works of Mercy, seven principle virtues, Seven Deadly Sins, and seven sacraments of grace.

³⁰ Kristensson, 175.

³¹ Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, 214.

³² Mirk presented the main differences between the clergy and their parishioners as being the external markers of behavior, comportment, and dress. His prescriptions for how priests should dress (modestly) and comport themselves (meekly) visually separated clergymen from laymen, while at the same time mirroring contemporary ideas about how good wives should dress (simply) and behave (humbly). See Kristensson, pp. 68-69 for a description of how priests should dress and act. The ability to perform the sacraments issuing from ordination also generally separated the clergy from the laity; however, the Eucharist, hearing confession, and

clergy to teach the laity had educational value for parish priests as well. Clerical and lay catechesis consisted of the same basic elements, modified by differences of degree and sophistication—priests learned Pecham’s syllabus, and then it was reinforced each time they ministered or examined the religious knowledge of their parishioners.

Mirk’s pedagogical program for parish clergy taught that the corporeal works of mercy were integral to salvation for both clergy and laypeople, that the spiritual works of praying for the dead and educating the ignorant were appropriate religious practices for the laity, that the commission of the Seven Deadly Sins constituted a breach in holy neighborliness, and that male and female laypeople required spiritual care that reflected contemporary gender roles and expectations. Although there were two branches of the works of mercy, which corresponded to the contemplative clerical lifestyle and active lay lifestyle, respectively,³³ Mirk presented a flexible view of the works of mercy suggesting that the selective performance of both types might be suitable for clergy and laity. Mirk enumerated the corporeal works of mercy in a section on the venial sins entitled “De modo inquirendi de peccatis venialibus.” His discussion of the works of mercy took the form of questions asked by a confessor to a penitent:

prescribing penance were the clergy’s most important sacramental duties. Laypeople could baptize infants if necessary.

³³ Although Pecham’s syllabus presented the corporeal works of mercy as the most suitable good works for the laity to practice, in the late middle ages laypeople began to appropriate the spiritual works as part of their own religious activities. Evidence of the lay appropriation of the spiritual works of mercy can be found in guild records and wills, and will be discussed in chapters four and five. See Eamon Duffy, “Religious Belief,” in *A Social History of England, 1200-1500*, eds., Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 294; Miriam Gill, “Female Piety and Impiety: Selected Images of Women in Wall Paintings in England After 1300,” in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, eds., Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 135; “‘Yf lak of charyte be nor ower hynderawnce’: Margery Kempe, Lynn, and the Practice of the Spiritual and Bodily Works of Mercy,” in *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe*, eds., John Arnold and Katherine Lewis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 178; Claire Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 3-6.

Hast þou holpe by þy my3t
To burye þe dede, as byd owre dry3t?
Pore & naked and hongrey,
Hast þow I-sokert mekely?
Hast þou in herte rowþth I-had,
Of hem þat were nede be-stad,
To seke & sore and prisonerus,
I-herberet all wayferus?³⁴

The act of yearly parochial confession prepared Christians for the ultimate act of confession—when Christ would assume the role of confessor and judge and separate the saved from the damned on Judgment Day. He would ask in much the same way as a confessor would if the penitent had performed works of mercy.³⁵ While Mirk lists all seven corporeal works of mercy, *Instructions for Parish Priests* primarily focuses on feeding the hungry, quenching the thirsty, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick.³⁶ His treatment of these works of mercy was wide-

³⁴ Kristensson, 145. Asking if the penitent has “mekely” given succor to the poor, naked, and hungry or felt wrath at having to help those in need seem to reference contemporary ideas about gender and the works of mercy. The emotions of meekness and wrath may have resonated differently with penitents of different sexes. Priests and housewives were taught to act meekly, and were responsible for the works related to sacred hospitality and burial. Scholars like Claire Waters have argued that the virgin martyrs were often used as models for priests to emulate. The texts under consideration in this chapter, however, draw parallels between the social and religious responsibilities of priests and good wives as well as their demeanor. Men were commonly guilty of the sin of wrath as well as neglecting their obligation to practice the works.

³⁵ The language used in prescriptive manuals suggests that Judgment Day confession would be a retelling of one’s sins—either by God or the penitent. For example, the *The Lay Folks’ Catechism* taught of the works of mercy, “god sal reherce us upon the dai of dome, and wit how we haf don tham here in this lyfe,” Simmons, *The Lay Folks’ Catechism*, 70. The *Ordynarye of Crystyante* (1502) describes Judgment Day as a time when “all synne is reherced.” According to the Oxford English Dictionary “rehearse” has been used to mean both “to recite or repeat aloud” and “to repeat, say over again (something previously said or heard)” since the fourteenth century. The *Lay Folks’ Catechism* also succinctly warned that “they be so cursyd of god that do not do the werkys of bodyly mercy,” Simmons, 77.

³⁶ Chapters three and five demonstrate that feeding the hungry and quenching the thirsty were among the works of mercy that laypeople favored in their practice of charity. Laypeople did cloth the naked and visit the sick, but generally not as discrete works. They, instead, opted to fund charitable institutions like orphanages, hospitals, and bedehouses that performed multiple works of mercy at once.

ranging. By integrating them into his explications of other catechetical elements, like the Ten Commandments and seven deadly sins, Mirk taught that these works of mercy were religious obligations that had individual and communal spiritual and social import. Performance of these works demonstrated obedience to God's commandments, helped constitute community by creating bonds of charity, and served as remedies for an individual's sins.

According to Mirk, priests and laypeople alike were responsible for feeding the hungry and quenching the thirsty.³⁷ Mirk impressed upon priests that part of their clerical duties included "Of mete and drynke þow moste be fre, To poor and ryche by thy degre."³⁸ This advice was immediately followed in the text by warnings of Judgment Day to ensure that priests understood the connection between performing the works of mercy and the events surrounding Christ's last judgment, and could then impart this to their parishioners. In his explanation of the commandments, Mirk understood the commandment to honor thy father and mother to mean not only affording them due deference, but providing them with food, drink, and clothing as well. Confessors were meant to ask parishioners: "Hast þou 3eve hem at here need, Mete & drynke cloþ or wede."³⁹ In discussing the commandment thou shalt not kill, Mirk echoed the sentiments found in the tenth-century Blickling homilies, which taught that uncharity was tantamount to

³⁷ Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 223-256.

³⁸ Kristensson, 69. Mirk's instructions to priests regarding their duty to perform sacred hospitality echoes sentiments found in the contemporary poem, "How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter," where the daughter is instructed "With Mete, drinke, & honest chere, Such as þou aist to hem bede, To ech man after his degree, & help þe poore at need," Frederick J. Furnivall, *The Babees Book* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 44. Clergymen and good wives both shared the sacred duty of the host to feed and quench the hungry and thirsty.

³⁹ Kristensson, 121.

murder.⁴⁰ Therefore, confessors were obligated to ask penitents “Hast þou 3eve any mon of þy mete, When he hade hongour and nede to ete.”⁴¹ If the parishioner had failed to feed the hungry, they were in a state of sin and prescribed penance.

In discussing the seven deadly sins, Mirk conceived of them as being harmful to the charitable relationships between individuals, their neighbors, and God. Penance for the sins of gluttony and greed was almsgiving. Mirk advised those guilty of gluttony to perform the work of feeding the hungry: “þow moste do alme fulle gret; Fede þe pore of þat þow sparest. And lete hem fele how þow farest.”⁴² The sin of sloth was characterized by failing to practice neighborliness through the performance of charity. Here Mirk does not mention specific works of mercy, but instructed confessors to ask penitents more generally, “Hast þou be slowe in any degree/For to do werke of charyte?”⁴³ Mirk was teaching parish clergy that neighborliness was enacted by sacred hospitality, and that both clergy and laypeople bore this responsibility. Parish clergy were tasked with performing this work of mercy, and maintaining a community in which parishioners practiced this type of charity as well. In each case, hospitality materially benefited the community while also spiritually enriching the individual.

⁴⁰ R. Morris, ed., *The Blickling Homilies*, EETS no. 58 (London, 1874; reprint, 1967), pp. 52-53. One of the Blickling homilies for Lent warned listeners that if the neighborhood poor should die from their lack of charity, “all those men’s deaths shall he be guilty and a murderer before the throne of the eternal Judge, because that he wretchedly and arrogantly previously kept his wealth and refused it to the Lord’s poor,” R. Morris, ed., *The Blickling Homilies*, EETS no. 58 (London, 1874; reprint, 1967), pp. 52-53; see also Elaine Clark, “Social Welfare and Mutual Aid in the Medieval Countryside,” *The Journal of British Studies* 33, no. 4 (1994), 402; Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 62.

⁴¹ Kristensson, 121.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 157.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 129. Surprisingly, the remedy for sloth is not to practice works of mercy, but to instead go to church and say the Paternoster several times a day, Kristensson, 158.

In terms of the work of visiting the sick, Mirk's instructions focused on the clerical treatment of the infirm and dying. Performing the sacrament of extreme unction, clergymen both admonished sinners and comforted the afflicted—they anointed the sick, heard their confession, and administered the Host for those well enough to take it. While visiting the sick was categorized as a corporeal work of mercy, which laypeople should perform in their capacity as deathbed visitors, priests also performed this work. Although Mirk does not explicitly make this connection, visiting the sick also fulfilled the corporeal work of relieving prisoners. According to the Franciscan-Authored Middle English *Treatise on the Ten Commandments* (c. 1420-1434), the sick and bedridden were “godes preisiners & lyen in þe boondes of god in sore sekeness.”⁴⁴ By the same token, Mirk advised parish priests not to impose penance on the gravely ill because their illness was its own type of penance—“And þow se þat he may not lyue/ Oþer penaunce þthow schalt not gyn/But þe sekenes þat he ys In.”⁴⁵

Praying for the living and dead and educating the ignorant were spiritual works of mercy typically associated with the contemplative life. In fact, Pecham's syllabus for lay catechesis presents the corporeal works of mercy, not the spiritual ones as part of his seven-point program of necessary lay religious knowledge. Mirk presented these particular spiritual works of mercy as suitable for the laity, which may mean that he was responding to lay desires to expand the scope of their spiritual responsibilities. Mirk discussed lay obligation to pray for the dead in his explanation of the commandment to honor thy father and mother, and in his section on confession. Part of correctly honoring one's parents was to pray for them. Parishioners were meant to contemplate this responsibility as their priest asked, “Hast þow made for hem to

⁴⁴ James F. Royster, ed., *A Middle English Treatise on the Ten Commandments: Studies in Philology* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University Press, 1911), 21. See also Clark, 401.

⁴⁵ Kristensson, 172.

pray.”⁴⁶ Under the category of venial sins, confessors were supposed to ask their parishioners, “Hast þow I-come by a chyrcche-3orde/And for þe dede I-prayed no worde?”⁴⁷ In their roles as godmothers and godfathers, parishioners were expected to educate the ignorant: “Godfader and godmoder þou moste preche/þat þey here godchyldere to gode teche/Here pater noster and here crede/Techen hem they mote nede.”⁴⁸ An element of the sin of sloth was failing to teach “þy godchyldre pater noster & crede.”⁴⁹ Here, Mirk presents education as a responsibility for both clergy and laity to perform, albeit in different scopes and contexts. Parish priests taught laypeople the elements of the faith in the parish church, and expected that laypeople would do the same in their roles as parents and godparents. Mirk does not explicitly mention the spiritual works of counseling the doubtful, bearing wrongs patiently, comforting the afflicted, or forgiving offenses willingly in the context of acceptable lay religious practice. He does, however, critique the lay admonishment of sinners through fraternal correction. In his discussion of the sin of pride, Mirk noted that laypeople who pointed out the sins of others were actually doing so for their own gain—the admonishment of sinners may underlie the sin of pride. A confessor should ask if the penitent “a-noþeres synne I-spoken owt/And þyn entencyone syche was/þat þy synne schulde seme þe las.”⁵⁰ It is possible that because Mirk’s writings were contemporaneous with emergence of the Lollards, he was hesitant to encourage laypeople to openly admonish each other, fearing that the lay correction could lead to heretical criticism of the Church.

The seven works of corporeal mercy enabled Christians to be saved through the performance of good works, which benefited their neighbors and commemorated Christ’s

⁴⁶ Kristensson, 121.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 146.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 76.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 128.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 127.

suffering. Conversely, the commission of the seven deadly sins damned Christians because each sin broke the twin laws of charity; they were considered “the negative exposition of the two commandments of the Gospel, the love of God and the love of one’s neighbor.”⁵¹

Neighborliness, then, was an integral aspect of the seven deadly sins as a moral code for Christians. Accordingly, Mirk characterized deadly sin as being expressed through the hatred of one’s neighbor and consequent forsaking of God’s charity. Neighbors were the primary victims of the sins of pride, sloth, envy, wrath, and greed, which were considered to be the gravest of the deadly sins. John Bossy has argued that contemporaries conceptualized the seven deadly sins as representing “a kind of moral spectrum showing sins of the spirit at one end and sins of the flesh at the other; the first were held to be graver than the second.”⁵² The sins were traditionally ordered Pride, Envy, Wrath, Avarice, Gluttony, Sloth, and Lechery.⁵³ Mirk’s schema placed Sloth between Pride and Wrath instead of at the end of his enumeration of sins with the other sins of the flesh, Gluttony and Lust. For Mirk, Sloth includes spiritual failings like shirking the responsibility to instruct the ignorant as a godparent, or forsaking Christian duties done “for Goddes loue and sowle nede”—attending church, praying, and penance.⁵⁴ According to Mirk, the prideful took credit for charity performed by others and oppressed their neighbors in the selfish pursuit of personal honor. Mirk drew a direct connection between neighborliness and the works of mercy in his discussion of the sin of sloth. Those guilty of sloth failed to perform works of charity and help neighbors in need. The wrathful willingly harmed their neighbors, and

⁵¹ John Bossy, “Moral Arithmetic: Seven Sins into Ten Commandments,” in *Conscience and Casuistry in Early Modern Europe*, ed., Edmund Leites (Cambridge, 1988), 215.

⁵² Bossy, “Moral Arithmetic,” 215; see also M.W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (East Lansing, Michigan, 1952); Siegfried Wenzel, “The Seven Deadly Sins: Some Problems of Research,” *Speculum* 43 (1968), 1-22.

⁵³ Bossy “Moral Arithmetic,” 215.

⁵⁴ Kristensson, 130.

the avaricious failed to properly execute their neighbors' wills and testaments out of sheer greed.⁵⁵

While conciliar decrees stressed the necessity for clergy to instruct the laity on sin, confession, and penance, contemporary gender expectations informed the ways in which clerics were taught to deal with their parishioners. Men and women were understood to have different pastoral needs that required spiritual care attuned to those differences.⁵⁶ Although Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests* was based on William of Pagula's earlier work, Mirk addressed the needs of female parishioners with more attentiveness, inclusiveness, and in some cases equanimity than his predecessor.⁵⁷ Mirk directly instructed his audience that the adequate pastoral care of women was an integral aspect of their clerical duties by using gender-inclusive language. For example, he told priests to carefully teach parishioners the importance of confession, "be hyt husbande, be hyt wyue."⁵⁸ Additionally, in his section on hearing confessions, he told priests that they "moste penaunce 3en, Boþe to men and to wymmen."⁵⁹ Barr has also pointed out that Mirk taught his audience that both men and women could perform emergency baptisms, that godfathers and godmothers should be expected to instruct godchildren in basic Christian tenets like the Creed and Pater Noster, and that his usage of gender-neutral terminology was meant to impress upon readers that the word parishioner meant men and women.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Kristensson, pp. 121-142.

⁵⁶ Barr, "Gendering Pastoral Care," 93.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-100.

⁵⁸ Barr, "Gendering Pastoral Care," 97; Kristensson, 71.

⁵⁹ Barr, "Gendering Pastoral Care," 97; Kristensson, 108.

⁶⁰ Barr, "Gendering Pastoral Care," 98. Barr cites Kristensson, pp. 71, 75, 76, 79, 81-6, 108 for examples of gender inclusive and gender-neutral language.

Mirk's advice for parish clergy nevertheless addressed men's and women's specific social roles, and reflected contemporary notions about religiosity. He gave advice suited to male occupations like soldiers and workmen, while also providing specialized instruction for the spiritual care of pregnant women, wives, and mothers.⁶¹ In line with clerical concern for men's perceived lack of religious devotion, Mirk told his audience to warn their male parishioners "Beþenke þe wel, sone...Of þy synne and þy mysdede...For schotyng, for wrastelyng & oþer play, For goyng to þe ale on holyday, For syngyng, for roytyng & syche fare, þat ofte þe sowle doth myche care."⁶² These instructions were echoed in late medieval sermon collections and prescriptive literature for clergy and laity. Male parishioners were frequently accused of general impiety, lack of religious devotion, and irresponsibility.⁶³ Laymen were chastised for working—or even worse, gaming, wrestling, fighting, singing, and drinking, when they should be at church. Evidently, male parishioners also needed to be constantly reminded to take proper care of their wives and children.⁶⁴ Mirk counseled clerics to ask male parishioners whether they had been lax in their household duties, "Hast þow slowe & feynte I be/To helpe þy wyf & þy meyne."⁶⁵ In terms of performing charity and the works of mercy, Mirk's instructions were either gender-neutral or gender-inclusive.

In addition to offering a more inclusive view of the parish and parochial duties than William of Pagula and other clerics, Mirk also presented marriage as a partnership between

⁶¹ Barr, "Gendering Pastoral Care," pp. 98-99.

⁶² Kristensson, pp. 199-120.

⁶³ Katherine French's chart of episcopal visitations for Hereford, Salisbury, Kent, and Lincoln demonstrate that men were presented much more frequently than women were for missing church; this indicates clerical concerns that men were less pious than women were based in their real life experiences with male parishioners. See French, *Good Women*, 212.

⁶⁴ Barr, "Gendering Pastoral Care," pp. 98-9.

⁶⁵ Kristensson, 130.

husband and wife. Where William of Pagula stressed the subservience of wives to their husbands, Mirk argued that husbands and wives needed to achieve “mutual consent” when making decisions regarding spiritual vows, pilgrimage, and chastity.⁶⁶ To maintain marital harmony, priests were told to prescribe penance for wives that would not indicate the nature of their sins, which if known, might anger their husbands: “syche penaunce þou gyue hyre þenne, þat hyre husbonde may not kenne.”⁶⁷ Although *Instructions for Parish Priests* reflected a commitment to the pastoral care of women, Barr found that in tailoring prescribed pastoral care to perceived differences in the needs of male and female parishioners Mirk portrayed female penitents as problematic for confessors and limited while simultaneously stereotyping the range of possible sinful female behavior; all of which may have actually hindered adequate pastoral care for women.⁶⁸ Mirk defined men in terms of their occupations, family relationships, and social identities, but women primarily in terms of their relationships to men; they were wives, widows, even mistresses.⁶⁹ In six of the seven surviving manuscripts of *Instructions for Parish Priests* the penitent portrayed in the sections on confession and penance was male.⁷⁰ Since both men and women were required to confess and communicate annually it stands to reason that Mirk was using the example of the male penitent as a general template for men and women—he

⁶⁶ Barr, “Gendering Pastoral Care,” pp. 99-100.

⁶⁷ Kristensson, 154; In “Gendering Pastoral Care,” Barr explains that, “because standard penance was often assigned for certain sins, a husband who discovered the penance of his wife might also have discovered the sins she had committed. By assigning penance carelessly, then, priests might reveal (albeit inadvertently) private confessions that could instigate discord between husbands and wives,” 100.

⁶⁸ Barr, “Gendering Pastoral Care,” 94.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102; Interestingly, Mirk offers a longer list of women in his section on male penance for lust. In this context he notes that type of women lechery can be committed with ranges from wives, “prestes sybbe kynne” and mistresses (lemmon), anchoresses, nuns, prostitutes, and maidens, Kristensson, 110, 138-139.

⁷⁰ Barr, “Gendering Pastoral Care,” 102.

probably expected priests to change the address “my sone” to my daughter when they dealt with female parishioners.⁷¹ In fact, the section on hearing confession concludes with the gender-inclusive address “sone or doghter, now herken me/for sum-what I wole helpe þe.”⁷²

Mirk characterized men as more sinful than women in general and noted that they committed a wider variety of sins than women. Contemporaries believed that sins were gendered in nature—men had a proclivity for avarice or greed, while women’s sins were rooted in lust.⁷³ In Mirk’s discussion of the seven deadly sins, the confessor addresses a male penitent. However, the section on lust is expanded to include a discussion entitled “Quod si sit femina,” which explains the correct way to deal with female penitents guilty of lust.⁷⁴ Since none of the other six sins has gender specific instructions, perhaps Mirk thought that men and women committed them for the same reasons. Sins of lust, however, were committed with gendered motivations. According to the questions Mirk provides for confession, men fell into lechery because of the weakness of their own flesh, they ate or drank too much, or listened to “songes þat of lechery were.”⁷⁵ Mirk suggested that women may have succumbed to lust “for couetyse of gold or seluer, or oght of hyse.”⁷⁶ Mirk provides a broad range of scenarios in which men might seduce nuns, anchoresses, wives, maidens, cousins, and prostitutes, while female penitents are questioned if they sinned with “Syb or sengul, or any spowse/Or what degree of relygyowse.”⁷⁷ It is interesting to note that Mirk presents male lechers as responsible for their actions and

⁷¹ For examples of addresses to male penitents see Kristensson, 138.

⁷² Kristensson, 115.

⁷³ Barr, “Gendering Pastoral Care,” 102, 107, Barr found that one-third of the possible sins that could be committed by women according to Mirk’s *Instructions* were sexual in nature; Karras, “Gendered Sin and Misogyny,” 241.

⁷⁴ Kristensson, 141.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

consequent sin, but characterizes female lust as a sin shared with the male participant asking women, “Of what degree þe mon was/That synned wyþ hyre in þe case.”⁷⁸ Contemporary thought on the sin of lust had a tendency to blame women for leading men into temptation in the first place.⁷⁹ The sin of lust was also associated the venial sins involving the five wits, or senses—especially that of touch. Although this section on the senses deals with lust, Mirk does not add on a discussion geared towards educating female penitents in the way that he did for the interrogation of the deadly sin. Instead, the penitent was again assumed to be male, and asked if they were ever “styred by wommones flesh.”⁸⁰

Gendered notions of sin and sinfulness also pervaded Mirk’s instructions for the physical aspects of the penitential process. He dictated gender-specific ways for how the male priest’s body should interact with those of their penitent parishioners. These instructions conditioned priests to expect certain types of confessions and behaviors from men and women. In his section on hearing confessions, Mirk told priests that they should instruct male parishioners to kneel before them and gently, but thoroughly examine their sins. Conversely, he advised for female penitents:

When a wommon cometh to þe,
Loke hyre face þat þou ne se,
But teche hyre to knele downe þe by,
And sum-what þy face from hyre þou wry,
Stylle as ston þer þow sytte,
And kepe þe welle þat þou ne spytte.

⁷⁸ Kristensson, 141. The implication here could be that the man’s status revealed the motivations behind the woman’s sin. However, in both series of questions where the confessor was instructed to find out about women’s sins of this nature, the women were sinning “with” a man, which implies both the woman and her lover were being held responsible. In the questions to the male penitent the man was portrayed as actively seducing women, not sinning with them.

⁷⁹ Ruth Mazo Karras, “Gendered Sin and Misogyny in John of Bromyard’s ‘Summa Praedicatorum’,” *Traditio* (1992), 244.

⁸⁰ Kristensson, 143.

Koghe þou not wyth þy schonkes,
Lest heo suppose þou make þat fare
For wlatyngē þat þou herest þare,
But syt þou styлле as any mayde.⁸¹

The priest was meant to mirror the woman's body by sitting completely still "as any mayde." Because of presumed female modesty (or the possibility of inciting lechery in priest or penitent) Mirk told confessors not to directly look female penitents in the face, or ask her the types of incisive questions that he would ask a man. Instead, he was supposed to let her speak until she was done confessing, "tyl þat heo haue alle I-sayde," which is not to say that all of her sins had actually been confessed.⁸² By both suggesting a wider variety of sins and more probing confession process for male penitents, Mirk may have inadvertently limited the opportunities for women to confess their full range of misdeeds and consequently their ability to atone—"unconfessed sin could condemn souls to extended stays in Purgatory or damn them for eternity, this limited portrayal of women's culpability could have serious consequences for female penitents."⁸³ Mirk's instructions for dealing with male and female parishioners gave priests contradictory advice for dealing with their congregations. While Mirk advocated for the proper spiritual care of women, contemporary thinking about the relationship between gender, sexuality, and sin may have restricted the ways in which clerics learned to view their female parishioners; thus, limiting

⁸¹ Kristensson, pp. 113-114.

⁸² Ibid., 114.

⁸³ Barr, "Gendering Pastoral Care," 105. Damnation stemming from incomplete confession was a concern for both clergy and laity. W.O. Ross' sermon collection provides an exemplum dealing with the repercussions of unconfessed sin, Ross 183-4. This exemplum is dealt with in more detail in Chapter Two.

women's access to adequate pastoral care and their avenues for charitable reconciliation with God and community.⁸⁴

Mirk's *Instructions* presented a catechetical program for parish clergy to follow that focused on neighborliness and communal harmony. To create parochial community, parish priests needed to amend sinners and the discordant, or exclude them altogether through excommunication if necessary. Mirk expected parish clergy to teach parishioners that the performance of the works of mercy and avoidance of sin enacted a community in charity. Sin imperiled the individual, but the also community as well. In other words, sinfulness had spiritual and social consequences.⁸⁵ Mirk particularly focused on the correction of the verbal sins of defamers, back-biters, and evil-speakers, and those who neglected neighborly hospitality.⁸⁶ Writing during the emergence of Lollard critiques of the Church, it is possible that Mirk was especially attentive to breaches in good neighborhood. Mirk's instructions for local clergy represented a mutually-reinforcing pedagogical strategy. As clergy learned about their responsibilities towards parishioners, learning about the Church's gendered expectations for parishioner knowledge and behavior helped clergymen encourage or correct specific types of behavior.

Like Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests*, the *Doctrinal of Sapience* was aimed at teaching parish clergy how to catechize their parishioners. William Caxton translated and printed the *Doctrinal of Sapience* in 1489.⁸⁷ It was a nearly literal translation of the late fourteenth-century French pastoral manual *Le Doctrinal de Sapience* (also called *Le Doctrinal aux (des)*

⁸⁴ Barr, "Gendering Pastoral Care," 107.

⁸⁵ R.N. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215-1515* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 60-62.

⁸⁶ Kristensson, pp. 124-159.

⁸⁷ Duffy, 56.

Simples).⁸⁸ In the prologue, Caxton writes of the *Doctrinal of Sapience*, “this present boke in Frenshe is of right grete prouffyt and edificacion...Guy de Roye...Archebyssshop of Sence, hath doon it to be wretton for the helthe of his soule and of the soules of alle hys peple.”⁸⁹ The purpose of the text was for “the prestes to lerne a[nd] teche to theyr parysshens. Also it is necessary for simple prestes that vnderstand not the scriptures.”⁹⁰ Although the book was primarily intended for the instruction of clerics, the author also envisioned a secondary audience of devout, but unlearned laypeople: “And it is made for symple peple and put in to Englissh.”⁹¹ The *Doctrinal* is divided into six sections comprised of ninety-three chapters. The sections—The Articles of Faith, Charity, The Seven Deadly Sins, The Seven Sacraments, Life After Death, and the Author’s farewell—cover Pecham’s seven-point syllabus with the exclusion of the Seven Principal Virtues. It also includes material such as the Lord’s Prayer, Salutation of the Virgin, and meaning of the Sign of the Cross, which is supplementary to Pecham’s catechism.⁹²

While Mirk’s *Instructions* and the *Doctrinal of Sapience* are similar in basic content, they utilize different pedagogical strategies to impart religious teachings. Both works are concerned with “dealing with the application of religious information to daily life and not the creation of a

⁸⁸ Gallagher, *The Doctrinal of Sapience*, 7. See also Joseph E. Gallagher, “The Sources of Caxton’s “Ryal Book” and “Doctrinal of Sapience,” *Studies in Philology* 62, no. 1 (Jan., 1965), pp. 40-62.

⁸⁹ Gallagher, *The Doctrinal of Sapience*, 48. An indulgence of twenty days pardon for those who read this book to others, and ten days for those who prayed for Archbishop of Sens, Guy de Roye (Roi), and read the book repeatedly to themselves accompanied the original French version of the *Doctrinal*, 48. According to Gallagher, Guy de Roye either authored, transcribed, or commissioned the French version of the *Doctrinal*, “The Sources of Caxton’s “Ryal Book, 45.

⁹⁰ Gallagher, *The Doctrinal of Sapience*, 47.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 31.

formal theological construction.”⁹³ Mirk’s straightforward instruction seems to have been drawn from his personal familiarity with pastoral care—his experience was his authority. For example he tells priests and confessors how they should dress, sit, and even physically engage with their parishioners as if from experience. The *Doctrinal of Sapience* seems to draw its authority from exegetical tradition more than the author’s lived experience. There are no *exempla* in Mirk’s text, possibly because they are provided in his *Festial*, which was written soon after *Instructions*. The *Doctrinal of Sapience*, contains moralizing biblical stories, Patristic sayings, and 124 *exempla*.⁹⁴ According to the text, *exempla* were the best way to instruct unlearned people because they were emotionally affecting. The prologue of the work provides an exemplum attributed to Bede, which tells of the failure of a “subtyl” and “grete” clerk to successfully preach the word of God. Because this clerk “vsted in hys sermons subtyll auctorytes suche as symple people hadde ne toke therin no fauor, he retourned without doing of ony grete good ne proffyt.” Next, another cleric was sent to preach. This man was “of lasse science, the whiche was more playne and vsted comynly in hys sermons examples and parables, by whyche he prouffytet moche more vnto the erudicion of the symple peple than dyd that other.”⁹⁵ The prologue includes several other authorities that support the use of *exempla* and parables to teach the unlearned, and concludes with the unimpeachable example of Christ’s own use of *exempla* in his preaching saying, “we rede in the holy scripture that Our Lord Jhesu Cryst preched to his discyples oftymes by examples and parables.”⁹⁶ The purpose of the work that follows was to emulate Christ in his

⁹³ Gallagher, 29. In terms of the *Doctrinal of Sapience*, Gallagher also notes that it is “organized according to principals of pragmatic pastoral pedagogy rather than formal theological order,” *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 28.

⁹⁴ Gallagher provides an index to the *exempla* in *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 248.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

instruction of the ignorant by writing “somme good examples in this matere for the better to styre and moeue the symple peple to deuocion.” And, in order for the book to “be the better redde, herd, and vnderstanden, hit is made short for to be the more clearly vnderstond, to thende ther may be found therin helthe for our soules.”⁹⁷

The *Doctrinal* was written to be read by those with adequate vernacular literacy, but also to be read to others who lacked such a skill. In this way, it is a more visually oriented and contemplative text than Mirk’s more straightforward enumeration of pastoral duties. The *Doctrinal* makes allusions to contemporary visual didactic resources to make connections between the words heard in sermons and images seen on church walls; it also provides guided meditations on various aspects of the catechism—in particular Christ’s passion.⁹⁸ In contemplating Christ’s suffering repeated addresses are made to the reader to utilize their mind’s eye: “O, deuote persone, consydere and beholde” or “O deuote soule...yf thou haddest seen.”⁹⁹ The text also references artwork depicting religious subjects. In describing the Passion, the text points out that well-executed renderings of the crucifixion should be based on scriptural traditions. Mary was said to have covered Christ on the cross with a piece of her own clothing, therefore, the author of the *Doctrinal* contends, “in suche places as the crucyfyeng of Our Lord is paynted by the honed of a good maystre that the mantel of Our Ladye and the cloth that is about the raynes of Our Lord ought to be of one colour.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Gallagher, *The Doctrinal of Sapience*, 48.

⁹⁸ For the relationship between images and sermons see Miriam Gill, “Preaching and Image: Sermons and Wall Paintings in Later Medieval England,” in Carolyn Muessig, ed., *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), “Reading Images: Church Murals and Collaboration Between Media in Medieval England,” in *Collaboration in the Arts from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 17-32.

⁹⁹ Gallagher, *The Doctrinal of Sapience*, 65.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

Instructions for Parish Priests and the *Doctrinal of Sapience* each teach that charity is an integral part of salvation. However, the *Doctrinal* presents a more elaborate structuring of charity than found in Mirk. In the *Doctrinal*, charity is a state of being, mode of action, and an emotional affect, all of which are connected and informed by the two precepts of the Gospel, works of mercy, Ten Commandments, and sacrament of penance.¹⁰¹ The works of mercy are presented as foundational to salvation because they are the way in which Christians fulfill their debt to God—a debt owed in satisfaction for Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. The *Doctrinal* teaches that the remission of sins was granted to humanity by God through the virtue of the sacraments—in particular that of penance, which required Christians to make satisfaction for their sins by performing the works of mercy.¹⁰² A soul’s duration in Purgatory was closely tied to adequate satisfaction.¹⁰³ The *Doctrinal* warned its audience that good works “not ful doon in thys world muste be doon in the fyre of purgatory, the whyche is so ardaunt & brennyng that all the paynes a[n]d tormentes of thys world be but a dew or a bayne to the regard of that fyre.”¹⁰⁴ This warning is followed by the exemplum of a prisoner who was freed from his bondage by the charitable prayers on his behalf—as sinners are (eventually) freed from the prison of Purgatory by prayers of their family and friends.¹⁰⁵

The text enumerates both the spiritual and corporeal works; however only the spiritual works of praying for the dead and admonishing sinners receive the elaborated treatment that each of the corporeal works does. In the *Doctrinal*, the obligation to “susteyne and deffende the poure wydowes and the poure orphelins and alle other poure people for the loue of Our Lord” was

¹⁰¹ There are references to affect in Mirk, but not the extent found in the *Doctrinal*.

¹⁰² Gallagher, *The Doctrinal of Sapience*, 53.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

added to the traditional seven works of corporeal mercy.¹⁰⁶ Neighbors were to be the primary beneficiary of the works of mercy: “The loue that thou owest to haue to thy neighbor is clearly shewed by the werkes of mercy.”¹⁰⁷ The text presents two *exempla* demonstrating the corporeal works: one tells of a sinful man, who cared for the sick at a hospital, and the other recounted a well-known exemplum from the works of Jacques de Vitry about a leper and a noblewoman.¹⁰⁸ Next, the author provides authorities on the subject: “Saynt Poul saith...the werkes of mercy gete grace and deuocion toward Our Lord. Seynt Iherome saith that he remembereth not to haue seen a persone to deye an euyll deth that gladly dyde the werkes of mercy,” and connects them to the events of Judgment Day, “the werkes of mercy doon good thynges to them that doon them...They take away the synnes of hym that is truly confessyd and repentaunt, and in lyke wyse as the water quenchyth the fyre, right so almesse quenchyth the synne of a persone.”¹⁰⁹ Performing the works of mercy pleased God, and on Judgment Day those who did them would be saved, while the remiss “shal be sente to the fyre of helle, lyke the gspell saith.”¹¹⁰ Works of mercy could be performed by all Christians, and it was the act itself, not the scale that mattered. Those with limited material means could perform them by quenching the thirsty with the small kindness of giving a cup of water, which called to mind Christ’s thirst as he languished on the cross.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Gallagher, *The Doctrinal of Sapience*, 81.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 80. The *Doctrinal* presents a very broad conception of who is a neighbor, “by thy neighbor is vnderstanden alle manere of people nyghe and ferre, frendes and also enemyes, and alle other people,” 78.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-2; see also Farmer, “The Leper in the Master Bedroom,” 88-9; French, *Good Women of the Parish*, 185-7.

¹⁰⁹ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 82.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 69; See also John 19:28.

The *Doctrinal* equates alms with the works of mercy, and warned that all Christians—rich, poor, religious, and secular alike were bound to perform good works or face damnation.¹¹²

The text provides the spiritual alternatives of prayer, admonishment, and instruction to giving material charity for those lacking in means, saying:

yf he haue nothing to gyue, yet yf he haue good will it suffiseth. And who hath not wherof to doo bodily almesses, lat hym doo almesses spyrtuelles; that is to saye, praye for the synners and euyll persones wyth good herte and deuotly, and fede them by deuote oroyson and good admonicyo[n] wyth good example and good techynges of that he wel knowth. For an holy man sayth that its is a greater thing to fede the soule whiche shall alleyway endure then the body whyche shal deye.¹¹³

Here, the poor are able to perform both spiritual and corporeal charity—with their prayers, instruction, and correction becoming the food that nourishes the souls of the wayward. In the conception of the works of mercy presented in the *Doctrinal*, every Christian can make a charitable contribution to the community of believers.¹¹⁴ Where Mirk's text reflected an ambivalence about the laity admonishing sinners through fraternal correction, the *Doctrinal* presents it as part and parcel of the commandment to love one's neighbor: "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self. That is to saye, that shalt loue and desire that he loue God and serue hym, and that he doo good werkes by whyche he may come to heuen as thou wouldst thy self...thou

¹¹² Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 85. The text characterizes alms as charitable actions Christians perform or "doo," not only as material relief to be given, 86. Alms also included keeping others out of deadly sin, 85.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-6.

¹¹⁴ The *Doctrinal* differs from traditional presentation of the seven works of spiritual mercy in that instead of counseling Christians to pray for the living and dead, it focuses on the sinfulness of those needing prayers, instructing, "praye for them that ben in synne to thende that God wyll amende them," Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 80. Prayers for the dead were intended to speed their souls through Purgatory, where they languished for sins committed during their lifetimes. So, ultimately the *Doctrinal* and texts like *Instructions for Parish Priests* both conceptualize prayer as a form of charity, but the *Doctrinal* presents prayer as a form of fraternal correction as well.

sholdest loue hym so wel that thou haue sorrow and pyte of hys synne and of hys harme”¹¹⁵ A Christian’s duty, therefore, is not only to provide for the material needs of one’s neighbor in the way that they would provide for themselves, but also safeguard that neighbor’s soul as if it were one’s own as well. Admonishing the sinful is conceived as a means of loving one’s fellows in a way that mirrored the charity expressed in Divine correction.

The works of mercy also play an important role in upholding the Ten Commandments. Like Mirk, the author of the *Doctrinal* teaches that the works of mercy are an integral part of the commandment to honor one’s father and mother. The text provides an exemplum of a man and wife who refused to feed and clothe his parents due to their own greed and selfishness. The man was punished by having a toad “toke hym by the ouer lyppe,” so that whenever he attempted to eat the food he denied his parents, he would have to lift the toad up with one hand and feed himself with the other.¹¹⁶ In order to have the toad removed the man had to confess to his priest, who sent then him to the archbishop to receive his penance. The archbishop in turn sent him to the pope, forcing him along the way to “in alle places that he came shewe hys maladye and telle the cause.” When he reached the pope, he “told hym all the tro[u]th, which helde it doon for a miracle and assoylled hym, and bad hym to crie mercy to hys father and moder.”¹¹⁷ When the man wept tears of true contrition, the toad departed. The exemplum ends by drawing a parallel between one’s parents and the Church; they are both owed honor and merciful works must be done for their benefit, or their remiss “children” will face divine punishment. Likewise, the

¹¹⁵ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 78. Although Mirk’s *Instructions* and the *Doctrinal* were both originally written in the late fourteenth century, Mirk was writing during the emergence of Lollardy. It is possible that Mirk associated lay fraternal correction with the undesirable elements of Lollard practice and thought it unwise to instruct clergy to encourage laypeople to practice this work. Barr discusses Mirk and Lollardy in “Gendering Pastoral Care,” 95.

¹¹⁶ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, pp. 92-3.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

commandment to keep the Sabbath included performing the works of mercy. Good Christians had two duties on the Sabbath, “to entende but on the werkes of mercy and of Our Lord.”¹¹⁸ Dereliction of practicing the works of mercy is also listed under the discussion of venial sins.¹¹⁹

The corporal works of mercy are primarily presented as most suitable for lay religious practice; however, as in *Instructions for Parish Priests*, the *Doctrinal* discusses the importance of clerical hospitality in the form of feeding and quenching the hungry thirsty. The *Doctrinal*’s explication of the paternoster’s petition for daily bread reminds priests of their sacred duty to feed their flock with “bodyly” and spiritual bread. The text explains, “by the words afore we demaunde of Or Lorde that he gyue to vs the brede of helthe and of doctrine, the whiche the prestes shold gyue to vs.”¹²⁰ The “helthe” the text refers to is both physical and spiritual health—the “corporall brede” was to “susteine vs bodyly,” while the “spyrytuel brede” of doctrine saved souls. In emulation of God’s charity, priests had the responsibility to distribute this “bread” to parishioners “wisely & charitably.” Failure to provide this sacred hospitality would lead to clerics’ damnation.¹²¹

Neighborliness plays less of a role in exposition of the seven deadly sins in the *Doctrinal of Sapience* than in Mirk’s *Instructions*.¹²² Good neighborhood is important—the *Doctrinal* counsels that the seven works of mercy should be to one’s neighbor as a proxy for Christ, and

¹¹⁸ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 89.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 136. It is interesting to note that both priests and housewives were expected to perform sacred hospitality in the form of feeding the hungry with bread as well as educate the ignorant with the spiritual “bread” of the gospels in the parish and in the home, respectively.

¹²² It is possible that because Mirk imagined a solely clerical audience for his *Instructions* he assumed that they would already be aware of their obligation to a universal neighborliness; whereas, the *Doctrinal* may have had a small lay audience that needed to be educated about their duty to be good neighbors.

that “who hath a good neyghbour hath a good morow;” however the deadly sins are presented as being primarily offensive to God.¹²³ Similar to the spectrum from spiritual to fleshly sins found in Mirk, the *Doctrinal* discusses the sins in the following order: Pride, Envy, Wrath, Sloth, Avarice, Gluttony, and Lust. Again, Sloth is counted among the sins of the spirit rather than those of the flesh. Each deadly sin can be remedied by gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Like *Instructions for Parish Priests*, the *Doctrinal of Sapience* encourages a gender-inclusive approach to pastoral care. This includes notions of sinfulness in line with contemporary gender expectations. In the second section of the *Doctrinal*, which focuses on charity, there is a lengthy meditation on the passion of Christ. This meditation exhorts sinners, “man or woman” to “byholde thys myr[o]ur of pacyence and lerne to suffer.” The text continues with the instruction that “thou oughtest to crucyfye thyn hert by penaunces wyth thy Lord and thy frende Ihesu Crist.”¹²⁴ The text vividly recreates the events surrounding the Passion and encourages the reader/listener to imagine the great depth of Christ’s suffering. Traditionally, medieval educational theories held that men and women learned in different ways, and therefore needed to be instructed in different ways.¹²⁵ The *Doctrinal*, however, makes no such distinction in urging men and women to Christocentric contemplation.

¹²³ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 98.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 68, 70.

¹²⁵ Clerics conceived of women as being more corporeal than men, so they presented material to a female audience in concrete and experiential terms. Conversely, men were characterized as more spiritual and intellectual, which led clerics to address them in abstract and “rational” terms; See Anna Dronzek, “Gendered Theories of Education in Fifteenth-Century Conduct Books,” in Kathleen Ashley and Robert Clark, eds., *Medieval Conduct: Texts, Theories, Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Beth Allison Barr, “Gendering Pastoral Care: John Mirk and His Instructions for Parish Priests,” in *Fourteenth-Century England*, Vol. IV, ed. J.S. Hamilton (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006), 93-108, *The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2008); Alcuin Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended* (Oxford: Clarendon Press); Patricia Cullum, “And Hir

While both men and women were sinners who could be redeemed through penance, their sinfulness was often presented in ways that were in keeping with traditional gender expectations. This is evident in the *Doctrinal's* use of *exempla*.¹²⁶ Authors of prescriptive texts used moralizing *exempla* to help adapt “theological ideas to popular mentalities,” and to provide their audiences role models for emulation. *Exempla*, like hagiography, perpetuated gendered notions of appropriate social relations by modeling male and female sinfulness and virtue.¹²⁷ The *Doctrinal* presents the seven deadly sins in a gender-neutral fashion, but uses gendered *exempla* to illustrate the ways in which each particular sin might manifest itself in a man or a woman. The *Doctrinal* contains 124 *exempla*, fifteen of which feature women as the main characters.¹²⁸ Four feature positive female exemplars for imitation, one is a neutral story about the merits of

Name was Charite,’: Charitable Giving by and for Women in Late Medieval Yorkshire,” in *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society c. 1200-1500*, ed. P.J.P. Goldberg (Wolfeboro Falls, NH: Alan Sutton Publishing Inc., 1992); Katherine French, *The Good Women of the Parish* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Ruth Mazo Karras, “Holy Harlots: Prostitute Saints in Medieval Legend,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1 (1990), 3-32, “Gendered Sin and Misogyny in John of Bromyard’s ‘Summa Praedicatorum,’” *Traditio* (1992): 233-257.

¹²⁶ Jacques Berlioz, “Exempla: A Discussion and A Case Study,” in *Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History*, ed., Joel Rosenthal (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990); Fitz Kemmler, ‘*Exempla*’ in *Context: A Historical and Critical Study of Robert Mannyng of Brunne’s ‘Handlyng Synne’* (Tübingen: Narr, 1984); Joseph Albert Mosher, *The Exemplum in the Early Religious and Didactic Literature of England* (New York: AMS Press, 1966); Owst, *Literature and the Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), pp.149-209.

¹²⁷ *Exempla* reflected contemporary notions about sin and gender. Ruth M. Karras found in her study of John of Bromyard’s encyclopedia of *exempla*, the *Summa Praedicatorum* that women made up fourteen percent of the characters in a sample of 1,300 stories, but disproportionate to their numbers comprised fifty percent of the total sinners committing lust. Mirk’s *Festial* showed a slightly less extreme correlation between women and the sin of lust; of 110 *exempla*, there were thirty-four “ordinary” female characters (not saints), twenty-two engaged in sinful activity, and for ten of the twenty-two, the sinful activity was sexual in nature. See Barr, *Pastoral Care of Women*, 70; Karras, “Gendered Sin and Misogyny,” pp. 237-46.

¹²⁸ Many of the 109 remaining *exempla* feature women as ancillary characters. I am only counting the *exempla* in which the main character or characters are women in the sample of fifteen that I mention.

humility, and the last ten are cautionary tales. Of the cautionary tales, five are about women committing sins associated with lust, three are of impious women, and the remaining two deal with wrath.¹²⁹ For example, while all Christians were obliged to keep the Sabbath holy, the sin of Sabbath-breaking was detailed with the story of a woman whose sin was driven by lust. She “gladly daunced and songe, & arrayed her self merueyllously ryche and fayre clothing and iewellys” and “admonesteth and encorageth alle other to daunce and to doo many synnes by her vestymentes.”¹³⁰ Contemporary sermons, including those written by Mirk, often accused men of breaking the Sabbath with their games, singing, and wrestling.¹³¹ Men’s impiety in this fashion was the result of sloth, while dancing and richly arrayed women were perceived as intent upon inducing others to commit lechery.¹³² Teaching clerics through the use of gendered *exempla* conditioned their expectations for sinfulness as well as what they taught their parishioners about sin.

In the third section of the text, which is devoted to the Seven Deadly Sins, the sins of avarice, sloth, and gluttony were explained with *exempla* featuring only men; lust, wrath, and

¹²⁹ Gallagher provides a numerical list of *exempla* arranged by character, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 248. Of the fifteen female main characters in the *exempla*, three were biblical figures or virgin martyrs (and these three make up three-quarters of the positive female *exempla* characters—the fourth was a charitable wife, see numbers 18, 55, 69, 66), five were nuns (see numbers 81, 82, 83, 84, and 85), and the remaining seven were laywomen (31, 66, 70, 121, 122, 123, 124). Four of the laywomen committed sins of lust. Where it is possible to determine by the text, two of the lustful women were single or maidens, one may have been a widowed countess, and the last was a wife, who did not abstain with her husband before a feast day).

¹³⁰ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 90.

¹³¹ In *Instructions for Parish Priests*, Mirk taught that dancing was a particular snare for sin that priests needed to be wary of, Kristensson, 69.

¹³² The *Doctrinal* contains an exemplum of a good knight, who enjoyed hunting and hawking so much he neglected his spiritual duties, 130. Another exemplum warned men who enjoyed jousting and tournaments that they imperiled their souls if they did not keep the Sabbath, pp. 130-131.

pride afflicted both men and women, and envy was gender-neutral.¹³³ In this text, the sin of lust was particularly associated with youth. Both “yong men and yong wymen” fell victim to lust when they “araye them fresshely and shewe them in thentent that they shold be seen and byholden, make of thery bodyes grynnes and nettes of the deuyll for to take them & bringe them to thus synne that soo beholde them.”¹³⁴ The sin of wrath, which placed the sinner in a deadly state of uncharity by breaching expectations of neighborliness, exhibited itself in traditionally gendered ways. Men’s wrath resulted in physical violence, and in extreme cases, homicide. Women’s wrath manifested itself through scolding and debate.¹³⁵ The two *exempla* featuring wrathful women both tell the stories of scolding nuns. The first tale taught of the importance of self-amendment and contrition. Two nuns were in the habit of subjecting their confessor to “many vylonies” of speech. He repeatedly counseled them to change their behavior, but they refused, thus forcing him to excommunicate them. The nuns shortly died thereafter, and although they were allowed to be buried in their local church, at every mass when “they deken cried that that were not partyners of the benefice of the chyrch and they that were excominied shold goo out of the chyrch,” the congregation witnessed their spirits woefully leave the church. Their fellow nuns made oblations on their behalves and the scolding nuns were reconciled to God, and “neuer after they were seen departe out of the chyrche.” The story concluded with a

¹³³ Men were particularly associated with the sin of avarice. When women committed sins other than lust, lust was still an underlying motivation for their sin, Karras, “Gendered Sin and Misogyny,” pp. 242-3.

¹³⁴ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 164.

¹³⁵ Discordant and unruly behavior in women was typically expressed in terms of verbal transgression and the use of aggressive language. See Sandy Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Gregory “Witchcraft, Politics, and Good Neighborhood,” 57; David Underdown, “The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England,” in *Order in Disorder in Early Modern England*, eds., Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 116-36.

special caution to the audience, impressing upon them to “note wel” excommunication was a last desperate resort for a cleric. The nuns were excommunicated because when warned “yf ye amende not you, I shal curse you” they continued on the path towards damnation.¹³⁶ The uncharity of the scolding nuns lead to their expulsion from the community of believers, but the charitable prayers of their sisters helped heal the breach they caused. In the second exemplum, a nun who was always moved by “rancor, plees, and debates,” died and was buried in her church. The next day, the keeper of the church witnessed her body before the high altar and saw that the top half of her body had been burnt, while the bottom remained untouched. This story was meant to demonstrate that although the nun had lived chastely, her sinful speech led to damnation.¹³⁷ Both *exempla* demonstrate that charity and wrath occupied opposite ends of the spiritual spectrum.

Both men and women were prideful; but male pride was often motivated by vainglory, an offshoot of Pride, and female pride was motivated by lust.¹³⁸ Male pride could be frequently found in clerics, who were particularly proud if they had excellent singing voices. A story of a young monk, “whiche was prowde, which lyfte vp his vois aboute the other” during services demonstrated that pride led to damnation. The young monk opened his mouth to sing over the older monks one day and was transported away. The exemplum concluded, “this is aienst them that synge more by presumpcyon than by deuocyon.”¹³⁹ Another story tells of a priest who brought a woman to tears with his singing. He believed the woman wept “for his faire syngyng,”

¹³⁶ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, pp. 110-111.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 121. This story is also recounted in contemporary sermon collections.

¹³⁸ Mirk’s *Festial* also provides *exempla* in which men are characterized as being particularly vulnerable to Vainglory. In his sermons men often acted, not out of their own goodness or sense of responsibility, but with the underlying goal of achieving status or renown.

¹³⁹ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, pp. 127-8.

which encouraged him “to ynge the more hyer and lowed.” However, the story reveals that the priest had “a right euyl vois,” and the woman wept because he sang so poorly. She confesses to him at the end of the story, “I hadde an asse that dyde to me moche good labour, whom I haue loste, and me semeth when I here you singe that it is he.”¹⁴⁰ The moral of the story was it was sinful to sing for worldly praise and not commemoration of God. When women fell into the sin of Pride it was by way of Lust. The text recounts the story of a great countess, who lived a good life, but was damned for her vanity. She lamented, “I haue ben chaste ynow of my body, absine[n]t ynowh of my mouth, merciful ynowh & pietous to the poure, & am not dampned but onely for the adornment of my body vayn & prowde.” She revealed that the root cause of her vanity was a desire “for to plaise men.”¹⁴¹

Certainly moralizing *exempla* presented ideals of male and female piety within the framework of contemporary gender expectations. Yet it is important to note that in *exempla* dealing with charity and the works of mercy, the *Doctrinal* attempted to valorize women’s piety within this context. Women are characterized as stewards of household charity in an exemplum about a leper and a noblewoman.¹⁴² The exemplum recounts the tale of a nobleman who despised lepers and forbade them to enter his house. Like the good wife in Proverbs 31:10-31, she opened “her hand to the poor and reaches out to the needy.” She was particularly known for her compassion and charity towards the sick. One day while the husband was out hunting, a leper came to her door asking for charity. She offered him food and drink, which he would not accept unless she allowed him to rest in her husband’s bed. She told him her husband hated

¹⁴⁰ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 128.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁴² Lepers were associated with lust, so this exemplum is story about the virtue of charity, but also the underlying dangers of committing the sin of lust through adultery by allowing a stranger into the home. See Farmer, “Leper in the Master Bedroom.”

lepers, but was so moved by the leper's tears that she carried him to her husband's bed in her own arms. Soon her husband returned and demanded to take a nap in his bed. The noblewoman panicked knowing that her husband would be enraged that she disobeyed him. When he entered his bedroom, the husband did not find the leper, but encountered an odor so sweet that it seemed to him that he was in paradise.¹⁴³ Astonished by this miracle, the wife confessed everything to him, and "whan he vnderstode it, he was so constrayned that he wyche was to fore fiers as a lyon was softe & debonayre as a lombe, and by the merites of his wyf was in suche wyse conuerted to Our Lord that from thenne forthon he ledde suche a lyfe lyke as his wyf dyde."¹⁴⁴ The exemplum is followed with quotation from St. Paul about the ability of a "good wyf" to save an "euyl husbonde." Here good wives are imbued with the spiritual stewardship of their households and the special ability to bring their husbands spiritual rewards through the performance of the works of mercy. The section concludes with a brief mediation on the works of mercy, which cites authorities from the Gospels.¹⁴⁵ While this mediation enumerates the corporeal works of mercy, the good wife in the exemplum has actually performed both the corporeal acts of reliving the leper's suffering, but also instructing the ignorant and admonishing sinners as she converted her husband through her pious example. With this example, clergy were encouraged to share some of their prerogatives with laywomen in an attempt to corrective male behavior.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 82; See also Ross, 186. The sweet smell was the odor of sanctity—evidence that Christ himself had been present in the room.

¹⁴⁴ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 82; See also Farmer, "The Leper in the Master Bedroom," 82.

¹⁴⁵ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 82.

¹⁴⁶ It is important to note female disobedience or critiques of male behavior are justified only in the context of serving the interests of religion and the church (like disobedient virgin martyrs or wives that accrue spiritual rewards by disobeying their husbands). According to Sharon Farmer, clerical authors allowed all normative social rules regarding male authority to be inverted where pious wives were concerned, "The Leper in the Master Bedroom," 88.

Like *Instructions for Parish Priests*, the *Doctrinal of Sapience* prescribes a gender-specific confessional process and advises priests on their decorum in the confessional. However, the *Doctrinal* also suggests a special spiritual status for female penitents informed by the fact that they are women. Where Mirk's instructions focused on the body of the priest as confessor, telling him not to shift in his seat or look directly at female penitents, the *Doctrinal* is concerned with both his body and his voice. The confessor is told not to look at women's faces, and repeatedly instructed that the sinner should be "trayteed swetely" and spoken to "swetely."¹⁴⁷ This is not to say that the confession examination is not rigorous. Where Mirk allowed his female penitents to confess as much as they were comfortable with, the *Doctrinal* actually recounts an exemplum where a noble nun ends up damned not for her actual sin (lust), but for her failure to confess them all because of her pride. The text instructs the confessor to tell his female penitents that "God is pyetous and merciful, for they that shal doo moste penance in this world shal be moste loued and exalted of God, as it apperith in David, Saynt Peter, Saint

¹⁴⁷ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 202, 206, 207. In adopting a sweetness of speech and meek demeanor in these examples, priests are encouraged to use similar techniques of persuasion as wives were in prescriptive works and poems like "How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter." In the Good Wife poem, which is discussed in more detail in the next chapter, wives are counseled to perform charity in the household by quieting their husband's wrath with "fair" and "meeke" words, Edith Rickert, ed., *The Babees' Book: Medieval Manners for the Young: Done into Modern English from Dr. Furnivall's Texts* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1923), 38. The wrathful lived outside of God's charity, so wives who performed this spiritual work of admonishing sinners were invested with the responsibility of safeguarding their spouse's soul. The characterization of the wife's words as fair and meek invoked a clerical tradition of using the allure and sweetness of wives' speech to persuade men to become better Christians. Thomas of Chobham encouraged women to correct their husbands on matters of morals and religion in his *Manual for Confessors*, Waters, 98-9. If, however, women failed to admonish wayward spouses, they would be held responsible for their sins, Sandy Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 67; see also Sharon Farmer, "Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives," *Speculum*, vol. 61 (1986): 517-543. Priests and housewives alike were responsible for amending sinners, and their ability to do so depended on their rhetorical abilities; both would also be punished if they failed in this sacred duty. See also Waters, 73-120.

Poul, and in Marie Magdalene.”¹⁴⁸ Mary Magdalene in particular was a resonant role model for female sin and redemption. Next the text explains how women are naturally possessed of the virtue of “shamefastnes,” or humility, which had earlier been explained as a special gift of the Virgin Mary. Thus, they should not damn themselves by letting pride move them to partial confession:

O, for Goodes sake, ye fayre maidens & swete wymen, whiche by nature ye be shamefaste, take ye herby ensample and lese not your fayre soules ne also youre bodyes for lytil shame wyche is sone passed. Ye se that thys woman that had doon so many good deeds that she might haue be a saint in heuen yf she had confessed of thys synne, and now she hath all loste for a lityl shame.¹⁴⁹

By associating ordinary women of the parish with the Virgin Mary, the text elevated their spiritual and social status. While priests may have had gifts granted by the commemorative and sacramental nature of their offices, by their very nature women had special virtues that men could only work to attain. However, this female spiritual purchase was not just valorizing. At the same time it was limiting—while the Virgin Mary was renowned for her humility, she was also lauded for her silence.¹⁵⁰

Conclusion

Archbishop Pecham’s seven-point catechetical syllabus remained standard for clerical education and lay catechism from thirteenth-century reforms through the beginnings of the

¹⁴⁸ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 202.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 203. Discussion of Virgin Mary, pp. 114-5. The text equates “shamefastnes” with humility, which is a remedy for the sin of Pride. Shamefastnes is different than shame, which actually emanates from “ouer grete pryde,” 203.

¹⁵⁰ According to Mirk’s *Festial* sermon for the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary advises that “a mayde schuld be seen, but not herd” on the basis that silence was a “vertu had our lady.” Tradition held that Mary spoke on only four occasions in the Gospels, which was to her credit, Erbe, 229-30.

Reformation.¹⁵¹ Throughout this long period, the doctrine of charity that underlay each aspect of Pecham's catechism continued to hold sway. God's charity enabled salvation through the sacraments of the Church—in particular the Eucharist that reconciled Christians to God and one another, and penance in the form of the works of mercy, which made satisfaction for sin. Christians were counseled to adhere to Pecham's syllabus for love of God, and were expected to demonstrate that love with obedience to the commandments and good works. These were the foundational elements of clerical education in the vernacular. Neighborliness was integral to communal harmony and the practice of the gospels' precepts. Parochial clergy were charged with policing the performance of and breaches in this type of community building, using the confessional as a means to control and correct parishioner behavior.

The works of mercy informed the understanding and practice of other crucial elements of Christian doctrine. Where previously the spiritual works of mercy had been seen as the province of clerics and the corporeal works as that of active laypeople, Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests* and Caxton's *Doctrinal of Sapience* presented a more flexible reading of these Christian duties—obligating clerics to perform sacred hospitality and encourage their parishioners to admonish sinners, instruct the ignorant, and pray for the dead within the context of the family and the household. The works of mercy were integral to the sacrament of penance and the Eucharist, and inextricably tied to the events of Judgment Day. Educational texts for priests taught that lived religion was predicated on what modern scholars call a reciprocal “economy of grace” in which Christ “purchased” the sins of humanity, or “bought sinners with his blood.” Repayment was expected in the form of penitent works of mercy. The debts of penance not paid

¹⁵¹ See Susan Wabuda, *Preaching During the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 26-7.

in life, were paid in death, as Purgatory functioned as a sort of debtors' prison. These texts had the dual purpose of educating clergy, and teaching them what to teach laypeople.

Although theories of education rooted in classical, biblical, and early medieval notions of a scientific/medical difference between men and women typically governed the ways in which contemporaries believed men and women ought to be instructed, Mirk and Caxton gendered elements of their texts' content rather than the actual methods of pedagogy they recommended for priests learning pastoral care. The texts each gendered types of sins men and women committed, which in effect conditioned confessors' expectations for sin and prescription of penance. Both texts also drew parallels between the works of mercy focused on the household and the obligations to sacred hospitality expected of priests and housewives, which will be further discussed in chapters three and five.¹⁵²

¹⁵² That laypeople learned to expect adequate catechism and sacred hospitality from their local clergy is evident in complaints made to episcopal visitors. Laypeople reported their clergy for not teaching them the articles of the faith or preaching to them with regularity, A. Hamilton Thompson, *Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1517-1531*, vol. 33 (Hereford: Hereford Times, 1940), 49, 67. The laity also made complaints about clergy not providing them with hospitality, Thompson, vol. 33, pp. 49, 64, 73, 97-99, 126-7. These issues are discussed in Chapter Three.

Chapter 2
‘Mannys sowle ys lyfte vp with charite’: Lay Catechesis, the Doctrine of Charity, and the Seven Works of Mercy

Of þere werkes of mercy Criste shall speke inspeciall of at þe Day of Dome.
I praye eueriche of you to haue þis in mynde.¹

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a movement towards a Christocentric piety and focus on the apostolic life opened up new opportunities for lay spirituality by imbuing a pious life lived in the world with renewed prestige.² Clerics began to place an emphasis on this active religious, but secular, life specifically geared towards laypeople’s worldly obligations.³ Clergymen encouraged laypeople to follow Christ’s example as they lived in the world, making the performance of charity through the corporeal works of mercy central to the active life. As the late fourteenth-century *Book of Vices and Virtues* explained, it was a “lif of bisynesse in goode works” that served to profit the individual and their neighbors, and was increasingly the life to which the majority of laypeople were counseled to aspire.⁴ The Seven Works of Mercy were thus ideally suited for a life in the world as they situated the emulation of Christ in everyday life.

¹ Woodburn O. Ross, *Middle English Sermons* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 19. “Of these works, Christ shall especially speak to you at the day of Doom. I pray that every one of you keeps this in mind.” Unless noted, Middle English translations are my own.

² Eamon Duffy, “Religious Belief,” in *A Social History of England, 1200-1500*, eds., Rosemary Horrox and W. Mark Ormrod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 294; Nicole R. Rice, *Lay Piety and Religious Discipline in Middle English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 6-11; Claire Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 3-6.

³ Patricia Cullum, “Gendering Charity in Medieval Hagiography,” in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, eds., Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (New York: Routledge, 2002), 135.

⁴ W. Nelson Francis, *The Book of Vices and Virtues* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 220.

They allowed laypeople to accrue spiritual capital in the course of their pursuit of “spiritual self-improvement.”⁵

For medieval Christians, living in a “state of charity” meant undergoing a process of social integration based on the sacramental program of the Church, which was predicated on the love dictated by Christ’s commandments to love God and neighbor. This social integration was the “principle end of the Christian life.”⁶ While the concept and language of charity provided clerics with a powerful motivational tool and laypeople with a vivid and potent call to pious action, this call to action needs to be understood as impacting men and women differently. Many earlier historians have overlooked the fact that social integration did not and could not mean the same thing for men and women; therefore, consideration of the role of charity and role of the works of mercy in late medieval religion requires attention to the different ways in which men and women were educated and the different ways in which they were encouraged to practice religious principles and indeed the different ways they were encouraged to live in the world. Classical, biblical, and early medieval notions of a scientific/medical difference between men and women informed how clergymen conceived of charity; these differences underpinned

⁵ Nicole R. Rice, *Lay Piety and Religious Discipline in Middle English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 2. Rice notes that while prescriptive works encouraged laypeople to cultivate spiritual self-regulation and self-correction in order to gain spiritual capital, this self-regulation was contained within the scope of the Church’s sacramental regime. Priests necessarily occupied a central position in lay spiritual life because of their sacramental powers, pp. x-8.

⁶ John Bossy, *Christianity in the West*, 57. See also Bossy, “The Mass as a Social Institution,” *Past and Present* 100 (1983): 48-61. The sacraments that literature for the education of priests and of laypeople focused on the most were baptism, which made a Christian part of the community of the faithful; penance, which reconciled the Christian to God and community through the works of mercy as acts of contrite repentance; and, the Eucharist, which enacted the wholeness of Christian community.

gendered expectations for men and women's religious and social behavior, and clerics presented them in ways that taught audiences to develop different standards for male and female piety.⁷

Medieval parish churches were replete with visual aids, which helped illustrate the religious themes that were addressed at the pulpit and in didactic texts to laypeople. Clerics even thought of these church decorations as "silent preaching."⁸ Wall paintings, stained glass, baptismal fonts, and woodcarvings depicted popular sermon subjects like Judgment Day, the works of mercy, deadly sins, sacraments, biblical stories, and saints' lives.⁹ The laity was responsible for maintaining the nave of their local parish church, so they commissioned the majority of these visual aids for their own spiritual edification and that of the community at large.¹⁰ Their selection of subject matter and artistic execution on some levels represented the lay appropriation of clerical catechetical interests.¹¹ While decisions regarding the nave were left up

⁷ Anna Dronzek, "Manners, Models, and Morals: Gender, Status, and Codes of Conduct among the Middle Classes of Late Medieval England," Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Minnesota, 2001, 124. Medieval people generally thought of men as being more rational/spiritual and women as being more physical/earthly/emotional. See also Anna Dronzek, "Gendered Theories of Education in Fifteenth-Century Conduct Books," in Kathleen Ashley and Robert Clark, eds., *Medieval Conduct: Texts, Theories, Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 200), 136.

⁸ Miriam Gill, "Preaching and Image: Sermons and Wall Paintings in Later Medieval England," in Carolyn Muessig, ed., *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 155.

⁹ M.D. Anderson, *History and Imagery in British Churches* (London: J. Murray, 1971); Colin Platt, *The Parish Churches of Late Medieval England* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1981).

¹⁰ Katherine French, *The Good Women of the Parish* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 188. See also Carol Cragoe, "The Custom of the English Church: Parish Church Maintenance in England Before 1300," *Journal of Medieval History* 36 (2010): 20-38; Charles Drew, *Early Parochial Organisation in England: The Origins of the Office of Churchwarden* (London: St. Anthony's Press, 1954); French, *People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Beat Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish c. 1400-1560* (Aldershot, 1996).

¹¹ Duffy, 66. See also Richard Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Stroud: Sutton, 2004).

to laypeople, they viewed their parish clergy as partners in catechetical education and often sought the advice of their local priest when commissioning religious art for their church.

Charity as embodied by the works of mercy in particular was a common theme portrayed in wall paintings, especially in the fourteenth-century, and became a popular topic for stained glass windows in the fifteenth-century.¹² There are thirty-nine wall paintings of the works of mercy extant in churches located throughout twenty-two counties in Britain.¹³ While sermons exhorted both men and women to practice the works of mercy, only a few historians have been attentive to the ways in which that practice might be circumscribed by contemporary gender expectations. Scholars like Patricia Cullum, Katherine French, and Miriam Gill have found that there was a gendered dimension to the way that clergymen taught laypeople about charity.¹⁴ In turn, there was a gendered dimension to the way that laypeople commissioned artists and craftsmen to visually represent charity and the works of mercy in the church nave. In her research on the works of mercy and wall paintings, Miriam Gill has been able to determine the gender of the charity providers in twenty-six of the paintings. In ten paintings women provided charity, in another ten men provided the charity, and in the last six, both men and women

¹² Duffy, 64.

¹³ French, *Good Women*, 189.

¹⁴ See Patricia Cullum, “‘And Hir Name was Charite’: Charitable Giving by and for Women in Late Medieval Yorkshire,” in *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society c. 1200-1500*, ed. P.J.P. Goldberg (Wolfboro Falls, NH: Alan Sutton Publishing Inc., 1992), 182-211, “Gendering Charity in Medieval Hagiography,” “‘Yf lak of charyte be nor ower hynderawnce’: Margery Kempe, Lynn, and the Practice of the Spiritual and Bodily Works of Mercy,” in *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe*, eds., John Arnold and Katherine Lewis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 177-194; French, *Good Women*, pp. 180-222; Miriam Gill, “Preaching and Image: Sermons and Wall Paintings in Later Medieval England,” “Female Piety and Impiety: Selected Images of Women in Wall Paintings in England After 1300,” in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, eds., Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 101-120.

performed charity.¹⁵ Gill's findings support the idea that the works of mercy were well suited to female piety because they were grounded in the types of household activities most commonly performed by women such as feeding, clothing, and sheltering the needy. The acts of charity carried out by women were an "extension of household activity and charitable disposal of surplus was regarded as an aspect of good domestic management," as in the Biblical story of the good wife in the Book of Proverbs (Proverbs 31:10-31). In the Book of Proverbs a good wife "opens her hand to the poor and reaches out to the needy."¹⁶ The works of mercy that focused on the household also served to provide women with the opportunity to give charity while attempting to keep them out of the way of sin.¹⁷

In the wall paintings with male and female figures, artists and lay patrons make clear statements about the activities they think are best suited for men and women. Female figures are often shown performing the works of mercy that center on the domestic space of the household. Although the sermons discussed later in this chapter encouraged women to follow examples of the Virgin Mary and Martha, who performed all of the works of mercy, wall paintings infrequently depicted women welcoming strangers, visiting prisoners, or burying the dead—activities that would take them out of the safety and respectability of the home.¹⁸ Wall paintings of the works of mercy in Trotton, Sussex and Wickhampton, Norfolk show both men and women performing acts of charity. In the Trotton painting women carry out each work of mercy except welcoming strangers. The notion that women should avoid strangers echoes the advice from the poem "How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter," where the "daughter" is warned to avoid

¹⁵ Cited in French, *Good Women*, 189.

¹⁶ French, *Good Women*, 185; Gill, "Female Piety and Impiety," 113.

¹⁷ French, *Good Women*, 191.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 192.

encounters with strange men on the street.¹⁹ In the Wickhampton wall painting, women perform all the works except the burial of the dead. As French points out, the Wickhampton painting shows women aiding in the burial of the dead, but within a specifically female context. The women in the painting do not actually bury the dead body depicted, as burial was typically the province of male sextons or parish clerks. Instead, the women are shown preparing the body for burial by sewing it into a shroud while a priest sprinkles holy water on it.²⁰

Stained glass depictions of the works of mercy also seem to reflect similar gendered notions about the appropriate performance of mercy for men and women.²¹ The representations of charity in both wall paintings and stained glass windows “argue that charity must fit into acceptable female behavior and that charity should never become an occasion for immodesty.”²² The clerical authors of sermons and prescriptive literature were concerned with gender-appropriate behavior, but they did not circumscribe the female performance of charity and the works of mercy. The lay patrons of church adornments—who included both men and women—seemed to feel that the practical concerns of women’s physical safety, sexual probity, and reputation necessitated placing certain types of limits on the female performance of charitable works.

¹⁹ French, *Good Women*, 192; Edith Rickert, ed., *The Babees’ Book: Medieval Manners for the Young: Done into Modern English from Dr. Furnivall’s Texts* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1923), 35-6.

²⁰ French, *Good Women*, 192.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 197. For example, stained glass windows in a church in Combs, Suffolk reveal a gendered rendering of the works of mercy, with a depiction of a man and woman providing food and drink to the needy informed by notions of appropriate male and female behavior. In the representation of feeding the hungry, the woman in the scene holds a loaf of bread, while the man is shown in conversation with the needy stranger. Similarly, in the illustration of distributing drink to the thirsty, the female figure fills a cup from a barrel and then the male figure once again engages the stranger, French, *Good Women*, 197.

²² *Ibid.*

Examining vernacular sermon collections, prescriptive texts written for the laity, and religious drama, this chapter explores 1) what role the Seven Works of Mercy played in the clergy's pedagogical efforts, and 2) how gender differences informed the catechesis of the laity. I argue that clergymen encouraged laypeople to follow Christ's example as they lived in the world by urging them to cultivate religious self-regulation within the sacramental framework provided by the church and inspired by Christocentric and apostolic modes of piety. Christian charity as exemplified by the Seven Works of Mercy occupied a central place in this clerical vernacular pedagogy, and provided opportunities for laypeople, women in particular (as caregivers and hospitality providers), to participate actively in their own salvation. I am specifically interested in whether clerics adapted their teachings on charity to accommodate men's and women's social roles, in what differences there were between men and women's catechism, and in what clerics understood to be appropriate male and female charitable and neighborly behavior.²³

Vernacular Sermon Literature

By the late middle ages, vernacular preaching was a primary means of catechizing the laity. Archbishop Pecham expected priests to expound his Lambeth Constitutions (1281) four times a year to the laity in English, and by the fourteenth century bishops and other ecclesiastical officials were urging parish priests to increase the frequency of their preaching. For example, the Constitutions issued by Archbishop Thoresby of York in 1357 required the clergy to preach weekly sermons in the vernacular, declaring that they "openly on Inglis upon sononndaies teche and preche thaim that hai haue cure of."²⁴ Moreover, pews and pulpits began to be common in

²³ New confessional legislation in the thirteenth century called upon laypeople regulate themselves within a larger framework of institutional supervision. See Rice, pp. x-xii.

²⁴ Thomas Frederick Simmons, *Lay Folks' Catechism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1901), 6; Carolyn Muessig, ed., *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*

parish churches in fourteenth century, becoming more widespread and elaborate in the fifteenth—evidence of the increased popularity of preaching and sermon attendance.²⁵ In addition to the sermons provided by local clergymen, laypeople also had the opportunity to hear sermons preached by mendicant friars and itinerant preachers.²⁶

Although Pecham’s Lambeth Constitutions dictated to clerics what they needed to teach, it failed to provide the often under-educated, Latin-illiterate parish clergy with sermons or source material. To fill this gap, clerics like Dominican friar Jacobus de Voragine and Augustinian canon John Mirk, compiled homily collections, which provided explanatory sermons for the entire ecclesiastical calendar. Three sermon collections from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries exemplify the vernacular preaching resources available for English parish priests and illustrate that from a clerical perspective charity and the works of mercy were fundamental, but often gendered, catechetical concerns: John Mirk’s *Festial*, the so-called Ross Collection, and the *Speculum Sacerdotale*.²⁷ Of the three collections, the *Festial* is the most distinctive in narrative style and presentation of catechetical subject matter. The Ross Collection and *Speculum Sacerdotale* are similar in content and scope; therefore, I will only be examining the *Festial* and Ross Collection for this chapter.

(Leiden: Brill, 2002), 158. “Openly in English upon Sundays teach and preach to those that they have care of.”

²⁵ Margaret Aston, “Segregation in Church,” in *Women in the Church: Studies in Church History* 27, eds. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990) 237-94; French, *Good Women*, 85-117; Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 94; Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England*, 258.

²⁶ Katherine French, *The People of the Parish*, 177.

²⁷ Susan Powell, *John Mirk’s Festial*, 2 Volumes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Edward Weatherly, *Speculum Sacerdotale* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936); Woodburn O. Ross, *Middle English Sermons* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940).

Sermons were one of the most direct means by which clerics communicated Christian ideals to laypeople, but as Beth Barr has discussed, pastoral literature in theory was a “discourse by men and for men.”²⁸ Women remained a problem. The language used in sermons was an especially important tool to educate men and women on their respective roles in Christian society. Some sermons opened with direct addresses to the congregation, such as “Christ’s people, both women and men,” “good men and women,” or “reverent friends,” which were gender inclusive (or at least) gender neutral greetings that acknowledged the universal nature of Christian fellowship.²⁹ Barr suggests that the conscious choice to employ gender inclusive language demonstrates a genuine attempt on the part of some clerics to provide proper care for female parishioners.³⁰ Gender-inclusive language was especially prevalent in the sermons that specifically addressed sacramental issues and active participation in the parish.³¹

Christian fellowship itself was universally inclusive, but membership in the community of the faithful required specific types of behavior from men and women. Clerics had gendered notions of proper Christian behavior, and advocated that laypeople act within the parameters of these notions. Preachers used *exempla*, hagiography, and biblical tales to illustrate appropriate conduct, and the stories they chose presented gendered notions of sinfulness; men had a proclivity for avarice or greed, while women’s sins were rooted in lust.³² In addressing the male members of their parishes, clergymen demonstrated considerable concern about the consequences of avarice as well as a generalized male impiety, lack of religious devotion, and

²⁸ Beth Allison Barr, *The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2008), 43.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

³¹ Barr, 61.

³² Ruth Mazo Karras, “Gendered Sin and Misogyny in John of Bromyard’s ‘Summa Praedicantium’,” *Traditio* (1992): 241.

irresponsibility.³³ They chastised laymen for working—or even worse, gaming, wrestling, fighting, singing, and drinking, when they should be at church. The clergy also frequently reminded their male parishioners to take proper care of their wives and children.³⁴

The relationship between clerics and their female parishioners was more complicated. Katherine French explains, “the story of Eve and her role in the Fall informed opinions about women’s inherently sinful nature, but it did not teach women Christian behavior or recognize their piety, it merely explained their failings. Preachers and Church officials had to do more than illuminate women’s propensity for sin; they had to teach women how to identify sin and virtue and how to transform this knowledge into meaningful Christian action.”³⁵ Since it was counterproductive for clerics to focus solely on women’s negative attributes if they wanted to mold female parishioners into model Christians, it was incumbent upon clergymen to provide women with aspirational figures and positive examples of female piety. Clerics needed to demonstrate that women could be good Christians, in spite of their associations with Eve. Both Beth Barr and Leo Carruthers have noted that a significant number of late medieval English clerical writers tempered this anti-female literary legacy with a more nuanced and inclusive view of women’s piety.³⁶

³³ Katherine French’s chart of episcopal visitations for Hereford, Salisbury, Kent, and Lincoln demonstrate that men were presented much more frequently than women were for missing church; this indicates clerical concerns that men were less pious than women were based in their real life experiences with male parishioners. See French, *Good Women*, 212.

³⁴ Beth Allison Barr, “Gendering Pastoral Care: John Mirk and His Instructions for Parish Priests,” in *Fourteenth-Century England*, Vol. IV, ed. J.S. Hamilton (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 98-9.

³⁵ French, *Good Women*, 182.

³⁶ Beth Barr argues that “clerical images were not balanced, but neither were they one-sided,” Barr, *Pastoral Care of Women*, 78, and Leo Carruthers notes, “some medieval clerics seem capable of rising above the general wave of anti-feminism, of being at least neutral and occasionally positive in their attitude towards the female sex and marriage,” Carruthers, “No

In illustrating the ways in which women could live a Christian lifestyle, clergymen made explicit links between women's roles in the household and their place in the religious community of the parish. Although all good Christians were urged to practice charity, clerics consistently linked ideal female piety with charitability in ways that lent a religious import to women's work. Charity was characterized as "an extension of good household management"³⁷ conceptualized as the practice of the works of mercy. Parish priests encouraged female parishioners to act in accordance with images of charitable women drawn from the Bible, and "used examples from women's daily life to explain theological concepts and employed female role models to exemplify female Christian behavior."³⁸ Women were urged to be silent, submissive, and meek, all qualities that were usually at odds with the reality of active religious life and participation in the parish.³⁹ These qualities were also often actually incompatible with the attributes of the female saints that the clergy encouraged women to emulate.⁴⁰ While these behavioral ideals were far from attainable, or even in actuality desirable for many lay men and women, they remained salient concepts for clerical writers. Gendering charity gave women's work a spiritual imperative and religious significance, while simultaneously reinforcing gender roles. In addition to using

Womman of No Clerk is Preysed: Attitudes to Women in Medieval English Religious Literature," in *A Wyf There Was: Essays in Honour of Paule Mertens-Fonck*, eds., Paule Mertens-Fonck and Juliette Dor (Liège: Université de Liège, 1992), 60.

³⁷ French, *Good Women*, 185.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 199.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ In her work on female saints' lives Catherine Sanok has noted that while late medieval women were encouraged to follow the examples of virgin martyr saints like Sts. Cecilia, Margaret, Katherine of Alexandria, Agnes, Barbara, and Agatha, who defied masculine or parental authority for their Christian beliefs, preached the faith, and demonstrated a "public vocation," English communities in the late middle ages in actuality neither required nor condoned "women's heroic virtue." See Catherine Sanok, *Her Life Historical: Exemplarity in Female Saints' Lives in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 2, 10; Waters, *Angels and Earthly Creatures*, 101.

gender-inclusive language in their addresses to the laity and ascribing religious import to women's work, clerical authors also tailored their instruction to accommodate the purported differences in the ways men and women processed information. Informed by contemporary medical/scientific theories of gender, clerics presented material to women in the concrete, experiential, and physical language best suited for their corporal natures, while addressing men's spiritual natures in more abstract and "rational" terms.⁴¹ For example, sermons in both the *Festial* and Ross Collection use women's housekeeping as an analogy for practicing charity. Female listeners are encouraged to draw parallels between cleaning a house and cleaning the soul in concrete terms based on their life experiences.⁴² Conversely, no such analogies are made between men's work and religious duties.⁴³

While the *Festial* and Ross Collection are similar in scope and content, the sermons in each collection illustrate the varying degrees to which clerical authors explicitly attempted to include female parishioners in their religious addresses and gender catechetical lessons. They present charity as a general Christian concern, while using female exemplars to demonstrate correct charitable practice through the performance of the works of mercy. Both collections contain *temporale* sermons, which celebrate important Sundays and feast days of Christ, as well as *sanctorale* sermons, which commemorate the saints.⁴⁴ The most important sermons in these collections are those of the Lenten season leading up to Easter and the sermons for Easter day itself. Easter was a time to memorialize Christ and reconcile the Christian community of

⁴¹ Dronzek, "Gendered Theories of Education," 151. While parish clergy would not have had the benefit of a university education, these gendered theories of education would have been passed down through clerical manuals of instruction and the informal tutelage of other clerics.

⁴² French, *Good Women*, 22.

⁴³ Powell, *John Mirk's Festial*, vol. 1, 67; Ross, 279.

⁴⁴ Judy Ann Ford, *John Mirk's Festial: Orthodoxy, Lollardy, and the Common People in Fourteenth Century England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 11.

believers through acts of charity and mercy. As such, the sermons of Lent and Easter in each collection use hagiography, *exempla*, and Biblical stories to emphasize the centrality of the doctrine of charity to the Christian faith and reciprocal nature of the works of mercy.

Additionally, the *Festial* and the Ross Collection are contemporaneous with the Lollard movement of the late fourteenth century, and challenge the anti-sacramental and anticlerical beliefs of the Lollards by emphasizing the primacy of the Church's authority and promoting a works based conception of salvation.⁴⁵

The *Festial*, written in the late 1380s, was the most popular English sermon collection of the late middle ages, with forty-three manuscript editions still in existence.⁴⁶ It was the only sermon collection printed in England before the Reformation, and was probably the most frequently re-printed pre-Reformation English text, with twenty-four editions produced between William Caxton's initial issuing in 1483 and Wynkyn de Worde's final printing in 1532.⁴⁷

Mirk's sermons were based on the Bible, the *Legenda Aurea*, ecclesiastical service books, and expositions on the interpretation of religious rituals and feasts.⁴⁸ In his prologue, Mirk explains that he wrote the *Festial* for "mene clerkus," that "hauen the charge of soulus and bene holdyn to teche hore pareschonus of alle the principale festus that cometh in the 3ere."⁴⁹ A defining feature of Mirk's *Festial* is the accessibility of his anecdotal narrative style. He used moralizing *exempla*

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 143-8.

⁴⁶ Susan Powell, "The *Festial*: The Priest and His Parish," in *The Parish in Late Medieval England*, eds., Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2006), 160; Barr, *Pastoral Care of Women*, pp. 30-32.

⁴⁷ Ford, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁸ Powell, "The *Festial*," pp. 165-6.

⁴⁹ Powell, *John Mirk's Festial*, vol. 1, 3. "poor clerks that are charged with the cure of souls and obligated to teach their parishioners all the principle feasts of the year."

to adapt “theological ideas to popular mentalities” and hagiography to provide role models for emulation.⁵⁰

The sermons in the *Festial* center on the doctrine of charity as the religious framework for the ideal Christian life, and present the works of mercy as its actualization. For Mirk, charity was a “brennyng loue” shown to God, neighbors, and even one’s enemies in an attempt to memorialize and emulate Christ.⁵¹ Mirk understands charity as synonymous with love, goodwill, and Christian fellowship. The *Festial* abounds with praise for the charitable and dire warnings for the uncharitable. Mirk explains that charity “is abouen alle vertues” and that to be “in charite” was to live in God’s grace.⁵² Conversely, being out of charity meant living in a state of deadly sin, far from Divine Love, and governed by wrath.⁵³ Mirk advised priests to admonish parishioners “that none of you come thus to goddess borde but yf ye be in perfyte loue and charite, and be clene shryven and in full purpose to leue your synne,” reflecting popular belief that communion without charity led to damnation.⁵⁴ This warning operated on multiple levels: first, by referencing the fact that the parish church was “God’s house” and that the communion table was God’s “borde,” Mirk was telling the uncharitable that they would be excluded from divine “table-fellowship.”⁵⁵ In essence, using language that invoked notions of sacred

⁵⁰ Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 105.

⁵¹ Powell, *John Mirk’s Festial*, vol. 1, 28.

⁵² *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 208, 242.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 151.

⁵⁴ Susan Brigden, “Religion and Social Obligation in Early Sixteenth-Century London,” *Past and Present* 103 (1984), 73. See also Simmons, *Lay Folks’ Catechism*, 66. “that none of you come to God’s table unless you are in perfect love and charity, and are confessed and ready to leave sin behind.”

⁵⁵ “Table-fellowship” was one of a number of pious acts categorized as “caritas-ritualizations,” which included collective meals, almsgiving, prayer, and commemoration of the dead, Sonntag, “On the Way to Heaven,” pp. 30-53.

hospitality, Mirk explained these sinners would be turned away from God's own table, where charity was enacted. Second, the clergy and laity were stewards of God's house (in different capacities); as stewards of the sacramental aspects of "God's house," the clergy would deny the uncharitable access to divine charity represented by communion. Contemporary expectations taught that laypeople should follow suit, excluding those denied communion from neighborly charity as well. Mirk also explained the need for Christians to be in charity with one another in even more stark terms writing, "for also long os a man is owte of charite, þe fende is in hym and hath power ouer hym."⁵⁶ In practice, this means that the piety Mirk encourages focuses on works, ensuring salvation through the performance of charity.

The themes of love, charity, and reconciliation are the hallmarks of Mirk's sermon for Easter—the most important sermon of the liturgical year. Mirk uses the motif of charity as the proper clothing for both the body and soul to help his audience conceptualize the fundamentality of charity to everyday living. He advises them to dress their hearts and souls in the "fayr clope of charyte, and of loue, and of pes, and of rest wyth all Godys pepull" and to "comen to þys fest wele arayde in Godys lyuere, clotped yn loue and scharyte." Those who wished to remain clothed "yn the fendys lyuere" of envy and wrath could look forward to the "paynyng of hell-wormys" gnawing at them for eternity.⁵⁷ The language of livery would likely call to mind membership in local parish or trade guilds for both male and female parishioners—linking individual acts of charity with those practiced in the corporate setting of the religious guild. Wearing "Godys lyuere" meant spiritually (and visually) allying oneself with a community of believers receiving God's grace, while the "fendys lyuere" marked one out as an evil-liver facing

⁵⁶ Powell, *John Mirk's Festial*, vol. 2, 249. "for so long as a man is out of charity, the Fiend (Satan) is in him and has power over him."

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 116.

eternal damnation. The discussion of livery might also call to mind the corporeal work of clothing the naked with its discussion of “dressing” the soul in love and charity.

God’s charity enabled Christians to be reconciled to him and to each other. Mirk provides an exemplum that taught laypeople about God’s infinite knowledge and mercy.⁵⁸ He recounts the story of a bishop, who through divine intervention was able to discern the nature of a person’s sins just by looking at them. The bishop saw both men and women with bloody red faces, faces black as pitch, faces white as snow, fair and healthy faces, and finally two women with faces that shone like the sun. The bloody red faces belonged to the unrepentantly envious, wrathful, and blasphemous; the pitch faces to incorrigible lechers; and the snow white and fair faces to those who fell into sin, but confessed and had their sins washed clean by tears of contrition.⁵⁹ Here Mirk demonstrates that men and women alike were among the sinners and the saved. However, he reserved the most poignant spiritual transformation for the women with the shining, bright faces. He describes them as “two comyn woymen” of “euell lyuyng,” who came to church with such penitence in their hearts that God’s mercy washed their souls clean, thus making them outshine all of the others present.⁶⁰ While Mirk does not mention her in this

⁵⁸ This exemplum also harkened to the rehearsal of Judgment Day sins and the separation of the saved from the damned.

⁵⁹ Mirk describes the envious and wrathful as backbiters, who were considered particularly disruptive to communal harmony. Verbal transgressions were often attributed to women, but here Mirk holds men and women equally responsible for this sin. See Sandy Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Gregory “Witchcraft, Politics, and Good Neighborhood,” 57; David Underdown, “The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England,” in *Order in Disorder in Early Modern England*, eds., Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 116-36.

⁶⁰ Powell, *John Mirk’s Festial*, vol. 1, 117. Barr uses this sermon as evidence that clerics were able to view women in a realistic and even favorable light. Ordinary women were sinners, but female sinners could become ideal penitents through true contrition. See Barr, *Pastoral Care of Women*, 63.

particular sermon, the narrative calls to mind Mary Magdalene and exemplifies the reconciliatory nature of the Easter feast. Christians were reconciled to one another by asking for and granting forgiveness, and sinners were likewise reconciled to and forgiven by God through acts of contrition. The foundation of this forgiveness was love, or Christian charity.

The works of mercy, as charity effected through pious deeds, figure throughout the *Festial*. The ideology of religious charity enjoined the laity to perform spiritual and material good works in their communities in commemoration of Christ and his suffering.⁶¹ These good works were supposed to put the Christian in mind of Christ's own travails at the hands of his detractors and tormentors. To be merciful was to endeavor to be Christ-like and would be rewarded on the Day of Judgment.⁶² Given their memorialization of Christ's suffering, the works of mercy were well suited for sermons leading up to the Lent and Easter, and figure in four of the nine sermons for this season. Mirk provided his audience with general expositions on the works of mercy, and then gave gendered examples of the works of mercy in practice. A sermon for Sexagesima specifically focuses on the Seven Works of Mercy, and links charity, merciful works, and neighborliness. Mirk instructs parishioners that the "werkes of charyte" come "out of the ten commawndementys of God" and must be performed so that Christians "wyll haue mercy of God

⁶¹ This terminology is borrowed from James W. Brodman's work on charity in medieval Europe. Brodman argues that religious charity constituted an ideology, and was not just a set of institutions. Alms were only one dimension of religious charity, which was the love of god as demonstrated through love of one's fellows. See James W. Brodman, *Charity and Religion in Medieval Europe* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University Press of America, 2009), 9. Before Brodman's book, Miri Rubin's *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* was one of the only works devoted to medieval charity in England. In line with Brodman's criticisms that historians have focused on charitable institutions to the detriment of trying to understand charity as widely encompassing religious and social ideology, Rubin looks at ecclesiastical institutions without much attention to lay charity performed at the parish level. See Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁶² Brigden, *Religion and Social Obligation*, 102.

yn the dredfull day of dome.”⁶³ Christians must demonstrate charity through merciful works performed in fulfillment of their covenant with God; a covenant defined by the obligations laid down in the Decalogue as three duties that individuals owed to God and seven that “longyþe to þy neightbur.”⁶⁴

Of the two collections under consideration, the *Festial* presents the most gender specific vision of proper Christian piety. A notable characteristic of the *Festial* is the marked concern Mirk demonstrates for his female parishioners’ spiritual welfare, which he frequently illustrated through explicitly gender-inclusive language.⁶⁵ The *Festial* also contains more *exempla* and hagiographical stories than the Ross Collection; both *exempla* and hagiography perpetuated gendered notions of appropriate social relations by modeling male and female sinfulness and virtue.⁶⁶ While his use of traditional hagiographies and *exempla* could mean that Mirk still conceptualized ideals of male and female piety within the framework of contemporary gender expectations, it is important to note that in sermons on charity and the works of mercy he attempted to valorize women’s piety within this framework. It is possible that Mirk cultivated his sensitivity to the needs of his female sermon audience while performing pastoral duties at St. Alkmund’s, Shrewsbury;⁶⁷ perhaps in contrast to clerical and monastic authors with no pastoral experience, his time caring for female parishioners and participating in female life-cycle events allowed him to view women in a more realistic light. Additionally, it is possible that in

⁶³ Powell, *John Mirk’s Festial*, vol. 1, 69.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 90. Sexagesima is the second Sunday before Ash Wednesday.

⁶⁵ In her case study of *Festial* manuscripts, Beth Barr found that the majority of clerics copying the *Festial* chose to “keep gender-inclusive language intact from a previous version or to add women into the sermons they were copying” in order to purposefully include a female audience, *Pastoral Care of Women*, 60.

⁶⁶ See Barr, *Pastoral Care of Women*, 70; Karras, “Gendered Sin and Misogyny,” pp. 237-46.

⁶⁷ Sue Powell suggests that Mirk may have performed pastoral duties in “The *Festial*: The Priest and His Parish,” 162-3.

overseeing the practice of charity, Mirk was influenced by his parishioners' specific pastoral needs and expectations, and these experiences also informed the gendered notions of charitable practice he presents in his sermons.⁶⁸

Mirk encouraged both men and women to practice charity, but he characterized male and female charitable practice and motivation differently. In the late middle ages, women were particularly associated with charity and charitable works; indeed, the medieval personification of charity was female.⁶⁹ Women were often portrayed as doing charitable deeds in ways that initially disobeyed or displeased their husbands, but ended up garnering spiritual rewards and grace for their families.⁷⁰ It is interesting to note that men were not imbued with this ability to save the souls of their families, although they were supposed to be the heads of their households and responsible for the good governance of their wives, children, and servants. In Mirk's sermon collection it took holy men (with divinely granted spiritual privileges) to save souls, but ordinary wives and mothers were empowered to save the souls of loved ones through their piety alone.

Mirk provided *exempla* of both men and women performing charitable works; however he depicted men's charity as particularly vulnerable to the deadly sin of Pride and its offshoot—vainglory. In other words, men practiced charity, but often with the underlying goal of achieving

⁶⁸ Preaching was not unidirectional; lay concerns influenced the style and content of sermons. See Katherine French, "Medieval Women's History: Sources and Issues," in *Understanding Medieval Primary Sources*, ed. Joel Rosenthal (New York: Routledge, 2012) 203-4.

⁶⁹ Karras, "Gendered Sin and Misogyny," 244. Initially, charity personified was imagined as female because the Latin word for charity, "caritas," is a feminine noun. However, over time, scholars, clerics, and laypeople began to associate the notion of charity with female attributes; thus collapsing the distinction between the feminine word and feminine religious deeds. See French, *Good Women*, pp. 190-1.

⁷⁰ Cullum, "Hir Name Was Charite," 203; French, *Good Women*, 185; Miriam Gill, "Female Piety and Impiety: Selected Images of Women in Wall Paintings in England After 1300," in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, eds., Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 113; Karras, "Gendered Sin and Misogyny," 251.

status or renown. This type of empty charity actually damned the performer. Mirk relates the story of a rich man in Ireland that illustrates this point:

I rede þat þer was a wondyr rych man, som tyme, yn Eirlond, and dyd so mony almys-dedys yn hys lyue, þat all men wendon þat he had ben a gret seynt before God. But when he was ded he apered to won þat loued hym wele yn his lyue, as blak as pyche wyth an horrybull stenche, and sayde to hym: “3e wenyn I am a saynt; but now I am such as þou may se.’ Then sayde þat oþer: ‘Wher byn all þyn almys-dedys bycomen.’ Þen sayde he: ‘Þe wynd of vayn glorye hath blowen hom away.’

Although the man’s outward deeds marked him as holy to his community, the selfish and deliberately public nature of his charity negated it in the eyes of God. Mirk concludes with the moral that those who give alms for their own glory and not that of God lose the merits of their works, which are ultimately destroyed by “fendys of þe ayre.”⁷¹

While sermons often presented men as performing charity for selfish ends, sermons more frequently characterized men as being remiss in practicing charity altogether. In a sermon for Advent Sunday, Mirk describes the events of Judgment Day, impressing upon his audience the reciprocal nature of Christian mercy. He uses the figure of another rich man to both remind parishioners of the memorial origins of the works of mercy and to warn them that the penalty for failing to perform them would be damnation. Mirk recounts the story of a rich man who did not aid the less fortunate and as a result was consigned to the fires of Hell. Christ rebukes the man in language that invokes the works of mercy, saying that although he had “ynogh wherof to haue

⁷¹ Powell, *John Mirk’s Festial*, vol. 1, 67. Mirk’s narrative style was both anecdotal and authoritative—he often inserted himself into his sermon stories with the phrase “I rede,” which personalized his sermons, but also called attention to his literacy and the veracity of his story as based on other written authorities. “I read that there was a wondrously rich man some time in Ireland, and he did so many alms deeds in his life that all men believed that he had been a great saint in God’s eyes. But, when he died he appeared to one who he loved well in his life, black as pitch and with a horrible stench, saying to him, “You believe that I am a saint, but now I am such that you see here.” The other man said to him, “but what about all of your alms deeds?” To which he replied, “The wind of vainglory has blown them all away.”

fed me and my seruantys, and 3eue me dryngke, yclopet me, and herbert me, and holpen me yn my sekenes, and vyset me yn my dyses, and 3e wold not, but louet your good and not me.” The man’s punishment was to be tormented in the “fyre of helle,” with Christ’s final pronouncement to him being “for 3e wold do no mercy, and þerfor 3e schull haue no mercy.” By contrast, Christ rewarded those who did perform the works of mercy, saying, “My fadyrs blessyd chyldryne comeþe ynto þe joy þat euer scall last.”⁷² This vivid description of the rewards and punishments faced by the charitable and uncharitable resonated with late medieval laypeople; A similar imagining of Christ’s Judgment Day speeches to the saved and damned occurs in a York Mercers’ guild play discussed later in this chapter. The theme of merciful reciprocity reoccurs throughout Mirk’s sermons, with the author reiterating the fact that “he þat loueth to do mercy, God wyll 3eue hym mercy.”⁷³ Both of the aforementioned sermons dealing with failed male charity also offer critiques of the typically male sin of avarice. Men were in danger of being damned by their own pride and greed. As sermons discussed later in this chapter will demonstrate, female charity offered a spiritual corrective to these male failings.

Easter sermons were the most important of the liturgical year. Mirk addressed his to both male and female sermon-goers, but explained charity with analogies drawn from housework, proper household management, and domestic life—a strategy that might have engaged female listeners in particular.⁷⁴ Easter and springtime were seen as occasions for rebirth and renewal. Just as a hearth “brent wyth fyre and blakyd wyth smoke” must be cleaned each spring and arrayed with fresh straw and flowers, so too should be the souls “all men and woymen.” Easter was the necessary time to “clense þe howse of your soule,” and to do so Christians needed to

⁷² Powell, *John Mirk’s Festial*, vol. 1, 6.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷⁴ French, *Good Women*, 22.

turn away from wrath and envy, instead embracing the virtues “of kindness, of loue and charite, of pes and rest.”⁷⁵ Failing to cultivate these virtues imperiled the soul because when Christ “comyþ into þe hows of your soule, and fyndeth þer any stynkyng þyng of wraþ or of envy or of any oþer dedly synne, he woll not abyde þer: but anon he goþe out, and the fende comyþe yn and abydyþe þer.”⁷⁶ In describing cleansing the soul in housekeeping terms, Mirk was presenting theological ideas in quotidian terms familiar to medieval women, which resonated with their seasonal work responsibilities.

Mirk’s sermon for the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary explicitly expounded on the Seven Works of Mercy as integral parts of the proper late medieval Christian life, and characterized them as particularly female spiritual undertakings. In this sermon celebrating the Virgin Mary, Mirk identified two additional female Biblical figures as exemplars and models of idealized types of religious devotion—Mary Magdalene, and her sister Martha.⁷⁷ Through the respective examples of Mary Magdalene and Martha, Mirk explained the virtues of the contemplative life, lived in monastic confinement, and the active life, lived in the world. Martha, who performed acts of mercy for Christ, was a symbol of the active life.⁷⁸ He then describes the Virgin Mary as the “furst Martha” because she performed the Seven Works of Mercy for Christ from his conception to his death—housing him in her own body for nine months, feeding the

⁷⁵ Ibid., 114-5.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 115. “comes into the house of your soul and finds there any stench of wrath, envy, or any other deadly sin, he will not abide there, but instead go out. The Fiend will come in there and dwell.”

⁷⁷ In the Middle Ages, the figure of Mary Magdalene was actually the composite of three separate Biblical women—Martha and Lazarus’ sister Mary of Bethany, Mary Magdalene of the Gospels, and the unnamed female sinner who washed Christ’s feet. See Sherry L. Reames, ed., *Middle English Legends of Women Saints* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2003), 51.

⁷⁸ Powell, *John Mirk’s Festial*, vol. 2, 209; See also French, *Good Women*, 186.

infant Christ “wyth hur owne brestys,” clothing him with her own hands, nursing him as a sick youth, caring for him when he was imprisoned, and helping to bury his body and lay it in its tomb.⁷⁹ In a shift from earlier medieval tradition, the active life was not described as being inferior to the contemplative life. In fact, Mirk was illustrating that a secular life could be holy if it was lived in the service of God, and with a commitment to reciprocating the mercy demonstrated by Christ’s sacrifice with alms deeds. Although Mirk expected men and women to perform the works of mercy, “Mirk implicitly directed parishioners to understand the works of mercy in terms of the experiences of women,” pointing out “it was Martha’s food preparation and Mary’s mothering, both tasks intimately associated with women, that enacted the works.”⁸⁰ Mirk’s female characterization of the works of mercy gave women’s activities religious imperatives, expanded the scope of women’s ability to participate in parish life,⁸¹ and increased women’s opportunities for salvation.

While Mirk sought to engage both male and female listeners with his entertaining and anecdotal narrative style, he specifically addressed the needs of female parishioners by encouraging their active engagement in the process of salvation. He appealed to his audience with religious teachings couched in the commonplace terms of everyday living, encouraging them to hope for salvation and dread God’s judgment.

The Middle English sermons collected by Woodburn O. Ross can be dated to the late fourteenth century, after the composition of Mirk’s *Festial*. Ross’ compilation is made up of fifty-one ready-made sermons for major Christian holidays drawn from a variety of larger

⁷⁹ Powell, *John Mirk’s Festial*, vol. 1, 209.

⁸⁰ French, *Good Women*, 187.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

collections, and actually includes three sermons copied from the *Festial*.⁸² While the organization of this collection reflects Ross' modern ordering of late medieval material, the sermons themselves illustrate fourteenth-century religious themes and pedagogical techniques. The sermons in the Ross Collection address many of the themes foregrounded in Mirk's text, but present them using different pedagogical strategies. The sermons in the collection emphasize the mercy, love, and justice that God extends to humanity through his forgiveness and tolerance, and draw on patristic writers, proverbs, the *Legenda Aurea*, and the Bible for their content. While Mirk's sermons used *exempla* to make concrete connections between doctrine and proper practice, those found in this collection frequently use analogies and symbolism as a teaching tool. The more abstract nature of the sermons allows listeners to interpret and apply teachings to their lives in more flexible ways.

The sermons in the Ross Collection and the *Festial* share a central concern with charity and affective piety; however, they present charity and affectivity in different ways. In the Ross Collection charity is primarily conceptualized in terms of "frenshippe and loue," which are the defining characteristics of the relationship between Christ and humanity. In return for Christ's sacrifice, Christians owed faith and "werkes" as manifestations of their own friendship and love for God.⁸³ Consequently, the performance of charity through merciful works and reconciliation as "debt payment" are central themes throughout the collection. While Mirk's sermons focused on the reconciliatory nature of charity, the Ross Collection sermons foreground its obligatory nature—as the duty Christians owed to repay Christ for his death. Through the frequent characterization of Christ's suffering as resulting from his deep love for humanity, the sermon

⁸² Helen Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 309.

⁸³ Ross, lvi.

author attempts to cultivate a sense of indebtedness and responsibility in the audience. If Christians fail to attend to their commitments to one another, they will answer for it on Judgment Day. A sermon for the Trinity season serves as an example of this, listing the works of mercy, and explaining that Christians are bound by duty to perform them or face damnation:

Þses vij werkes þou arte bondon to fulfill by verke and dede 3iff þi powere br, or els by þi good will 3iff þi powere fail, in payne of euer lastyng dampnacion 3iff þou repente not. For of þere werkes of mercy Criste shall speke inspeciall of at þe Day of Dome. I praye eueriche of you to haue þis in mynde.⁸⁴

The sermon concludes by reassuring the audience that those who properly perform the works of mercy will be granted God’s mercy on Judgment day. Its general message allows listeners to make their own determination about how to best perform the works of mercy. Another Trinity season sermon counsels listeners to perform good works every day.⁸⁵ In line with medieval church’s call for a works based faith, a sermon for the first Sunday after Easter teaches that proper faith needs to be complemented by proper action, counseling, “þou must do good werkes, for as þe prophete seyþ, ‘Fides sine operibus mortua est—the withouten good werkes is as dede.’ And þer-fore loue þi God and þin euencrsten as þi-selfe.”⁸⁶ The collection also contains several sermons for undetermined occasions, one of which deals with charity and mercy. The sermon is concerned with the nature of the seven deadly sins and their remedies. The cure for envy was “charite and ryghtwisnes,” which the sermon defines as “no þinge els but fulfillynge þe

⁸⁴ Ross, 19. “You are bound to fulfill these seven works by work and deed if you have the power, or else by your goodwill if your power fails, in pain of everlasting damnation if you do not repent. For of these works of mercy Christ shall speak to you especially at the Day of Doom. I pray every one of you keeps this in mind.”

⁸⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 134. “You must do good works, for as the Prophet says, “Faith without works is dead—faith without good works is dead. And therefore, love your God and your fellow Christian as yourself.”

vij dedis of mercy to is ewen-cristen.”⁸⁷ “Ryghtwisnes” is described in contemporary texts like the *Lay Folks’ Catechism* as justice or righteousness, and was conceived of as giving each man or woman what was due to them.⁸⁸ Christians owed their fellows mercy for the sake of their debt to God for his own mercy.

Sermons for the Easter season also focus on the reciprocal nature of God’s mercy. The sermon for Septuagesima uses the theme of friendship to describe ideal Christian relationships. The sermon begins by recounting the allegorical story of a man who had committed crimes against the law, and was therefore sentenced to die. The man had four friends, but in his time of despair, only one would help him. The first two friends symbolized the World and the Family, which will abandon a dying man in the end. The third friend was the Devil, who brings nothing but sorrow and damnation. The fourth friend was Christ “of þe wiche frenshippe and loue we may not be withowte, for is frenshippe delyvers vs for þe bitter peynes of hell and restoreþ vs to euerlastynge liff. Þis frenshippe and loue shewed Criste to mankeend, þat for þe loue of hym he leid is owne sowle to wedde. And þis is þe most loue and frenshippe þat oon man may shewe to a-noper.”⁸⁹ This sermon attempted to impress upon listeners the hierarchical, reciprocal, and sacralized nature of Christian charity as conceived of as friendship. Christ sacrificed himself for the love and friendship of humanity. The sermon encouraged the audience to emulate and commemorate this sacrifice by creating and maintain friendships with their fellows—living “in charite.”

⁸⁷ Ibid., 213.

⁸⁸ Simmons, 80.

⁸⁹ Ross, 88. “Of whose friendship and love we may not be without. For it is friendship that delivers us from the bitter pains of Hell and restores us to everlasting life. Christ showed this friendship to Mankind—as a result of this love he has united his own soul with them.” Septuagesima is the third Sunday before Ash Wednesday.

A sermon for Palm Sunday explains the debt Christians owe to Christ on account of his sacrifice. Because Christ died “so horryble a dethe for us,” Christians were obliged to return his “kyndenes” by repenting, turning away from pride, wrath, and envy, and embracing meekness, love, and charity.⁹⁰ In order to receive God’s grace, Christians specifically needed to perform the works of mercy. If they had not done so, the sermon advised them to “petosly also beseche hym of for3euenes in þat þou haste not fulfilled þe vij werkes of mercye, of þe wiche God shall arayne vs of straytely at þe Day of Dome. And euer here-aftur be in vill to amende þe.” After enumerating the works of mercy, the author concludes, “3iff þou do þus, þan þou makeþ a grownde of keendnesse, where-to God 3eue þe grace.”⁹¹ The works of mercy were considered an important element of the kindness owed to God and in performing them, Christians could secure God’s grace and favor.

This collection contains three sermons for Easter, each of which deals with reconciliation and the nature of the Eucharist. These sermons make the connection between living “in charite” and salvation by illustrating that while communion was necessary for everlasting life, charity was a necessary precondition to receive communion; in effect, salvation was denied to those who lived out of charity. They also reiterate Mirk’s teaching that one cannot fool God as to the state of their soul, warning that taking communion unworthily leads to damnation: “who þat eteþ and drynkes me vnworthely, he takeþ is owne dome and dampnacion þer-by.”⁹² The sermons then provide a number of *exempla* to drive the point home. In contrast to Mirk’s sermons, however,

⁹⁰ Ibid., 31.

⁹¹ Ibid., 32. “Also piteously beseech him for forgiveness if you have not fulfilled the seven works of mercy of which God shall ask us about directly on Judgment Day. And hereafter be willing to amend yourself.”

⁹² Ross, 62. This exemplum was acted out in real life in the now famous court case of Margaret Chamber and Joanna Carpenter discussed later in this chapter.

one Easter sermon contains an exemplum of a female character failing to be charitable. The exemplum recounts the story of a “worthy womman” who hated her poor neighbor, and as a result was “owt of charite” when the time arrived for the Easter service and communion.⁹³ The woman’s priest told her that she must make amends with her neighbor or she could not receive the Eucharist. She consented to make peace, but she did not really forgive the poor woman in her heart. The story ends with the “worthy womman” being strangled to death for her deception and taking communion without true contrition.⁹⁴ The sermon’s author also laments how many laypeople temporarily turn away from sin in the period leading up to Easter only to return to it when the holiday ends. He counsels his audience to continue living in the “loue and charite of bretherod...euer forth here-aftur þat þe fende haue no entreste ne powere ouer you.”⁹⁵ Another sermon teaches that Christians must “reseyve Goddes bodie in þe forme of brede in-to þi soule with iij vertewes; þat is, feythe, hope, and charite” to gain everlasting life, and again admonishes against taking the sacrament unworthily.⁹⁶

The Ross Collection sermons use some gender-inclusive language, but to a far lesser degree than found in the *Festial*.⁹⁷ The Ross Collection sermons can be divided into three different groups speculated to have been authored by at least six different clerics, which vary in their degree of gender-inclusive language. The sermons that enumerate the spiritual responsibilities of Christians and issues of pastoral care (confession, church attendance, the Eucharist) are the ones in which female parishioners are explicitly included in the sermon

⁹³ In this sermon, the contrast is made between a rich woman and a poor woman, implying that the rich woman’s lack of charity might involve the typically male sins of pride and avarice.

⁹⁴ Ross, 62.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 63.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 131.

⁹⁷ Barr, *Pastoral Care of Women*, 44.

language, which Barr reads as clerical acknowledgement of their spiritual debt to female as well as male parishioners.⁹⁸ Although some of the sermons in this collection feature gender-inclusive language, there are significantly fewer *exempla* and hagiographical stories, which means fewer explicitly gendered moral lessons are being presented to the audience. The *exempla* used in this collection follow contemporary thought on sin; men are guilty of pride and avarice, women of lust. The Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene are the only female saints mentioned in this collection along with half a dozen very brief examples of important women from the Old Testament.

While the Ross Collection features less explicitly gendered lessons about charity, it does contain two sermons for the Easter season that highlight the special sanctity of women's performance of the works of mercy in ways that echo Mirk's *Festial*. In a sermon for Sexagesima, a well-known exemplum taken from the popular works of Jacques de Vitry about a leper and a noblewoman, which was discussed in Chapter One, served to make the points that practicing the works of mercy brought heavenly rewards. It taught that the recipients of charity stood in for the person of Christ (symbolically and sometimes literally), women were uniquely suited to perform the works of mercy, and most importantly, women were able to perform charitable acts under their own discretion and authority—bypassing the permission of their husbands.⁹⁹ A discussion of the path to salvation as conceptualized by the rungs of a ladder framed the sermon. Alms deeds were the final rung, which “qwenche all maner of synne,” and the story of the leper and noblewoman was used as an example of these salvific alms.¹⁰⁰

Continuing the theme of redemptive female piety, a sermon for Easter attempts to liberate

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 44-7.

⁹⁹ Farmer, “The Leper in the Master Bedroom,” 88-9; French, *Good Women*, 185-7.

¹⁰⁰ Ross, 185.

womankind from Eve's sinfulness and sanctifies women's practice of the works of mercy. The sermon focuses on Christ's resurrection and the specific role that women played in this seminal Christian event. After explaining that only those who truly seek Christ and are ready to depart from sin will be saved, the sermon continues with a unique moralizing lesson on the significance of Eve, the Virgin Mary, and the three Marys, who anointed Christ in his tomb, to the Christian faith.¹⁰¹ Employing a common medieval trope, the sermon explained that while a woman had imperiled humanity (Eve), a woman (the Virgin Mary) had also subsequently saved humanity.¹⁰² The sermon instructed its audience that Christ loved the women in his life who cared for him and comforted him, which is why he chose to reveal his miraculous resurrection to them first, and allow them to be the messengers of his rebirth:

Loke now what messangers þat Ihsus haþ made of is vprysynge. Þis iij wymmen knewe is preute and shewed and told þat he was risen from dethe to liff. Lo to hem þat were sorefull and in will to fore[sake] here synne, to hem he shewed is priuetees. By wymmen he sent for the þise words, for he entirely loued hem. Þorowe a wymman we were lorne, and þorowe a wymman we founde comferte a-3eyn, and þorow a wymman entred dethe, and þorowe a wymman com in a3eyene euerlastynge liff. A wymman brought Adam in-to muche pyne, and þer-fore Our Ladie amended þat was amys, þat womman shuld not be ashamed in þat þat she made Adam trespace. Þer-fore thorowe Crist Adam was amended, for no man shuld haue vomman in dispite, for it is no wisdam to dispise þat God loueþ.¹⁰³

These pious women accrued a special divine favor through charitable acts, which made them the particular friends of Christ; likewise the sermon audience was encouraged that through similar acts they could become friends of Christ as well. Despite the universal call for Christian mercy and charity, the sermon was making a particular argument for the sanctity of women who

¹⁰¹ Ross, 137.

¹⁰² In giving birth to Christ the Redeemer, the Virgin Mary thus amended Eve's sin, therefore, according to the sermon women should not be burdened with the stigma of Eve's disgrace.

¹⁰³ Ross, 137.

performed charitable works, concluding with the moral that no man should ever despise those whom Christ especially loved.

Although perfect Christian charity was admittedly an unattainable goal, the vivid language clerics used to describe and circumscribe the relations among parishioners reveals that charitableness and mercy were potent ideals which held a great deal of social, cultural and religious currency for clergy and laity alike. Both medieval men and women were inclined to sin and fall out of charity with one another and with God. The sermon collections discussed above all focus on the limitlessness of God's mercy (until Judgment Day) and the ability of Christians to actively contribute to their own salvation through the practice of charity conceived of as merciful works done for the benefit of their fellow Christians (generally) and neighbors (specifically). While both collections highlight a specific aspect of charity—love and reconciliation or sacrifice and satisfaction, respectively—they each present charity as the central Christian virtue that medieval Christians should endeavor to embody in word and deed. To live “in charite,” individuals needed to eschew envy and wrath by treating their neighbors with love and forgiveness. The *Festial* and Ross Collection encouraged every Christian to obey God's commandments, confess, repent, and seek salvation; however, each collection offered different avenues for reaching these goals. Mirk's *Festial* provided the most comprehensive behavioral advice for men and women, anecdotally presenting charity and the works of mercy as particularly suited to his female audience in a way that was inclusive but perhaps limiting at the same time. In line with contemporary thought, Mirk taught that all Christians should practice charity, but used male characters to illustrate the improper performance of charity (for vainglory or not at all), and presented female characters as successful exemplars of charitability. The Ross Collection sermons lacked much of Mirk's narrative concreteness and addressed female listeners

less directly. Hence these sermons may have allowed for a more flexible understanding and application of Christian teachings—one that provided a generalized blueprint for all Christians to follow which was adaptable to the personal needs of the individual Christian, male or female.

Vernacular Devotional and Prescriptive Literature

Lay literacy increased in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and with it the demand for religious literature aimed at a lay audience increased as well.¹⁰⁴ Initially, authors simply modified Latin devotional works aimed at a clerical audience to fulfill this demand, but by the last quarter of the fourteenth century they began producing texts specifically for the laity. This vernacular devotional literature was inspired by thirteenth-century reforms, and reimagined “cloistered modes of discipline as ways to inculcate independent modes of self-control.” These devotional texts expanded possibilities for lay identification with elements of monastic, fraternal, and secular clerical lifestyles, while “returning readers to the supervision of confessors and the social structures of the larger lay community.”¹⁰⁵ The clergy used this burgeoning body of literature as another means of educating the laity; however, this audience was more selective than that for whom sermons and didactic art were a primary means of catechesis. Only laypeople with enough literacy, money, and interest would buy these works, whereas everyone was expected to go to church on Sunday. This genre of popular catechetical literature was intended to

¹⁰⁴ See H.S Bennett, *English Books and Readers, 1475-1557* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); Lotte Hellenga and J.B. Trapp, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume III, 1400-1557* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers, 1240-1570* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 63; Valerie Edden, “The Devotional Life of Laity,” in *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts*, eds., D. Dyas, V. Edden, and R. Ellis (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005), 44; Kevin E. Lawson, “Learning the Faith in the Later Middle Ages: Contributions of the Franciscan Friars,” *Journal of the Religious Education Association* (2012), 149.

¹⁰⁵ Rice, pp. x-xii.

help laypeople cultivate a more sophisticated understanding of religious doctrine, develop more personalized devotional practices, and actively participate in religious services.¹⁰⁶

Scholars loosely group devotional manuals into two categories with somewhat overlapping content: primers and prescriptive works. Primers provided their audience with a step-by-step account of the order and meaning of elements of the Mass in order to encourage increased understanding and participation and contained expositions of the various elements of Christian doctrine. The most popular vernacular primer was the *Lay Folks' Catechism*, which focused particularly on the ideal of Christian charity and the ways in which individuals could achieve this ideal through living in harmony with God's commandments and their neighbors. Unlike the prescriptive literature that will be discussed later in this chapter, primers did not overtly gender charity or the idealized Christian lifestyle. Instead they provided a generalized blueprint for all Christians to follow, which was adaptable to the personal needs of the individual Christian, male or female.¹⁰⁷ Alongside works of an expressly catechetical nature, the late medieval period also saw an increase of vernacular prescriptive and proscriptive literature, which sought to instill religious and moral virtues through the use of allegorical tales aimed at teaching correct Christian conduct. Some of this literature was written by clerics, some by the laity themselves. In contrast to the universal themes addressed in primers, many of the most popular late medieval prescriptive and proscriptive texts exhibit a gendered preoccupation with charity and the works of mercy. It seems possible that because these works were concerned more with conduct than belief, their authors endeavored to teach audiences how to turn correct belief into

¹⁰⁶ Duffy, 68, Peter Heath, "Between Reform and Reformation," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41 (1990), 672.

¹⁰⁷ It possible that the authors of these works simply wanted to provide a broad religious framework and assumed laypeople would receive lessons about the proper way to enact these teachings from other sources like sermons, didactic art, and religious drama.

appropriate practice through the provision of examples. Popular late medieval prescriptive texts, like “How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter,” “How the Wise Man Taught His Son,” and the Book of the Knight of the Tower, exhibit a gendered preoccupation with charity and the works of mercy as they attempted to help audiences translate Christian belief into proper social behavior.

In 1357 Archbishop Thoresby of York reissued Pecham’s *Ignorantia Sacerdotum*, and then authorized a vernacular version to be written for the benefit of the laity. This English adaptation was entitled the *Lay Folks’ Catechism*.¹⁰⁸ To increase the circulation of this new text, Thoresby included a forty-day indulgence for those who learned it or taught it to other people.¹⁰⁹ In the early fifteenth century, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, John Stafford, instructed that it be placed in every church within his dioceses and ordered that his archdeacons provide a copy for all of their clergy as well.¹¹⁰ Because the church taught that being charitable to others was fundamental to the salvation of all late medieval Christians, the two precepts of the Gospel provide the conceptual framework for much of the *Lay Folks’ Catechism*. Its author describes them as loving “god over al things” and loving one’s “euen-cristen als we do oure selven.” Christians must always love their fellows with a whole heart in both word and deed as a reflection of their love of God.¹¹¹ In fact, the author argued, “the tane may nought be loued withouten the tothir.”¹¹² To be in charity meant loving one’s neighbor as oneself and receiving a special grace from God on account of that love. Naturally, didactic works such as the *Lay Folks’*

¹⁰⁸ See Anne Hudson, “A New Look at the *Lay Folks’ Catechism*,” *Viator*, 16 (1985), 243-58; R.N. Swanson, “The Origins of the *Lay Folks’ Catechism*,” *Medium Aevum*, 60 (1991), 92-100.

¹⁰⁹ Duffy, 54; Simmons, *Lay Folks’ Catechism*, 98.

¹¹⁰ Duffy, 54.

¹¹¹ Simmons, *Lay Folks’ Catechism*, 60.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 80.

Catechism were aimed at making sure laypeople understood how to enact charity in their daily lives, and viewed the Mass as a vehicle for creating a community “in charite.”

The *Lay Folks' Catechism*, like Mirk's *Festial*, noted that damnation was the punishment for those who came to prayer out of charity, admonishing “whan men seye godys seruyse in gret hate and envye with owte deuocion and reuerence they take godys name in vayne for they aske here owne dampnacioun in seyyng of the Pater noster.”¹¹³ And of taking communion without charity, it warned, “he that takes it worthily, takes his salvation, and who-so unworthily, takes his dampnation.”¹¹⁴ Occasionally we can see laypeople themselves using these warnings as justifications for forcing reconciliation in front of the entire congregation by pointing out if someone remained out of charity with them during services. In a now famous example, Margaret Chamber found herself in this very situation while attending mass at St. Michael Queenhithe, London one Sunday in 1529. As she was kneeling at the altar preparing to make communion, her neighbor Joanna Carpenter was reported to have taken her by the arm and adamantly petitioned her, “I pray you let me speke a worde wythe you, for you have need to axe me forgyvenes, before you reseyyve your rights.”¹¹⁵ Joanna Carpenter was accusing Margaret Chamber of being unworthy of receiving the sacrament that reconciled Christians to God and one another because she had in some way breached a neighborly relationship. Because Chamber had acted without charity and mercy, Carpenter was within her spiritual rights to demand redress, and in doing so demonstrated that those without mercy will not be given mercy. According to the Law of Charity, Joanna Carpenter was well within her rights to confront Margaret Chambers for her breach of

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 66.

¹¹⁵ Susan Bridgen, “Religion and Social Obligation in Early Sixteenth-Century London,” *Past and Present* 103 (1984), 74; W.H. Hale, ed., *A Series of Precedents and Proceedings in Criminal Causes Extending from the Year 1475 to 1640* (London, 1847), 109.

good neighborhood and was actually performing a spiritual good work. In the eyes of the law, however, she was charged with interfering with Margaret Chambers' reception of the Eucharist, and was reported to the London Commissary Court.

The incident between Margaret Chamber and Joanna Carpenter illustrates that there was a religious element to the relationships Christians developed with one another. Eamon Duffy coined the phrase "holy neighbourliness" to denote this spiritual fellowship.¹¹⁶ Holy neighborliness encompassed the relationship between the community of Christian believers and the saints on one hand, and the spiritualized character of the relationship between individual Christians on the other. Late medieval laypeople thought of the saints as "celestial neighbors," to whom they owed a "debt of interchanging neighborhood."¹¹⁷ The laity venerated the saints, who in return watched over and protected them.¹¹⁸ This relationship of mutual obligation was mirrored in the relationships neighbors were instructed to develop and maintain with one another. "Holy neighborliness" was in essence the religious dimension of community, which included both living and dead members, and was at its core a manifestation of Christian charity. For the laity in the late Middle Ages, their community was primarily constituted by their neighborhood.

The performance of "holy neighborliness" was informed by the Decalogue and the two precepts of the Gospel, and manifested in the ways that they were carried out on a quotidian basis. Clerics were eager to imbue the idealized relationship between the individual Christian and his neighbor with a spiritual and moral imperative, so they used scriptural language to define and

¹¹⁶ Duffy, 138.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 160, 168, 188.

¹¹⁸ Christopher Marsh, *Religion in Sixteenth Century England: Holding Their Peace* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1988), 65.

describe it.¹¹⁹ The exposition of the Ten Commandments in the *Lay Folks' Catechism* explained that the first table of commandments were duties owed to God, the second, duties owed to one's neighbor.¹²⁰ Neighborliness, however, did figure into the first table's obligations to God. Making peace with one's own neighbors, mediating disputes between feuding neighbors, and visiting infirm and sick neighbors were integral components of the commandment to keep the Sabbath. Readers were even instructed that making the peace was a more admirable endeavor than the building of churches.¹²¹ The commandments governing the relationship between neighbors admonished Christians not to bear false witness against neighbors, nor covet their neighbor's house, wife, servants, or goods."¹²² At the end of the explanation of the Ten Commandments, the readers of the *Lay Folks' Catechism* were sternly warned a final time to do the works of mercy to their needy neighbors, with the punishment for breaking that commandment or any of the others being that they "schalt be dampnyd in helle in body *and* sowle withouten ende. thow thou haue a thowsand bullys of pardoun lettris of fraternite and Chauntres aftyr thy deth."¹²³

The love of God and neighbor was best demonstrated through the performance of works of mercy, which were at the same time commemorative and reciprocal. Merciful deeds memorialized Christ's suffering, while reminding Christians that his sacrifice was made in the name of love and with mercy for humanity. The mercy Christians showed towards their fellows called to mind God's own mercy, but the performance of pious deeds ensured they would receive

¹¹⁹ Naomi Tadmor, "Friends and Neighbours in Early Modern England: Biblical Translations and Social Norms," in *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe, 1300-1800*, eds., Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter, and Miri Rubin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 150.

¹²⁰ Simmons, *Lay Folks' Catechism*, 30.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹²² Tadmor, 151.

¹²³ Simmons, *Lay Folks' Catechism*, 57.

divine mercy as well. Next to God, neighbors were the primary recipients of charity, as defined as love and affective benevolent works. The *Lay Folks' Catechism* reasoned, "who-soever loues god, loues his euen cristen; for he that loues nought his brothir, wham he mai se, how suld he loue god almighten that he seis nought?"¹²⁴ It taught that showing love and performing acts of mercy to neighbors would merit love and mercy from God, arguing:

Thise til our neghtebors er ful nedefull,
And to tham that dos tham wondir medefull,
For he sal find merci that mercifull is,
And man withouten merci of merci sal misse.¹²⁵

As the end of the poem reveals, laypeople were frequently cautioned that those who lacked mercy for their fellows would find themselves outside of the ambit of divine mercy. For the late medieval Christian, there was no escaping the obligation to be merciful, because at the Final Judgment Christ would ask them about their deeds during life. The *Lay Folks' Catechism* explained, "god sal reherce us upon the dai of dome, and wit how we haf don tham here in this lyfe."¹²⁶ It also succinctly warned, "they be so cursyd of god that do not do the werkys of bodyly mercy."¹²⁷ While primers like the *Lay Folks Catechism* provided generalized guidelines for charitable living suited for both men and women, many prescriptive works gendered their moral instruction.

The strongly gendered nature of prescriptive poems such as "How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter" and "How the Wise Man Taught His Son" implies that clerical authors recognized the limitations of sermons in fully addressing these concerns and sought to supplement them in additional ways; the popularity of these poems suggest that laypeople agreed

¹²⁴ Simmons, 80.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 76.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 70.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 77.

with them. Two popular fourteenth-century clerically-authored poems, “How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter” and “How the Wise Man Taught His Son” clearly illustrate the ways in which gender could inform clerical prescriptive writing on charity. While the poems are by different authors, they often appeared together as a set, which indicates manuscript compilers thought they complemented one another.¹²⁸ Although both poems are likely the “product of a meeting of interests between male clerics and city fathers,” they encourage their urban audiences to engage in a type of self-fashioning and self-surveillance that is presented as spiritually and socially beneficial for the individual.¹²⁹ The poems rehearse the standard Decalogue sentiments governing neighborly relations, while at the same time demonstrating a greater degree of anxiety about social relationships than found in sermon literature. The structure and content of each poem also reflect contemporary gendered educational theories. Clerics conceived of women as being more corporeal than men, so they presented material to a female audience in concrete and experiential terms. Conversely, men were characterized as more spiritual and intellectual, which led clerics to address them in abstract and “rational” terms.¹³⁰

As its title suggests, “How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter” was aimed at the instruction and correction of young women. Although written by a male cleric, the poem is narrated by a “mother” concerned with inculcating proper female behavior in an audience that

¹²⁸ Claire Sponsler, “The English How the Good Wijf Taught Hir Doughtir and How the Wise Man Taught His Sonne,” in Mark D. Johnston, ed., *Medieval Conduct Literature: An Anthology of Vernacular Guides to Behaviour for Youths* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 287. Felicity Riddy suggests that the “Good Wife” poem was written by a teaching friar, “Mother Knows Best: Reading Social Change in a Courtesy Text,” *Speculum* 71 (1996), 71.

¹²⁹ Riddy, “Mother Knows Best,” 73; Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods, and Theatricality in Late Medieval England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 68.

¹³⁰ Dronzek, “Gendered Theories of Education,” 151.

included female offspring as well as servants.¹³¹ In the context of the poem, proper female behavior reflected the “bourgeois ethos” of upwardly mobile merchants and artisans living in late medieval cities and their suburbs. This ethos was predicated on a well-governed, male-headed household. Such households should ideally enjoy stability, piety, hierarchy, and respectability—attributes that were necessary for success in the reputation-and credit-based culture of urban burgesses. Women, as wives and mothers, were expected to maintain and impart these values within a domestic setting, and as wives, daughters, and servants, embody them when out in public as a positive reflection on their households.¹³² The poem advocates publically discrete behavior for women; it advises them not to entertain male advances that would give rise to malicious gossip, act like a “gigge” or loose woman, haunt taverns, get drunk, or attend wrestling matches and the like as if they were a common “strumpet.”¹³³

“How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter” connects female honor with the urban bourgeois values of sexual discretion and proper governance. However, hitherto scholars have ignored the fact that the text also highlights the positive way that women accrued respectability and spiritual rewards for their families with its particular concern for performing charity and the works of mercy. As the practice of charity was one of the aspects of the active life to which women were thought to be ideally suited, the poem demonstrates that charitableness was viewed as one of the most valuable virtues in women, and that charity was rooted in neighborliness. The text’s narrator instructed his audience to “Loue þan weel þi nei3boris, as god haþ comaundide þee; It bihoueþ þee so for to do, And to do to þem as þou woldist be doon to.”¹³⁴ He enjoined

¹³¹ Riddy, 83.

¹³² Ibid., 67-68.

¹³³ Frederick J. Furnivall, *The Babees Book* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 40.

¹³⁴ Furnivall, *The Babees Book*, 44. “Love then well your neighbors, as God has commanded

young women to be charitable and practice good neighborhood by never envying, slandering, or scorning their neighbors. They should fix any discord that may arise with friends or neighbors.¹³⁵

A good wife and daughter were also urged to fulfill the works of mercy through commensality with neighbors and providing alms for the poor:

Weelcume faire þi neiboris þat comen to þee warde
With Mete, drinke, & honest chere, Such as þou aist to hem bede,
To ech man after his degree, & help þe poore at need;
And also for Hap þat may betide,
Please weel þi nei3boris þat dwelle þee biside, Mi leue child.¹³⁶

Similarly, the narrator advised his audience to “3eve of þin owne good, and be not to hard, for seelden is þat hous poore þere god is steward.”¹³⁷ In this way, the clerical author of the poem reminds the reader or listener of the poem that charity is reciprocal; God rewards those who practice charity. Wives are also counseled to perform charity in the household, as they are advised to quiet their husband’s wrath with “fair” and “meeke” words.¹³⁸ Since the wrathful lived outside of God’s charity, wives who performed this spiritual work of mercy (admonishing sinners) were invested with the responsibility of safeguarding their spouse’s soul. The characterization of the wife’s words as fair and meek invoked a clerical tradition of using the allure and sweetness of wives’ speech to persuade men to become better Christians.¹³⁹ While this

you. It behooves you to do so, and do to them as you would have done to you.”

¹³⁵ Edith Rickert, ed., *The Babees’ Book: Medieval Manners for the Young: Done into Modern English from Dr. Furnivall’s Texts* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1923), 39.

¹³⁶ Furnivall, *The Babees Book*, 44. See also Sponsler, “The English How the Good Wijf Taught Hir Doughtir,” 295. “Graciously welcome the neighbors who come to you/With meat, drink, and honest cheer, such as you are able to/To each man after his degree, and help the poor in need/To guard against any mishaps that may occur/Please your neighbors well who dwell beside you, my dear child.”

¹³⁷ Furnivall, *The Babees Book*, 37.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹³⁹ In Thomas of Chobham’s *Manual for Confessors*, he said that “it should always be enjoined upon women to be preachers to their husbands, because no priest is able to soften the heart of a

poem reinforced many contemporary gender expectations, it also invested its female audience with a certain measure of spiritual authority. Although wifely persuasion took the form of fair and meek words, these words still offered a critique of male wrath. The traditionally clerical prerogative of admonishing sinners was repurposed for a lay context in this poem in such a way that it opened up spaces for female piety to operate as a corrective for male behavior.¹⁴⁰

“How the Wise Man Taught His Son,” which undertook the instruction of “lordlings,” offers similarly gendered notions of appropriate bourgeois male behavior that focused on the particular pitfalls of male urban public life.¹⁴¹ Like the maternal instruction of “How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter,” “How the Wise Man Taught His Son” purports to offer fatherly advice “maad bi good resound to make men true and stidfast.”¹⁴² The advice given is primarily derived from the seven deadly sins and the Ten Commandments, and placed within the context of the responsibilities and challenges faced by the head of an urban household. The poem begins with the fatherly narrator cautioning the reader to devoutly pray to God upon waking for the grace to lead a good life, “synne to flee boþ ny3t & day,” and that “heuen blis may be þi

man the way a wife can.” He went so far as to suggest that women speak of religious matters to their husbands in an alluring fashion “even in the bedroom, in the midst of their embraces,” Waters, 98-9. Female preaching was encouraged but only in the privacy of the home, and only restricted to matters of morals and religion. Thomas of Chobham also noted that women who failed to persuade their husbands to turn away from sin would be held responsible for those sins, Sandy Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 67; see also Sharon Farmer, “Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives,” *Speculum* 61 (1986): 517-543.

¹⁴⁰ It is important to note female disobedience or critiques of male behavior are justified only in the context of serving the interests of religion and the church (like disobedient virgin martyrs or wives that accrue spiritual rewards by disobeying their husbands). According to Sharon Farmer, clerical authors allowed all normative social rules regarding male authority to be inverted where pious wives were concerned, “The Leper in the Master Bedroom,” 88.

¹⁴¹ While these poems were aimed at a literate urban audience, that did not mean they did not circulate more widely through being read out loud to other audiences.

¹⁴² Rickert, 48.

mede.”¹⁴³ The theme of heavenly reward being the only riches worth acquiring is one that is repeated throughout the text, which makes sense given the status-and wealth-conscious urban cultural milieu to which the intended audience would belong. Evidently the poem’s clerical author felt that living in an urban environment or amongst burgesses created ample occasions for discord between neighbors. He warned readers against hurting or displeasing their neighbors through office-holding, echoed the commandment against bearing false witness, and stressed the importance of not being a tavern-haunter, dice player, or lecher.¹⁴⁴ Unlike the “How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter,” this poem does not give extended advice about the types of charity men should do or encourage them to perform the works of mercy. In fact, the “son” should expect to accrue spiritual rewards through the charitable activities of his wife rather than through his own efforts. He is instructed to maintain charity in his home by treating his wife fairly and cherishing her good deeds, and charity within his neighborhood with the vague (and passive) to direction “warne amonge þi nei3boris sitte.”¹⁴⁵ In the conclusion of the poem, the narrator advises his audience to shun worldly riches, “of þi trespass make a-meendis, and to poore men of þi good þou dele,” and “of þi foo-men make þi freendis”; all of which are done for the salvation of the soul.¹⁴⁶

Charity as enacted through “good neighborhood” was part of the ideal Christian lifestyle, however, “How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter” and “How the Wise Man Taught His Son” constituted neighborliness in overtly gendered ways. Women were encouraged to cultivate

¹⁴³ Furnivall, *The Babees Book*, 48.

¹⁴⁴ Rickert, 44.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 51. Husbands were especially counseled to encourage their wives’ charity because it brought blessings upon the household. See Miriam Gill, “Female Piety and Impiety,” 113.

¹⁴⁶ Rickert, 52. “Make amends for your trespasses and give to the poor from your own goods...make friends of your enemies.”

affective bonds of benevolence with their neighbors through good works and hospitality, which was in keeping with the late medieval identification of pious women as helpers and almsgivers. While men were advised to give to the poor and amend trespasses, most of the poem's advice characterized neighborliness as a civic pursuit.¹⁴⁷ Both poems also reveal apprehensions about how best to put the ideal into practice in an urban setting. Neighborhood life brought women and men into contact with servants, the poor, other parishioners, and strangers; each of these contacts had the potential for spiritual reward or public censure. In her work on these poems, Claire Sponsler argued that sociability was presented as dangerous for both men and women. For young women, female sociability with either sex was presented as creating numerous opportunities for conflict as “envy, gossip, borrowing of money, scorn, miserliness, covetousness, and other sins against the social economy are to be avoided because they rupture social relations.”¹⁴⁸ The case is similar for young men as Sponsler notes that “How The Wise Man taught His Son” cautions against “holding office, against inviting the envy or enmity of neighbors, and against male rivalry—all dangers associated with the social terrain beyond the household. Public spaces are seen as dangerous, and social relations, especially with other men are imagined as destructive of personal happiness.”¹⁴⁹ Interestingly, verbal conflict in particular is the reason sociability imperils “good neighborhood.” Although the poems present the male body as well-governed and the female body as unruly, Sponsler observes that for both the “daughter” and “son,” the mouth represents a site of discord as the origin of sins of speech. The “daughter” is advised to answer

¹⁴⁷ See Shannon McSheffrey, “Men and Masculinity in Late Medieval London Civic Culture: Governance, Patriarchy and Reputation,” in Jacqueline Murray, ed., *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West* (New York: Garland, 1999), 243-78, “Jurors, Respectable Masculinity, and Christian Morality: A Comment on Marjorie McIntosh’s Controlling Misbehavior,” *The Journal of British Studies* 37, no. 3 (1998): 269-78.

¹⁴⁸ Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance*, 64.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 61.

her suitors courteously and her husband meekly, and not to talk in church or scorn others, while the “son” is told “Þin owne tunge may be þi foo, Perfore be waar what þou doist say” and counseled against bragging, bearing false witness, and defaming his wife by calling her “vilouns” names.¹⁵⁰ In these examples unruly speech is problematic, but for different reasons. Women who spoke in scornful, forceful or disrespectful manners opened themselves up to charges of scolding; whereas men’s disruptive speech had a feminizing effect. Men who could not control their speech were viewed as incapable of the manly restraint necessary for the good governance of their households.¹⁵¹ While the proper performance of charity was connected with the notion of “good neighborhood,” the clerical authors of these poems did not present it as a straightforward concept, instead complicating the practice of charity with conflicting and gendered notions of community and neighborly obligations.

Two additional popular works in English, authored by laymen, demonstrate the centrality of charity as practiced through the works of mercy in vernacular literature: the *Book of the Knight of the Tower* and “A Lyke-Wake Dirge.” The Knight of La-Tour-Landry wrote the *Book of the Knight of the Tower* in the late fourteenth century as a conduct manual for his daughters. The original French text was translated twice into Middle English, first by an anonymous author around 1450 and then by William Caxton, who printed it in 1483. The *Book of the Knight of the Tower* was a compilation of morality lessons that was originally intended to advise young

¹⁵⁰ Sponsler, 62; Furnivall, *The Babees Book*, 49, 51. “Your own tongue can be your enemy, therefore, be wary of what you say.” Sandy Bardsley has noted that while both men and women are advised to control their unruly speech in these poems that women are more frequently admonished and in a wider variety of contexts than male counterparts. See Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues*, 51.

¹⁵¹ Bardsley argues that men who spoke in “problematic ways risked being labeled as womanly,” and undermined their masculinity in the eyes of their peers through verbal excesses, *Venomous Tongues*, 90-1.

noblewomen on appropriate religious and social conduct with models drawn from *exempla*, personal anecdotes, biblical stories, fabliaux, and the *Legenda Aurea*.¹⁵² The author and narrator devoted eleven chapters of the 144-chapter work to the performance of specific charitable acts by noblewomen, but discussed the works of mercy more broadly throughout the text.¹⁵³ As Anna Dronzek has noted, the teachings are particularly gendered through their use of graphic *exempla*, and instructions to emulate the examples set by the Virgin Martyrs and other female religious figures.¹⁵⁴ The clerical authors of the “Good Wife” and “Wise Man” poems and the Knight of La-Tour-Landry shared many contemporary ideas about the importance of meekness and charity in women. The Knight of La-Tour-Landry, however, (perhaps informed by the experiences of fatherhood) presented the religious education of women and the practice of the works of mercy in ways that exalted the status of female piety. In his conception of women’s lifecycles, maidens should be educated to become pious women, good wives were, if not equal partners in marriage, at least the essential spiritual governors of their households, and good widows were exemplars of neighborliness and hospitality.

While the Knight of La-Tour-Landry did encourage his female audience to be meek, submissive, and non-confrontational, he characterized those qualities as being suited for specific social and domestic contexts.¹⁵⁵ He also took a somewhat unusual position in asserting that

¹⁵² The Knight of La-Tour-Landry originally intended his book to be used for the education of young noblewomen. By the time Caxton printed it in 1484, the book would have most likely appealed to a growing urban middle-class. See Claire Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods, and Theatricality in Late Medieval England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 57; also Dronzek, “Gendered Theories of Education,” 139.

¹⁵³ Cullum, “Hir Name was Charite,” 202.

¹⁵⁴ Dronzek, “Gendered Theories of Education,” 143.

¹⁵⁵ There are chapters on “How no woman ought to chyden or brawle with folk whiche ben braynles” and “How we ought not to stryue aygenst them that ben langageurs and full of words.”

women should be given a formal education (even if it could be ultimately viewed as reinforcing their subject position in society). Using the examples of the prophetess Deborah and St. Katherine, the Knight opined that “yong women, maydenes, shulde be putte vnto scole to lerne virtuous thinges of the scripture, wherethrough thei may the beter see and knowe thaire sauement, and to duell and for to eschewe al that is euel in manere.”¹⁵⁶ He also answered “suche men that haue opynion that thei wolde not þat her wyues nor her doughtres shulde knowe no thinge of the scripture” by arguing “eueri woman it us the beter that canne rede and haue knowinge of the lawe of God, and forto haue lerned to haue vertu and science to withstonde the perilles of the sowle, and forto use and excerse the werkys of thaire sauement, for that is thinge aproued and necessarie to all women.”¹⁵⁷ The Knight imagined the education of young women to be active and salvific in nature as is demonstrated by his brief narrative of St. Katherine’s martyrdom. While other contemporary sources such as Mirk’s *Festial* and the *Speculum Sacerdotale* downplayed St. Katherine’s learning and public debate skills, the Knight thought they were important when put to proper use—in this case the defense of Christianity.¹⁵⁸ The Knight described St. Katherine as “wise seint Katerine, that by her witte and clergy, with the grace of the holy gost... surmounted and ouercome the grettest philosophers in Grece, and by her clergie and stedfast faithe she wane the victory of martirdom.”¹⁵⁹ While his readers would not seek martyrdom as a demonstration of their faith, they could put their education to pious use in

Women are not discouraged from arguing in general, but in these cases, arguing pointlessly with foolish and garrulous people.

¹⁵⁶ Thomas Wright, *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry* (New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1969), 117.

¹⁵⁷ Wright, *The Book of the Knight*, 119.

¹⁵⁸ Sherry L. Reames discusses how the sermons in the *Festial* and *Speculum Sacerdotale* highlight the less contentious aspects of the St. Katherine legend for imitation, *Middle English Legends of Women Saints* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2003), pp. 170-171.

¹⁵⁹ Wright, *The Book of the Knight*, 117.

the locus of the home. As will be discussed later in this section, the same learning and persuasion that made St. Katherine an exemplar was presented as important for wives who through charity must convert their husbands from wrath and sin, and from impiety to devotion.

By way of teaching with examples, the Knight imagined a life of active piety for women centered on performing the works of mercy. While he advocated the practice of all the works in preparation for Judgment Day, he focused specific attention on sacred hospitality, feeding and clothing the poor, and caring for orphans.¹⁶⁰ He also advocated for women to perform the spiritual works of praying for the dead and admonishing sinners. The *Book* contains chapters entitled “Thexample of the folysshe vyrgyns and also of the wyse and prudente vyrgyns,” “How euery good woman ought to be meke and humble after thexample of the blessyd vyrgyne Marye,” “How wymmen ought to be charytable by thexample of our lady,” “How a woman ought to obeye her husband in alle thyng honest,” and “Thexample of a good wydowe,” which were intended to guide women in charitable living throughout their lifetimes. In the prologue to the work, the Knight prays that his daughters will turn to lives of good and honor, which he described as “to serue and loue god/and to haue the loue and grace of their neyghbours.”¹⁶¹ With respect to the charity and Seven Works of Mercy, the Knight argued that both are the “pleasaunce of alle goode women.”¹⁶² Neighborliness also constituted an important aspect of charity for the Knight as he urged readers to “make pees with thi neyghboure, and be in charite

¹⁶⁰ In a section on the works of mercy, the Knight instructs, “the swete Ihusu Cryste sayd in theuangelly/that at the daye of his grete Iudgment/he shalle haue mercy on hem/whiche shalle haue vysyted and comforted them/that were emprysoned/and the seke and also the poure wymmen that lay pourley in theyr childbedde/For at that ferdful and dredefull day god shalle therof aske a rekenynge/and nedes men must render hym reason therof...and therefore my fayr doughters/thynke now on hit whyles ye lyue,” Offord, *The Book of the Knight*, 118.

¹⁶¹ Offord, 3.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 38.

togedre.”¹⁶³ He encouraged his audience to follow the positive examples of women like the Pharaoh’s daughter, who rescued and fostered Moses, the Virgin Mary, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, who “nourished the poure Orphanes,” the penitent Mary Magdalene, and Martha, her sister, whose sheltering and provision of food to Christ led to her association with the active life and performance of the works of mercy.¹⁶⁴ In the tales of the Pharaoh’s daughter and St. Elizabeth motherhood and childcare occupied a special status, as did the caring for orphaned and fatherless children, which fulfilled multiple works of mercy at once. St. Elizabeth’s narrative concluded with the morals “god forgeteth neuer the seruyce done to hym by charyte/as to nourysse the orphanes or faderles/which is an operacion of Mysericorde/that God moche loueth” and that it is necessary “to nourysse the orphanes and the small children that haue mystier or nede for it is grete almesse & grete charyte/& that moche pleseth god.”¹⁶⁵

The Knight encouraged women to give of their household goods in the form of clothing the poor and practicing sacred hospitality—in a more cautious way he also suggested sheltering strangers was also a suitable work of mercy for housewives to practice.¹⁶⁶ Using the examples of female saints, the Knight instructed his readers, “as of Seynt Elyzabeth/of saynt Katheryn and seynt Agathe and other mo/that gaue their gownes to the poure folke for the loue of God And soo ought to doo euery good woman.”¹⁶⁷ Conversely, women who were too greedy or vain to give away their clothing to the poor faced damnation. A chapter titled “Thexample of a good wydowe,” taught readers that widowhood should be sanctified by piety, hospitality, and good

¹⁶³ Wright, 137.

¹⁶⁴ French, *Good Women*, 187.

¹⁶⁵ Offord, 117.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

works, which included the spiritual works of praying for the dead and admonishing sinners.¹⁶⁸ A good widow was “of a holy lyf/and moche humble & honorable/as she...euey yere kepte and helde a Feste vpon Crystemasse day of her neyghbours bothe ferre and nere tyll her halle was full of them/She serued and honoured eche one after his degree.”¹⁶⁹ She loaned her clothes and jewels to poor gentle women wanting to marry, so that they could at least maintain the outward appearance dictated by their social estate: “yf she knewe any poure gentyll woman/that shold be wedded/She arrayed her with her Iewels.”¹⁷⁰ She prayed for the dead and honored their memories with her presence and donation of lights: “she wente to the obsequye of the poure gentyll wymmen/and gaf there torches and all suche other luminary as it neded thereto.”¹⁷¹ After her daily prayers were finished, if the good widow “wyste and knewe ony seke folke or wymmen in theyr childbedde she went to see and vysyted them/and to be brou3t to them of her best mete.”¹⁷² She also provided “plente of good mete and drynke for to gyue to the poure and seke folke there as they were.”

The notion of the “good governance” of the household was one of great importance in the structuring of late medieval domestic relationships.¹⁷³ Husbands were typically viewed as the

¹⁶⁸ The widows imagined by the Knight seem to have been financially well off. He does not mention them having to care for any of their own children, and does not advocate that they remarry. Instead, they should commit themselves to lives of chastity, charity, mass attendance, walking “in her gardyn or els aboute her place sayenge her other deocions & prayers,” Offord 181.

¹⁶⁹ Offord, 181.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ In her examination of medieval and early modern “good governance,” Barabara Hanawalt points out that in late medieval notions of governance were rooted in both civic and domestic order and peaceful relations, Hanawalt, “Good Governance” in the Medieval and Early Modern Context, *The Journal of British Studies* 37 (1998), 248. In the context of the household, the father was expected to be the “governor” of his family and servants, making sure their behavior

head of the household, however, the sermons and prescriptive poems discussed earlier illustrate that women had an important role to play in household governance as well. In the Knight's *Book* the housewife's role was imagined as one of spiritual guardianship of husbands and children, charitable correction, and in extenuating circumstances, wifely disobedience in the service of piety. A chapter called "How euery good woman ought to enhorthe her husband to serue god with great deuocion" taught that wives must "Incyte and meue her lorde to worship god and the church," but that she must "be of fayre and swete spekyng in repreuyng her lord of ony thyng."¹⁷⁴ This advice echoes the instruction that the "Good Wife" gave her "daughter" in the prescriptive poem discussed earlier to quiet a husband's wrath with "fair" and "meeke" words.¹⁷⁵ Also like the poem and many contemporary sermons, wives were encouraged to charitably admonish sinful husbands. The Knight viewed charitable admonishment as having a place outside of the household as well. In this regard, the Knight gave the example of "My lady Cecyle of balleuylle," who was the most "humble and the most good and curtoys lady/that euer I knewe

was in good order and that they did not disturb the peace of the domestic space. Shannon McSheffrey's work on masculinity and the late medieval household offers similar insights into the notion of good governance. In her research on London, she found that the three concepts of patriarchy, governance, and reputation underlay social order, explaining "patriarchy is used here in the sense of the ideal father-ruled household, an ideal that in the late medieval English urban world extended beyond the family into society as a whole, so that men, rather than women, and particularly older men were seen as the natural rulers and governors of both family and society," "Men and Masculinity in Late Medieval London Civic Culture: Governance, Patriarchy and Reputation," in Jacqueline Murray, ed., *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West* (New York: Garland, 1999), 244. Both Hanawalt and McSheffrey's work has interesting implications for the role played by women in the provision of sacred hospitality and performance of the works of mercy. While men may have been viewed as the "natural" governors of the family, through charitable practices, women were allowed (in the sense of encouraged and licensed) to be the spiritual governors of their homes.

¹⁷⁴ Offord, 106.

¹⁷⁵ Furnivall, *The Babees Book*, 37. Clerics were also counsel to correct sinners "swetely" in contemporary pastoral instructional literature. See Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 202, 206, 207.

or wyste in ony cuntrye.” She never spoke evilly words, and when others spoke enviously, “she “blamed them that spake euylle of other folk. And made them abashed of that she repreued them so as she dyd/ And thus oughte to doo euery good woman”¹⁷⁶

Contrary to the “Good Wife” poem, but in line with sermon teachings, the *Book of Knight* advocated wifely discretion (not blind compliance) in obeying one’s husband. The *Book* contains a chapter called “How a woman ought to obeye her husbond in alle thyng honest,” with honesty being an important element of obedience.¹⁷⁷ Relaying the story of St. Arragone, the text also suggested that wives could—and in the right circumstances should—disobey their husbands for the sake of soul-saving charity. This good wife “comforted and vysted the poure enchartered and emprysoned/and nourysshed the orphanes/and vysyted them that were seke,” but feared disobeying her husband in doing these merciful works. So, she deserted him—fleeing to Paris, “she rendryd her self in to thabbey/and bycame a Nonne/and lefte the world/to thende she myght better serue god withoute drede of ony man.” The moral of the story according to the Knight, was that “here is a good ensample to be charytable,” and that God would ultimately reward charitable women “for theyr good seruyse.”¹⁷⁸ The *Book of the Knight* seems to present a unique approach to marriage and household management. Wives should be educated, and this education gave them spiritual and moral authority in their households as well as being a means to salvation. Wives should be governed by their husbands, but only if they are pious and honest men. Women were expected to govern their children as mothers, and their husbands as spiritual stewards. In addition to these substantial responsibilities, wives were expected to control their own wrath and remain “in charity,” while also charitably saving their husband’s souls by cooling his damning

¹⁷⁶ Offord, 182.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 103.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 119.

wrath.¹⁷⁹ While the Knight clearly wrote with an aristocratic audience in mind, the types of charity that he advocated could be practiced by any women with access to a small measure of household resources; and the charitable deeds of cultivating affective bonds with neighbors, admonishing sinners, and praying for the dead could be performed by women at no financial cost.

Naturally, female readers/listeners were warned to avoid the examples of impious women, whose improper behavior had dire, graphically violent consequences for them. The various types of female impiety represented breaches in charity towards the dead suffering in Purgatory, in the household, and the neighborhood. The Knight relays the tale of a king's daughter who fails to pray for the dead, and as a result is drowned by her father.¹⁸⁰ In a chapter titled "How a good woman ought not to stryue with her husbond," a woman humiliated her husband in public, and after twice refusing his request to stop shaming and berating him, was subjected to a beating in which he "smote her with his fyste to the erthe, and smote her with his foote on the visage so that he brake her nose, by whiche she was euer al disfygured."¹⁸¹ The actual moral of the story, however, was not that women should avoid marital conflict, but that context and approach were of paramount importance in the admonishment of sinners. The Knight instructed wives not to reproach their husbands "in especial to fore the peple," but instead wait until "she shall fynd hym alone and tyme/but that she may wel reprehend hym and aduyse hym in shewyng curtoysly that he was wrong and vnright with hym/And yf he be a man reasonable/he shal cone her thanke/And

¹⁷⁹ Status may have mitigated certain social expectations placed on noblewomen in terms of their behavior. Where women of lower status may have been encouraged to practice the admonishment of sinners exclusively within the home, noblewomen's social position could have licensed them to admonish sinners in a wider variety of contexts.

¹⁸⁰ Dronzek, "Gendered Theories of Education," 146. Highlighting the importance of the spiritual work of praying for the dead, another tale tells of a young woman saved from the sin of lust when all of the dead she prayed for frightened away her suitor with a vision of "a thousand dede bodies about her in shetis," Wright, *Book of the Knight la Tour-Landry*, 6.

¹⁸¹ Offord, 35. See also Dronzek, "Gendered Theories of Education," 146.

yf he be other/yet hath not she done her parte/For right so should a wyse woman do.”¹⁸²

Admonishing one’s husband was a wife’s “parte,” but a good wife knew this correction should take place in the privacy of the home. In a final example, the Knight tells the tale of a rich woman, who was charitable and widely praised, “and had on her many signes and tokens to be a good crysten.” This woman, however, refused to forgive a grudge she had against her neighbor. She became deathly ill, and continued to refuse to forgive her neighbor even as her priest shrove her in her sickbed. The priest gave her numerous examples of people who had been gravely sinned against, but were moved to forgiveness—including the example of Christ himself who “forgaaf & pardoned his dethe.” The dying woman would not relent. Later that same night, the priest had a vision of the woman’s soul being torn out and carried off by demons, and her heart being replaced by a “right fowle, lothely, and hydous” toad. In the morning when the woman’s dead body was discovered, the priest refused to allow her to be buried in the churchyard in hallowed ground. When her family protests, the woman’s body was cut open, and the toad the priest had dreamt about hopped out of her chest. The toad revealed himself to be the Devil, and mocked the priest and the woman’s family, bragging about the victory of ire and wrath over charity and forgiveness. The story concludes with the moral that those who will not forgive and pardon the trespasses of others can expect God not to extend them forgiveness for their trespasses.¹⁸³ The physical punishment suffered by this woman was not paternal or spousal, but spiritual—uncharity led to damnation. In these tales, the Knight does not threaten his own daughters (or female audience) directly with violence, but the physical correction experienced by the women in the *exempla* he uses in his text is meant to be understood as a warning of the

¹⁸² Offord, 35.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 137-8.

possible outcomes of such ill-advised behavior to female reputations, honor, bodies, and souls.¹⁸⁴ The Knight did not necessarily present the physical violence each cautionary female character suffers as laudable, as much as he as a secular male, who had been a suitor, father, and husband, was trying to impart to his daughters the range of dangers that can befall young women. His moralizing tales encouraged women to live in a spiritual and practiced charity that they were naturally suited towards, while discouraging inappropriate behavior. Unlike many of his clerical contemporaries, the Knight did not make direct connections between misbehavior and gender—instead he was more concerned with the pitfalls of secular living and male and female relationships than notions of innate female sinfulness.

Graphic violence as a corrective to sinfulness was not only aimed at impious women. The “Lyke-Wake Dirge,” a late medieval death-bed ballad, which was aimed at a general audience that included both men and women, warned of divine punishment that mirrored the types of graphic physical and spiritual violence that befell sinful women in the *Book of the Knight*. The theme of reciprocal mercy found throughout sermons and devotional texts is addressed repeatedly in this popular ballad. The “Lyke-Wake Dirge” impressed upon its listeners the importance of performing the works of mercy in life, concluding that the merciful will experience Christ’s mercy, but the unmerciful will be tormented by eternal fire. The ballad begins by stating, “If thou gavest hosen and shoon, Every night and alle; Sit thee down, and put them on; And Christe receive thye saule.” Similarly, the provision of food and drink would be rewarded on Judgment Day. Conversely, those who never gave clothes, food, or drink to the needy could look forward to being repeatedly stabbed by thorns and burned by fire down to their

¹⁸⁴ Dronzek, “Gendered Theories of Education,” 147.

bare bones.¹⁸⁵ The performance of charity through the works of mercy was rewarded by God's grace, and the failure to live charitably led to damnation. These basic precepts of the doctrine of charity were frequently rehearsed to the laity through vernacular texts in an effort to help laypeople participate in their own salvation.

Late medieval devotional literature was concerned with helping Christians translate correct religious belief into appropriate social behavior. Devotional works specifically aimed at conduct taught more concrete lessons than sermons as they endeavored to inculcate a self-guided religious discipline in audiences, which centered on cultivating charitable interpersonal relationships. As would be expected, "How the Good Wife Taught her Daughter," "How the Wise Man Taught His Son," and the *Book of the Knight* taught gendered lessons aimed at their specific male or female audience about the practice of charity and performance of neighborliness; however, these texts also relayed complementary lessons about how the opposite sex should behave as well.¹⁸⁶ Although more general in scope, the Lyke Wake Dirge demonstrates the centrality of works of mercy to salvation with graphic depictions of the damnation that awaited the uncharitable of either sex at Judgment Day.

Religious Drama

As with images in churches, drama also provided a visual medium for religious instruction. The content of most medieval plays was drawn directly from sermons, and the plays themselves often focused on elucidating a specific religious concern like the Creed or Lord's

¹⁸⁵ William Beattie, ed., *Border Ballads* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1952), 176-7.

¹⁸⁶ The *Book of the Knight* provides examples of men failing in neighborly duties in many of the same civic and governing terms as "How the Wise Man Taught His Son." See for example the exemplum of the evil king who warred with his neighbors, Wright, 75.

Prayer.¹⁸⁷ Religious guilds and craft guilds often commissioned and sponsored catechetical drama, illustrating the reciprocal relationship between pastoral education and the lay appropriation of religious instruction.¹⁸⁸ Some guilds like that of the Lord's Prayer in York were specifically founded to perform religious plays for the parish community. Their return to Richard II's national survey of guild activities in 1388 stated the following motivation for the guild's foundation:

As to the beginning of the said gild, be it known that, once on a time, a play, setting forth the goodness of the Lord's Prayer, was played in the city of York; in which play all manner of vices and sins were held up to scorn, and the virtues were held up to praise. This play met with so much favour that many said:—'Would that this play could be kept up in this city, for the health of souls and for the comfort of the citizens and neighbours.' Hence, the keeping up of that play in times to come, for the health and amendment of the souls as well of the upholders as of the hearers.¹⁸⁹

There were also guilds dedicated to performing plays illustrating the meaning of the Creed and the feast of Corpus Christi.¹⁹⁰ The works of mercy also frequently figured into religious drama. In medieval York, the Mercers' Judgment Day mystery play featured a dramatic imaging of the Last Judgment that concluded with Christ chastising the bad souls who failed to perform the

¹⁸⁷ Duffy, pp. 66-7. See also Laurence G. Craddock, "Franciscan Influences on Early English Drama," *Franciscan Studies* X (1950), pp. 383-417; Christine Fitzgerald, *The Drama of Masculinity and Medieval English Guild Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); David L. Jeffrey, "Franciscan Spirituality and the Rise of Early English Drama," *Mosaic*, VIII (1975), pp. 17-46; Alexandra F. Johnston, "The Plays of the Religious Guilds of York: The Creed Play and the Pater Noster Play," *Speculum*, 50, no. 1 (Jan., 1975), 55-90, "The Guild of Corpus Christi and the procession of Corpus Christi in York" *Mediaeval Studies*, 38 (1976), 372-84; L.R. Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 19-20; Sandro Sticca, "Drama and Spirituality in the Middle Ages," *Medievalia et Humanistica* (1973), pp. 67-87; W. Tydeman, "An Introduction to Medieval English Theatre," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed., R. Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1-36; R.W. Vince, ed., *Companion to Medieval Theatre* (London: Greenwood Press, 1989).

¹⁸⁸ Duffy, pp. 66-7.

¹⁸⁹ Joshua Toulmin Smith, Lucy Toulmin Smith, and Lujo Brentano, *English Gilds* (London: The Early English Text Society, 1870), 137.

¹⁹⁰ Duffy, 66.

works of mercy. Christ tells them that they never aided him when he was poor, sick, naked, cold, hungry, or imprisoned, accusations which one of the bad souls counters by asking, “When had thou, Lord that all things has, hunger or thirst, since thou God is?”¹⁹¹ The bad souls failed to understand one of the most basic teachings of the Gospel, namely that merciful works done on behalf of the needy were actually done Christ’s behalf and would be rewarded as if they were done directly to him. Christ explains this to the bad souls, saying:

Caitiffs, as oft as it betid
That needful aught asked in my name,
Ye heard them not, your ears ye hid,
Your help to them was not at home.
To me was that unkindness kid,
Therefore ye bear this bitter blame;
To least or most when ye it did,
To me ye did the self same.

The bad souls were cursed and consigned to “hell to dwell without end” and “sit by Satanas the fiend.” In contrast, Christ tells the merciful that they are his chosen children, who will live in joy and bliss forever.¹⁹² The motif of reciprocal mercy found in this play is a common moralizing theme, which is echoed throughout late medieval religious works.

The works of mercy also figure in popular medieval plays, such as *Everyman* and the Digby *Mary Magdalene* play. Like those sponsored by guilds, morality plays were primarily derived from sermons and homiletic literature. These plays reflected church teachings coupled with contemporary sentiments. They were allegorical works set in the present-day world featuring personified human qualities as characters.¹⁹³ *Everyman* was one of the first plays printed in England, appearing in print early in the second decade of the sixteenth century. Like

¹⁹¹ Richard Beadle and Pamela M. King, eds., *York Mystery Plays: A Selection in Modern Spelling* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1984), 278.

¹⁹² Beadle and King, 279.

¹⁹³ A.C. Cawley, *Everyman* (Manchester: The University Press, 1961), xiv.

most morality plays *Everyman* is concerned with the themes of good and evil. The play opens with God lamenting that humanity has fallen into sin due to the desire for earthly riches, saying “charity they do all clean forget.” God has “proffered the people a great multitude of mercy,” which few accept because they are so encumbered with the pursuit of worldly matters. The mercy that God is referring to is the reciprocal mercy mentioned in sermon literature—the performance of merciful deeds as a demonstration of charity, which will in turn secure divine mercy. As a result, God decides to “do justice” and sends Death into the world to force humans to account for their sins. In a parting conversation with God, Death remarks that alms are the best friend of the worldly, because without alms they are cursed “in hell for to dwell, until the end of the world.”¹⁹⁴ The body of the play is concerned with Everyman, who represents humanity, preparing to meet Death by obtaining the knowledge of grace that all Christians need to avoid damnation. This crucial knowledge is that beauty, strength, and the five senses will fail in the end. The only means a Christian has to secure God’s mercy is the performance of “Good Deeds” in the name of “Saint Charite.” In fact, Everyman is counseled that the only things that he can take to his grave are his good deeds, and if they are small “before God he has no help at all.”¹⁹⁵ The play ends with the foreboding statement that Christians who fail to live charitably will be consigned to the fires of hell.

The Digby *Magdalene* (c. 1490-1525) is a hagiographical account of the life of Mary Magdalene. The narrative of the play focuses on Mary Magdalene’s conversion, travels, and miraculous encounters. Although Mary Magdalene is more traditionally associated with the spiritual works of mercy and her sister Martha with the corporeal works of mercy, throughout

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

¹⁹⁵ Cawley, 27.

this play she performs the corporeal works of mercy or is a recipient of the charity of others in the forms of merciful alms deeds. In the play, Mary Magdalene arrives alone and destitute in Marseilles. She appears to the king and queen of the city in a vision, begging them for alms because she is “in hunger, thirst and cold.”¹⁹⁶ The royal couple agrees to help Mary, with the queen remarking on the need for the rich to help the poor: “we should help them that have need, with our goods, so God did bid.”¹⁹⁷ In her audience with the king and queen, Mary reminds the king to “fulfill thy God’s commandment, and sustain poor folk in mischief.”¹⁹⁸ At the end of the play Mary Magdalene makes a speech to the people of Marseille where she exhorts them to “be in charity both night and day” though “sometimes they are brought in to poverty.” Then echoing the Beatitudes, she tells them that “blessed are those who give food to the hungry and thirsty, blessed are those who have been merciful toward wretched men.”¹⁹⁹ Finally, Mary Magdalene commits her life to living in humility, chastity, and performing works of charity. In line with contemporary sermons, Mary Magdalene’s privileging of the works of corporeal mercy makes her an exemplar similar to Martha. She also performs the spiritual works of instructing the ignorant and admonishing sinners encouraged by prescriptive works like the *Book of the Knight*. Where the play departs from homiletic tradition is in recounting her role as a preacher. Sermons in the *Speculum Sacerdotale* and *Festial* downplayed or completely omitted this aspect of her legend. In this play, it is also unusual that she preaches in public spaces, since women who were encouraged to preach, were encouraged to do so in the home. Perhaps because her preaching was intended to “convert” the people of Marseille to living in charity, Mary Magdalene’s public

¹⁹⁶ F.J. Furnivall, *The Digby Plays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 115.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 127-8.

preaching was acceptable in the way that St. Katherine's learned disputations against the Greek philosophers were.

The York Mercers' Judgment Day play, *Everyman*, and the Digby *Magdalene* illustrate that charity and mercy remained central concerns for late medieval people. Typically, clerics wrote such plays, but laypeople commissioned them. Thus, they represent a meeting of clerical and lay catechetical interests. While the Judgment Day play and *Everyman* reflect traditional views regarding the importance of the works of mercy, the Digby *Magdalene* provided a suggestively expansive model of emulative female piety. All three plays instructed viewers on the reciprocal nature of God's charity and impressed upon them the very real possibility of damnation for failing to live in charity. Likewise, lay-commissioned church adornment demonstrates that the laity recognized the importance of performing the works of mercy to avoid hell-fire. Although the frequent allusions to the prospects of damnation were grim, the broad corpus of vernacular religious works—from sermons and didactic texts to church adornment and play—also meant to instill audiences with a sense of hope and agency. Laypeople were ultimately in control of their spiritual destinies and would be rewarded in heaven if they adhered to the moral precepts of the Church. They were provided with models of imitable exemplary behavior through a wide variety of textual and visual media.²⁰⁰

Conclusion

The theological doctrine of charity occupied a central place in clerical vernacular catechetical efforts in fifteenth-century England. In particular, the Seven Works of Mercy were the means through which laypeople could cultivate lives lived “in charite” with God and one

²⁰⁰ Religious drama and church adornment in the specific context of late medieval and early Reformation Lincolnshire will be explored in detail in the chapters that follow.

another. As a social system that structured relationships between Christians by rewarding the charitable with salvation and punishing the discordant with damnation, charity enacted through the works of mercy was the a powerful ideological tool for the medieval Church. Through lessons drawn from the Bible, *exempla*, and saints' lives, local parish clergy endeavored to impress upon parishioners the centrality of charity writ large to their individual and corporate salvation. They tried to make their message both edifying and entertaining, and sought to inculcate the proper performance of gender roles along with ideal Christian behavior. For sermon authors like Mirk and the anonymous compilers of the Ross Collection, charity was best expressed through the Seven Works of Mercy performed for the benefit of one's neighbor. Each collection varied in its presentation of ideal charitable practice, but both imbued sociability with a religious import and characterized it as integral to Christian fellowship.

Although the *exempla* used in the sermon collections presented different models of gendered charity, they nonetheless shared a concern with the works of mercy, highlighting the consequences of failing to receive the poor or help the needy. Conversely, the prescriptive poems composed with a very specific urban milieu in mind offered a more wary view of charity—taking into consideration the particular pitfalls dangers of charity and neighborliness in cities and towns, their authors adapted their teachings accordingly. Prescriptive works authored by laypeople offered a vision of salvation that was attainable of all Christians contingent upon their practice of the works of mercy, while also focusing on the graphic consequences of failing to perform these works on the body and soul.

Although gendered notions of appropriate behavior dictated the methods and means of charitableness, practicing charity allowed women to participate in an active spiritual life and contribute to their community and parish as well. Solely focusing on the patriarchal structure of

the medieval household underestimates the important role women played in garnering spiritual rewards for their loved ones, and in the salvation of souls through charitable works. In fact, the contemporary characterization of charity and the Seven Works of Mercy as particularly female enterprises endowed women with a measure of what in Duffy's "economy of Grace" can best be called spiritual capital. Clerical sermon and prescriptive literature authors depicted women as the spiritual stewards of their households. They utilized teaching strategies that empowered women to share in the responsibility of saving their husband's souls, making them lay partners in the catechesis of the family.

Chapter 3 **‘a kyrke stoke of ther gud wylls’:** **Collective Charitability in the Parish**

Inspired by the reforms initiated by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, late medieval clerics embarked upon a wide-ranging educational campaign to improve laypeople’s religiosity. The first two chapters of this dissertation demonstrated that the clergy sought to inculcate charity as a religious ideology best practiced through gendered works of corporeal mercy. As local religion centered on the parish, neighborhood, and guild, it was in these contexts that laypeople put religious instruction into practice. The bonds created by the practice of charity sustained these communities and served as a support system for the individual Christian from birth to death.

The parish was the primary unit of ecclesiastical administration. There were over 8,000 parishes in England by 1300, 630 of which were in the county of Lincolnshire.¹ It was in the parish community, at the parish church, where the laity received the sacraments and the moral instruction through which they became a part of the larger Christian community of believers. The parish was “the framework in which believers executed their religious obligations,”² which as we saw in earlier chapters, centered on charitability as expressed in the works of mercy. While parish priests were required to allocate at least one quarter of their incomes for poor relief,

¹ James Stokes, *Records of Early English Drama: Lincolnshire*, vol. 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 381. Gervase Rosser sets the number at 600, “Parochial Conformity and Voluntary Religion in Late-Medieval England,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 1 (1991), 175.

² Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 237.

parishioners provided financial aid to the poor at feast day and funeral doles.³ But of course charity did not end with monetary alms, as parishioners engaged in a wide variety of community-building activities in hopes of promoting harmony and fostering Christian solidarity within their parishes.

Medieval charity included aiding the needy, however, it was also fundamentally characterized by “hospitality and sociability” as well.⁴ Hospitality itself was a corporeal work of mercy.⁵ It was both the singular act of welcoming strangers as well as a combination of all six of the gospel-based works of mercy.⁶ Hospitality centered on the caretaking duties of the host in the locus of the home, a role given spiritual purchase by illustrious biblical hosts such as Martha, who took Christ into her home,⁷ and the Good Samaritan, who mercifully provided a stranger with food, clothing, and shelter. The parish church was a spiritual home for local communities, and the sacralized household obligation of hospitality was extended to the church. In addition to acting as a spiritual home for parishioners, parish churches were also conceived of as “God’s house.”⁸ The household was the arena in which a host could “dramatize his generosity, and thereby reveal his hegemony.”⁹ Divine “generosity” in the church as a “household” took the form of charity. As the stewards of God’s house (the clergy of the chancel, and the laity of the

³ Ibid.

⁴ Judith Bennett, “Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England,” *Past and Present*, no. 134 (1992): 21.

⁵ Farmer, “The Leper in the Master Bedroom,” 82, 96.

⁶ The seventh work of mercy, burying the dead was from the Book of Tobit, not Matthew 25:41, Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 358.

⁷ Cullum, “Hir Name was Charite”, 203

⁸ French, *Good Women of the Parish*, 19.

⁹ Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 6. The connection Heal makes between host and hegemony has interesting implications for the gendered division of spiritual duties within the household. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, hospitality for the laity was viewed as the particular province of women. The roles played by women in performing acts of sacred hospitality in a parochial context will be discussed later in this chapter.

nave), parish clergy and their parishioners were responsible for emulating this charity and enacting hospitality in his stead.

The parish and its church were the loci in which the laity were expected to put religious charity into practice through the sacraments of the Church (God's charity allowed for salvation through this sacramental regime) and the performance of the seven works of mercy (as repayment for humanity's debt, and a demonstration of love and obedience to God and the gospel precepts). Through regulations and episcopal visitations, ecclesiastical authorities may have dictated what should be found in a parish church, but parishioners determined how they would provide for their churches as a community and the ways in which they could appropriate official concerns to the benefit of their parishes. Lincolnshire's late medieval churchwardens' accounts are a particularly fulsome source for evidence of the range of charitable activities performed by laypeople at the parochial level. As descriptive documents, churchwardens' accounts are typically lists of parochial receipts and expenditures; however, they also provide important, if at times indirect, evidence about lay piety in practice. A close reading of these accounts reveal how the charity, enacted through the works of mercy, was collectively performed through the medium of the parish church.

The office of the churchwarden and the ecclesiastical machinery of the episcopal visitation both emerged in the thirteenth century as efforts on the part of the Church to administrate effectively English parishes by holding clergy and laity responsible for the proper administration of parish churches, their liturgy, fabric, and general upkeep.¹⁰ Thirteenth-century

¹⁰ Clive Burgess, "Longing to Be Prayed For": Death and Commemoration in an English Parish in the Later Middle Ages," in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Commemoration in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds., Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 53; J. Charles Cox, *Churchwardens Accounts from the*

synodal legislation made laypeople responsible for the fabric of the nave, church tower if there was one, and churchyard. A fourteenth-century cartulary from Deeping, Lincolnshire records an archiepiscopal decree, which dictated that parishioners were required to provide the following for their local churches:

A legenda, antiphoner, grail, psalter, troper, ordinal, missal, and manual; a chalice, a principle vestment of chasuble, dalmatic, and tunic; a choir cope; a frontal for the high altar, three towels, three surplices, a rochet, a processional cross, a cross for the dead, an incense vessel, a lantern, a bell to carry before the sacrament when it is taken to the sick; a pyx, a Lenten veil; a banner for Rogation processions; bells with ropes; a bier; a holy water vat; a pax; a holder for the Easter candle, a font with a lock; statues in the church; a principle statue in the chancel, the churchyard wall.¹¹

The position of churchwarden arose as a means of organizing and regulating these material obligations to parish churches.

There are approximately 230 sets of pre-Reformation churchwardens' accounts surviving for England.¹² The earliest churchwardens' accounts for the whole of England begin in the mid-fourteenth century. There are more extant accounts for southern than northern parishes and more for urban than rural parishes.¹³ In the case of Lincolnshire, nine sets of pre-Reformation accounts exist. The survival of rural churchwardens' accounts is rare for the entirety of England, however, due to chance documentary survival, Lincolnshire's churchwardens' accounts are

Fourteenth Century to the Close of the Seventeenth Century (London: Methuen, 1913), 244; Carol Cragoe, "The Custom of the English Church: Parish Church Maintenance in England Before 1300," *Journal of Medieval History* 36 (2010): 20-1; Charles Drew, *Early Parochial Organisation in England: The Origins of the Office of Churchwarden* (London: St. Anthony's Press, 1954), 5-6; Duffy, 132-4; French, *People of the Parish*, 27-30.

¹¹ Dorothy M. Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire* (Lincoln: The Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 1990), 118.

¹² French, *People of the Parish*; Beat Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish, c. 1400-1560* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996).

¹³ Burgess, "Pre-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts and Parish Government: Lessons from London and Bristol," *The English Historical Review* (2002), 307. See also French, *People of the Parish*, pp. 46-48; Beat Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community*, 65-66.

almost evenly divided between the town and countryside. Accounts from St. Mary, Grimsby (1411-12), St. Andrew, Kirton-in-Lindsey (1484-1717), St. James, Louth (1500-24, 1527-59), and St. Mary, Stamford (1427) represent urban Lincolnshire, while those of St. Peter and St. Paul, Wigtoft (1484-1533), Holy Trinity, Hagworthingham (1487-1550), St. Mary, Sutterton, 1490-1530, St. Helen, Leverton (1492-1598), and St. Andrew, Horbling (1533-70) survive for the countryside.¹⁴ The accounts are primarily from the late fifteenth-century, and those from Leverton, Wigtoft, Sutterton, Horbling, Louth, and Kirton-in-Lindsey account for multiple years of parish activity. However, even when there are multiple years of extant accounts, there are frequently multiple year gaps in between each account.

Another set of records that Lincolnshire has in relative abundance is episcopal visitations. They are records of the official Church and its episcopal deputies—usually rural deans or archdeacons that sought out and corrected the moral and financial failings of the parish and its members. Visitors asked a predetermined set of questions, but visitation records are not solely documents of unilateral ecclesiastical regulation and correction. Churchwardens, while responsible for reporting misbehavior, were also members of the communities being regulated; therefore, the information they communicated to episcopal authorities was conditioned by local

¹⁴ For more detailed information about Lincolnshire's churchwardens' accounts see Appendix A. For lists of surviving churchwardens' accounts see, Lawrence Blair, *A List of Churchwardens' Accounts* (Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1939) Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 276-77; Beat Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish, c. 1400-1560* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), 265-9; Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 350-362; Elsbeth Philipps, "A List of Printed Churchwardens' Accounts," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 15 (1900), 335-341. The villages of Sutterton, Leverton, and Wigtoft are located in the Holland region of Lincolnshire about six miles from Boston (Sutterton and Wigtoft to the southwest and Leverton to the northeast). Hagworthingham is in the East Lindsey district and Horbling is in the South Kesteven.

expectations and concerns regarding morality, gender roles, religious conformity, and liturgical regularity.¹⁵ In this way, both types of document, churchwardens' accounts and visitation records illuminate how laypeople interacted with the instruments of central ecclesiastical control—rejecting or embracing particular elements of religious and social discipline.

As complementary sources for the workings of the parish as a community, churchwardens' accounts and visitation records are useful for examining lay receptivity to clerical catechetical efforts centered on the performance of charity through the Seven Works of Mercy. Additionally, while ecclesiastical authorities regulated requisite church goods by statute, churchwardens' accounts provide evidence for elements of religious devotions that grew out of local pious impulses not explicitly dictated by the Church—this includes saints' cults, church art, and liturgical enhancements such as bells and organs. And, as churchwardens handled the receipt and execution of testamentary bequests, their accounts in some measure reveal if and how parishioners' last wishes were actualized.¹⁶

Based on the contents of churchwardens' accounts, parochial charity in Lincolnshire can be divided into three categories: 1) traditional charity, which I define as charity limited to the provision of monetary relief and the corporeal works of mercy, 2) expanded charity, which is charity as a religious ideology that encompasses hospitality, neighborliness, and sacralized

¹⁵ Owen lists the following taken from a London council (1433) as the types of business typically heard during a visitation: those taking away rightful property or rights of a church or church court, disturbers of the King's peace, perjurers, slanderers, those who failed to execute royal writs, thieves of church property, sanctuary breakers, and "witches, usurers, simoniacs, sacrilegious persons, heretics, Lollards, and those who sheltered them," Owen, *Church and Society*, 33. Each of the offences listed is socially disruptive and detrimental to community cohesion. See also French, *Good Women*, 209.

¹⁶ Clive Burgess and Beat Kümin have noted that although bequests often represented a significant percentage of a parish's income, they were infrequently recorded in parish records, Burgess and Kümin, "Penitential Bequests and Parish Regimes in Late Medieval England," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44 (1993), 619.

affective bonds, and 3) the lay appropriation of clerical charity through the performance of the spiritual works of educating the ignorant and praying for the living and dead. Through an examination of Lincolnshire's pre-Reformation churchwardens' accounts and early sixteenth-century episcopal visitation books (1517-30) this chapter argues that laypeople took a broad view of the practice of charity in a parochial setting, enacted the corporeal works of mercy through the performance of Christian hospitality, and appropriated clerical educational initiatives by undertaking spiritual works of mercy.¹⁷ It also considers the relationship between parochial practices of charity as recorded by churchwardens and the ways in which charitable expectations informed social discipline as illustrated in visitations.

Churchwardens' Accounts

Ideally, the laity maintained social cohesion through the practice Christian charity, which took the form of mutual aid, fellowship, and neighborliness.¹⁸ For late medieval Christians, the ideal of charity included not only the provision of alms to those in need but also the nurturing of affective bonds of Christian brotherhood and "good neighborhood." The church taught that charity bestowed God's favor and would bring peace on earth. Laypeople were instructed to pray

¹⁷ Heal argues that in the later Middle Ages, hospitality was primarily understood as a charitable duty of bishops, and then parochial clergy, to care for the poor and needy, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, 14. Therefore, lay hospitality based in the parish church can be viewed as the appropriation of the clerical duty of charitable hospitality. Heal also points out that the differentiation made between hospitality and charity does not begin to be clearly articulated until the late sixteenth-century. For medieval people, charity and hospitality were complementary forms of social integration conceived of in terms of Christian community, *ibid.*, 15-18. Hospitality can be defined not only as the provision of food and shelter, but fellowship and entertainment as well. In a Christian context, hospitality has biblical analogs and like the works of corporeal mercy can emulate and commemorate Christ and the Apostles.

¹⁸ Elaine Clark, "Social Welfare and Mutual Aid in the Medieval Countryside" *The Journal of British Studies* 33, no. 4 (1994), 382, 401. While parishioners aspired to Christian charity, it was often difficult to attain in day-to-day social interactions—a fact attested to by the censure of discord in sermons and prescriptive literature, and descriptions of neighborly strife abounding in court records.

for peace and charity at every Mass.¹⁹ As demonstrated in Chapter Two, late medieval devotional works like the *Lay Folks' Catechism* focused on the importance of loving one's fellow in order to show love for God.²⁰ That this idea still held currency in the early decades of the sixteenth-century is illustrated by the popularity of Richard Whytford's handbook *A Werke for Householdiers* (1530). Whytford's text encouraged laymen to pray for charity upon waking every morning and counseled his readers to extend charity to others as a show of love to God and hope that in doing so they would be able to dwell in God's own charity themselves.²¹

Because churchwardens' accounts record the ways in which parishes collectively allocated their resources for communal benefit, they are important documents for evaluating the extent to which late medieval Christians enacted or rejected religious instruction on creating and maintaining communities in charity. Churchwardens were the lay people (both men and, in rarer instances, women), who served as the representatives through whom parishioners fulfilled their collective parochial duties.²² Parishioners usually collectively elected their churchwardens, although in Wigtoft, there is evidence that standing churchwardens appointed their co-wardens. Churchwardens typically served in pairs, however, in urban areas it was not uncommon for there

¹⁹ Susan Bridgen, "Religion and Social Obligation in Early Sixteenth-Century London," *Past and Present* 103 (1984), 67.

²⁰ Thomas Frederick Simmons, ed., *Lay Folks' Catechism*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1901), 80.

²¹ James Hogg, ed., "A Werke for Householdiers A Dayly Exercese and Experyence of Dethe," *Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies* 89 (1979): 6. In Whytford's work, daily practice of charity through the works of mercy prepared Christians for the rehearsal of their deeds on Judgment Day.

²² Burgess, "Pre-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts and Parish Government," 307; Burgess and Kümin, "Penitential Bequests and Parish Regimes," 612; Drew, 5; French, "Women Churchwardens in Late Medieval England," in *The Parish in Late Medieval England*, eds. Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2006), 301-21; In the extant Lincolnshire churchwardens' accounts, no mention is made of women holding this office; however these documents are not comprehensive, which is to say it is possible that Lincolnshire may have also had women that served in this capacity.

to have been as many as four churchwardens per term.²³ There is not a great deal of evidence to aid in the determining the criteria for election or the status of churchwardens in Lincolnshire with the exception of a few cases. In rural Wigtoft and Leverton, Edmund Howson and Walter Bussche, members of the local gentry served as churchwardens, and in the urban parishes of Stamford and Louth, the churchwardens seem to be men of status, listing their occupations at the headings of their accounts.²⁴ For example, in Stamford, John Leche, goldsmith was churchwarden in 1427, and John Chapman, merchant, John Hoberthorn, gentleman, Symon Lyncon, Merchant, and Thomas Bradelay, mercer, served as Louth's churchwardens in 1500. Wigtoft churchwardens appear to have been older parishioners—Robert Lambeson served as churchwarden in 1524-5, but died while in office and was replaced by Robery Brygg. Robert Brygg served for a number of years before dying himself in 1532 and being replaced by Edmund Howson.

Churchwardens were charged with recording church income and expenditures, caring for and administering church ornaments, and making presentments at episcopal visitations in line with ecclesiastical statutes. The documents produced by churchwardens represented the intersection of local community concerns with episcopal oversight, and can be viewed as textual “symbols of locally constructed community identity.”²⁵ Parishioners gathered annually to hear the churchwardens read the receipts and expenses out loud; therefore, churchwardens' accounts were written records that had oral lives as well. The act of reading the accounts at parish meetings transformed these records, and the oral response of the parish community further

²³ Cox, 5; French, *People of the Parish*, pp. 63-70.

²⁴ Thomas Howson rented the church-house. See John Nichols, *Illustrations of the Manners and Expenses of Ancient Times* (1797), 197.

²⁵ French, *The People of the Parish*, 45, 52.

augmented and amended them.²⁶ The churchwardens' accounts of the church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Wigtoft bear each of these elements out. In 1535, churchwardens John Redwarre (sometimes Redway) made "a full Countt by for ye Pyche, of all manr of receyttts and paymets done, had, and Wrytton in yis boke in or tyme: And has elect As now at yis Account to be churche wardons Edmund Howson and Rogr Maye, Into whose hands ys delyv'ed ye churche goods."²⁷ As the entire parish typically gathered for the reading of the audit, it was frequently followed up by some degree of commensality—a feast, or a simpler provision of bread, ale, and cheese.²⁸

Being a churchwarden was a difficult task; he, or she, was required to maintain detailed receipts and accounts, serve as the stewards for church goods, deal with bequests to the parish, and act as the liaison between their fellow parishioners and the Church. Serving as a churchwarden was considered to be a good work that would ultimately merit the commemoration of the parish and count towards one's salvation.²⁹ Despite the spiritual merit of the position, it

²⁶ French argues that churchwardens' accounts occupied a space between "absolute" textuality and orality, *The People of the Parish*, pp. 44-52. See also Burgess, "Pre-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts," 307. Churchwardens themselves occupied a similarly liminal space between literate and illiterate; the churchwardens' of St. Helen's, Leverton recorded paying a "clarke for wrytyng" in 1516, Edward Peacock, "Extracts of the Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of Leverton," *Archaeologia* 41 (1867), 345; Edward Pishey Thompson, *The History and Antiquities of Boston and the Villages of Skirbeck, Fishtoft, Freiston, Butterwick, Benington, Leverton, Leake and Wrangle: Comprising the Hundred of Skirbeck, in the County of Lincoln* (Boston: John Noble, 1856), 563.

²⁷ Nichols, 225. There is some debate as to who constituted the parish and would have been allowed to participate in electing a churchwarden. See French, *People of the Parish*, 74; Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, 95-6. For further discussion of the electoral process for churchwardens see also Clive Burgess, "The Benefactions of Mortality: The Lay Response in the Late Medieval Urban Parish," in *Studies in Clergy and Ministry in Medieval England*, David M. Smith, ed., (York, 1991), 80-2; French, *People of the Parish*, 83; Kümin, *Shaping of a Community*, 27-30.

²⁸ Cox, 7-8.

²⁹ Burgess, "Pre-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts," 314.

seems that (in Wigtoft at least) some parishioners had to be coerced into accepting it.³⁰ In the year 1500, the Wigtoft churchwardens recorded that, “A promys is mad be at ye pishion when a kyrk greive is chosyn, he shall chess hym a fellow, and he wyll not agre ther to, he shall pay to the kyrk maister xxd...and so ewyrr aftyr to conteneu.” Lambert Worme, the “standing kyrk grieve,” chose John Snell to serve as his fellow churchwarden.³¹

Some early scholarship on churchwardens’ accounts argued that with the exception of doles from monasteries and parsonages, the medieval parish as the “organized Christian community” did little to aid the poor and needy in accordance with “Christian teaching and example.”³² Defining community and Christian brotherhood—which should more accurately be fellowship since the community of believers included both men and women—primarily in terms of financial support, obscures the myriad of ways that medieval people enacted community and fellowship in accordance with the doctrine of charity, or “Christian teaching and example.” Moreover, because many historians have not looked at charity as a comprehensive religious ideology, much early scholarship on charity has been limited in scope. As a result, they have overlooked possible variances in the interpretation of charity by the clergy and laity. Most detrimental to the understanding of charity as medieval people conceived of it, however, is the

³⁰ Katherine French found that in Somerset not all parishioners viewed the office of the churchwarden as a prestigious position and had to be compelled to serve through fines, *People of the Parish*, 83, 92.

³¹ Nichols, 196. It does not seem like John Snell actually served and it does not look like he paid the 20d. fine to the church chest either. Katherine French’s work on Somerset has shown that in both urban and rural parishes, the office of churchwarden sometimes remained in the hands of a few important parochial families or factions, who were then able to form powerful cliques within the parish, *People of the Parish*, 78-99. There is evidence that this may be the case in Wigtoft and Leverton, where members of the Bryggs (Briggs), Bussche, and Howson families appear regularly in the accounts as churchwardens or contributors to parochial projects.

³² Edmund Hobhouse, *Church-Wardens’ Accounts for Croscombe, Pilton, Yatton, Tintinhull, Morebath and St. Michael’s Bath: Ranging from 1349-1560*, (Somerset: Somerset Record Society, 1890), xxv.

modern perception that medieval charity is synonymous with poor relief. I would argue that based on prescriptive and descriptive evidence, medieval charity also included amity, neighborliness, religious fellowship, and affectivity as expressed by endeavoring to live in harmony with one's fellows, performing good works for the benefit of one's neighborhood, and strengthening the bonds of local community.³³

Scholars have identified numerous limitations in the use of churchwardens' accounts as evidence for lay piety. Churchwardens' accounts are not standardized documents—accounting and recording practices vary from churchwarden-to-churchwarden and parish-to-parish.³⁴ Not all of a parish's activities are recorded in churchwardens' accounts, especially those not within the purview of parochial authorities; these often tended to be activities related to endowed lights, chantries, and parish guilds.³⁵ Unpaid voluntary and altruistic donations and activities are also infrequently recorded in churchwardens' accounts.³⁶ Finally, due to the uneven survival of churchwardens' accounts for Lincolnshire, the records lend themselves to descriptive rather than quantitative analysis. While these churchwardens' accounts have their limitations as comprehensive documents, they reveal information not found in other sources. For example, the Wigtoft accounts mention a parish schoolhouse not detailed in wills or guild records, the Leverton records reveal guilds and a local bedehouse not mentioned in wills or contemporary probate registers, and the Kirton-in-Lindsey accounts record guilds not found in other sources.

³³ See Marjorie McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England, 1350-1600* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) for recent scholarship on the character of charity as poor relief.

³⁴ Burgess and Kümin, "Penitential Bequests and Parish Regimes," 620.

³⁵ Burgess, "Pre-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts and Parish Government," 308-10; Kümin, "Late Medieval Churchwardens' Accounts and Parish Government: Looking Beyond London and Bristol," 96. See also Ken Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community*, 102, 115; Katherine French, *People of the Parish*; Beat Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community*.

³⁶ Kümin, "Late Medieval Churchwardens' Accounts and Parish Government: Looking Beyond London and Bristol," 96

When considered in conversation with other contemporary sources, churchwardens' accounts enable a more fulsome picture of collective charitable practice in the parish.

Traditional and Expanded Charity

In the setting of the parish, laypeople practiced traditional charity through poor relief in the form of monetary doles and corporeal works of mercy. They practiced an expanded form of charity through the nurturing of affective bonds of community, neighborliness, and hospitality by collectively contributing to the upkeep and beautification of the parish church and in the sponsorship of activities that combined religious practice with local festive cultural traditions. Expanding the definition of charity to include liturgical maintenance and enhancement, commensality, and Christian fellowship reveals an understanding of charity more in line with medieval ideas than limited modern notions. Churchwardens' accounts reveal that parochial charity played a larger role in Lincolnshire parishes than it may have first appeared.

The primary ways in which churchwardens' accounts record the traditional practice of charity was through the burial of the dead and the visitation of the sick. The accounts for all five villages (Wigtoft, Leverton, Sutterton, Hagworthingham, and Horbling) contain entries for monies received from relatives and executors for the burial of the dead within the parish church and churchyard, or expenses for the purchase and refurbishment of items used during funerals or burials, which is indirect evidence for funerary piety. In 1484, Wigtoft churchwardens William Brigg and John Almonds paid carpenter Thomas Smyth 4 ½d. for repairing the stools that support coffins during funerals.³⁷ Wigtoft churchwardens Robert Brygg and Richard Newman paid to have the church's funeral bier repaired in 1520, and then Robert Brygg and John

³⁷ Nichols, 79.

Atkynson paid to have it repaired again in 1531.³⁸ In terms of visiting the sick, only the Leverton and Sutterton churchwardens' accounts contain entries for purchasing the lantern lights that priests used when they brought the Eucharist and for repairing the pyx used to carry the Eucharist itself.³⁹ In 1526 Leverton's churchwardens also purchased accessories for their chrismatory used for extreme unction.⁴⁰

In the towns of Grimsby, Stamford, and Louth, traditional charity also encompassed burial rights and the visitation of the sick. Louth's churchwardens' accounts record yearly income from burial fees and funeral knells. The churchwardens' inventories also included several pyxes, which held the sacrament for services and visitation of the sick. In Grimsby, churchwardens recorded receiving 3s. 4d. for burying Joan de Burten in the south porch of the church and 4s. for the sale of a gravestone to Richard Coke of Humberstone, a village south of Grimsby.⁴¹ Grimsby churchwardens also forfeited the 6s. 8d. debt for the burial of Dionisia (Denise) Feriby because collecting her burial fee "benefits the church little."⁴² Stamford's

³⁸ Ibid., 209, 218.

³⁹ See Foster, vol.1, 253; The Pyx was "the vessel in which the consecrated and reserved Host was hung over the altar," Christopher Wordsworth, *Notes on Medieval Services in England, with an Index of Lincoln Ceremonies* (London: T, Baker, 1898), 258. The pyx was made of gold, ivory, silver, or crystal, and the Host was reserved there "to be carried to the sick upon any emergency; when it was taken down, & with a canopy over it, born by the clergy in procession to the houses of such inhabitants as were dying, as they thought, & called for that sacred viaticum," Peck, *Antiquarian Annals of Stanford* (London, 1727), Book XIV, 7.

⁴⁰ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1.

⁴¹ E. E. Gillett, "An Early Church-Warden's Account of St. Mary's Grimsby," *Lincolnshire Architectural and Archaeological Society Reports and Papers* 6 (1955-6), 33.

⁴² Gillett, 36. Whether the burial fee benefitted the "church little" because Denise Feriby was too poor, or too important is unknown. It is more likely that it was because she was too poor. There is no extant will for her among those registered with the Lincoln Consistory Court (LCC), which does not mean she did not leave one, only that if she did, it has not survived. The villages of North and South Feriby are about twenty-five miles from Grimsby. It is possible Denise Feriby (or her family, if she had one) migrated from one of those villages, and took the village name as a surname. There are, however, no LCC wills for anyone with the last name Feriby.

churchwardens' accounts for 1427 show materials purchased for the pyx canopy.⁴³

When the definition of charity is expanded to include liturgical maintenance and enhancement, commensality, and Christian fellowship, churchwardens' accounts reveal that collective charity was more common in Lincolnshire parishes than it may have first appeared. As would be expected, the rural parishes of Sutterton, Wigtoft, Leverton, and Hagworthingham churchwardens' accounts all record that parishioners spent a great deal of time and money ensuring that their parish churches were not only adequately provided for, but that its liturgical objects were kept clean and in good repair. Ecclesiastical statutes dictated the liturgical objects parishioners were responsible for stocking their churches, but with the exception of a chalice made of silver (gilt was acceptable if silver was not possible),⁴⁴ and a pyx of silver or ivory, synodal legislation left the selection of vestment, vessel, and image materials up to laypeople. In this respect, the "extraordinary and lavish" ways that laypeople provided for the fabric and furnishing of their churches demonstrates the laity's continuing and growing commitment to corporate Christianity.⁴⁵ Laypeople were concerned not only with the function of their liturgical provisions, but the form as well; their adornment of parish churches reflects the desire to beautify "God's house" and dignify parochial worship to the best of their individual and collective abilities.⁴⁶ Parishioners in Leverton commissioned rood loft images and altar tables from costly alabaster, and clerical vestments from silk. Leverton's 1524 accounts record the making of an alabaster table, and then in 1526, William Franckyshe's wife paid his legacy of 46s. 8d. to the churchwardens to help with what seems to have been a costly project of carving images for the

⁴³ Peck, 4.

⁴⁴ French, *People of the Parish*, 29.

⁴⁵ Duffy, 131.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 134.

rood loft. The wardens' accounts record that in that year, seventeen images were made for the rood loft in total.⁴⁷ In 1528, Leverton parishioners purchased lengths of black and red silk for Edward Brygge the vestment maker and his son to make vestments for the church.⁴⁸ Sutterton parishioners purchased silk "ij yards of sylk lace to stryng the purse that the sacrament ys borne in" and "sylk rybyn to hyng the syluer pyxt."⁴⁹ Testamentary bequests of gold crosses, cups, and rings and silver plate further enhanced the liturgical landscape of local parish churches.

Liturgical maintenance and enhancement in urban parishes was of a similar character to that found in rural parishes, but on a much grander scale.⁵⁰ Parishioners' contributions were influenced by elements of civic religion—the grandeur of the parish church was a symbol of civic piety and prosperity.⁵¹ Louth and Kirton-in Lindsey's churchwardens' account contain detailed inventories of church belongings that demonstrate lay enthusiasm for church provision. Louth's 1513 inventory of St. James' goods is seven folios long, and there is a separate inventory for objects in the high choir.⁵² The church had multiple silver chalices, candlesticks, and censors.

⁴⁷ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 21; Peacock, "Leverton," 349; Thompson, 564.

⁴⁸ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1; Peacock, "Leverton," 350.

⁴⁹ Edward Peacock, "Churchwardens' Accounts of Saint Mary's, Sutterton," *Archaeological Journal* 39 (1882), 62-63.

⁵⁰ Miri Rubin argues that medieval religious culture partly transcended or effaced the strict division between town and countryside, and that urban and rural religious practices shared important characteristics. Differences between urban and rural religious practices tended to be those of scale, not type—just like in towns, issues of hierarchy, respectability, and sociability informed religious performance in the countryside. Miri Rubin, "Religious Culture in Town and Country: Reflections on a Great Divide," in *Church and City, 1000-1500: Essays in Honor of Christopher Brooke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 3-10.

⁵¹ Magnus Williamson, "The Role of Religious Guilds in the Cultivation of Ritual polyphony in England: The Case of Louth, 1450-1550," in *Music and Musicians in Renaissance Cities and Towns*, ed., Fiona Kisby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 87; See also Shannon McSheffrey, "Men and Masculinity in Late Medieval London Civic Culture: Governance, Patriarchy and Reputation," in Jacqueline Murray, ed., *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West* (New York: Garland, 1999), 243-78.

⁵² Dudding, 150-8, 169-74.

There were half a dozen pyxes of silver and ivory “in wich is borne the sacrament to them that lyes seyke in the toune” decorated with enamel, crystal, and beryl embellishments, numerous paxbreds made of silver and enamel, as well as three silver crosses with “imagys of crist mare & John gilted & enameld.”⁵³ Parishioners like Cecill Wyom had donated coral, silver, and amber rosaries to the church.⁵⁴ In terms of vestments and altar cloths, the church had copes embroidered with gold thread, damask and silk altar cloths embroidered with gold, and silk frontals with gold thread and pearl-work.⁵⁵ St. James’ also had an ivory comb belonging to St. Herefrid, the tenth-century saint to whom the church was originally dedicated.⁵⁶ Kirton-in-Lindsey’s churchwardens recorded the following vestments in their church inventory in 1529:

Imp[ri]mez oon cooppe of kreme svp velvet also on vestemt for ye priest dekyn & sbdekyn.
 It[em] oon koope of blayk worsted a vestemt of the saym for preyst dekkeyn & sbdekyn.
 It[em] oon kooppe of whytte sylk.
 It[em] iij vestemetes oon of whyt damask, on odor whyt chamelet, the therd whytte qwyllte.
 It[em] ii vestemetes of greyn sylk & a vestemet of blewe damask wt ye ap[er]enetez.
 It[em] oon vestemet of blayk chamelete & on oder of greyne croylle wt ye apenetez.
 It[em] ij redde vestementes, on of saton of bregez, the odeor of worsted wt the apenetez.
 It[em] on vestemetthe grownd blewe wrought wt byrddes of greyn sylk.
 It[em] ij cov[er]ettes of redd & yalowe.
 It[em] iij auterclothez, on pained wt red & greyne saton of bregez, the oder the grownd blew paynted wt ymages, the therd whyt sylke.⁵⁷

In Stamford, the church of St. Mary at the Bridge, had a treasury in which were stored “diverse jewels & vestments.” These were used in the elaborate Corpus Christi processions sponsored by

⁵³ Ibid., 150.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 153.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 155.

⁵⁶ Dudding, 155.

⁵⁷ LRO Kirton-in-Lindsey Par/7/1 f. 62v; See also Edward Peacock, “Churchwardens’ Accounts of Kirton-in-Lindsey,” *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, Second Series, ii (1864), 385, “Kirton-In-Lindsey: Churchwardens’ Accounts,” *Antiquary* 19 (1889), 19.

the Corpus Christi guild, which had a chapel in the north chancel of the church.⁵⁸ This treasury had been enhanced by the extravagant gifts of plate bequeathed by Knight of the Garter, William Bruges (d. 1447/9) to Stamford's St. George church. Among other precious objects, silver chalices, candlesticks, and crosses were to be stored at St. Mary's with "theire tresour," and used during Corpus Christi processions.⁵⁹ Grimsby's vestments and ornaments are recorded in their churchwardens' accounts under cleaning and repair expenses. Two surplices, four towels, four altar cloths, one alb, four amices, thirteen kerchiefs and other ornaments and one rochet were laundered in 1411-2, while Mabel Couper gave the church enough linen to have an alb and two amices made, and various vessels were polished and repaired. Ecclesiastical statutes also required laypeople to keep these vestments and vessels clean. Churchwardens' accounts demonstrate that parishioners spent considerable effort cleaning candlesticks, altar cloths, clerical vestments, and altar tables. In both rural and urban parishes, laundering vestments and polishing vessels, candlesticks, and altar tables were the most common types of cleaning expenditure related to church upkeep.⁶⁰

The fifteenth century was a period of great church building and expansion—two-thirds of all English churches experienced substantial rebuilding or alteration in the century and a half preceding the Reformation.⁶¹ Lincolnshire was no different. Parishioners in rural and urban areas

⁵⁸ Peck, 5.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁰ Brief examples from Wigtoft and Grimsby typify entries for this type of expense. Wigtoft's churchwardens paid 11d. for the "scowryng of 4 candlesticks afore ye hye aluter, and ye candlestyke afore Seynt Peter" and the repair of the holy-water fatte (vat)" in 1484, Nichols, Wigtoft, 79. In Grimsby, churchwardens recorded paying 12d. for "washing two surplices, four towels, four altar cloths, one alb, four amices, thirteen kerchiefs and other ornaments and one rochet," but "for rinsing the embroidery of the altar cloths, albs and amices nothing," as the curate laundered these himself, Gillett, 33.

⁶¹ Duffy, 132.

funded the purchase of bells and organs, and the construction of steeples. These projects were independent of the legislated upkeep of the nave and, therefore, reflect lay prerogatives regarding the use of parish churches as communal spaces for the practice of religious charity. Music played both an important liturgical and social role in parish communities.⁶² Bells marked the hours and were rung in celebration—for example, Louth churchwardens recorded that when the spire at St. James’ was completed, they ordered bellmen to “rynge al the bels” and commenced celebrating.⁶³ Bells were also integral parts of funeral services and anniversaries as knells were rung to memorialize the dead and solicit prayers—“sounding bells was an exhortation to pray, widening the service to include as many as possible in the prayerful commendation of soul or souls commemorated.”⁶⁴ They were also used to enhance liturgical celebrations as well as for the more practical purposes of summoning parishioners to services. Organs enriched parochial worship by enhancing the sonic landscape of the liturgy—the provision of polyphonic music “like other adornments to the church’s ritual and physical fabric” could be “seen to reflect well on the community’s economic and spiritual health.”⁶⁵

The churchwardens’ accounts for Wigtoft, Sutterton, Leverton, Hagworthingham, Stamford, Grimsby, and Louth all contain numerous expenses related to the casting, upkeep, decoration, and tolling of their church bells. Louth, in particular, devoted considerable resources to maintain their bells—the annual accounts even have a separate section for funeral and anniversary knells. Louth parishioners “invested heavily in the spiritual and physical fabric of

⁶² Williamson, 91.

⁶³ Dudding, 181.

⁶⁴ Clive Burgess, “A Service for the Dead: The Form and Function of the Anniversary in Late Medieval Bristol,” *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* 105 (1987), 189.

⁶⁵ Williamson, 88.

their church during the century preceding the Reformation”—the provision of “music, singers, and organs to augment divine worship” were central elements of this investment.⁶⁶ St. James’ church had numerous bells—St. James, Stella Maris (the great bell), Trinity, Cay, and the “antym bell,” or anytime bell. The “antym bell” was used to “summon townfolk each evening from the streets and fields” for evening Lady Mass.⁶⁷ For a fee, the parish church tolled its great bell to commemorate the dead. Charges ranged from 8d. to 12d. depending on the length of the toll.⁶⁸ St. Peter and St. Paul, Wigtoft and St. James, Louth both had organs. Wigtoft’s churchwardens, John Frankys and Richard Newman, took a payment of 1s. 1d. towards the building of the organ in 1507, and paid “ye orgounpllyar” 2½ d. that same year.⁶⁹ St. James’ churchwardens’ accounts contain a memorandum from 1531 detailing the gift of an organ, which was purchased jointly by the Our Lady guild and Richard Taylor, rector of St. Mary’s church, Feltwell, Norfolk:

Memorandum that the honest men of this towne of Lowthe desyryng to have a good payr of organs to the lawde, prayse and honor of god and of the hole holy company of heffen, made an assemble together for this said purpose...at which tyme Mr Richard Taylor...heryng of the good devoute mynde and vertuouse intent of said townes men...offerd to cawse them to have a payre made of a cunning man in Lyn...for which beneficiall acte I praye Jhesus acqwyte and rewarde hym in his kingdom of heven. Amen for charite.⁷⁰

St. Mary’s Grimsby had three bells, and churchwardens paid for numerous bell repairs in 1411-

12.⁷¹ The parishioners of St. James, Louth undertook a fifteen-year building project to construct

⁶⁶ Ibid., 90.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 87.

⁶⁸ For example, see Dudding, 3.

⁶⁹ Nichols, 200.

⁷⁰ Williamson, 88.

⁷¹ Gillett, 33.

a spire, or “brooch”, for the parish church, spending a total of £288 3s. to complete the project.⁷² On a much smaller scale, Wigtoft churchwardens spent 9s. for timber for the “stepowll” and 6d. in meat and drink for the men who hauled the timber.⁷³

Christian fellowship engendered through commensality and community gatherings is another important aspect of late medieval parochial life that should be included in the conception of medieval charity. Charitable feasting was a Christian ideal, which ‘promoted harmony and goodwill.’⁷⁴ In some cases commensality was combined with self-help in the form of help-ales for needy neighbors.⁷⁵ Help-ales were popular through England, but there is no direct evidence of them in Lincolnshire’s churchwardens’ accounts. The accounts refer to feasting and gathering, but these events are not specifically described as “ales.” In rural and urban Lincolnshire, domestic charity and Christian hospitality were important aspects of the practice of community. Scholars have argued that, “the sharing of food defined a community,”⁷⁶ however, it is difficult to determine who was included in the community of the parish by looking at churchwardens’ accounts alone. Unlike guild records, they did not make stipulations regarding who was allowed to share in parochial hospitality.⁷⁷ It is likely that for parishioners, the definition of “community” varied with time and place; therefore what constitutes a community at any given time might be somewhat impressionistic.

⁷² Williamson, 87; Dudding, 181.

⁷³ Nichols, 201.

⁷⁴ Clark, “Social Welfare and Mutual Aid,” 385.

⁷⁵ Bennett, “Conviviality and Charity,” 24.

⁷⁶ Clark, “Social Welfare and Mutual Aid,” 386.

⁷⁷ Guild feasts are discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

All of the rural churchwardens' accounts record some type of communal feasting. Hagworthingham parishioners purchased a bushel of malt (enough to make ten gallons of ale)⁷⁸ for their "Plough dinner" in 1526-7, and in 1536 paid for bread and drink on their "bound day,"⁷⁹ which is likely to have been the perambulation of parishioners around the boundaries of their parish. The plow dinner may have been a celebration on or around Plow Monday, which was the first day of work following Christmas.⁸⁰ "Bound day" bread and drink probably referred to the refreshment provided after parishioners annually processed their communal boundaries "with hand-bells, banners, and the parish cross" during Rogationtide, which followed Easter celebrations, to "drive out of the community the evil spirits who created division between neighbors and sickness in man or beast."⁸¹ Banners would have been embroidered with the image of the parish's patron saint—the procession had an intercessory element as parishioners asked "for the helpe of all seyntis" while perambulating.⁸² Hagworthingham, Leverton, and Wigtoft accounts each mention the banners and hand-bells requisite for this procession. Churchwardens were central to these processions and were expected to organize and finance them with church funds.⁸³ Rogationtide processions would have been opportunities for nurturing charity through physically marking out the bounds of community as well as occasions for clerics

⁷⁸ Bennett, "Conviviality and Charity," 20.

⁷⁹ The churchwardens' accounts do not mention either a plow light or plow guild in this parish, but it is possible that there might have been one since parishioners celebrated a "plough dinner." With few exceptions, the accounts only give the year and not the day or month of the expenses, so it is difficult to determine at what point in the year many parish events occurred. Ernest L. Grange, "Hagworthingham Church Book," *Lincolnshire Notes & Queries* 1 (1888-9), 7-8.

⁸⁰ Duffy, 13. Plow guilds and lights will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four.

⁸¹ Duffy, 136.

⁸² Steve Hindle, "Beating the Bounds of the Parish: Order, Memory and Identity in the Local English Community, c. 1500-1700," in *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Michael J. Halvorson and Karen E. Speirling (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2008), 222; Owen, *Church and Society*, 108.

⁸³ Hindle, 208-9

to preach on the subject through sermons. Parishioners would have heard preaching on the subjects of forgiveness and charity at stational crosses along the parochial boundaries, such as the “med,” or meadow, cross repaired by Sutterton parishioners in 1491 and 1523.⁸⁴

Rogationtide processions were opportunities to enact holy neighborliness as Rogationtide was “a traditional time for the settlement of disputes” and “restoration of communal harmony” between living neighbors, as well as a time for seeking the supplication and intercession of celestial neighbors.⁸⁵ Clergy were expected to perform the spiritual works of admonishing sinners and instructing the ignorant through sermons, while parishioners were to reconcile with one another by forgiving trespasses.

After listening to sermons, praying for their crops, and singing the litany of the saints, parishioners would have enjoyed Rogationtide hospitality in the form of bread and ale.⁸⁶

Sutterton churchwardens record that in 1491 they “payd to Jon Pese wife for bred and alle and yt was spente at Med Crose 14d.” and “payde to Thomas Hune wife for a pote with ale at ye same 6 d. ob.”⁸⁷ Numerous Lincolnshire testators also provided for Rogationtide commensality in their wills as a way to foster community amongst the living and the dead (as they hoped their gifts would keep them in the minds of their fellows). For example, Thomas Quadring of Careby (d.1528) left money for “brede and ale” to be given to parishioners “in the days of Rogacions called Crosse weke,” and Robert Peycoke (d.1532) of Kirkby St. Peter instructed that on the Tuesday of Rogation Week, bread and ale was to be given “to refreshe them that go in

⁸⁴ Peacock, “Sutterton,” 61.

⁸⁵ Hindle, 207. Duffy discusses the idea of holy neighborliness and the “debt of interchanging neighborhood” between saints and the community of believers, *Stripping of the Altars*, 160, 168, 188.

⁸⁶ Hindle, 206.

⁸⁷ Peacock, “Sutterton,” 57.

procession.”⁸⁸ Hospitality in the form of food and drink became an integral part of these perambulations in the minds of participants.⁸⁹ While Rogationtide processions were meant to be solemn enactments of holy neighborliness, their inherent sociability and hospitality often drew censure from ecclesiastics; they could seem more like parties than serious religious observances.⁹⁰ A Rogationtide sermon from a Lincoln Cathedral sermon collection warned parishioners “not to come and go in the procession talking of nyse talys and japis by the wey, or by the feldes a ye walke...but ye scholde come mekely and lowly with a good devocion and follow yowre crosse and yowre bells.”⁹¹ While the processions and commensality were intended to engender communal charity, the nature of that charity often centered on one’s own particular parish. The perambulations were “designed to promote spatial awareness of the boundaries of the parish community, and were exclusive occasions.”⁹² The scanty mentions of these processions in rural churchwardens’ accounts do not give many clues as to who would not have been welcome—testamentary commensality was ostensibly extended to all perambulators and parishioners. However, parochial identity could be defined both “in conjunction with, and sometimes in outright opposition to, the claims of neighboring communities”—especially when the processions were used to expel evil spirits across parochial boundaries.⁹³ On at least one pre-

⁸⁸ LCC 1520-31, 142d, Foster, vol. 2, 75 (Quadring); LCC 1532-4, 186v, Hickman, 53 (Peycoke).

⁸⁹ Hindle points out that “parishioners came to expect hospitality during and after perambulation, and complained bitterly when the tradition was abrogated,” 215.

⁹⁰ Duffy, 138.

⁹¹ Owen, 109. Owen cites G.R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period c. 1350-1450* (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc.: 1965), 215. Owst takes this sermon from a manuscript collection found in Lincoln’s cathedral library, MS. Linc. Cath. Libr. A. 6. 2, fol. 136.

⁹² Hindle, 211. Hindle found that after the Reformation, Rogationtide processions became more exclusionary, with women and less substantial parishioners being barred from participation, 210.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 222-4.

Reformation occasion multiple Lincolnshire parishes came into conflict when neighboring processions converged, “in part because they believed that the rival procession was driving its demons over the boundary into their parish.”⁹⁴ Only the urban churchwardens’ accounts for Grimsby make any mention of these annual processions, although scholars have argued that the processions occur more frequently in urban churchwardens’ accounts and that churchwardens played a more central role in the convivial aspect of the celebration by providing the refreshments themselves.⁹⁵ In Grimsby, the churchwardens paid John Kirton “for lighting the said candles and ringing handbells round the fields on Rogation days.”⁹⁶ In urban processions, the corporeal works of mercy of feeding the hungry and quenching the thirsty would have been fulfilled as churchwardens were expected to shoulder the costs of Rogationtide hospitality.⁹⁷ The payment of those carrying the cross and banners—especially persons of elevated social status—with food and drink was also a particular characteristic of Rogationtide celebrations in cities and towns.⁹⁸

Sutterton’s parishioners held an Ascension Day celebration with Wigtoft parishioners in 1523-4. The churchwardens recorded the receipt of 6d. for “owr gederyng in the towne & chyrch for brede & ayll for Sutterton & Wigtoft.”⁹⁹ There is also an expense of 2d. paid in 1535-6 “for the merrymett In quatryng (Quadring).”¹⁰⁰ The churchwardens’ accounts from Wigtoft record gatherings in the parish for the years 1484, 1487, 1499, 1500, and 1532 (although the widespread

⁹⁴ Duffy, 136; Owen, 107-9.

⁹⁵ French, *People of the Parish*, 190; Hindle, 214; Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 34.

⁹⁶ Gillett, 33.

⁹⁷ Hindle, 214.

⁹⁸ Hutton, 34.

⁹⁹ Kahrl, *Records of Plays and Players*, 91.

¹⁰⁰ Kahrl, 93.

practice of annual audits means there were probably annual gatherings as well). The nature of the gatherings is somewhat vague and varies from year to year. In 1484, churchwardens John Brigge, the younger, and John Barre received “one quarter and two strik barley” from each parishioner at a “gaddryng” for the “well of the said chirche.”¹⁰¹ These could be collections towards the church fabric—the barley would be malted and then sold for church uses, or towards parochial festivities.¹⁰² The 1487 accounts have a similar entry for a “gaddryng,” where parishioners donated cheese and barley. A gathering also appears under expenditures, again for the “well” of the church, so it seems that parishioners donated foodstuffs to the church, and then the parishioners along with “diverse persons” had a meal of sorts. The churchwardens spent money in 1499 for the “towne matter” at the public-house kept by John Brygg (not specified if this is the younger or elder). The following year, money was collected within the town and a gathering was held in the church, where further money was raised. The accounts do not give any additional details about the gathering nor do they reveal what the money was being collected for. Finally, in 1532, the churchwardens paid Katherine Deconson 9d. for providing food and drink at the “creyng of the Spauldyng Baunne.”¹⁰³

Leverton’s churchwardens’ accounts provide more direct descriptive evidence about commensality in the parish than those for other villages do. The churchwardens’ accounts for 1516 include a list of fifty-three parishioners consenting to “a kyrke stoke of ther gud wylls.”¹⁰⁴ They each appeared to have donated between one and eight pence to the church’s stock. In 1526, fifty-two weekly gatherings were “made by the principle inhabitants of the parish in rotation on

¹⁰¹ Nichols, 77.

¹⁰² Ibid., see footnote g.

¹⁰³ Nichols, 222.

¹⁰⁴ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 50.

succeeding Sundays.”¹⁰⁵ The purpose of the gatherings appears to have been to collect money—possibly for the church fabric or parish activities. Elaborate obits sponsored by parishioners Walter Bussche and William Frankyshe occasioned bread and ale to be distributed to parishioners annually. Walter Bussche was apparently a member of the Bussey family, an established knightly family, who were of “old standing” in Leverton.¹⁰⁶ While many scholars have debated the role the gentry played in parish life, it appears Walter Bussche was invested in his parish—he served as churchwarden in 1492 in addition to funding an elaborate obit.¹⁰⁷ His testament does not survive, but his obit as recorded in the churchwardens’ accounts included the provision of cheese and “gud ayle” for parishioners, along with doles to be made for two poor women living in the church-house, and six “other” poor women as well.¹⁰⁸ Like Walter Bussche’s will, that of William Frankyshe does not survive in probate records. Instead, the will dated March, 10, 1524, or at least the portion dealing with St. Helen’s, is recorded in the churchwardens’ accounts for 1526. Frankyshe left three roods of arable land to fund an obit for his soul, his wife’s soul, and all Christian souls, to pay two parsons for performing the dirige and mass, the offering, a clerk for preaching, and to provide bread, cheese, and drink for the parishioners of St. Helen’s on his October 23rd obit day.¹⁰⁹ The parish accounts also contain

¹⁰⁵ Thompson, *History and Antiquities of Boston*, 562.

¹⁰⁶ Peacock, “Leverton,” 336. Peacock points out that he found “the name of Bussey the second in the list of persons taxed” in Edward III’s Subsidy Roll.

¹⁰⁷ French, *People of the Parish*, 85. See also Christine Carpenter, “The Religion of the Gentry of Fifteenth-Century England,” in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Conference*, ed., Daniel Williams (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1987) 53-74; Colin Richmond, “The English Gentry and Religion, c. 1500,” in *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England*, ed., Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1991), 131-43; R.N. Swanson, *Church and Society*, 284.

¹⁰⁸ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 21; Thompson, 564. The churchwardens’ accounts for 1495 record receipts from his executors, so he must have died between 1492-1495.

¹⁰⁹ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 21; Thompson, 565.

receipts for “drynkyngs” for the church in 1535 and 1536. They do not give much more detail than “resavyd att the drynkyng for the church” with the amount collected—for example, in 1535, St. Helen’s parishioners collected the substantial sum of 3l. 6s. 8d.¹¹⁰ While the exact nature of a Leverton parish drinking is not possible to discern from the laconic churchwarden’s entry, the entry does reveal that commensality and fundraising went hand in hand. Parishioners raised money for the church by selling drink and possibly food.¹¹¹ The completion of large construction projects seems to be a cause for communal celebration as well. In 1490, Sutterton’s church of St. Mary was reconsecrated after a period of repair. The churchwardens’ accounts record expenses for a parish gathering—with the wardens laying out considerable monies for wine, beer, two capons, beef, butter, two pigs, chickens, spices, as well as the wages for the cook and the spit-turners.¹¹² The accounts for the same year record 14d. spent “pro expensis of corpus xpi day,” so perhaps the re-consecration occurred as part of Corpus Christi celebrations.¹¹³

Although commensality was an equally important aspect of urban parochial life as demonstrated by guild records and testamentary evidence, Louth’s churchwardens’ accounts are the only urban accounts that mention a parish feast. In 1515, the steeple of St. James’ was

¹¹⁰ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 31.

¹¹¹ Guild records refer to their feasts as “drinkings,” which means they may have had a fundraising element as well. This idea is explored further in Chapter Four.

¹¹² Peacock, “Sutterton,” 56.

¹¹³ Peacock, “Sutterton,” 56. Peacock only gives the year for each entry extract, so it is difficult to tell when the re-consecration occurred. Corpus Christi day would have been on the ninth Sunday following Easter. See French, *People of the Parish*, 190. Commensality and Christian hospitality would also have been an important part of seasonal celebrations and games. Hagworthingham’s accounts from 1525-6 record the expense of 10d. to Peter Babbe and George Bullock for shaping and painting the parish maypole, with an additional 9d. laid out for cloth for it, Grange, 7. May games were common throughout Lincolnshire, and a time for communal celebration and feasting. While Hagworthingham accounts are the only ones to mention a maypole, Stamford also had a maypole, while Wigtoft accounts mention payments maid to a “maye light,” Stokes, vol. 2, 429.

completed, and the parish celebrated over the course of three days. On Holy Rood evening (September 14) the weathercock was installed atop the steeple, and on that Sunday, September 16th, the work was consecrated.¹¹⁴ The churchwardens' accounts record the following about the ceremony:

Ther beyng Will Ayleby parich prest with many of his breder prests ther present haloyng the said wedercoke and the stone that itt stands upon and so conveyed upon the said broch and then the said prests syngyng Te deum laudamus with organs. And then the Kirke wardens garte ryngge all the bels and causid all the pepull ther beyng to hafe brede & ayle. And all to the lofyng of god oure lady and all saynts.¹¹⁵

The sacralized conviviality of breaking bread together after the completion of religious services also further reinforced the reconciliatory message of the Mass for parishioners. The distribution of a "holy loaf" or "kirk-loaf" after services to all those present "as a symbol of fraternal love" was common throughout late medieval England.¹¹⁶ This "blessed (but not consecrated) loaf divided amongst the parishioners after the Sunday mass in a lay version of the Eucharist."¹¹⁷ Churchwardens were often responsible for providing the holy bread, but parishioners like Robert Snell of Quadring Eudyke (d. 1524), who left a salt pan to the chapel in

¹¹⁴ Dudding, xviii.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 181.

¹¹⁶ Owen, *Church and Society*, 102. Owen also calls this bread "singing bread" and defines it as "blessed bread for distribution to the congregation," but Foster equates "singing bread" with the wafer used in celebration of the Mass, Owen, 14; Foster, vol. 1, 259. Louth's churchwardens' accounts refer to the Eucharist as "holy-bread," so determining when holy bread is the blessed loaf versus the consecrated host depends on the context of the entry, Dudding, 44. See also John Bossy, "The Mass as a Social Institution," *Past and Present* 100 (1983), 52, 56; Susan Brigden, "Religion and Social Obligation in Early Sixteenth-Century London," *Past and Present* 103 (1984), 77-8. In his Sutterton churchwardens' account extracts, Peacock argues that holy bread was almost universally distributed in English churches before the Reformation, Peacock, "Sutterton," 60.

¹¹⁷ Swanson, *Church and Society*, 280.

St. Margaret's church to pay for bread, also left bequests towards the cost in their wills.¹¹⁸ The Wigtoft, Sutterton, and Hagworthingham churchwardens' accounts all show multiple expenditures towards the purchase of a "mawnde" or "maund"—a basket for holding the holy bread. For example, in 1512 Sutterton churchwardens paid 10d. for "ij holybred mawndes."¹¹⁹ The expense for the basket survives more frequently than the expense for the bread, so it is possible that parishioners donated the loaves at no financial cost to the parish church, or the loaves were purchased with bequest monies that were not recorded in the accounts. It could also be the case that the churchwardens kept track of the baskets because they were the property of the church. The 1525 account for Wigtoft records that 8d. was paid to Frankes to buy wheat for the "haly bred."¹²⁰ In 1527, Hagworthingham churchwardens spent 2d. "for a maund of Holy bread."¹²¹

Rural Lincolnshire also appears to have a local devotion to "our lady of holie bread." This could be a Eucharistic devotion or a devotion to the previously discussed blessed communal loaf. The details of this observance are very scanty, as mention is only made of it in bequests. Robert Greg of Rowston (d. 1533) left 6s. 8d to "fynde a light afore the ymage of Our Lady of the holy bred altare" in St. Clement's church, and John Brodeley of Appleby (d.1532) and John Norfoke of Santon (d. 1531) both left money to the altar of Our Lady of the "holie bread" in their

¹¹⁸ LCC 1520-31, 12d., Foster, vol. 1, 14; Owen, 14, 103; Salt pans owned by local parish churches were often loaned out to parishioners to provide income for the church. In her study of Bath and Wells, Katherine French found that it was parishioners' responsibility to supply the "pax bread"—a responsibility that they sometimes resented and protested, *People of the Parish*, 25. Hobhouse defines the "paxbred" as the "plate apart from the foot of the Pax," which is "the small metal plate serving for the Kiss of Peace in the Liturgy," Hobhouse, 238. The name "pax bread" itself reveals the purpose of breaking bread—to enact peace among the parishioners.

¹¹⁹ Peacock, "Sutterton," 60.

¹²⁰ Nichols, 215-6.

¹²¹ Grange, 7.

parish churches.¹²² Of the urban accounts, only Louth's mention the purchase of a 2d. "maund to deyll the haly-bread" in 1523-4.¹²³ The sporadic nature of source survival, however, makes it impossible to discount that this type of Christian commensality was widespread in Lincolnshire's cities and towns as well.

Some parishes maintained a communal property called a "church-house," which served as a meeting place for parish social events as well as a source of income for the parish church through the sale of beer, ale, and bread brewed and baked there as well as the rental of its brewing, cooking, and baking appliances.¹²⁴ The most extensive work on church-houses appears to have been done on the county of Devonshire by Lilian Sheldon and G.W. Copeland. In his study of the extant records of sixty-four church-houses in Devonshire, Copeland found that church-houses were an integral part of parish social life. Traditionally the church-house adjoined the parish church.¹²⁵ It served as a locus for sociability and hospitality, especially when church authorities attempted to curtail ales and other festivities involving alcohol consumption in the sacred space of the church and churchyard.¹²⁶ Copeland notes that church-houses "were the rendezvous of people after the church service, and neighboring parishioners visited one another in them, and freely spent their money together."¹²⁷ Parish feasts, dances, and games were often

¹²² LCC 1532-4, 143, LW 4-127 (Greg); LRO Stow 1530-52, 12v, LW 3-233 (Brodeley); LRO Stow 1531-56, 359, LW 3-153 (Norfoke).

¹²³ Dudding, 221.

¹²⁴ Cox, 2; Hobhouse, xxi. Hobhouse traces the evolution of the church house in Tintinhull from a bake-house for the holy wafer and holy loaf, "to a place for the sale of the latter, and when brewing gear was added for the brewing of the holy ale, a place for the sale of that also, instead of the churchyard." The baking and brewing vessels and appliances were let for additional revenue. Hobhouse, xxi-xxii. See also, G.W. Copeland, "Devonshire Church-Houses," *Reports and Transactions of the Devonshire Association* 92 (1960), 117.

¹²⁵ Copeland, 118.

¹²⁶ Hobhouse, xxii.

¹²⁷ Copeland, 118.

held in the church-house, or in its gardens. Churchwardens were responsible for maintaining the church-house's stocks of trenchers, cups, bowls, and other vessels and utensils.¹²⁸ There is not much scholarship on church-houses in Lincolnshire. They appear in the rural churchwardens accounts for Wigtoft, Sutterton, and Leverton, and in the urban accounts for Grimsby and Kirton-in-Lindsey, but not in wills or guild records. Due to the nature of the surviving records, is difficult to get a sense of how Lincolnshire parishioners used their church-houses. It is likely, however, that they were used in a similar fashion as those in Devonshire. Wigtoft accounts make the most frequent mention of their church-house. The churchwardens had the house repaired numerous times, rents were collected for it, and in 1532 the wardens received 13s. 4d. from Master Wyllm Lyncolne for the "kyr chowsse may lyght," which implies the house might have been used for some May Day activities.¹²⁹ Inn-keeper (or possibly brewer) Alice Benet paid churchwardens John Brigge, the Younger, and John Barre 10s. 3d. for malt in 1484.¹³⁰ It is possible the malt was from the church-house store. Leverton's church-house was called "Clarke House," and in 1524 wardens record paying for the door to be repaired. Clarke House was evidently a bedehouse as well. The accounts for the same year record payment from Walter Bussche's executors to support two poor women living there.¹³¹ With the exception of Bussche's will recorded in the churchwardens' account, Clarke House is not mentioned in any other Leverton bequests.

¹²⁸ Copeland, 118.

¹²⁹ Nichols, 220. There seem to be multiple interpretations for what a "may light" is. Nichols suggests that it was an obit light (199) or a surname (207). There is a Roger Maye mentioned in the accounts. Stokes suggests that the "may light" might have something to do with the seasonal celebration of May games. Stokes, vol. 2, 429. This is a possibility as Sutterton's churchwardens' accounts record the construction of a maypole.

¹³⁰ Nichols, 78.

¹³¹ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 21; Thompson, 564.

Besides the Christian hospitality and sociability of parish gatherings, churchwardens' accounts from Leverton, Wigtoft, and Stamford also record a more transactional type of hospitality in the boarding of church workmen. Wrights, glaziers, plumbers, carvers, and smiths all traveled to Wigtoft, Leverton, and Stamford from Lincoln, Boston, and Swineshead to repair windows, cast bells, carve rood loft statues, and fashion iron-worked flowers for the candlesticks in an Our Lady chapel. They were paid in money as well as in room and board for their labor. Parishioners took these workers into their homes and were paid for boarding them by the churchwardens with church funds. According to the churchwardens' accounts, most parishioners who took in boarders took them into a private home, while a minority may have run public houses. In her work on hospitality, Felicity Heal has noted that "the conventions of English innkeeping suggest that in some measure landlords perceived themselves as analogous to private hosts, with the same duties performed for money rather than love. . . innkeepers believed they had to offer courteous entertainment, providing guests with private meals and sitting with them if they so desired."¹³² In the case of boarding church workmen, landlords were helping their parish churches undertake vital repairs and liturgical enhancements by feeding and sheltering artisans. The accounts from Leverton, Wigtoft, and Hagworthingham reveal that this type of hospitality was primarily women's work. Marjorie McIntosh has argued that, "providing domestic or personal services allowed women to extend the activities they carried out within their own families, without reimbursement, into a for-pay environment, by doing similar work for non-relatives."¹³³ While men may have owned the homes boarders were taken into, women almost exclusively played the role of host, and undertook the attendant responsibilities of caretaking and

¹³² Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, 203.

¹³³ McIntosh, *Working Women in English Society, 1300-1620* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 45.

hospitality.¹³⁴ The churchwardens' accounts also reveal that wives were typically the ones paid for taking in boarders even when their husbands are mentioned elsewhere in the accounts. Leverton parishioner Ellyn Acclif was named as a provider of meat and drink for workmen in 1503. She may have been related to John Aclyf, who was paid for removing earth with his horse during construction in 1512, and listed as paying 4d. towards the church stock in 1526.¹³⁵ The Wigtoft accounts give more detailed information about the parishioners who took in boarders during church construction projects. Alice Crigg, or Bregge, was a frequent boarder of workmen; in 1484 the churchwardens paid her 3s. 6d. for the "bordying of 2 wrights wirkyng... upon the belles for 14 days" and in 1499 paid her 1s. d. for boarding the glazier and the bell repairman. She also appears again in the accounts for 1500.¹³⁶ Agnes Bennett (Benet) was paid 2s. 10d. for boarding two glaziers, a painter, and his assistant.¹³⁷ Over the next two decades of accounts, Margaret Farrad (possibly wife of John Farrad), John Blackmoor's unnamed wife, Janet Brandun, Thomas Carter's unnamed wife, and Katherine Deconson (probably Thomas Dekonson's wife) all provided meat, drink, and board for a myriad of artisans working on the church of St. Peter and St. Paul. Payments for boarding were made to the wife in each case, even when she was only identified as someone's wife, with the exception of Thomas Dekonson. He was paid for boarding a glazier from Boston in 1524 and a workman from Swineshead in 1525. The 1525 accounts of Robert Lambeson and John Atkynson show they also paid him 3s. 4d. for expenses relating to the Swineshead Bann, so it is possible that he and his wife Katherine were

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹³⁵ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 50. In Hagworthingham, churchwarden Huge Chele's wife was paid 5s. 7d. in 1531-2 to board fourteen thatchers over the course of six days, Grange, 8

¹³⁶ Nichols, 80, 87, 196. Nichols notes that John Brigg (elder or younger not specified) probably kept a public house, 199. Alice Crigg, or Bregge, could be his wife or some relation.

¹³⁷ Nichols, 83.

innkeepers.¹³⁸ In the context of taking in boarders, women as the primary caretakers and hosts for visiting artisans fulfilled the role of household governor, at least in some capacity.¹³⁹ Using the authority accorded by sermons to spiritually govern their homes and families, women were also responsible for helping to maintain domestic order in the governing of guests as well. While contemporaries viewed men as the heads of their households, taking in boarders and acting as hosts expanded women's participation in the parish and in the management of the home.

Spiritual Works of Mercy

While traditional and expanded charity played important roles in collective parochial piety, laypeople also broadened the scope of their charitable activities by appropriating specific elements of clerical charity through the performance of the spiritual works of educating the ignorant and praying for the living and dead. The spiritual works of mercy were traditionally considered the province of clerics and the cloistered, however, over the course of the late middle ages, laypeople began to incorporate some of these practices in their own piety.¹⁴⁰

Churchwardens' accounts reveal that in a parochial context, lay performance of the spiritual works of mercy took the form of collective light (candle) provision by both semi-permanent and permanent subparochial groups and the maintenance of obits and anniversaries to pray for the

¹³⁸ Nichols, 216.

¹³⁹ In her examination of medieval and early modern "good governance," Barbara Hanawalt points out that late medieval works, Chaucer in particular, "uses governance to mean in good, civil order but also refers to the Host in the *Canterbury Tales* as "governor," the person who will keep the pilgrims in good order...Scolds, backbiters, eavesdroppers, and wanders at night as well as those who kept houses of prostitution and unruly taverns disturbed the peace. These people were not well-ruled in their personal behavior," Hanawalt, "'Good Governance' in the Medieval and Early Modern Context," *The Journal of British Studies* 37 (1998), 248.

¹⁴⁰ Chapter Four explores this theme as I argue as corporate bodies of laypeople guilds appropriated clerical concerns in their performance of spiritual as well as corporeal works of mercy (although guilds and clergy were not in conflict as they worked with and complemented one another).

dead and secure intercession, as well as the sponsorship of religious plays and didactic art to educate the ignorant. Lincolnshire churchwardens' accounts record a number of lights and guilds. In some cases the lights were collectively maintained in front of a particular altar, in other instances a subparochial group took on the responsibility of maintaining a light, and in a third instance, the term "light" conflated the less formalized type of parish guild with their practice of maintaining the light.¹⁴¹ As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, collectivities such as light maintenance organizations, or "lights," and religious guilds represent selective (and generally voluntary) corporate spiritualities within the larger parochial community. In collectively funding lights or belonging to parish guilds, laypeople were able to exert a measure of personal choice and control over their religious experiences.¹⁴²

The maintenance of lights at specific altars within the church served a two-fold purpose: firstly, the lights functioned as votive offerings in honor of particular saints or sacred relics, and secondly, in exchange for such propitiation, donors expected intercession on their behalf (dead patrons sought intercession to ease purgatorial suffering, while living patrons sought aid in earthly matters).¹⁴³ Votive lights were the simplest means for parishioners to participate in the

¹⁴¹ There has been considerable debate over what constitutes a parish guild. Some scholars characterize a guild as a formalized organization with a sense of permanence to it. Less permanent establishments then fall into the category of a "light" or a "store." Lights and stores tended to lack the endowments and officers that guilds had. See Ken Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia, C. 1470-1550* (Rochester: York Medieval Press, 2001), 120 n.130; French, "Maidens' Lights and Wives' Stores: Women's Parish Guilds in Late Medieval England," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 29, no. 2 (1998), 403 n. 25, *Good Women of the Parish*, 119, 270 n. 4.

¹⁴² Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England*, pp. 252-308.

¹⁴³ Duffy argues that the saints and their clients participated in an "economy of grace" wherein where in exchange for homage paid in the form of altars, lights, and masses, saints offered protection to the living and intercession for the dead, Duffy 183-90. See also Ken Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community*, 36.

cult of the saints.¹⁴⁴ Churchwardens themselves, or subordinate officers called “light wardens,” were in charge of maintaining specific lights.¹⁴⁵ For example, Leverton’s accounts for 1521 show the receipt of jd. from the keeper of the light of St. Mary of Grace.¹⁴⁶ Light dedications reveal a great deal about local piety, as light and altar devotions were not solely dictated by ecclesiastical authorities. Parishioners collectively established altars to saints cults that held resonance for their communities, which reflected “some latitude for personal and local preference.”¹⁴⁷ Scholars have found that St. Mary was the most popular patronal saint of the late middle ages.¹⁴⁸ Guilds, lights, altars, and chapels were widely dedicated to St. Mary and her feast day celebrations—the Assumption (August 15), Purification (February 2), Annunciation (March 25), and Nativity (September 8).¹⁴⁹ Payments toward the sepulcher light, which would have burned before the holy sepulcher on the north side of the church, were common in rural parishes¹⁵⁰—Wigtoft, Leverton, Sutterton, Horbling, and Hagworthingham’s accounts each show receipts for monies or wax towards this light. It was an integral part of parish Easter celebrations. The Easter Sepulcher was either a “temporary wooden structure” set up by churchwardens

¹⁴⁴ David Postles, “Lamps, Lights and Layfolk: “Popular Devotion Before the Black Death,” *Journal of Medieval History* (1999), 97-114.

¹⁴⁵ Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety*, 33. The office of light warden was frequently a job performed by female parishioners, Duffy, 147.

¹⁴⁶ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 17v; Peacock, “Leverton,” 347.

¹⁴⁷ French, *People of the Parish*, 195.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 196. French found that in Somerset, St. Katherine, Holy Trinity, and the Easter Sepulcher followed Mary in popularity of dedication for guilds. Farnhill found that for all the counties in his study, which included data from Yorkshire, Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, and London as well as East Anglia, St. Mary was the most frequent guild patron saint, with St. Katherine, Holy Trinity, and St. George having a large number of dedications as well, 38-40. Although guild dedications are not necessarily the same as church dedications or light devotions, they do provide insight about the popularity of particular saints in local parishes.

¹⁴⁹ French, *People of the Parish*, 196.

¹⁵⁰ Nichols, 196.

annually, or in some parishes, a permanent niche built into the church wall,¹⁵¹ where “the Host was deposited from Maundy Thursday until sunrise on Easter morning.”¹⁵² Rood lights, Our Lady’s lights, and All Souls lights were also common in all of these rural parishes. Wigtoft and Leverton funded parishioners St. Thomas lights. St. Andrew’s, Horbling had St. Katherine and All Hallows lights. Sutterton and Wigtoft both had a “Maye” light, which could have been connected with May Games, obits, or particular parishioners. Sutterton’s churchwardens also made payments towards the “commone lyght” in 1523-4.¹⁵³ The common light was a votive light that burned on behalf of the poor. Wigtoft’s churchwardens’ accounts record payments for a “grenpote” light and an “Esthorpe” light. In 1532, John Howson paid churchwardens John Atkynson and Robert Brygg 13s. 4d. towards the “grenpote” light.¹⁵⁴ This is the only mention of this light in the accounts. The Howsons were a local gentry family, and their names occur frequently in the Wigtoft accounts. According to William Whites *History, Gazetter and Directory of Lincolnshire* (1872), the mansion called “Easthorpe Court” was “anciently the seat of the Howson family.”¹⁵⁵ In 1535, churchwardens Edmund Howson and Roger Maye collected the same amount, 13s. 4d., from the Easthorpe light. It is possible that the grenpote light was another name for this light, which had been established by the Howson family in the church of St. Peter and Paul.

In urban Lincolnshire, churchwardens’ accounts for Grimsby and Louth mention sepulcher light expenses. In 1411-2, St. Mary, Grimsby’s churchwardens paid 6d. for their

¹⁵¹ French, *People of the Parish*, 188-9.

¹⁵² Westlake, *Parish Guilds*, 123.

¹⁵³ Kahrl, *Records of Plays and Players*, 92.

¹⁵⁴ Nichols, 219.

¹⁵⁵ William White, *White’s History, Gazetter and Directory of Lincolnshire* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co., 1882), 806.

sepulcher light.¹⁵⁶ The sepulcher light in Louth had its own account book, which was stored in the church chest according to the churchwardens' accounts for 1516.¹⁵⁷ The extensive survival of Louth's churchwardens' accounts allows a more detailed analysis of the parishioners of St. James' devotional practices than is possible for the other urban parishes under consideration. St. James' seems to have had a number of localized votive traditions. In addition to St. Michael's and St. George's lights, accounts record a "lampe" light, wever's light, websters' light, an Our Lady's light called the "autyme" or "anytime" light.¹⁵⁸ The websters' light appears to be a light maintained by a group of rope-makers, although the accounts do not indicate where in the church their light was located.¹⁵⁹ The "lampe" light has been described as a "eucharistic" devotion.¹⁶⁰ It may have been related to the "lantern lights," which were used in the visitation of the sick.¹⁶¹ Numerous Lincolnshire testators performed this particular work of mercy through funding lantern lights.¹⁶² The "antyme" light was a fund that paid for the lights that burned during the Lady Mass in the evenings.¹⁶³ The "antym" bell was the bell used to call parishioners to this service. In other urban churchwardens' accounts evidence for votive lights is more scant. Grimsby churchwardens paid for "seven pounds of new wax bought for twenty-four candles

¹⁵⁶ Gillett, 33. Although not recorded by churchwardens' accounts cities like Lincoln, Louth, and Kirton-in-Lindsey also had guilds dedicated to the Resurrection or Holy Sepulcher that helped maintain these lights, PRO C 47/40/135, PRO C 47/40/136, PRO C 47/40/137.

¹⁵⁷ Dudding, 182. Louth churchwardens differentiate between guilds and lights in their accounts. Although the sepulcher, anytime, and wever lights have accounts, they are not called guilds. However, "lampe light" which does have brothers and sisters as well as its own account book is designated a light and not a guild by churchwardens, Dudding, 94, 182.

¹⁵⁸ Williamson, 87.

¹⁵⁹ Dudding, 32.

¹⁶⁰ Dudding, 182; Duffy, 331; Williamson, 93.

¹⁶¹ Foster, vol. 1, 253.

¹⁶² Lantern lights are discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

¹⁶³ Williamson, 87.

burning before the Holy Cross.¹⁶⁴ Stamford had a “common light,” which wardens paid 4s. for in 1427.¹⁶⁵ Kirton-in Lindsey’s churchwardens’ accounts record that the church of St. Andrew had lights before St. Katherine’s and Our Lady’s altars. Rents owed to the church by Thomas Burgh, a member of the local gentry, paid for the upkeep of the St. Katherine’s light, and similarly the rental of another church property funded the Our Lady light.¹⁶⁶

In addition to financing intercessory lights to fulfill the obligation to pray for the dead, parishioners also commissioned masses, funded obits and anniversaries, and endowed chantries. Although each of these pious actions may have been initiated by an individual, they were ultimately intended to benefit the community as a whole—“all masses assisted the souls of the departed: every mass for the dead commemorated all the faithful departed, even if spotlighting names individuals.”¹⁶⁷ Likewise, obit and chantry costs typically “accounted for only a small proportion of the endowment revenue; the remainder was intended for the parish.”¹⁶⁸ Leverton, Wigtoft, Hagworthingham, Louth churchwardens accounts all contain details about local obit procedures. An obit or anniversary (terms used interchangeably in the sources) was the reenactment of the deceased’s funeral ceremonies, which included exequies and a Mass, the setting out of candles and a funeral hearse in the parish church, funeral knells to summon mourners and remind the community to pray for the dead, the donation of a mass-penny to the celebrant by churchwardens, who acted in some cases as the chief mourners, and finally a dole of bread and ale given to encourage charity in the form of conviviality and intercessory prayers.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Gillett, 33.

¹⁶⁵ Nichols, 130; Peck, 4.

¹⁶⁶ Peacock, “Kirton-in-Lindsey,” 384.

¹⁶⁷ Swanson, *Church and Society*, 299.

¹⁶⁸ Burgess and Kūmin, “Penitential Regimes,” 614.

¹⁶⁹ Burgess, “A Service for the Dead,” pp. 183-191.

Scholars have argued that funerals “provided occasions for a mixture of conviviality and charity.”¹⁷⁰ Obits, as a recreation of the funeral, served many of the same purposes. They were also intended to be an “obtrusive observance,” which reasserted the presence of the deceased into the ritual and celebratory life of their communities.¹⁷¹ In Leverton, Walter Bussche and William Frankyshe left elaborate obit instructions. Bussche’s obit was celebrated with the provision of bread, cheese, and five gallons of “gud ayle” brought from Leake to parishioners, doles to eight poor women in the parish, stipends paid to four priests and the parish clerk for a dirige and ringing of the bells, and two cryptic payments to the “iiij chylder that Redd lessons” and four “oyer smayle chylder”¹⁷² An offering was also made in his name of 4d. William Frankyshe left an endowment of land to fund an obit for his soul, his wife’s soul, and all Christian souls, to pay two parsons for performing the dirige and mass, the offering, a clerk for preaching, and to provide bread, cheese, and drink for the parishioners of St. Helen’s on his October 23rd obit day.¹⁷³ Funeral hospitality was “conceived of as hospitality given by the dead to the living: a coda that both represented a last farewell, and affirmed the communal integration of the living and dead.”¹⁷⁴

The celebration of an anniversary often reflects negotiations made by the decedent’s family, local clergy, and parishioners over the most mutually beneficial time to perform commemorative

¹⁷⁰ Bennett, “Conviviality and Charity,” 31. Bennett goes on to say, “testators often arranged in their wills for funeral doles (of food, drink and sometimes cash) to the poor. Occasionally called give-ales, these events ensured a mournful crowd,” *ibid.*; See also Samuel Denne, “An Attempt to Illustrate the Figures Carved in Stone on the Porch of Chalk Church,” pp. 13-18; David Cressy, “Death and the Social Order: The Funerary Preferences of Elizabethan Gentlemen,” *Continuity and Change*, V (1989), pp. 99-119.

¹⁷¹ Burgess, “A Service for the Dead,” 191.

¹⁷² LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 18v, LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 21; Thompson, 564.

¹⁷³ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 21; Thompson, 565.

¹⁷⁴ Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, 375.

rites.¹⁷⁵ In Hagworthingham, the parish came together to plan Laurence Clarke's obit. The churchwardens' recorded that in 1526-7 that "it is agreed by all the parish that there shall be delivered to two men of the said parish xiiis. iiiid. over & besides iiis iiiid. in the hands of Isabell Clarke therewith to finde yearly an obit for the soul of Laurence Clerke for ever the third day of July." This obit included payments to the parson for saying the dirige and mass, payments for the clerk, a mass-penny, money for the bede-roll, and an annual payment of 4d. to provide bread and ale for the bell-ringers.¹⁷⁶ Finally, Louth's churchwardens' accounts record payments made for obits and month's minds without providing the level of detail found in the rural accounts. However, a donation made by Thomas Sudbery, former vicar of Louth, of a silver-gilt processional cross for the use of the parish church, Lampe Light, Holy Trinity, and Blessed Lady guilds illustrates the ways in which parishioners envisioned they should be prayed for and remembered by the community. His bequest, recorded in the churchwardens' accounts for 1507, declared that the cross should:

Perpetually remain in the paryche chyrch of Louth for ever ther to be ussyde and occupiede in honor of god his blissyd moder Saynte James and all Saynts at every pryncipall feste. And also at the bereall of every broder and sister of the lampe light and yerly as long as the saide Master Thomas Sudbere shall haffe a nobitt kepytt in the forsaid parysh chirche of Louth itt lyke wyes to be occupied att the sayd obbytt and the said croos with the foote to be seet upon hys heys to the intent the devocyon of goode pepull shall the rather be styryde to pray for his saull.¹⁷⁷

Sudbery's cross bequest and his specific instructions for its usage allowed him to ensure that he would be commemorated at the burial of Lampe Light guild members, his annual obit, and on other occasions deemed acceptable by the churchwardens and guild officials.¹⁷⁸ The presence of

¹⁷⁵ Burgess, "A Service for the Dead," pp. 191-197.

¹⁷⁶ Grange, 8.

¹⁷⁷ Dudding, 94.

¹⁷⁸ Duffy, 331.

his funeral hearse, likely draped with a pall and surrounded by candles at the obit was supposed to have “suggested that a corpse was present once again.”¹⁷⁹

Chantries were the “provision for Mass to be celebrated daily at an altar within the beneficiary’s parish church.”¹⁸⁰ While the surviving chantry certificates for the county of Lincolnshire record numerous chantries in 1536, only Wigtoft’s and Leverton’s churchwardens’ accounts mention parochial chantries. According to the 1535 *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, Wigtoft had two chantries, one of which was dedicated to St. Mary, and the other was unnamed.¹⁸¹ Wigtoft churchwardens received payments from William Brygthe of 3s. 4d. in 1484 and 6s. 8d. in 1500 for the St. Nicholas chantry.¹⁸² Brygthe appears to have died between 1500-1505 because in 1505 the accounts show a bequest of 1s. paid by his executors to the church.¹⁸³ Robert Feylld paid 4s. of “ye chauntry moone” in 1500.¹⁸⁴ In 1531, Symon Moyn was paid 13s. 4d. of “ye chantre money.”¹⁸⁵ Symon Moyn seems to have done handiwork for the church; he was paid in meat and wages in 1533 for hanging “ye saintts bell,” in 1534 for making and mending the church gate, and in various other years for repairs around the church. Leverton’s churchwardens’ accounts only mention a chantry in passing. In 1524, the celebration of Walter Bussche’s obit

¹⁷⁹ Burgess, “A Service for the Dead,” 191.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 183; See also P. W. Fleming, “Charity, Faith, and the Gentry of Kent, 1422-1529,” in *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval English History*, ed., A.J. Pollard, 36-58 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1984); Michael Hicks, “Chantries, Obits and Almshouses: The Hungerford foundations 1325-1478,” in *Richard III and His Rivals* (London: Hambleton Press, 1991), 79-98; Alan Kreider, *English Chantries: The Road to Dissolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); K.L. Wood-Leigh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

¹⁸¹ C.W. Foster and A.H. Thompson, “Chantry Certificates from Lincoln and Lincolnshire,” *Associated Architectural Societies’ Reports and Papers* (Lincoln, 1921), 186.

¹⁸² Nichols, 78, 196.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 199.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 196.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 218.

included a 4d. to the master of the chantry, and in 1531 the master of the still unnamed chantry was paid 4d. for hallowing a vestment.¹⁸⁶

Preaching, religious art, and didactic drama were each important mutually-reinforcing elements of ecclesiastical pedagogical strategies. Unlike preaching, however, laypeople were allowed to commission religious art for their parish churches and participate in religious theater. Through the sponsorship of religious plays and artwork, parishioners performed several spiritual works of mercy—instructing the ignorant, counseling the doubtful, and admonishing sinners. Religious plays were meant to edify, correct, and provoke introspection through the visual medium of drama. Religious plays in Lincolnshire “characteristically incorporated elements of drama or quasi-dramatic enactments, liturgy, and ceremony in ways that made the events simultaneously worshipful, festive, and communal.”¹⁸⁷ The subject matter was typically historical, hagiographical, biblical, moral, or involved the explication of Christian doctrine or feast, like Pater Noster plays.¹⁸⁸ Religious guilds frequently sponsored parish plays as “part of an organized campaign of religious didacticism of the late Middle Ages in England concerned with educating the layman in the basic principles of his faith.”¹⁸⁹ In sponsoring drama, laypeople undertook the responsibility for educating other laypeople in the finer points of their shared religion. Religious guilds often commissioned their clerical members to author these plays, and

¹⁸⁶ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 18v, LRO Leverton PAR/7/1; Peacock, “Leverton,” 352.

¹⁸⁷ Stokes, vol. 2, 406

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 406.

¹⁸⁹ Alexandra F. Johnston, “The Plays of the Religious guilds of York: The Creed Play and The Pater Noster Play,” *Speculum* 50 (1975), 58. See also Johnston, “Parish Playmaking Before the Reformation,” in *The Parish in Late Medieval England*, eds., Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2006), 322-38.

scholars have noted that, “sermons were a stimulus to the development of medieval theater.”¹⁹⁰

The churchwardens’ accounts for rural Lincolnshire—Leverton, Wigtoft, and Sutterton, contain the most frequent references to parish drama; it is possible this is because religious guilds sponsoring plays in urban areas kept their own separate accounts. Leverton and Wigtoft accounts provide few details about parish drama—they do not mention the names of any plays performed. Sutterton’s accounts detail a well-established dramatic tradition focused on the Assumption of the Virgin, possibly in honor of the church’s dedication to St. Mary. In 1526, Leverton’s churchwardens paid 3s. 4d. to “maister holand of Swynsted & ye plaers of the same town whan thei rood & cryed thar bayne at Leu[er]ton.” Churchwardens spent an additional 8d. ob on bread and ale for them as well.¹⁹¹ Players from Swineshead also visited Wigtoft in 1525. The 1525 accounts of Robert Lambeson and John Atkynson show they paid Thomas Dekonson 3s. 4d. for expenses relating to the crying of the Swineshead Bann.¹⁹² Spaulding’s players visited in 1532, and churchwardens paid 9d. for their “drynke and bredd” and an additional 6s. 8d. “for the crying of Spauldyng bayn.”¹⁹³ In 1512, Wigtoft churchwardens paid 2d. for a “kyng girdle,” which was possibly part of the costume for a king in a parish play.¹⁹⁴ Sutterton’s churchwardens’ accounts show payments of 9d. in 1518-9 for “ye plaares rewarde of qwatlode (Whaplode),” and 6d. in 1520-1 and 1521-2 for “makyng the plaars candelles.” Sir John was paid 12d. the following year for “makyng the towne lyght & the plaer candelles.” In 1523-4, Thomas Hutton,

¹⁹⁰ Gervase Rosser, “Roles in Life: The Drama of the Medieval Guilds,” in *REED in Review*, eds., A.W. Douglas and S. Maclean (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 147; G.R. Owst, *Literature and the Pulpit in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), pp. 471-547.

¹⁹¹ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1; Peacock, “Leverton,” 350.

¹⁹² Nichols, 216.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 222.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 205. Stokes suggests that the girdle was part of a costume for a king in a parish play, Stokes, vol. 2, 792.

Robert Hutton, Richard Gwyttynggam, William Hobson, and William Beyll “wt other dyvers of the towne” paid 9s. 6d. towards the cost of a play performed on the “day of the assumpcion of or ladey.” Swineshead’s and Donington’s players visited in 1524-5, and were paid a “rewarde” as well as “Brede and drykk at the same tyme.” Finally, players were paid in the accounts from 1530-31 and 1531-2 as well.¹⁹⁵

In urban Lincolnshire, Stamford and Louth’s accounts contain entries pertaining to parish drama as well. Both parishes sponsored Corpus Christi plays, which were a common feature of medieval town life.¹⁹⁶ Stamford had an elaborate Corpus Christi celebrations that included a procession with banners, the use of “divers jewels & vestments” kept in the church treasury, and a play sponsored by its Corpus Christi guild. The play was performed in the north chancel of St. Mary’s in the Corpus Christi chapel “for the honor of God and the reformation of the faithful.”¹⁹⁷ The single year account for Stamford mentions that 6d. was “given the players”—all other information about the procession and play comes from the town’s late medieval Hall Books.¹⁹⁸ Louth also had a Corpus Christi tradition that involved a play, free-standing pageants, and a procession co-sponsored by churchwardens and the town’s guilds.¹⁹⁹ The churchwardens’ accounts for 1515-6 record that John Cawod stored the ‘hole regenall of Corpus Christi play’ in the chest purchased by the Our Lady guild.²⁰⁰ In 1519-20 four men were paid 4d. for “beryng payents to saynte Mary Kirke,” and in 1527-8 4s. 4d. was paid for carrying the pageants to the

¹⁹⁵ Kahrl, *Records of Plays and Players*, 92-3; Peacock, “Sutterton,” pp. 61-2.

¹⁹⁶ Miri Rubin points out that Corpus Christi celebrations were popular in the countryside as well, but were carried out on a much smaller scale than found in medieval cities, Rubin, “Religious Culture in Town and Country,” pp. 10-14.

¹⁹⁷ Stokes, vol. 2, 428.

¹⁹⁸ Peck, 4, 6; See also Kahrl, *Records of Plays and Players*, 87.

¹⁹⁹ Stokes, vol. 2, 426.

²⁰⁰ Dudding, 182

church.²⁰¹ In the same year a smith was paid 6d. for making a Corpus Christi hutch,²⁰² which would have been used to hold the sacrament during the procession.²⁰³ And, Grimsby players were paid 2s. 8d. “whan they spake theire bayn of theire play.”²⁰⁴ Louth may have also had a Nativity play—in 1530-1, Thomas Preston was paid 3s. 8d. for “mendyng harrowes clothes belonging to the kirke.”²⁰⁵

Medieval parish churches were full of visual aids, which helped to illustrate themes addressed at the pulpit to laypeople.²⁰⁶ Prescriptive literature, sermons, and religious art reinforced one another—“medieval artists and authors incorporated aspects of each other’s work. Themes from *Piers Plowman* made their way into wall paintings, sermons and devotional materials were depicted in stained-glass windows, and preachers referenced church art as part of their sermons.”²⁰⁷ Wall paintings, stained glass, baptismal fonts, and woodcarvings depicted popular sermon subjects like Judgment Day, the works of mercy, deadly sins, sacraments, and biblical stories. The laity was responsible for maintaining the nave of their local parish church, so they commissioned the majority of these visual aids for their own spiritual edification and that

²⁰¹ Dudding, 203, Louth had two churches, St. James and St. Mary; LRO Louth St. James PAR/7/2 f. 4; Stokes, vol. 1, 235.

²⁰² LRO Louth St. James PAR/7/2 f. 4; Stokes, vol. 1, 235.

²⁰³ Stokes, vol. 2, 426.

²⁰⁴ LRO Louth St. James PAR/7/2 f. 3; Stokes, vol. 1, 235.

²⁰⁵ LRO Louth St. James PAR/7/2 f. 15; Stokes, vol. 1, 237; Holbeach’s 1547 churchwardens’ inventory mentions a “harod’s coate,” which Stokes suggests would have been part of a Nativity play, Stokes, vol. 2, 425.

²⁰⁶ Miriam Gill, “Preaching and Image: Sermons and Wall Paintings in Later Medieval England,” in *Preacher, Sermon, and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed., Carolyn Muessig (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 155.

²⁰⁷ Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues*, 22,. See also C. David Benson, “*Piers Plowman* and Parish Wall Paintings,” in *The Yearbook for Langland Studies, Volume 11*, eds. John A. Alford and Andrew Galloway (Asheville, NC: Pegasus Press, 1997), 1-38; Miriam Gill, “Preaching and Image: Sermons and Wall Paintings in Later Medieval England” in *Medieval Monastic Education*, eds. George Ferezco and Carolyn Muessig (London: Continuum, 2000), 155-80.

of the community at large.²⁰⁸ Their selection of subject matter and artistic execution on some levels represented the lay appropriation of clerical catechetical interests.²⁰⁹ While decisions regarding the nave were left up to laypeople, they viewed their parish clergy as partners in catechetical education and often sought the advice of their local priest when commissioning religious art for their church.²¹⁰

Both rural and urban parish churches would have been replete with religious images and statuary, but these visual aids only appear in churchwardens' accounts when they were being commissioned or repaired. Therefore, in the absence of parish inventories, churchwardens' accounts often offer an incomplete picture of parish church décor. Only the accounts from Wigtoft, Sutterton, Leverton, and Louth make mention of images in the church. In 1512, Wigtoft's churchwardens paid 3d. to have the tabernacle of St. Peter and St. Paul, to whom the church was dedicated, enclosed in "a ryng of yron."²¹¹ They paid Marteyn Scrosborgarre 6s. 8d. for "mendyng ye dome and paynteng itt mor."²¹² Dooms, or Judgment Day scenes, were one of the most popular themes for medieval wall murals. They were usually painted around the chancel arch of the church, so that parishioners would be facing the Doom while watching the priest celebrate the mass. The hope was that the depiction Christ separating the souls of the saved from those of the damned would provoke introspection—the performance of the seven works of corporeal mercy were inextricably tied to the events of Judgment Day. At the judgment of souls, Christ would ask each man and woman if they had done these merciful deeds on his behalf (and symbolically directly to him), damning the remiss, and saving the dutiful. Wigtoft's church also

²⁰⁸ French, *Good Women*, 187-8.

²⁰⁹ Duffy, 66.

²¹⁰ French, *Good Women*, 188.

²¹¹ Nichols, 205.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 222.

had a carving of St. George and the dragon supported on a beam, with iron-work incorporated in the design.²¹³ Churchwardens' paid a total of 13½ s. to William Hulle, carver for "making the gorge a& the dragonne" in 1534. The George was a gift from an unnamed noble patron. The wardens recorded an expense of 1s. 8d. outlaid "at the erlis gywyng of ye gorges," so perhaps a small ceremony accompanied the gift.²¹⁴ Parishioners in Leverton commissioned seventeen carved alabaster images to be placed in the rood loft in 1526.²¹⁵ Although the churchwardens' accounts do not provide any further details about the images, it is likely they would have included saints, the Apostles, and possibly a carving of the Trinity.²¹⁶ In Sutterton, William Ravytt was paid 2d. for setting up two new saints' images in the church in 1521. An image of St. Thomas was mended in 1526, and in 1530 the parishioners commissioned a new image of the Virgin Mary. Churchwardens paid workmen 2d. for the "cartyng home of our lady" and an additional 1d. "for bred and dryng to them that helpyd hyr in to the carte."²¹⁷

Louth's church of St. Peter had images of the Holy Ghost and St. George that were frequently being repaired. In 1500, churchwardens recorded a payment of 12d. to John Leeke for "latyng doun the holy gost at dyvers tymes" under the heading "paid for reperacion about the kyrke."²¹⁸ In 1518, Rob[ert] Boston and Ric[hard] Boston were paid for "the holy gost aperyng in the Kirke roffe" and for "said holy gost os apers."²¹⁹ It seems that this image was raised and lowered for ceremonial purposes. Louth's St. George guild maintained the statute of St. George

²¹³ Katherine French notes that in the sixteenth-century St. George became a popular patron amongst the gentry and parish elites, French, *People of the Parish*, 204-5.

²¹⁴ Nichols, 225.

²¹⁵ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 21; Peacock, "Leverton," 349; Thompson, 564.

²¹⁶ Duffy describes a similar bequest for rood-loft images from the parish of All Saints, Bristol, *Stripping of the Altars*, 159

²¹⁷ Peacock, "Sutterton," 61-2.

²¹⁸ Dudding, 7.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 192-3

and provided the lights that before his image. A memorandum from 1513 noted that an image hung “a bouthe Saynt George neyke,” and in 1515 a “Saynt George prest” is mentioned in the accounts.²²⁰ The church’s inventory lists “ij ymages od silver and giltt. on litill ymage of oure lady giltid. And j noder ymage of saynt xpofer giltid. With other ij ymages sum thing begare. j of the said ij is gilyd and enameled. of the one part.”²²¹ Finally, in 1518, workmen were paid 8d. “for moo saincts helpyng,” but which saints are not named in the entry.²²² These images and statues were didactic, votive, and decorative in purpose. In commissioning and maintaining them, laypeople endeavored to beautify their churches, instruct the ignorant, and secure intercession for the living and dead through patronage of the cult of the saints.

Parishioners also founded schools as a way to educate local young people. They considered this to be a pious act.²²³ These educational institutions ranged from “song schools” to grammar schools that provided elementary education for parochial children. Wigtoft churchwardens were responsible for keeping their village schoolhouse in good repair. Their accounts do not specify what type of school they kept, but it was probably a grammar school that offered lessons to the parish children like the one founded by Louth’s Holy Trinity guild to instruct the “youth of the town and surrounding countryside in good manners and polite letters.”²²⁴ Wigtoft’s accounts do not provide much detail besides the fact that there was a school, and churchwardens paid for door repairs, the construction of a partition, and other upkeep in

²²⁰ Dudding, 163, 173.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

²²² *Ibid.*, 203.

²²³ Barbara Hanawalt and Ben McRee, “Keepers of the Lights: Late Medieval Parish Gilds,” *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 14 (1984), 33.

²²⁴ Williamson, 86.

1487, 1500, and 1521.²²⁵ The Louth guild of St. Mary also supported a song school in conjunction with the churchwardens of St. James' church.²²⁶

The churchwardens' accounts from St. Mary, Grimsby are the only accounts that mention the spiritual work of forgiving debts. Contemporaries conceived of debt as "the result of poverty rather than criminal intentions, and its forgiveness was enjoined in the Lord's Prayer."²²⁷ The fourteenth-century *Lay Folks Catechism* taught that Christians must understand "zif we be vn-merciful to men þat be oure dettours, trist we to oure fadyr þat he wyl punysche vs."²²⁸ This forgiveness of debts owed to the church is some of the only direct evidence of how Lincolnshire churches dealt with poor parishioners. In 1411-12, the accounts recorded the cancellation of 13s. 4d. of Robert Bolynton's 40s. debt, 4s. of John Stalingburgh's debt "as he is a poor man and had nothing," 4s. 8d. of Henry Loksmyth's debt "as he has nothing and is dead," and 2s. of Walter Mourbray's debt "because he is poor."²²⁹ The fourteenth-century Middle English poem *Piers Plowman* also advocated for the forgiving of debts through the amelioration of rents.²³⁰ Grimsby churchwardens did just that when they forgave 2s. or Walter Manby's debt for rent "by special grace."²³¹

Churchwardens' accounts demonstrate that late medieval people expended tremendous physical and financial effort to enhance the experience of "charite" in parochial life.

²²⁵ The accounts for 1500 record that John Frankes was paid 1s. 8d. for "scolyng yt was behind." Nichols glosses "scolyng" as scouring or schooling. Frankes (Frankys) is mentioned repeatedly in the accounts doing repairs and building projects around the church, so maybe he is being paid in 1500 for cleaning, not teaching at the school. This might be the same John Frankysh (spelled differently in each entry), who served as churchwarden in 1487, 1499, 1500, 1505, and 1508.

²²⁶ Williamson, 86.

²²⁷ Cullum, "And Hir Name Was Charite," 195.

²²⁸ Simmons, *The Lay Folks' Catechism*, 10.

²²⁹ Gillett, 36

²³⁰ Bennett, 21.

²³¹ Gillett, 36.

Contemporary gender roles, however, would have dictated the ways in which men and women performed charity in the parish. Male parishioners frequently gave gifts of money to their parish churches. Women, who were typically responsible for the domestic space of the home, made contributions to parish life that were often reflective of their household obligations.²³² Just as they were responsible for laundering and mending clothes and providing food and drink for their families in the household, women cleaned and mended altar cloths and vestments, hosted workmen, and provided food and drink for church functions. Women donating foodstuffs was in line with gendered expectations about the practice of charity. In emulation of Martha, who prepared a meal for Christ, women's charity was expressed in the locus of the home or through the allocation of household resources such as food and drink.²³³ Sutterton's churchwardens paid Jon Pese's wife 14d. for bread and ale and Thomas Hune's wife 6d ob. for an additional pot of ale for their Rogationtide celebrations.²³⁴ While the churchwardens' accounts under consideration do not give direct evidence about who provided the holy bread for post-Mass fellowship, it is possible that parish women donated the bread in rotation to the church as a good work. Christine Peters has argued in her scholarship on women's piety that, "the provision of the holy loaf by different households in the parish in turn allowed the public expression of the housewife's role as the representative of the household in ritual provision."²³⁵

The contributions of female parishioners to parochial life in Wigtoft were well recorded by churchwardens. In addition to the boarding of workers discussed earlier, women made bell-

²³² French, *Good Women*, 18.

²³³ See Cullum, "Gendering Charity in Medieval Hagiography," in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, eds., Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 135-7; French, *Good Women*, 185.

²³⁴ Peacock, "Sutterton," 57.

²³⁵ Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety*, 17.

strings and cared for vestments. Thomas Bett's wife was paid 4d. for making strings for the church bells in 1511 and 1519.²³⁶ Alsom (Halsome) Jeffe frequently washed altar cloths, a task for which she was paid between 2 and 4d.²³⁷ Margaret Hoggeson and Agnes Bawne also washed altar cloths.²³⁸ Alyson Randall cleaned the church's candlesticks.²³⁹ Thomas Dekonson's wife, Katherine, who boarded workmen, was paid 4d. for making a sleeveless surplice.²⁴⁰ Similarly, women mended surplices and altar clothes, and cleaned candlesticks in Leverton. Isabell Fendyke appears in churchwardens' accounts numerous times for mending vestments, and in 1526, she was paid 3d. for embroidering all of the linen altar cloths for the St. Thomas altar with a "T" made of black silk, and those for the Our Lady's altar with an "M."²⁴¹ In Louth, Janet Patryngton and Agnes Gyles washed albs and cloths for the high altar year after year.²⁴² Female parishioners did light physical labor around the parish church. The churchwardens of St. Mary's Grimsby paid two women 12d. for clearing thatch out of the churchyard. Women also served as parochial benefactresses donating items to their churches during their lifetimes and as testamentary bequests. In line with gendered giving practices, female parishioners frequently donated household items like sheets, table cloths, and towels to be used as altar cloths and banners in the church.²⁴³ In Hagworthingham, a certain Margery left a sheet to the church with the instructions that it be made into a banner, possibly for parish processions.²⁴⁴ Similarly,

²³⁶ Nichols, 205-6.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 213, 219.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 219.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 227.

²⁴¹ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 20v.

²⁴² Dudding, 29, 104.

²⁴³ French, *Good Women*, 41. Women's bequests are discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

²⁴⁴ Grange, 7.

Grimsby parishioner Mabel Couper donated linen to the church to make vestments.²⁴⁵ As Katherine French has pointed out, parochial piety expanded the range of women's religious activity; yet, these activities were in keeping with an acceptable range of contemporary gendered expectations of appropriate behavior.²⁴⁶

Episcopal Visitations

Ideally, the parish represented the ideal Christian community in microcosm. Parishioners were expected to live in a state of Christian harmony with one another, which was articulated in the notion of charity and realized through performing the works of mercy; therefore, enacting communal harmony constituted a serious religious undertaking. The ecclesiastical hierarchy constantly reminded clergy and laity alike of their duties to God and their neighbors—reinforcing religious teachings on mercy, charity, and good neighborhood at the Mass, through preaching at the pulpit, religious imagery, and in ballads, plays, and prescriptive texts. Lincolnshire's churchwardens' accounts demonstrate that the works of mercy, both corporeal and spiritual, were integral to the ways in which medieval parishioners conceived of and collectively practiced religion. Yet, episcopal visitations offer an important corrective to the corporate charity reflected in churchwardens' accounts because they demonstrate the ways in which individuals accepted or rejected the charitable obligations placed on them by the Church and the parish, and how parochial charitable expectations informed social discipline in the reporting of misbehavior. Episcopal visitations reveal that communities faced numerous impediments in their efforts to actualize Christian charity; the visitors' findings implicate both

²⁴⁵ In Louth's 1513 inventory, churchwardens recorded altar cloths and towels donated by Jenytt Wayth, Agnes Est, and Kateryn, Dudding 156-7. Women also donated money to the parish church, like Louth widow Kateryn Mason's gift of 12d., and Wigtoft's Alice Looke, who left £1 to St. Peter and St. Paul's for repairs, Dudding, 196; Nichols, 200.

²⁴⁶ French, *Good Women*.

the clergy and laity in failing to practice charity. Lincolnshire's visitation records illustrate that churchwardens, as both members of a parish and parochial agents of the Church, were most concerned with infractions that breached communal norms for 1) the performance of traditional charity (alms and corporeal works), 2) expanded charity in the form of practicing sacred hospitality, sacramental participation, and rituals of Christian fellowship, and 3) spiritual works of mercy as practiced through the cult of the saints.

Bishops customarily held a primary visitation during their first year as incumbent, followed by visitations conducted every three or four years.²⁴⁷ The visitation involved the bishop, or more frequently episcopal deputies, traveling around the diocese to conduct inquiries into clerical and lay conformity and hear presentments of clerical and parishioner behavior from local churchwardens.²⁴⁸ The visitors used a list of prearranged questions to conduct their inquiries, and were often only interested in the answers to these particular questions.²⁴⁹ The responses they gathered and recorded reflect the intersection of centralized Church concerns regarding conformity and local concerns surrounding morality and liturgical regularity. Although dependent upon and shaped by both visitor questions and lay cooperation, visitations offer some insights into how laypeople acted upon their obligations to religious charity; they record instances in which charitable obligations were rejected by laypeople as well as how charitable expectations informed social discipline. Visitations also reflect gendered expectations of social

²⁴⁷ Owen, "Short Guides to Records," 185. See also French, *Good Women*, 209.

²⁴⁸ Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire*, 201-1, "Short Guides to Records," 186; Swanson, *Church and Society*, 163-5.

²⁴⁹ French, "Medieval Women's History: Sources and Issues," 201; A. Hamilton Thompson, *Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1517-1531* (Hereford: Hereford Times Limited), vol. 33. There are no extant visitors' questions for Lincolnshire parochial visitations, but from the types of misbehavior recorded in the documents, issues of clerical hospitality, incontinence, and pastoral care as well as lay peace-breaking, absenteeism, and sacramental non-participation appear to have been the primary foci of churchwardens' reports and ecclesiastical inquiry.

and religious behavior, which in turn informed the understanding and reporting of misbehavior.²⁵⁰ Visitors on occasion reported back “*omnia bene*,” or that all was well, but much more frequently cited parochial failures of some sort. Most accusations were dealt with by the visitors themselves, but they referred serious cases to the episcopal courts.²⁵¹ The first part of this analysis of episcopal visitations considers the more complete visitation records from Bishop Atwater’s administration 1517-19, and the second part will examine the ways in which parishes conformed with or rejected episcopal correction by looking at the visitation records from Bishop Longland’s 1530 survey.²⁵²

In the case of traditional charity, Lincolnshire clergy and laity alike were reported for failures surrounding the burial of the dead and visitation of the sick. In 1519, John Lee, a curate from Spalding, was reported for refusing to accompany the bodies of deceased parishioners in funeral processions if he was not paid 2d. for his attendance.²⁵³ He also celebrated divine service at irregular hours and faced multiple charges of incontinence. The curate of Haseley’s parish church would only go as far as the church gate to meet funeral processions.²⁵⁴ In Pirton, the

²⁵⁰ French, “Medieval Women’s History,” 202.

²⁵¹ French, *Good Women*, 209. While this type of statistic is not available for Lincolnshire, Katherine French notes that in the case of Kent, ten percent of complaints made at visitations were referred to the bishop, 294. See also, Swanson, *Church and Society*, 165.

²⁵² This survey of episcopal visitations uses Thompson’s *Visitations in the Diocese of Lincolnshire*, vols. 33 and 35, which are printed Latin records of the parochial visitations of Bishop Atwater’s administration (1517-19) and Bishop Longland’s administration (1530). A detailed statistical analysis of these visitations tracking for longer term changes over time in categories of reported misbehavior exceeds the current scope of this project, but will be undertaken in my future work. It will include the use of manuscript parochial visitations from 1437, 1473, 1500 and the early sixteenth-century, which are in the collection of the LRO, but that I was unable to access for this project.

²⁵³ Thompson, *Visitations*, vol. 33, 61.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxvii.

curate refused to perform burials.²⁵⁵ Minster Lovell’s vicar buried parishioners without mass or the other divine offices.²⁵⁶ For their part, parishioners were reported for failing to pay burial fees, properly execute wills, and properly maintain cemeteries. Pirton’s parish church appeared to have suffered a wealth of abuses—multiple parishioners failed to pay for burials and owed the church money for bequests.²⁵⁷ Kibworth parishioners failed to provide the church with a bier for funerals.²⁵⁸ Numerous churches in the diocese were reported for having crumbling cemetery walls, or even worse, cemeteries being used as pasture for livestock. In 1519, Hagworthingham parishioners were cited for their cemetery being improperly enclosed. In the same year, the parishioners of Surfleet were reported for allowing horses and ewes to graze in the cemetery.²⁵⁹ In terms of the visitation of the sick, Pirton’s curate refused to visit his sick parishioners.²⁶⁰ Likewise, the curate of Loughborough would not leave his “games” or “jests” to administer to the sick, and told parishioners that he would not answer their first petitions for his help.²⁶¹ Slawston’s parish priest was hindered from properly performing these duties by the fact that his parishioners failed to provide him with a lantern light to carry before the Host when he visited the sick.²⁶² Only clergy were cited for failing to “keep hospitality,” which meant a dereliction of their obligations to perform “hospitable works of mercy”—feeding, quenching, clothing, hosting and entertaining, or otherwise caring for the community.²⁶³ Contemporary priest’s handbooks

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 121.

²⁵⁶ Thompson, *Visitations*, vol.33, 132.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 121.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 10.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 59.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 121.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 30.

²⁶² Ibid., 11.

²⁶³ Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, 226. Heal defines “keeping hospitality” as “conviviality and accessibility which would have involved generosity at times of feast, and

like the *Doctrinal of Sapience's* (c. 1489) attempted to impress upon priests the centrality of sacred hospitality to pastoral care. For example, its explication of the paternoster's petition for daily bread reminded priests of their sacred duty to feed their flock with "bodyly" and spiritual bread—explaining, "by the words afore we demaunde of Or Lorde that he gyue to vs the brede of helthe and of doctrine, the whiche the prestes shold gyue to vs."²⁶⁴ In emulation of God's charity, priests had the responsibility to distribute this "bread" to parishioners "wisely & charitably." Failure to provide sacred hospitality would lead to clerics' damnation.²⁶⁵ It is possible that because visitors still conceived of keeping hospitality as a clerical duty, laypeople were not cited because they may not have been asked questions about hospitality.²⁶⁶ Sacred hospitality was an important element of practicing the corporeal works, for clergy or laity, so it may also be possible that clergy as exemplars were officially sanctioned, whereas laypeople faced censure through (undocumented) community disapproval and increased pressure to consider the ramifications of their actions on Christ's impending Judgment Day sentence.

Parish clergy and their parishioners were jointly cited for laxity in performing expanded charity in the form of church upkeep, church attendance and sacramental participation, and practicing Christian fellowship. Visitation records reveal that clergy were more neglectful of

almsgiving in time of dearth," 255. She found that in the case of Lincolnshire visitations 1517-9, "when the men of a parish complained about the absence of hospitality it was not the truly poor that were in their minds...the expectation was rather that a cleric would be an active participant in the social life of his community, offering on occasions a focus for general good neighborliness and fellowship," 254.

²⁶⁴ Gallagher, *Doctrinal of Sapience*, 136

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 136

²⁶⁶ Heal makes this suggestion regarding presentations of regular clergy at episcopal visitations, pointing out that the infrequency of complaints made about monastic hospitality could "reflect the indifference of the inquisitors rather than the adequacy of the regulars," *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, 245. She also points out that in the case of an absent cleric, "lay farmers had the theoretical obligation to maintain hospitality...but Lincoln commissaries showed no interest in trying to enforce this duty," 254.

their duties to maintain the chancel more frequently than their parishioners were of the duty to maintain church naves.²⁶⁷ While visitors reported that the chancel was in ruins on multiple occasions, naves were usually only recorded as deficient—parishioners may have failed to keep vestments and altar cloths clean and in good repair, but they very rarely allowed the entire nave to lapse into complete ruin. Wigtoft's chancel was defective and the rectory of Richard Shepherd in Leverton was in ruins.²⁶⁸

While the sacramental program of the church was necessary for salvation, integrated Christians into the community of believers, and reconciled Christians to God and one another, visitors cited clerics for failing to administer the sacraments and parishioners for refusing to receive them. The aforementioned curate of Loughborough allowed parishioners to die without the sacrament and would not baptize infants. The rector of Orton Longville and vicars of Bradwell and Bicker were all reported for denying parishioners communion. Absenteeism and failure to communicate were more frequent charges than complete clerical neglect of sacramental duties. In contemporary sermon collections, clergymen addressed their concerns over the lack of religious devotion and absenteeism to their male parishioners in particular.²⁶⁹ Episcopal visitations demonstrate that this concern was well founded as more men were presented for missing church than women; while men could make the excuse that they were working on the Sabbath, which was still cause for sanction, most men presented were like Surfleet's John Robert, Thomas Barret, Edward Laborer, John Robynson, James Tailor, Richard Dalley, Robert Bachelor,

²⁶⁷ Thompson, *Visitations*, vol. 33, xxvi.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁶⁹ Katherine French's chart of episcopal visitations for Hereford, Salisbury, Kent, and Lincoln demonstrate that men were presented much more frequently than women were for missing church; this indicates clerical concerns that men were less pious than women were based in their real life experiences with male parishioners. See French, *Good Women*, 212.

and Thomas Tofte, who were cited for spending the time they should have been in church at the ale-house drinking.²⁷⁰ Occupational considerations, religious apathy, or heterodox beliefs were possible reasons for habitual absenteeism, however, visitors also reported that offenders such as Edmund Sterre of Beaconsfield had more legitimate excuses—he told the visitors that he feared that royal writs would be served against him, and was too poor to afford appropriate clothes for church.²⁷¹

When parishioners did actually make it to church, they on occasion disrupted services by talking, arguing, and even fighting in the churchyard or the church itself. Leverton parishioners Thomas Cooke and John Lounde frequently disrupted divine service with their talking.²⁷² In a somewhat unusual turn of events, Gosberton parishioner, Thomas Leyk was cited in 1519 for bringing an infant to church with the “deliberate intention to annoy.”²⁷³ The infant’s crying reportedly impeded services, and then Thomas, himself, for a reason not stated, broke one of the church’s crosses.²⁷⁴ During the Mass, the pax or kiss of peace was “the symbol of social reconciliation.” Parishioners were meant to kiss the pax-board “in token of mutual charity,” however, even this ritual could be fraught with conflict.²⁷⁵ In 1519, several men, including chaplain John Clopham, were presented for quarreling with John Wynde’s wife and preventing her from kissing the pax during services. Apparently this was in retribution for John Wynde’s

²⁷⁰ Thompson, *Visitations*, vol. 33, 59.

²⁷¹ Thompson, *Visitations*, vol. 35, 13.

²⁷² Thompson, *Visitations*, vol. 33, 69.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, xlvii.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 60, 69.

²⁷⁵ Brigden, “Religion and Social Obligation,” 77.

neglect of his obligation to provide a light to burn before the Blessed Mary in Godmanchester's church—a failure for which he had been cited for at the episcopal visitation the previous year.²⁷⁶

Peace-breaking “was a civil offense, punished by the secular courts in serious cases, but the church courts too judged marital quarrelers, scolds and barrators, and those who were “out of charity,” for they disturbed the Christian community.”²⁷⁷ Those who disrupted communal harmony were “barred from the sacraments by the righteous indignation of their neighbors or their priests, the person” in the best position to prevent the unreconciled from joining the worthy in the rights of the church.” Both men and women were guilty of breaking the peace, however, the ways in which their actions were understood and reported were informed by gendered expectations of appropriate behavior. Women were more likely to be charged with scolding for speaking to other parishioners in scornful, forceful or disrespectful manners,²⁷⁸ while men's words were more frequently accompanied by acts of violence. In St. Thomas, Wainfleet, Johanna White, Margaret Sheffield, and William White's unnamed wife were reported disturbing the peace during services.²⁷⁹ Aylesby parishioners Elizabeth Waltham and Johanna Gunnell were presented for similar unseemly behavior in church—Elizabeth for starting a fight over her seat in

²⁷⁶ Bowker, *An Episcopal Court Book for the Diocese of Lincoln, 1514-20*, 63, 63 n. 5; Thompson, *Visitations*, vol. 33, 118.

²⁷⁷ Brigden, “Religion and Social Obligation,” 79.

²⁷⁸ In his *Festial* sermons, Mirk describes the envious and wrathful as backbiters, who were considered particularly disruptive to communal harmony. Verbal transgressions were often attributed to women, but Mirk's sermons hold men and women equally responsible for this sin. See Sandy Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Gregory “Witchcraft, Politics, and Good Neighborhood,” 57; David Underdown, “The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England,” in *Order in Disorder in Early Modern England*, eds., Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 116-36.

²⁷⁹ Thompson, *Visitations*, vol. 33, 80.

church, and both women for being common scolds.²⁸⁰ As demonstrated in Chapter Two, sermons and prescriptive literature encouraged women to both “preach” and admonish sinners within the context of the household. While this may have opened up spaces for women to critique the behavior of sinners in the home, it also limited that space for critique to the home. Licensed fraternal correction became illicit scolding depending on the context—thereby transforming a good work into a sin when gendered expectations for behavior were informed by issues of space and place.²⁸¹ While religious correction was emancipatory in some ways for women, its effects are bounded by gender, social expectations, and geography.

In numerous cases involving male parishioners, hostile words escalated into actual physical violence. John Lowth of Alconbury assault fellow parishioner Thomas Holmes in church three times—once at matins, next at mass, and again at vespers. Clergymen were not exempt from violence either—being both victims and perpetrators. John Metham of Princes

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 86.

²⁸¹ In *Good Women*, Katherine French notes a similar phenomenon in terms of women’s ability to participate in parochial religion—while participation in the parish expanded spaces for women’s pious and social practices, the acceptable range of the practices was bounded by gendered expectations of appropriate behavior. See also French, “Women in the Late Medieval English Parish,” in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), 172. As far as the consideration of issues of space/place is concerned, Barbara Hanawalt makes the important argument that “the power of dominant groups lies, in part in their ability to control the ordering of space for subservient groups,” in “Medieval English Women in Rural and Urban Domestic Space,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 52 (1998), 19. See also French, *Good Women*; Barbara A. Hanawalt, *Crime and Conflict in English Communities, 1300-1348* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), “‘Good Governance’ In the Medieval and Early Modern Context.” *The Journal of British Studies* 37, no. 3 (1998), 246-57; Shannon McSheffrey, “Jurors, Respectable Masculinity, and Christian Morality: A Comment on Marjorie McIntosh’s Controlling Misbehavior,” *The Journal of British Studies* 37, no. 3 (1998): 269-78; Marjorie K. McIntosh, “Local Change and Community Control in England, 1465-1500.” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (1986): 219-42, “Response.” *The Journal of British Studies* 37, no. 3 (1998): 291-305, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Risborough was charged with breaking the chaplain's head.²⁸² Only piety prevented William Brown from assaulting vicar William Mosse during high mass—a fact reflected in his declaration to Mosse: “thow art a reade headed foxxe; and iff thow wer a nother maner of man I wold vse the after another maner.”²⁸³ In terms of acts of violence, laypeople appear to have respected the exalted status of the clergy more than the clergy did themselves—clerics were presented for assaulting their parishioners more frequently than their parishioners were for assaulting them. Hartford's vicar was presented for walking around the village armed with his sword and shield, and bringing his sword into the church.²⁸⁴ The curate of Hardwick, Sir William, assaulted his parishioners on multiple occasions. He was cited for drawing his sword on Thomas Bek, and in another instance, striking Henry Ships, tearing his clothes.²⁸⁵ The chaplain at Fulstow, Sir Agnus, was a common on brawler.²⁸⁶ Barton-on-Humber's curate, Sir George, assaulted the town's watchmen.²⁸⁷ And finally, Broadwell's vicar used physical force to remove a female parishioner from her seat.²⁸⁸

Parishioners and clergymen were also cited for disrupting or neglecting rituals of Christian fellowship and communal harmony. A Hartford man, John Kareles, was cited for eating so much of the holy bread when it was distributed that other parishioners were forced to

²⁸² Thompson, *Visitations*, vol. 33, 53.

²⁸³ This altercation is quoted in Daniel E. Thiery, “Plowshares and Swords: Clerical Involvement in Acts of Violence and Peacemaking in Late Medieval England, c. 1400-1536,” *Albion* 36 (Summer, 2004), 220.

²⁸⁴ Thompson, *Visitations*, vol. 33, 6. Daniel E. Thiery discusses the issue of clergymen and violence at length in “Plowshares and Swords.”

²⁸⁵ Thompson, *Visitations*, vol. 33, 43.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 134.

go without.²⁸⁹ Visitors also made numerous reports that Rogationtide processions were being neglected. In every case, it was clergymen, not their parishioners who were guilty of not fulfilling this obligation to defined communal bounds and foster fellowship. Contemporaries believed that it was “unneighborly” not to participate in Rogationtide celebrations,²⁹⁰ and sermons argued that missing these perambulations was a greater sin than failing to attend church. Through the neglectfulness of Harrington’s rector, parishioners were not led through the fields on Rogation Days.²⁹¹ In Chipping Norton, there were Rogationtide processions, but the parish clerks refused to participate in them.²⁹²

In terms of the spiritual works of mercy, the clergy and laity were both cited for failing to fulfill their obligations to the cult of the saints by providing lights to burn at altars and before images. Previously mentioned Godmanchester parishioner’s failure to provide a light to burn before the Blessed Mary in the parish church resulted in his wife being unable to kiss the pax-board.²⁹³ In Greetham, Robert Page, John Plunton, and Richard Laithorp owed lights to burn before the crucifix, and John Bradley and John Page owed lights to burn before the image of the Virgin.²⁹⁴ These parishioners may have had legitimate financial restraints that kept them from meeting their obligations to the church. Thomas Oxford, vicar of Worminghall and canon of St. Frideswide, had no such excuse for refusing to allow his parishioners to provide candles for images of the saints. The visitors reported that not only would he not permit parishioners to light votive candles, but that as soon as the candles were offered, he would take them and keep them

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 6.

²⁹⁰ Hindle, 210.

²⁹¹ Thompson, *Visitations*, vol. 33, 67.

²⁹² Ibid., 134.

²⁹³ Bowker, “Episcopal Court Book,” 63, 63 n. 5; Thompson, *Visitations*, vol. 33, 118.

²⁹⁴ Thompson, *Visitations*, vol. 33, 67.

for himself.²⁹⁵ Churchwardens also reported clerics for neglecting their spiritual duty to instruct the ignorant. Since Archbishop Pecham established his catechetical program for the laity in the thirteenth-century, clergymen were expected to provide their parishioners with a quarterly vernacular exposition of seminal Christian teachings at their local parish church.²⁹⁶ In Harrington, however, visitors found that the rector had not read the articles of faith or other elements of the catechism to parishioners in three or four years.²⁹⁷ A curate near Woodstock was cited for refusing to instruct the children of the parish.²⁹⁸

Although some scholars have used episcopal visitations as evidence of a growing religious antipathy as well as a decline in charity and neighborliness,²⁹⁹ visitations are also evidence that churchwardens and parishioners hoped to address parochial deficiencies with the help of intervention and correction from formal ecclesiastical authorities. Churchwardens were given notice that observed defects in the church fabric, vessels, and churchyard were to be rectified within an allotted amount of time under penalty of monetary fines.³⁰⁰ Individual offenders were warned by officials, or presented to episcopal courts. Visitors infrequently recorded the punishments they levied, but they would have been monetary fines, varying forms of penance, and in extreme cases excommunication.³⁰¹ Whatever the sentence, there were in most cases multiple opportunities for reconciliation with the parish and the Church. While not all of the parishes visited by Bishop Atwater's deputies in 1517-19 are represented in the records of Bishop Longland's visitations in 1530, generally speaking, parishioners implemented the

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁹⁶ Duffy, 53.

²⁹⁷ Thompson, *Visitations*, vol. 33, 67.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, xxxvii.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, xxxviii.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, xli.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, liii, xli.

changes dictated by episcopal visitors.³⁰² For example, the aforementioned derelict parishes of Godmanchester, Harrington, Minster Lovell, and Pirton received a passing grade from visitors, who recorded “omnia bene” in 1530, while the state of affairs in Orton Longville was recorded as “omnia mediocriter.”³⁰³

Conclusion

Evidence from churchwardens’ accounts demonstrates that laypeople took a broad view of parochial charity. While charity was an important aspect of collective parish piety, citations found in episcopal visitations reveal that parishioners’ day-to-day performance of Christian hospitality and the works of mercy fell short of prescriptive ideals. While visitors recorded numerous instances of misbehavior, the reporting of such illustrates that local communities at the very least felt the desire to correct these issues. The performance of the works of mercy helped to structure parish life, and concern for their proper practice through Christian hospitality held a great deal of currency to medieval parishioners. Although the prescriptive and sermon literature discussed in chapters two and three demonstrated that laypeople were encouraged to perform all seven works of mercy, in practice, parochial charity took the form of the works that centered on the locally significant elements of sacred hospitality—providing food and drink, and care for the sick and deceased. Parishioners were also invested in taking on more responsibility in the ritual and liturgical life of their parishes through the appropriation of clerical educational initiatives by undertaking specific spiritual works of mercy—educating the ignorant and praying for the living and dead. The practice of charity through Christian hospitality and the works of mercy were similar in Lincolnshire’s villages and towns—the difference was one of scale. In terms of the

³⁰² Ibid., lxvi.

³⁰³ Thompson, *Visitations*, vol. 35, 1, 18, 24, 27, 48.

role played by gender in the parish, the conceptualization of charity in terms of hospitality allowed women to participate in parish life in meaningful and spiritually significant ways as they translated housekeeping and household management skills into church-keeping skills.³⁰⁴

Through the boarding of parish-hired workmen, provision of food and drink for the parish community, and domestic upkeep of the church, women also played an important role in the performance of sacred hospitality and the domestic management of “God’s house.”

³⁰⁴ French, *Good Women*, pp. 17-49.

Chapter 4
**‘for the increase of divine worship and the devotion of man’: Religious Guilds, Charity,
and Community in Late Medieval Lincolnshire**

The substantial survival of guild records for Lincolnshire provides an excellent starting point for an investigation of the ways in which collective acts of affective piety nurtured notions of Christian community. While guild records are not unique to Lincolnshire, their relative abundance for this county and its geographic diversity make it a fruitful locus for the consideration of the role played by the Seven Works of Mercy in guild activities and how the works of mercy influenced the creation of guild statutes. Lincolnshire also boasts a large number of all-female organizations, like wives’ and maidens’ stores, making an investigation of local lay-religious communities important for the study of women’s piety and understanding women’s roles in contemporary notions of ideal Christian society as well. Looking at the guild returns of 1388, guild accounts, and wills, this chapter assesses the relationship of gendered religious instruction on charity, the works of mercy, and good neighborhood to parishioner behavior in Lincolnshire through an examination of its urban and rural parish guilds. This chapter argues that 1) religious guild membership was quasi-monastic in character, 2) guild members had a broad understanding of the Seven Works of Mercy, and adapted them to suit local concerns and vernacular conceptions of charity, 3) by conceiving of their organizations as spiritual families, guilds made the participation of women integral—with the seven works opening up spaces for women to undertake pious activities that complemented their household and familial duties, and 4) as corporate bodies of laypeople guilds appropriated clerical prerogatives in their performance of spiritual as well as corporeal works of mercy.

Local religion in medieval England centered on the parish, neighborhood, and guild. The relationships created within these associations were maintained by the bonds of charity and served as a support system for the individual Christian from birth to death. Participation in religious guilds offered laypeople opportunities to actualize the virtues of charity and good neighborhood through corporate activities that enacted the works of mercy. Guild membership allowed the laity to embody “sacred Christian kinship” by providing them with “Christian solidarity as an object of free choice,” and presenting them with “the opportunity of conforming themselves more exactly with Christ.”¹ In essence, laypeople could create their own spiritual kin-groups based on collectively held pious objectives; frequently couching their fellowship in familial terms, they conceived of the Church as their spiritual mother, and viewed each other as brothers and sisters in piety. Through guild membership and guild activities, laypeople aspired to create microcosms of an idealized Christian society within these organizations, endeavoring to nourish Christian fraternity and affection among members according to Christ’s commandments. In many ways, guilds’ spiritual families operated like the family created by the monastic cloister, which was characterized by a piety that was directed upward towards God, inward towards the cloister, and outward towards the neighborhood.²

¹ John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 58.

² Jörg Sonntag, “On the Way to Heaven. Rituals of *Caritas* in High Medieval Monasteries,” in *Aspects of Charity: Concern for One’s Neighbor in Medieval Vita Religiosa* (Berlin: Hopf, 2011), 48; see also Caroline Barron, “The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London,” in *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society*, eds., Caroline M. Barron and Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1985), 13-37, “The London Middle English Guild Certificates of 1388-9,” *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 39 (1995), 108-145; Christopher F. Black and Pamela Gravestock, *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Burlington: VT, 2005), *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); David J. F. Crouch, *Piety, Fraternity and Power: Religious Guilds in Late Medieval Yorkshire, 1389-1547*. Rochester: York Medieval Press, 2000; Konrad Eisenbichler, “Italian Scholarship on Pre-Modern Confraternities in Italy,”

In choosing to join a parish guild, laypeople became part of a self-selecting community bonded by collective devotion to a particular saint, oaths to live in accordance with specific teachings of the church, and bounded by vows of loyalty to their fellows. Through their

Renaissance Quarterly 50, no. 2 (1997): 567-80; Ken Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia, c. 1470-1550* (Rochester: York Medieval Press, 2001); Katherine French, "Maidens' Lights and Wives' Stores: Women's Parish Guilds in Late Medieval England," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 29, no. 2 (1998), 399-425; Ian Gadd and Patrick Wallis, *Guilds and Association, 900-1900* (London: Centre for Metropolitan History, University of London, 2006); Barbara Hanawalt, "Neighbors and Brotherhoods," in *The Ties That Bound: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 257-267, "Keepers of the Lights: Late Medieval Parish Gilds." *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 14 (1984): 21-37, Hanawalt and Ben McRee, "The Guilds of 'Homo Prudens' in Late Medieval England," *Continuity and Change*, Vol. 7, no. 2 (1992), 163-179; Ben R. McRee, "Bonds of Community: Religious Gilds and Urban Society in Late Medieval England," Indiana University Ph.D. 1987; "Religious Gilds and Civil Order: The Case of Norwich in the Late Middle Ages," *Speculum* 67, no. 1 (1992), 69-97, Charity and Gild Solidarity in Late Medieval England," *The Journal of British Studies* 32, no. 3 (1993), 195-225, "An Urban Fraternity in the Age of Reform," in *Mittelalterliche Bruderschaften in Europaischen Staedten (Medieval Confraternities in European Towns)* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 2009), ed., Monika Escher-Apsner, 47-66; Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 67-78; Gervase Rosser, "Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England," *The Journal of British Studies* 33, no. 4 (1994), 430-46, "Parochial Conformity and Voluntary Religion in Late-Medieval England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 1 (1991), 173-89, "Communities of Parish and Guild in the Late Middle Ages," in *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion, 1350-1750*, ed. S. J. Wright (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 29-55, "Finding Oneself in a Medieval Fraternity: Individual and Collective Identities in the English Guilds," in *Mittelalterliche Bruderschaften in Europaischen Staedten (Medieval Confraternities in European Towns)* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 2009), ed., Monika Escher-Apsner, 29-46, "Party List: Making Friends in English Medieval Guilds," in *London and the Kingdom: Essays in Honour of Caroline Barron*, Matthew P. Davies and Andrew Prescott, eds., 118-134 (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2006); Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds* (London: The Early English Text Society, 1870); Nicholas Terpstra, *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ronald F. E Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1982); H.F. Westlake, *The Parish Gilds of Mediaeval England* (London: Macmillan Company, 1919), "The Origins, Purposes, and Development of Parish Guilds in England," *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institution of Archaeology* 17 (1921), 163-174.

membership in these organizations, they were able to put church teachings to live peacefully and charitably into practice on a day-to-day basis. This self-selecting community of believers was obligated to hold its members accountable for their actions and administer sanctions for disobedience. Unlike guilds organized explicitly for the commercial or vocational regulation and advancement of merchants or artisans, parish guilds were first and foremost organized to commemorate the saints, to memorialize the dead, and to do charitable works for the living. These activities included, but were not limited to, providing funerals for brethren, distributing alms, organizing masses, feasts, and prayers for members-both living and dead, purchasing candles and furnishings for the local parish church, funding church repairs, hiring priests and chaplains for extra masses, prayers, and services, and sponsoring religious plays and processions.

Parish guild records allow for contrasts to be made between prescribed pious activities and the actual pious activities of late medieval laypeople as revealed by documents that they produced themselves. Until about thirty years ago the study of guilds in England was primarily the province of antiquarians looking to romanticize the quaint religious culture of pre-modern England, trace the evolution of trade-unionism or mutual benefit and insurance societies, or discover the origins of English democracy.³ In the 1980s and 1990s, however, the work of revisionist historians like Eamon Duffy, Christopher Haigh, J.J. Scarisbrick, Diarmaid MacCulloch and Christopher Marsh brought the study of voluntary religious organizations like guilds and fraternities to the fore. The contribution of guilds and fraternities to late medieval piety became a topic of scholarly interest, especially in debates about the nature of the English Reformation. Arguing against A.G. Dickens' thesis in *The English Reformation* that dissatisfaction with the late medieval church made reformation necessary, progressive, and

³ Hanawalt, "Keepers of the Lights," 23; Smith, *English Gilds*, xii.

widely accepted by the people, Duffy and others presented a picture of a late medieval church that was vibrant and vital, and flexibly accommodated the broad spiritual needs of the populace. These historians demonstrated that far from being confused by a Latin mass and the mysterious activities of a priest, large numbers of laypeople directly participated in the life of the Church. In addition to being able to engage actively with the Church through monastic houses and chantries by giving alms, praying for the dead, participating in saints' cults, and going on pilgrimage, lay people were also able to take a central role in their own spiritual lives and those of their neighbors through membership in a parish guild.

While at present, few scholars would deny the important role played by guilds in parish life as a complement to parochial piety, there is still a great deal of debate over the primary defining activities of parish guilds.⁴ They have been described as the “the poor man’s chantry,” which allowed laity below the level of the gentry to pool their financial resources to fund corporate masses for their collective souls.⁵ They have been called “burial clubs” because of their focus on providing members with funerary services.⁶ Some scholars have focused on the role played by Purgatory and intercession in guild activities.⁷ And still other scholars have argued for the importance of the patron saint and guild feast in understanding the pious impulses

⁴ Farnhill, “Guilds, Purgatory and the Cult of the Saints: Westlake Reconsidered,” in *Christianity and Community in the West: Essays for John Bossy*, ed., Simon Ditchfield (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 71. Farnhill argues that guild piety and lay piety are not synonymous—guild piety existed at “one point of a particular devotion, ultimately linked to the central concerns of the Catholic church,” 71.

⁵ J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 20.

⁶ Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 39-40. See also Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 257-267. According to Hanawalt, seventy-four percent of the guild returns from 1389 said that burial is a primary reason for foundation, 262.

⁷ Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, *passim*.

that underlay guild foundation.⁸ Nineteenth-century scholarship on parish guilds portrayed these associations as mutual benefit societies or precursors to insurance companies because of the financial aid they provided to members in need.⁹ Nationally, thirty-one percent of guilds reported that they made provisions for their needy members.¹⁰ In Lincolnshire, the percentage was much lower, with only twenty-four guilds out of 123, or twenty percent, providing for impoverished brothers and sisters. The guild of St. Margaret in Lincoln allowed for 6d. to be given members in poverty annually for up to three years. If the member was unable to repay the 18d., they were still allowed to remain in the guild, but were ineligible for additional assistance.¹¹ The guild of the Exaltation of the Cross, Lincoln, gave 12d. yearly for up to three years, with the understanding that the money would be repaid if possible.¹² The Boston guild of St. Peter and St. Paul gave weekly of aid, and had no stipulations about repayment or renewal of funds.¹³ In Harlaxton, the guild of the Blessed Virgin gave 7d. weekly to those in accidental poverty expressly to ensure that they would not have to beg in the streets.¹⁴ By way of a final example, the Lincoln guild of Corpus Christi in the church of St. Michael on the Hill allowed the payment of 1d. daily in accidental poverty.¹⁵

⁸ Farnhill, "Guilds, Purgatory and the Cult of the Saints," 59; Hanawalt, "Keepers of the Lights," 26.

⁹ Smith, pp. xiv, xix, xxviii-xxix.

¹⁰ This statistic is drawn from the Chancery returns, McRee, "Charity and Gild Solidarity," 199.

¹¹ PRO C 47/40/143; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 171. According to Westlake, this guild was associated with the weavers, but was not a craft guild.

¹² PRO C 47/41/160; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 174.

¹³ PRO C 47/39/88; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 157.

¹⁴ PRO C 47/40/124, see also McRee "Charity and Gild Solidarity," 210. McRee argues that "the delivery of assistance to members in need was only one among several objects of gild relief programs. Important complementary goals of such plans were to protect the public reputations of the organizations that sponsored them and to strengthen gild solidarity by reinforcing the sense of mutual obligation among gild members," 198.

¹⁵ PRO C 47/40/135; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 167.

One of the criticisms that scholars have leveled at medieval charity is that it was indiscriminate in nature, and as a result, ineffective, undisciplined, and wasteful.¹⁶ Guild charity to members was, generally speaking, quite discriminating. According to the Chancery returns, the reputation of the beneficiary as well as the circumstances of their poverty were taken into consideration before they could qualify for aid. Financial relief depended on the moral uprightness of the recipient, and would only be given in certain cases—provisions were typically made for old age, infirmity, and misadventure. The Spalding guilds of the Holy Trinity and St. Mary of the East Bank would only provide for members whose poverty was “undeserved.”¹⁷ In Harlaxton, the guild of St. Mary aided those whose poverty was “accidental.”¹⁸ The Killingholme guild of St. Mary made provisions in very specific circumstances—loss of cattle, fire, or robbery.¹⁹ This type of aid was most frequently provided by urban guilds, which made up eighty-eight percent of guilds relieving members’ poverty.

While guild ordinances reveal prescriptive attitudes towards relieving the poverty of members, the nature of surviving records makes it difficult to tell whether or not guilds put these ideal guidelines into actual practice. In studies of guild charitability, a number of scholars have found that while a large number of guilds stipulated for the provision of alms to destitute members in their statutes, few actually provided financially for their impoverished members.²⁰ Ben McRee has subsequently argued that the previous conception of charitable giving was too narrow, and posited that effectiveness of the charitable efforts of guild relief programs could not

¹⁶ Jordan, *Philanthropy in England, 1480-1660* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1959), 19.

¹⁷ PRO C 47/41/167; PRO C 47/41/168, Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 176.

¹⁸ PRO C 47/40/124; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 165.

¹⁹ PRO 47/40/132; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 167.

²⁰ Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 255; Barron, “The Parish Fraternities of Medieval London,” pp. 26-7.

fully be measured by the amount of aid actually provided to guild members. Instead, he has asserted that was necessary to examine charitable efforts alongside complementary motives such as protecting the reputations of guild members and strengthening the ties of mutual obligation to determine the relative success of their relief programs.²¹ While McRee called for a reassessment of guild charity, he still primarily defined charity as the provision of monetary alms. If charity is conceived of more broadly—as encompassing good neighborhood and creating affective bonds of mutual obligation, then the picture of parish guilds as charitable institutions becomes more positive. I would contend that in order to understand the motivations and pious goals of guild members, the sum of parish guilds activities, including those that at first glance might not seem pious in character must be considered as a whole. The overarching objective of guild members

²¹ Ben McRee, “Charity and Gild Solidarity,” 198. Miri Rubin and Caroline Barron found that while a large number of guilds stipulated for the provision of alms to destitute members in their statutes, few actually provided financially for their impoverished members. McRee has subsequently argued that Rubin and Barron’s conception of charitable giving was too narrow, and disagreed with their assertion that main function of guild relief was addressing material hardships. He posited that effectiveness of the charitable efforts of guild relief programs could not fully be measured by the amount of aid actually provided to guild members. Instead, McRee asserted that was necessary to examine charitable efforts alongside complementary motives such as protecting the reputations of guild members and strengthening the ties of mutual obligation to determine the relative success of their relief programs. While almsgiving was a charitable endeavor that counted among the works of mercy, protected the reputations of guild members, and created bonds of mutual obligation, it was statistically less significant than other community building activities mentioned in the guild returns. According to McRee’s figures, ninety-two percent of the returns of guilds offering alms to members promised burial services for brethren, seventy-five percent contained provisions for candles to be lit in veneration of patron saints, sixty-eight percent included funds for masses to be said, thirty-seven percent provided for communal feasts, and another thirty-one percent discussed religious processions, Ben McRee, “Charity and Gild Solidarity,” 198. In Lincolnshire, the numbers for each category mentioned by McRee skewed slightly differently; instead of burying the dead being the primary object of Lincolnshire guilds (sixty-eight percent), it was second in popularity to praying for the living and dead (seventy-nine percent). More Lincolnshire guilds funded masses (seventy-nine percent) than sponsored candles (seventy-eight percent). The percentages for feasts (thirty-six percent) and processions (thirty percent) were almost the same as McRee’s. As demonstrated by these statistics, charity was a central concern to guild members, but they conceived of its meaning more broadly than has been addressed in most studies of guild activities.

was to enact a community in charity under the auspices of God and a patron saint; they both practiced and embodied charity by performing spiritual and corporeal works of mercy in their communities.

Although parish guilds were an integral part of late medieval piety, the reconstruction of a comprehensive picture of guild life is difficult due to the uneven survival of records generated by guilds themselves. Scholarship on guilds, therefore, necessarily utilizes a diverse body of often-disparate primary source material. One of the richest sources used by scholars remains the Chancery returns occasioned by Richard II's survey.²² In 1388, fearing that parish guild members may have been involved with the Peasants' Revolt only seven years earlier, Richard II's government conducted a nationwide survey of guild activity. Richard II issued two writs demanding that guilds throughout England send official documentation of their organizations to the Chancery by February 2nd of the following year. The first writ was directed at parish guilds. The writ authorized the sheriffs in every shire to proclaim that the master or alderman of every guild or brotherhood in the country was obligated to return documents to Chancery stating the "manner and form and authority of the foundation," along with information about the origins of their organizations, their continuance and governance, details regarding oaths, gatherings, feasts, general meetings, ordinances, usages, customs, goods, and lands, as well as whether or not the

²² Westlake and Smith printed both extracted and complete returns from the 1388 Chancery survey. Where possible I have consulted the original manuscript documents. When Smith published *English Gilds* in 1870, he noted that many of the returns were in poor condition. I found the same to be true when I examined them myself. In the case of the majority of Lincolnshire guilds, the Chancery returns are the only records we have detailing their activities. This makes it difficult to make generalizations about changes in guild activities over time, however, where I can I have used extant guild accounts and churchwardens' records to supplement the 1388 returns.

lands were held in mortmain.²³ The second writ was aimed at craft guilds. It authorized sheriffs to make the same proclamation to the master or alderman of every mystery or craft throughout the country. The Crown used vague language to describe its motivation for the surveys, with the writ to the religious guilds merely stating that the proclamations were being authorized “for certain good and reasonable causes brought and made known before us and our council in our last Parliament, held at Cambridge.”²⁴

Although the official royal writs provide no specific reasons for the nationwide survey, circumstantial evidence suggests that concerns over the law of mortmain, fear of potentially subversive and rebellious activities after the 1381 Peasants’ Revolt, and the desire to seize and resell guild holdings as a means to finance war likely motivated Richard II to order the review.²⁵ Prior to the survey, the Commons had petitioned Parliament for the suppression of all guilds and fraternities, excepting those that benefitted the Holy Church and increased divine service without the use of liveries, confederacies, maintenance or riots against the law. The petition further asked that all of the goods and chattels of the dissolved guilds be used to finance war with France.²⁶ It appears that not much was actually done with the information gathered by the survey. Parish guilds were not subjected to further taxation, nor were they dissolved and their goods seized and sold to finance war. In 1391, however, the Crown did finally bring the guilds within the scope of mortmain legislation, but this was far from the drastic measures initially advocated by the Commons.²⁷

²³ Smith, 128.

²⁴ Ibid., 127.

²⁵ J. A. Tuck, “The Cambridge Parliament, 1388,” *The English Historical Review* 84 (1969): 237.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 238.

The contents of the guild returns reflect the uncertainty over how the provided information would be used. The vague language of the royal writ commissioning the survey put guild members on the defensive. As a result, guild responses to the writ preempted any accusations of wrongdoing by routinely professing loyalty to the monarch and the law. Although guilds may have geared their responses toward what guild members thought government officials wanted to hear, their responses at the very least reflected their perceptions of what a voluntary religious organization should aspire to be. Richard II's writ may have been ambiguous about his motivations for the guild survey, but guild members were discerning enough to recognize that their organizations needed to appear non-threatening to the government for the sake of survival. For example, Louth's Corpus Christi, St. Swithin, and Twelve Apostles guilds reported that of "lands, tenements and rents in mortmain or otherwise and of other chattels for the use of the said guild they have none at all," and besides an annual feast, they had no other gatherings, and no guild oath.²⁸ Lincoln's Resurrection, St. George, Holy Cross, St. Anne, and Corpus Christi guilds all had their ordinances approved and sealed by the Dean of Lincoln Cathedral.²⁹ Although thousands of guilds must have submitted returns to Chancery, only 509 returns survive for the whole of England. One hundred and twenty-three, or twenty-four percent, of those returns are from the county of Lincolnshire, and urban centers such as Boston, Lincoln, Grantham, Louth, Stamford, and Spalding account for more than half of the county's returns. In addition to the Chancery returns, I have found further reference to seventy-one more guilds in

²⁸ PRO C 47/41/161; R.W. Goulding, *Louth Old Corporation Records* (Louth: J.W. Goulding, 1891), 159-160.

²⁹ PRO C/47/40/136 (Resurrection), PRO C 47/40/137 (St. Anne), PRO C 47/141 (St. George), PRO 47/40/153 (Holy Cross), PRO C 47/40/159 (Corpus Christi); Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 168, 170, 173, 149.

wills and churchwardens' accounts for a total of 192 medieval guilds in Lincolnshire.³⁰ While the guild returns for the county of Lincolnshire represent almost one-quarter of the total returns for the entirety of England, scholars have largely ignored them in favor of the East Anglian ones. The Lincolnshire returns are unevenly distributed between rural and urban areas—with urban or borough guilds making up sixty-three percent of the extant total; a disparity which skews our understanding of guilds' pious activities and concerns. The guild returns are a particularly important source for evidence of lay piety because they are records generated by guild members themselves. While they reveal a great deal about vernacular religious ideals, aspirations, and practices that cannot be found in other sources, they are often limited by the fact that they do not always offer a full account of an organization's activities. These limitations can be mitigated to an extent, however, by the use of supplementary documents such as churchwardens' accounts, the financial accounts produced by the guilds themselves, and wills.

'in token of brotherly love and charity': Parish Guilds in England³¹

On the eve of the Reformation, there were over 30,000 parish guilds in England, or an average of three guilds per parish.³² Proliferating rapidly from the mid-fourteenth century onward throughout the whole of the country, their numbers continued to grow steadily until their

³⁰ The churchwardens' accounts and wills that reference the additional seventy-one guilds do not typically provide much more information besides the guilds' names. For this reason, anecdotal evidence will include these guilds, but statistical calculations will be based on the Chancery guild returns alone.

³¹ In 1339, a group of laypeople in the town of Grantham came together to establish the guild of Corpus Christi. Through the foundation of this guild, these laypeople endeavored to honor the body of Christ with commemorative activities and good works. On the feast of Corpus Christi, the members of the guild were to attend the Mass together, gathering afterwards for a communal feast. Each married couple was required to provide food for a pauper at the feast. Upon the election of the guild alderman, each member was required to give him the kiss of peace "in token of brotherly love and charity," PRO C 47/40/109; see also Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 162.

³² Farnhill, "Guilds, Purgatory and the Cult of the Saints," 60; Rosser, "Going to the Fraternity Feast," 431.

dissolution in 1547 by Edward VI's religious reforms.³³ The marked increase in the foundation of parish guilds in the fourteenth century has been partially explained by an inability to establish new parishes by the year 1300 and the consequent need for the creation of community organizations to fill in the gaps.³⁴ The aftermath of the Black Death and growing emphasis on Purgatory also probably contributed to the rapid growth of these guilds.³⁵ Membership in a parish guild was a common experience for most medieval people, with only the very poor unable to pay an often-nominal entry fee. Parish guilds were fairly open voluntary organizations of laypeople whose membership was drawn from a broad social spectrum. They came together under the auspices of a patron saint to engage in "community-building" activities.³⁶ Parish guilds fulfilled the role of communal or cooperative chantries committed wholly to providing religious and social services for members.³⁷ In contrast to the membership of merchant and craft guilds, which limited membership to those engaged in a particular trade, parish guild members represented a wide variety of occupations and social statuses. For example, the Corpus Christi guild in York was able to boast the membership of the king and his courtiers, while at the same time listing paupers among its brethren.³⁸ The economic diversity found among parish guild members helped to foster the creation of intimate vertical and horizontal ties between them.

³³ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580*. (New Haven: Yale, 1992), 142.

³⁴ Rosser, "Communities of Parish and Guild," 33.

³⁵ Hanawalt and McRee, "The Guilds of 'Homo Prudens,'" 164. John Bossy disagrees that institutional fraternity was a result of the Black Death, suggesting instead that the impact of the plague was to give the voluntary associations that had been around since the conversion of the West "new lease on life," Bossy, *Christianity in the West*, 58.

³⁶ Ben R. McRee, "Bonds of Community," 37.

³⁷ Barron, "Parish Fraternities," 23; Clive Burgess and Beat Kümin, "Penitential Bequests and Parish Regimes in Late Medieval England," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44 (1993), 614; Westlake, "The Origins, Purposes, and Development of Parish Gilds in England," 167.

³⁸ Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 54. For diversity of membership lists see also Ormrod, 35.

Parish guilds represented a valuable social network for laypeople where they were able to cultivate commercial and political relationships as well as religious fraternity.³⁹

In addition to being inclusive across socio-economic boundaries, parish guilds were also inclusive across the gender divide as well. Of the 509 surviving Chancery returns from this survey, only five parish guilds had statutes prohibiting female members.⁴⁰ Women joined as the sisters, wives, and daughters of male members, but were also allowed to join as single women and widows not related to male brethren, and participated as benefactresses, founders, light guardians, money collectors, feast organizers, and stock-keepers.⁴¹ Almost all existing parish guild statutes make provisions for female members who could belong on equal terms with men,⁴² and with the exceptions of the Baston guild of St. John the Baptist and guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Killingholme, Lincolnshire, guild statutes do not distinguish between the behavioral and participatory expectations for male and female members.⁴³ The published membership registers of guilds such as the Corpus Christ guild in York and Holy Trinity Guild in Coventry reveal that women often accounted for fifty percent of those guilds' membership.⁴⁴ Boston's Corpus Christi guild attempted to collapse hierarchies, which included those dictated

³⁹ Scarisbrick, 20.

⁴⁰ Hanawalt, "Keepers of the Lights," 25; Smith, *English Gilds*, xxx. McRee gives a different number, 519 total, 473 for religious guilds, "Community and Gild Solidarity," 199.

⁴¹ Herbert Westlake notes that women have been explicitly included as parish guild members since the late eleventh century, "Origins, Purposes, and Development of Parish Gilds."

⁴² Barron, "Parish Fraternities of London," 32.

⁴³ PRO C 47/39/76 (St. John the Baptist), PRO C 47/40/132 (Blessed Virgin Mary). See Smith, 185. Guilds may also not have needed gendered rules because members would have already been pre-conditioned to act in accordance with societal expectations about gender. No statutes survive for gender-exclusive parish guilds, so it is not possible to know whether or not these organizations had rules that reflected gendered behavioral expectations.

⁴⁴ Hanawalt, "Keepers of the Lights," 25. Ormrod, 37. The membership of Boston's Corpus Christi guild was made up of women and clergy, with laymen as a minority (1335-1543), Ormrod, 37.

by gender expectations, by stipulating that the names of the brothers and sisters of the guild should be entered “not according to the dignity or rank of the persons, but according to the order in which they were received into the fraternity.”⁴⁵ Less institutionalized are sub-parochial organizations, which often supported candles to burn before a shrine maintained by a guild or the parish at large. These groups often drew membership from specific marital and age groups, for example maidens, wives, and bachelors. While all guilds likely sought to inculcate proper social and religious behavior amongst their membership, the same-sex, lifecycle-specific organizations endeavored to socialize members and instill in them gender and age appropriate Christian behavior.⁴⁶ Lincolnshire had the largest number of all-female parish-based organizations found in late medieval England.⁴⁷ As such, a study of the variety of sub-or extra-parochial lay religious organizations provides an important point of entry into the examination of late medieval lay piety.

Although parish guilds were ostensibly a reflection of the laity’s desire for Christian unity, they have traditionally been viewed in opposition to the parish. Early scholarship on the parish guilds tended to characterize the parish as compulsory, static, and restrictive, while juxtaposing guilds as voluntary, dynamic, and flexible.⁴⁸ Laypeople had to belong to a parish in order to participate in the church’s sacramental program, which was required for salvation.

⁴⁵ Thompson, *History and Antiquities*, 115.

⁴⁶ Katherine L. French, *The Good Women of the Parish* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 143. There has been considerable debate over what constitutes a parish guild, especially in regards to organizations designated as “lights.” Some scholars characterize a guild as a formalized organization with a sense of permanence to it. Less permanent establishments then fall into the category of a “light” or a “store.” Lights and stores tended to lack the endowments and officers that guilds had. See Ken Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia, C. 1470-1550* (Rochester: York Medieval Press, 2001), 120 n.130; French, “Maidens’ Lights and Wives’ Stores: Women’s Parish Guilds in Late Medieval England,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 29, no. 2 (1998), 403 n. 25, *Good Women of the Parish*, 119, 270 n. 4.

⁴⁷ French, *Good Women*, 127-8.

⁴⁸ Gervase Rosser, “Communities of Parish and Guild,” 30.

Membership in a parish guild, however, was a matter of personal choice; one in which laypeople were able to select those with whom to worship corporately and what forms the corporate worship would take. The characterization of the parish as an agent of the established Church and the guild as an autonomous lay association, or “consensual parish,” created the impression that the parish and the guild represented incompatible and possibly conflicting forms of religious organization.⁴⁹ Historians set up guilds and their devotional activities as surrogates for faltering ecclesiastical institutions and viewed the enthusiastic participation of lay brethren as potentially subversive and proof of growing dissatisfaction with a decaying medieval church. However, overwhelming evidence to the contrary has illustrated that lay religious organizations existed to both complement and supplement offerings by the established church, not to replace it.⁵⁰ Guilds and fraternities worked hand-in-hand with the clergy to provide masses, prayers for the living and the dead, schooling for parishioners, charity for the infirm and impoverished, and proper burials for members. In addition, guilds and fraternities took it upon themselves to both foster and enforce canonical injunctions to uphold neighborliness, create peace, and maintain communal harmony, thereby becoming agents of religious orthodoxy and public order.⁵¹

**‘by deuote oroyson and good admonicyo[n]’: Parish Guilds and
the Spiritual Works of Mercy**

In many ways, late medieval people conceptualized charity as a series of concentric circles. Ecclesiastical pedagogy encouraged clergymen to practice a universal charity, which taught that all Christians were the neighbors to whom love was owed. Lay charity was less inclusive in nature. As the *Lay Folks’ Mass Book* discussed in previous chapters taught, the laity

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Hanawalt, “Keepers of the Lights,” 35; Hanawalt and McRee, “The Guilds of ‘Homo Prudens’,” 169.

⁵¹ Hanawalt, “Keepers of the Lights,” 35.

should reserve charity primarily for their sib men and neighbors. Servants, fellows, and friends occupied the outer rings of these concentric circles of charity.⁵² The charity of religious guilds was similarly exclusive. It took on quasi-monastic characteristics as guild members viewed one another as sib men, calling each other brother and sister, and conceived of one another as the neighbor for whom works of mercy were performed. These elements of guild membership share many parallels with monastic notions of charity, fraternity, and fellowship. Scholars studying the monasticism of the High Middle Ages have found that monastic orders practiced charity through works of mercy in the “neighborhood” of the cloister. Monastics fulfilled the precept to love one’s neighbor through pious acts “directed especially at those who were striving to perfect their quest for the salvation of their soul”—namely other monks.⁵³ These pious acts were “caritas-ritualizations,” which centered on the “table-fellowship” of collective meals, almsgiving, prayer, and commemoration of the dead.⁵⁴ Like monastic piety, guild piety was directed upward towards God, inward towards the guild community, and in a much more limited capacity, outward towards the parish.⁵⁵

For parish guild members, charity was unity. They constituted it by the performance of good works, which according to Augustine were semi-sacramental in nature. As such, parish guilds demonstrated a particular concern for maintaining the wholeness of their self-subscribed pious communities. They used the works of mercy as vehicles through which they both solidified communal bonds and defined communal boundaries. The spiritual works of praying for the living and the dead, admonishing sinners, bearing wrongs, and forgiving trespasses as

⁵² Simmons, *The Lay Folks Mass Book*, 52.

⁵³ Gert Melville, *Aspects of Charity: Concern for One’s Neighbor in Medieval Vita Religiosa* (Berlin: Hopf, 2011), VII.

⁵⁴ Sonntag, “On the Way to Heaven,” pp. 30-53.

⁵⁵ Sonntag, “On the Way to Heaven,” 48.

well as corporeal works such as the burial of the dead, feeding and quenching of the hungry and thirsty, welcoming strangers, caring for the sick, and clothing the naked were important aspects of guilds' corporate religion. However, like monastic communities, guilds practiced these works within the "cloister" of their own organizations. Guilds did engage the parish community at large, but in a limited way. (see tables 4.1 and 4.2)

Table 4.1 Spiritual Works of Mercy Performed by Guilds

Total number of guilds performing this particular work	Urban	Rural
Admonishing sinners/bearing wrongs/forgiving 14% (17)	94% (16)	6% (1)
Praying for living and dead 79% (97)	66% (64)	34% (33)
Instructing the ignorant 25% (31)	97% (30)	3% (1)
Bundling spiritual works through increase of divine service (providing priests and chaplains that will perform all seven spiritual works) 62% (76)	66% (50)	34% (26)

Table 4.2 Corporeal Works of Mercy Performed by Guilds

Total number of guilds performing this particular work	Urban	Rural
Feeding/quenching 24% (30)	80% (24)	20% (6)
Clothing 4% (5)	100% (5)	0
Strangers 20% (24)	100% (24)	0
Sick 3% (4)	100% 4	0
Prisoners 2% (2)	100% (2)	0
Burying dead 64% (79)	68% (54)	32% (25)
Bundling through institutions 3% (4)	100% (4)	0

Parish guilds were an integral part of a broader late medieval Christian culture, at the heart of which was the ideal of “holy neighborliness,” which has been discussed in previous chapters.⁵⁶ Holy neighborliness encompassed the relationship between the community of Christian believers and the saints on one hand, and the spiritualized character of the relationship between individual Christians on the other. Late medieval laypeople thought of the saints as “celestial neighbors,” to whom they owed a “debt of interchanging neighborhood.”⁵⁷ The laity venerated the saints, who in return watched over and protected them.⁵⁸ This relationship of mutual obligation mirrored the relationships neighbors were instructed to develop and maintain with one another. It also underlay the foundation of parish guilds in the first place as they were

⁵⁶ Duffy, 138.

⁵⁷ Duffy, pp. 160, 168, 188.

⁵⁸ Christopher Marsh, *Religion in Sixteenth Century England: Holding Their Peace* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1988), 65.

vehicles through which laypeople were able to practice holy neighborliness, corporate charity, and seek intercession through the patronage of the cult of the saints.

Examples from the returns for guilds in in the towns of Burgh, Caistor, and Spalding illustrate the motivations behind their founding, the localized, grassroots nature of guild concerns, and the types of activities in which guilds aspired to engage. While the patronage of a particular saint motivated laypeople to found guilds, it was the commemorative social activities honoring the saint that brought guild members together as communities in charity. The Burgh guild of St. James was founded in 1365 by communal assent. “Five men had vowed a pilgrimage to the land of St. James, and while returning after its completion were in great danger from a storm at sea. So they vowed that if by the intercession of St. James they were preserved and should return in safety to their homes, they would build an altar in honor of St. James in the church of St. Peter. When they had made their vow, the storm ceased, and by the saint's intercession they came to their desired haven. On coming to their own homes and being asked by their neighbors how they had fared, they told of the tempest and of their vow, so all combined to build the altar.” Each member was to contribute a measure of barley towards the fabric of the church.⁵⁹ The Caistor guild of Corpus Christi was founded when its original members noticed “a great lack in the church—namely, that from the ‘day of preparation,’ on which the body of Christ is placed in the shrine by the priests, to the time of the Resurrection, no natural light was set to burn around the Divine Body,” so they provided for thirteen lights to burn before it.⁶⁰ In the case of Spalding, a man named John de Rughton painted a “beautiful image in honor of St. John in 1358, and for

⁵⁹ PRO C 47/39/91; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 33, 158; A.E.B. Owen, ed., *The Medieval Lindsey Marsh: Select Documents* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 1996), 15; Edmund Venables, “Burgh-le-Marsh Guild Certificates,” *Lincolnshire Notes & Queries* IV (1896), 51-3.

⁶⁰ PRO C 47/39/92; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 158.

some time he and other devout people found a light for it.” Almost twenty years later, in 1383, another Spalding resident, John Torald decided to collect funds to provide a chaplain to celebrate in praise of St. John the Baptist. He and his fellow parishioners combined to form a guild to undertake the management of these pious activities, agreeing that “the keeper of the chapel and the warden should twice a year diligently inspect the missal, lights and ornaments and repair them if necessary.” Guild members attended funeral ceremonies for dead members—hiring six poor men or boys to carry candles, and sponsored thirteen candles in the chapel.⁶¹

Guild statutes frequently admonished members to pray for the living and the dead. As this was the spiritual work of mercy that aided souls in Purgatory, guild members, like all medieval Christians regarded it as a religious obligation of the utmost importance. They performed this spiritual work through sponsoring masses during which they commemorated their dead through prayers and through the maintenance of votive lights. Most Christians could expect to spend time in Purgatory, since only saints were called directly to Heaven. However, the souls of the departed were able to pass through Purgatory more quickly if the living helped the dead through their intercessory prayers. Purgatory’s “position between heaven and earth allowed intercession by parties from either place, thus sparking a huge investment by the laity and clergy in securing remission of the time they would have to spend there, through the employment of chantry priests and invocation of saints.”⁶² While saints were called upon to intercede in a wide variety of travails afflicting the living, their intercession on behalf of the souls in Purgatory was of particular importance. Saints were part of an “economy of grace.” They bestowed gifts upon their supplicants and performed miracles—“the essence of their cult lay in its assurance of

⁶¹ PRO C 47/41/166; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 175-6.

⁶² Farnhill, “Guilds, Purgatory and the Cult of the Saints,” 60.

the possibility of rescue from the iron laws of cause and effect, the painful constrictions of poverty, disease, and the sometimes harsh ordering of society which burdened men and women.”⁶³

The Church provided laypeople with the spiritual tools to help mitigate the suffering their friends and family endured in Purgatory through the patronage of the cult of the saints. Honoring their patron saint through sponsoring images, altars, lights, and celebrating attendant feasts and festivals “was an important function of the fraternities because the patron was in the ideal place to intervene on behalf of the entire membership of fraternity: to intercede for souls in Purgatory, and protect those guild members still on earth.”⁶⁴ Guild members and their saintly patrons engaged in a reciprocal spiritual relationship; in exchange for the honors bestowed upon them, patron saints were expected protect the living and intercede on behalf of the dead.⁶⁵

The preoccupation guild records show with securing prayers for the dead led early guild scholars to argue that the belief in Purgatory and “the efficacy of prayer and alms as a means of deliverance therefrom” was the primary bond that unified guild members.⁶⁶ Lincolnshire records bear this out as ninety-eight percent guilds performed pious activities that were related to Purgatorial relief. Forty-three percent recorded that the commemoration of the dead and intercessory prayers were prime contributing factors to a guild’s establishment. Lincolnshire’s surviving returns asserted that the primary reasons for the foundation of a guild were the worship of God and their patron saint, and the provision of lights to burn before the image of that saint in

⁶³ Duffy, 186.

⁶⁴ Farnhill, “Guilds, Purgatory and the Cult of the Saints,” 69.

⁶⁵ Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish*, 36.

⁶⁶ Westlake, “Origins, Purposes, and Development of Parish Gilds,” 164.

commemoration and supplication.⁶⁷ To honor their patron saints, guilds funded images and altars, and supplied lights to be burned before them in devotion. Like Spalding's St. John the Baptist's guild, Holy Trinity guild in the same city, and the Grantham guild of the Invention of the Holy Cross each originated when a single layperson provided the local parish church with a saint's image or altar, and organized devotion grew up around it. John Toft "caused an altar to be made in the parish church in honor of the Trinity and provided its furniture, and so a gild was formed, which provided a chaplain." This guild took its devotion to the Holy Trinity so seriously, that its Chancery return stated that a member who failed to pay their portion for the upkeep of the altar with its chaplain and candles did so "as if despising the honor of the Trinity and the safety of his own soul."⁶⁸ In the case of the Invention of the Holy Cross, "Roger De Wolsthorp carved an image of the Saviour on the Cross, His mother and St. John, and built an altar and a fit place for divine service."⁶⁹ The Boston guild of Saint Peter and Saint Paul invoked "the author of pardon to grant them special grace that they may have perfect charity amongst them and the remission of sins, by the sufferages of the two apostles." The guild paid for a new chancel to be added on the north side of the church,⁷⁰ and commissioned two new wooden images of the apostles, providing thirteen candles to burn around them.⁷¹ The Louth guild of St. George was founded to maintain

⁶⁷ Guilds also dedicated themselves to liturgical celebrations and elements of religious doctrine—like Corpus Christi, Holy Trinity, and the Ascension. The celebration of Corpus Christi and the Holy Trinity were late medieval liturgical innovations, which served the purpose of facilitating lay understanding of the doctrines of the Trinity and transubstantiation, PRO C 47/41/167; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 30, 176. Religious guilds embraced these new devotions, and their patronage may reflect evolving guild concerns over the course of the late middle Ages.

⁶⁸ PRO C 47/41/167; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 167.

⁶⁹ PRO C 47/40/111; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 162.

⁷⁰ French, *Good Women*, 94; Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 133-5.

⁷¹ PRO C 47/39/88; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 157.

the statue of the saint in St. James' church.⁷²

Sponsoring lights to burn before an image or on their patronal saint's day was one of the most popular activities of parish guilds, and was a pious act that even the poorest guild was able to accomplish. Nationally, three-quarters of all parish guilds paid for a light to burn before a saint's image.⁷³ In Lincolnshire, the percentage was slightly lower, with sixty-six of guilds providing for a light. The Springthorpe guild of St. George funded a single light to burn before the crucifix in their parish church, while the Resurrection guild in Lincoln supplied twenty-four candles and four mortuary candles annually to burn around the sepulchre, "of which four square and four mortuary candles burn from the Burial to the Resurrection."⁷⁴ Other guilds, like the Horkstow's Holy Trinity guild, or Louth's St. Swithin guild, reported that the provision of a light during festivals was their only guild activity.⁷⁵

The celebrations and ceremonies that took place on the annual patron saint's day were "in many cases, the largest single source of expenditure, and perhaps the only time the entire guild gathered together."⁷⁶ With some variation based on a guild's wealth and resources, the annual patronal celebration included a company procession to the parish church, mass in honor of their patron saint and requiems for their dead, a meeting to conduct elections, discuss guild affairs,

⁷² Goulding, *Louth Old Corporation Records*, 175; Williamson, 85.

⁷³ Hanawalt, "Keepers of the Lights," 28.

⁷⁴ PRO C 47/40/136, Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 168.

⁷⁵ PRO C 47/40/126, Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 165; PRO C 47/41/161, Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 175.

⁷⁶ Farnhill, "Guilds, Purgatory, and the Cult of the Saints," 68. Although Farnhill says guilds gathered once a year for saints' day celebrations, according to guild statutes, members were all expected to attend members' funerals. In the case of Lincoln's guilds, members were required to assemble and accompany pilgrims to and from the city gates. See also Rosser, "Going to the Fraternity Feast."

and read the bede-roll, and concluded with a communal feast.⁷⁷ Processions offered guild brethren the opportunity to visually display their membership in an important socio-religious organization, reinforce their ties of fellowship, and edify the community.⁷⁸ These processions were also intended to reinforce group ties through the use of liveries, which allowed members “to kennen ye bretheryn an systeryn.”⁷⁹

The sponsorship of masses was also central concern for parish guilds. Guilds financed masses in accordance with the spiritual works of mercy, but they also did so for the promotion of Christian charity. Nationally, sixty-eight percent of guilds made provision for masses,⁸⁰ while the number was slightly lower at sixty-one percent in Lincolnshire. Masses were not only occasions for communal worship, but also ones that by their very nature required those in attendance to be in good charity with one another. The Mass was essentially a ceremony of peace and reconciliation where the individual Christian could expect harsh spiritual sanctions for seeking God’s mercy and forgiveness if they did not show mercy and forgiveness to others. Those who were wrathful could not experience divine charity, and as such were actually risking damnation in attending the Mass unworthily.⁸¹ The edifying and reconciliatory nature of the Mass itself provided guild members with the opportunity to reflect on both spiritual and temporal

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Nationally, thirty-one percent of guilds held processions, McRee, “Charity and Gild Solidarity,” 203. Hanawalt gives a much lower figure of seven percent of guilds nationwide specifying processions with garlands, candles, and banners in their 1388 returns, “Keepers of the Lights,” 29. In Lincolnshire, the number was much lower than that mentioned by McRee, with only nineteen percent of guilds mentioning a procession.

⁷⁹ McRee, “Unity or Division?: The Social Meaning of Guild Ceremony in Urban Communities,” in Barbara Hanawalt and Kathryn Reyerson, eds., *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 192.

⁸⁰ McRee, “Charity and Gild Solidarity,” 203.

⁸¹ Susan Brigden, *New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors, 1485-1603* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 43.

relationships. The liturgy constituted the focal point of medieval religion, and the Mass was its seminal component. The Mass was a ceremony that simultaneously restored the world and constituted the Church.⁸² Guild members were cognizant of the unifying and corporate message of the Mass, and that attendance constituted a community building experience, which strengthened their individual bonds with God, but also those within the community of believers.

While attending mass and witnessing the elevation of the Host bestowed blessings and protection upon parishioners in charity with their neighbors, it was considered sinful to attend while out of charity with ones fellows.⁸³ As late medieval Christians were ideally expected to go to mass at least once a week on Sundays, they were consistently called upon to maintain peaceful relations with one another in expectation of religious services.⁸⁴ In addition to the opportunities to attend the Mass celebrated at the high altar on Sundays, morrow masses for laborers, and low masses in side chapels and chantries multiple times throughout the day, most guilds also required their members to hear mass on a *mornspeche*, or a meeting day, which occurred either semi-annually or quarterly, and sponsored additional masses for their brethren on feast days, saints' days, and for members' funerals.⁸⁵ Guild ordinances imposed fines of money or wax on those brethren who missed any of the mandatory guild masses. As a pious act, the Grantham guild of St. Peter sponsored special masses, "so that travellers passing through the town" may hear them.⁸⁶ The Boston guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary also funded a dawn mass and a nine

⁸² Duffy, 91.

⁸³ John Mirk, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. Edward Peacock, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1902).

⁸⁴ Duffy, 99. Duffy argued that many late medieval Christians in fact attended Mass daily, however, as demonstrated by the Lincolnshire episcopal visitations examined in the previous chapter, absenteeism was a problem often faced by parish clergy.

⁸⁵ Duffy, *passim*.

⁸⁶ PRO C 47/40/115; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 163.

o'clock mass so that "travellers leaving town early or those coming to it from other places might have the chance of attendance."⁸⁷ The provision of these masses can be viewed as fulfilling the corporal work of mercy of welcoming strangers. While the ideal of perfect Christian charity was infrequently attained in real life, it was of primary import to guild members and guild sources present it as an aspiration central to the daily practice of their faith.

Guild meetings typically preceded guild feasts. They were occasions on which guild officials were elected, regulation were updated and read to the assembled members, bede-rolls were read and group prayers were said. Many guilds reported that members were required to recite a lengthy formulaic prayer at every guild assembly, which included prayers for the monarchy, patriarch of Jerusalem, pope, cardinals, pilgrims, and widows. They also said prayers for their dead as well since "the complete fraternity was a communion of the living and the dead"⁸⁸ At the Lincoln guild of the Resurrection's feast, following the meal four candles were lit, grace was said "together with the antiphone *Regina Celi Letare*, and the Lord's Prayer; and the names of all the dead bretheren and sisteren shall be read over, and the *De Profundis* shall be said for their souls."⁸⁹ Similarly, the guild of St. John the Baptist also used its annual feast as an occasion to commemorate its dead: "On the Vigil of St. John, immediately after dinner, the bell man shall go through the town and (exhort to) pray for dead brethren and sisters; knell and offices for dead after vespers and mass of requiem on the morrow, at which all attend, so doing they would have much joy in the feast. Afterwards, in giving thanks the chaplain shall say, *Inter Natos Mulierum*... in honor of St. John, and recite the names of the dead with *De Profundis* and

⁸⁷ Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 16.

⁸⁸ Farnhill, "Guilds, Purgatory, and the Cult of the Saints," 69; see also Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, 37; Crouch, 247.

⁸⁹ PRO C 47/40/139; Smith, 177.

prayers.”⁹⁰ Guild members were particularly attuned to paying the debt of interchanging neighborhood, and intertwined patronal devotion with the commemoration of their dead as a charitable endeavor that they would benefit from after their own deaths. In reading bede-rolls and praying for the dead guild members also made the absent present at a time when they were enacting a community in charity.

In addition to their extensive efforts to maintain charitable ties with the departed by securing remission and commemorating the dead, guild members tried to enact communities in charity among living members by creating and nurturing familial bonds between brothers and sisters. Since guild members aimed to create ideal Christian communities in microcosm, the foundations for these communities were notions of peace and harmony. Like monastics, guild members used the spiritual works of admonishing sinners, forgiving offenses, and bearing wrongs patiently as means of fraternal correction. First, guild members were meant to serve as exemplars. They were meant to model behavior through their own clean and sober living, charity with their neighbors, and good repute. Many guild statutes denied outright membership to those with morally questionable backgrounds, explaining that all new guild members must be of good reputation, condition, or bearing.⁹¹ These reputational conditions had the dual purpose of protecting the moral character of the guild by excluding persons of ill-repute, and charitably performing the fraternal correction of inappropriate behavior through community sanction and exclusion.

Religious guild members sought to inform the social relations between members by cultivating communal harmony through rituals of charity, restoring peaceful relations between

⁹⁰ PRO C 47/41/166, Westlake, 29, 175.

⁹¹ See PRO C 47/40/116, C 47/41/166, C 47/41/167, C 47/41/168, C 47/41/169.

members, and containing conflict. In addition to sponsoring community-building activities, they also aspired to settle conflict between members through local, extra-judicial, community-based mechanisms of peacemaking, peacekeeping, arbitration, and reconciliation. A community in which the public peace was kept was the very manifestation of the ideals of charity and “good neighborhood,” and fulfilled the spiritual works of bearing wrongs patiently, forgiving trespasses, and admonishing sinners. While this peace was an important element of Christian and guild ideals, only twelve Lincolnshire guilds had statutes governing disputes. Eleven of these guilds were located in urban areas, while the twelfth was the rural guild of St. Mary in the church of St. Andrew, Harlinton. The statutes of Lincoln’s Corpus Christi guild (founded 1328) capture the general tenor of dispute regulations. Disputants were not allowed to go to the law without permission from the guild’s leaders under penalty of fines of money or wax, or in extreme cases expulsion:

If any quarrel or strife arises between any bretheren or sisteren of the guild (which God forbid), the bretheren and sisteren shall, with the advice of the Graceman and the Wardens, do their best to make peace between the parties, provided that the case is such as can be settled without breach of the law. And whoever will not obey the judgment of the bretheren, shall lose his guildship, unless he thinks better of it in three days, and he shall pay a stone of wax, unless he have grace.⁹²

The mention of both bretheren and sisteren implies that male and female members would be able to have disputes settled with one another through the guild’s mediation channels.

Evidence from the returns suggests that conflicts arising at the feast and verbal disputes were the most common types communal breaches committed by guild members.⁹³ It is difficult to discern whether the strictures placed on conflict resolution were effective or even upheld. Some evidence from other counties does suggest that guilds were able to police the ways

⁹² PRO C 47/41/149; see also Smith, 182; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 174.

⁹³ See for example PRO C 47/10/147.

members resolved conflicts outside of their organization. Entries from the account book of the guild of the Assumption, Westminster reveal that on certain occasions the guild punished members for breaking the ordinances governing the recourse to law. The account book reveals that Thomas Wylde was fined 10d. for going to the law against two fellow guild members without the permission of the masters of the guild.⁹⁴ Similarly, William Burow was fined three pounds of wax for taking legal action against three guild members without permission, one pound per offence.⁹⁵ While these examples are from outside of Lincolnshire, it would not be unreasonable to think it possible that Lincolnshire's guilds were able to control members behavior in a similar fashion.

Guild members were not attempting to undermine the legal system with the limits they attempted to place on their members going to law, but instead were interested in mediating a settlement which restored harmony between disputants through dialogue; whereas a lawsuit had the potential to create more disharmony through the designation of one party as a winner and the other as a loser. Late medieval people often viewed litigation as a violation of the idealized relationship between neighbors. Arbitration and mediation represented better means to resolving conflict because they were rooted in consensus.⁹⁶ Contemporary ecclesiastical authorities frequently encouraged reconciliation over litigation, as it was a basic principle of canon law.⁹⁷ Neighbors and members of the parish clergy viewed it as their Christian duty to make peace between feuding parishioners. There were also more mundane considerations as neighborly

⁹⁴ Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 73.

⁹⁵ H.F. Westlake, *St. Margaret's Westminster: The Church of the House of Commons* (London, 1914), 58.

⁹⁶ J. A. Sharpe, "'Such Disagreement Betwyx Neighbours': Litigation and Human Relations in Early Modern England," in *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West*, ed. John Bossy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 175.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

conflict could become disruptive to the fabric of an entire community. Guild-sponsored peacekeeping fit into a larger parish culture that valued the importance of extra-legal dispute settlement.

Parish guilds often imbued the peacemaking process with religious ceremony. Guild members would conduct reconciliations in churches and have the newly conciliated parties swear their peace on relics or a bible, or bind it with a shared drink of wine. The relics, gospel, and wine represented powerful symbols of religious gravity and ancient hospitality, which gave the ceremony a deeply spiritual significance.⁹⁸ The public nature of the ceremony itself represented the healing of a breach in the community of the guild, within which guild members aspired to create in microcosm an ideal Christian society. In a broader context the ceremony represented Christians out of charity with their brethren, and therefore out of the ambit of God's grace and favor, being reintegrated into the larger Christian community of believers.

Although mediation and arbitration were ideal methods of conflict resolution, guild statutes did often outline procedures for taking a dispute to law. After failed mediation, the disputants were free to pursue litigation with the permission of the guild leaders. Generally a failed attempt at internal mediation allowed a dispute to be brought into the purview of formal legal authorities. In these cases, guild members would then lend their support to the person they considered to be in the right, illustrating the type of complementary relationship which existed between informal communal institutions and formal authorities.⁹⁹ They worked together to place limits on disruptive elements that were harmful to the fabric of their organizational

⁹⁸ Barbara Hanawalt, *Of Good and Ill Repute: Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 40.

⁹⁹ Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 83.

community life.¹⁰⁰ The informal regulation of conflict and consequent reliance on the law in the face of failed reconciliation constituted an intricate system of checks and balances which aimed to minimize discord and limit socially destructive behaviors.¹⁰¹

Religious guild members also attempted to maintain organizational unity in the face of conflict with their broader communities. The Lincoln guild of St. Margaret required members to maintain a united front when one of them was charged with breaking the public peace through the commission of a crime. The guild invoked familial bonds in their stipulation that “the entire guild must stand with members charged with any offense such as theft or homicide in markets or fairs, with counsel and help, as if they were children of the same mother and father.”¹⁰² If guild members were going to stand as a unit in the face of the law, they wanted to ensure that they were risking their personal reputations in support of persons of good repute. Guilds sought to control the moral makeup of members with character-based admission regulations, and limit the potential for socially harmful conduct by issuing ordinances governing behavior and limiting activities which were seen as possibly divisive or reflecting badly on the reputation and standing of a guild and its members. In his work on religious guilds, Ben McRee has argued that the cultivation and protection of good reputations were amongst the most important objects of guild membership.¹⁰³ He found that thirty-eight percent of guilds that provided charity for their members also had behavioral and reputational regulations that members were obligated to

¹⁰⁰ Marjorie Macintosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 7.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² PRO C 47/41/143; See also Westlake, 171

¹⁰³ McRee states that, “the delivery of assistance to members in need was only one among several objects of gild relief programs. Important complementary goals of such plans were to protect the public reputations of the organizations that sponsored them and to strengthen gild solidarity by reinforcing the sense of mutual obligation among gild members,” McRee, “Charity and Gild Solidarity,” 199.

follow.¹⁰⁴ In Lincolnshire, only five guilds, or three percent, had admission rules governing the character of potential members. All five guilds were in urban areas, four in Spalding, and one in Grimsby. The Spalding guilds each stipulated that no one be admitted to their guilds unless they were sufficiently good, pious, and devoted.¹⁰⁵ The Grimsby guild of the Holy Trinity required all intending brothers to be burgesses of good repute. This guild had both male and female members, so it may be safely assumed that intending sisters were expected to be of good repute as well.¹⁰⁶

Guild regulations also served to help members admonish sinners and practice fraternal correction through sanctioning bad behavior.¹⁰⁷ Guild members were meant to conduct themselves with dignity on all of the occasions during which the fraternity gathered to meet, pray, feast, or process, and many had ordinances which forbade and punished “jangling,” quarreling, and disruptive behaviors during these community-building events. As is the case with reputational statutes, behavioral statutes appear to be an urban phenomenon. The six Lincolnshire guilds with statutes governing members’ behavior were found in Grimsby, Lincoln,

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 203.

¹⁰⁵ PRO C 47/41/166; PRO C 47/41/167; PRO C 47/41/168; PRO C 47/41/169; see also Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, pp. 175-77.

¹⁰⁶ PRO C 47/40/116; Ben McRee, “Religious Gilds and the Regulation of Behavior in Late Medieval Towns,” in *People, Politics, and Community in the Later Middle Ages*, eds. Joel Rosenthal and Colin Richmond (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 107-122; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 163.

¹⁰⁷ Reputational statutes were intended to control disruptive behavior. Farnhill points out that they also had spiritual consequences as well. Members who were expelled for misbehavior were eliminated from the community of the guild during life, but as a result of expulsion, removed from the guild’s bede-roll as well; this would mean the expelled member was excluded from the guilds’ collective prayers for their soul, *Guilds and the Parish*, 17.

and Spalding.¹⁰⁸ The Lincoln guild of Corpus Christi (1328) expelled disobedient members.¹⁰⁹ Another Lincoln Corpus Christi guild (1335) stipulated members had to keep silent when the graceman ordered them to.¹¹⁰ The return does not give the specifics of this silence, but ordinances from other guilds around the country governing decorum at feasts, during processions, and at mass, make it likely that the regulation was aimed at policing rowdy behavior. The Grimsby Holy Trinity guild has a similar ordinance that members were to keep their “place” and speak reasonably, presumably at social and religious gatherings as well.¹¹¹ Finally the Lincoln guild of the Holy Cross had an ordinance expelling thieves: “if any of the brotherhood is justly charged with theft, to the value of a penny, he shall be put out of the company.”¹¹² Guild membership afforded spiritual and social status, which members were eager to protect; therefore they were very conscious of the need to punish behavior that would reflect badly on the reputation of their organization.

While guilds sought to create ideal communities based on notions of “sacred Christian kinship,” their activities could be perceived as actually working against communal harmony by setting their membership apart from the parish as a whole through exclusionary admissions practices, liveries, and processions.¹¹³ Scholars like John Bossy have remarked the brotherhood of some often leads to the otherhood of those outside that fellowship.¹¹⁴ In the case of guilds,

¹⁰⁸ The scarcity of reputational and behavioral statutes is undoubtedly a reflection of the uneven survival of source material, and not a reflection of the unimportance of appropriate conduct to guild members.

¹⁰⁹ PRO C 47/41/159; Smith, 182; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 74, 149.

¹¹⁰ PRO C 47/41/158; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 174. Lincoln had five different Corpus Christi guilds.

¹¹¹ PRO 47/40/116; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 163.

¹¹² PRO C 47/41/153; Smith, 179; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 173.

¹¹³ Wrightson, “Mutualities and Obligations,” 5.

¹¹⁴ Eamon Duffy, “Religious Belief,” 294.

guild members' spiritual families could create obvious outsiders among blood relatives and non-members.¹¹⁵ A hallmark of religious guilds, however, was their open admissions policy—unlike craft and trade guilds they did not limit membership based on occupation or gender. Typically those with enough money to pay the often-nominal entrance fee would be admitted as long as they were of good repute—this excluded only the very poor from joining. Only two of Lincolnshire's 123 parish guilds specifically barred entry to certain social groups.¹¹⁶ The Lincoln guild of Corpus Christi in the church of St. Michael on the Hill expressly forbade mayors or bailiffs from joining. Their return stated that as the guild was founded by those of common and middling rank, prospective members should be of those ranks as well: "and whereas the guild was founded by folks of common and middling rank, it is ordained that no one of the rank of mayor of bailiff shall become a brother of the guild, unless he is found to be of humble, good, and honest conversation, and is admitted by the common assent of the bretheren and sisteren of the guild."¹¹⁷ Upon admission, a mayor or bailiff "must not meddle in any matter" nor "take on himself any office in the guild."¹¹⁸ Clearly the guild members were concerned with those of high rank attempting to use their positions to influence guild matters. Conversely, the Grimsby Holy Trinity guild stipulated that potential members must be burgesses of good repute.¹¹⁹ The registers of both guilds are no longer extant, so there is no way to determine whether or not they put these admission regulations into practice.

¹¹⁵ Bossy, "Mass As a Social Institution," 37, *Christianity and the West*, 58; Brigden, "Religion and Social Obligation," pp. 94-100; Duffy, pp. 131, 142-143; Reynolds, 67.

¹¹⁶ This is parish guilds with Chancery certificates.

¹¹⁷ PRO C 47/40/135; see also Smith, 179.

¹¹⁸ Smith, 179; Sheila Lindenbaum, "Rituals of Exclusion: Feasts and Plays of the English Religious Fraternities," in *Festive Drama* (Rochester: D.S. Brewer, 1996), 56.

¹¹⁹ PRO C 47/40/116; see also Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 163.

‘Of þere werkes of mercy Criste shall speke inspeciall of at þe Day of Dome’: Parish Guilds and the Corporeal works of Mercy

Performing the corporeal works of mercy, which relieved physical suffering, was also an integral part of guild corporate charity. Loving one’s neighbor fulfilled Christ’s commandments, and the love of neighbor “was most eloquently expressed through the seven works of mercy.”¹²⁰ Lincolnshire guilds most frequently funded funerals for their deceased, feasts and commensality, welcoming strangers, and clothing the naked. In addition to fulfilling discrete works of mercy at these occasions, guild members often performed multiple works at once or supported institutions that did so. Parish guilds have been traditionally thought of as burial societies, and in fact, burying the dead, was the most common corporeal work of mercy performed by Lincolnshire guilds. Forty-eight percent of the guilds in the county made provisions for their deceased, which included undertaking the financial burden of funeral costs for members whose families could not afford them, recovering bodies from far afield, funding candles, sponsoring requiem masses and obits, collecting soul alms, and distributing charity to the poor on behalf of the departed. Geographically, there was an unequal distribution of guilds that stipulated the provision of funeral services, with sixty-eight percent of guilds so stating being located in boroughs or urban areas. Scholars have characterized guilds as substitutes for absent family, so it is unsurprising that they would play a primary role in the burial of their members in a more urbanized context where many inhabitants might be transplants from the countryside without familial networks. It is important to note, however, that among all rural guilds, fifty-three percent provided burial services for their members, so burials are not irrelevant in a rural context.

Funerals provided guild members with another opportunity to strengthen their bond of

¹²⁰ Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 102.

fellowship and engage in charitable giving. Guild funerals themselves fulfilled a number of works of mercy besides simply burying the dead; bread doles after the funeral fed the hungry, the distribution of ale quenched the thirsty, alms clothed the naked, and strangers were received. Both rural and urban guilds demonstrated an almost equal preoccupation with funeral almsgiving, with forty-seven percent of rural guilds and fifty-three percent of urban guilds requiring funeral provisions that performed some of the aforementioned works of mercy at funerals. All guild brethren were required to attend the burial services for a deceased brother on the pain of fines of money or wax, and in some cases expulsion. Funerals were a time where members sponsored a mass to be said for their departed fellow, paid for prayers to be said for their soul, and made sure alms of food and clothing were collected and distributed to the poor on their behalf. These were all reciprocal acts of mercy. The dead would intercede on behalf of the living, but as death was a certainty for all, guild members could also take comfort that they would benefit from guild funerary provisions. Members could be assured that “whatever the economic circumstances of their family, or perhaps the neglect of family that they would be given a decent burial and indeed much more than that—a grand departure to the afterlife...guild members could also die knowing that guild brothers and sisters would pray for their souls even immediate family was lazy or indifferent. For people with no close family the gild was a psychological comfort.”¹²¹

Funeral provisions could range from the very basic funding of a candle to burn for the deceased to elaborate processions for the dead. The Spalding guild of St. John the Baptist paid for six poor men or boys to accompany a member’s body carrying candles, and a bellman to announce their death.¹²² Lincoln’s Corpus Christi guild in the church of St. Michael on the Hill

¹²¹ Hanawalt, “Keepers of the Lights,” 36.

¹²² PRO C 47/41/166; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 29,175.

stipulated that members should process with the guild banner to the decedent's home, where it remained "displayed publically" so that everyone knew they were a member of the guild. Then, on the day of the funeral the banner was carried with a great light preceding the corpse to the church, where a guild priest sang for the souls of the dead.¹²³ Another Lincoln guild provides one of the most extravagant funeral services found amongst the Chancery returns. The guild of the Resurrection reported that "when a brother or sister dies, a hearse shall be put about the body, with thirteen square wax lights burning in four stands, at placebo and dirige mass; and there shall be four angels, and four banners of the Passion with a white border, and scutcheons of the same powdered with gold. And offerings shall be made; and as many masses shall be said for the soul of the dead as there are bretheren and sisteren in the gild."¹²⁴ Additionally, two torches were to be kept burning around the body until it was carried into the church. They were extinguished while body lay in the church, and then after the mass re-lit and kept burning until the body was buried.¹²⁵

The elaborate nature of these services likely reflected the wealth and status of the guild. However, the devotion to Christ's resurrection was also a dedication with a special significance in Christian theology. The Easter season was the spiritual focal point of the liturgical calendar, and the resurrection in particular allowed for the laity to conceive of their lives in terms that paralleled Christ's; the contemplation and commemoration of Christ's death and resurrection reminded laypeople that "just as Christ overcame death, so too they may obtain salvation by

¹²³ PRO C 47/40/135; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 168.

¹²⁴ Smith, 176.

¹²⁵ Smith, 177.

fulfilling the instructions He vouchsafed.”¹²⁶ The explicit mention of both the brothers and sisters of the guild as receiving this funerary treatment and participating in it demonstrates that at least in this context, men and women were viewed on equal terms as members. This practice stood in marked contrast to a contemporary sermon from the *Speculum Sacerdotale*, which explained that church bells should be rung three times for a dead man but only twice for a dead woman to indicate women's subordinate status.¹²⁷ While most guilds only made provision for their own members, some guilds took their commitment to charity a step further and in addition to providing alms at funerals, made provisions to bury the poor at their own expense. The Corpus Christi guild in Lincoln (associated with the Tailors) reported that they would provide for those dying in the city without means for a decent burial according to the rank of the deceased.¹²⁸

The concern parish guild members demonstrated for maintaining the wholeness of their communities operated on both physical and spiritual levels. When possible all members were expected to attend the funerals of their fellows, and these funeral ceremonies were conducted whether or not the deceased's body was available for memorialization. Many guilds would first attempt to retrieve the body of a dead member from distances up to fifteen miles of their location.¹²⁹ However, if that was not possible, guilds still sponsored memorial services as if the member had died locally. It was not just the modest guilds that made this provision. The

¹²⁶ Clive Burgess, “Longing to Be Prayed For”: Death and Commemoration in an English Parish in the Later Middle Ages,” in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Commemoration in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds., Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 44.

¹²⁷ Beth Allison Barr, *The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2008), 65; Edward Weatherly, ed., *Speculum Sacerdotale* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 234.

¹²⁸ Smith, 182. According to Westlake, although this guild was associated with the tailors, it was not a craft guild, Westlake, *Parish Guilds*, pp. 49-54.

¹²⁹ Hanawalt, “Keepers of the Lights,” 32.

previously discussed Resurrection guild recorded that a member dying outside of Lincoln was to be commemorated with the same elaborate ceremonial as if their body was actually present.¹³⁰ While most guilds only made funeral provisions for their own members, some urban guilds took their commitment to charity a step further and in addition to providing alms for the poor at funerals, made provisions to bury the unknown poor as well at their own expense. For example, another Corpus Christi guild in Lincoln reported that they would provide for those dying in the city without means for a decent burial according to the rank of the deceased. The inclusion of unknown indigents in the funerary statutes of urban guilds probably reflects the specific pious and demographic concerns of an urban context; there were simply more impoverished strangers needing charity in cities than in villages.

Parish guilds also sponsored requiem masses, obits, and anniversaries as part of their efforts to fulfill the work of buying the dead. Typically this provision would have included the Office of the Dead, “*Placebo*” and “*Dirige*,” and the “*De Profundis*” prayers.¹³¹ Together with the “litany of the saints,” these were the “central prayers of intercession for the dead, feeding the souls and making them ‘strong to suffren here peyne wyth more paciens’.”¹³² Only a small percentage of guilds specified that they sponsored requiem masses, but the near universal collection of money from members for funeral services indicates that masses were an integral part of funeral sponsorship. These masses would have been paid for through soul-alms, which were payments collected by guild members in order to compensate clergy for their services, defray burial costs, and perform acts of charity on behalf of the deceased by distributing alms of money or bread to the poor. The contribution of soul-alms was required of all guild members,

¹³⁰ Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 169.

¹³¹ Duffy, 368; Ormrod, 39.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 369.

usually at the rate of ½d. for a member and up to 2d. for guild officers.¹³³ The guild of St. Benedict, Lincoln had an ordinance that stated at funerals “every brother and sister shall give a half-penny to buy bread, to be given to the poor for the soul of the dead, while the priest celebrates mass.”¹³⁴ In an unusual differentiation between the membership obligations for men and women, the Killingholme guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary stipulated that male members pay their soul-almes of a penny in money, while female members were to pay with a half-penny loaf of bread.¹³⁵ In a broader context, female charity and performance of the works of mercy often centered on the household and the provision of food. It appears that this regulation reflects not only the medieval characterization of women as food providers, but also might be a reflection of guilds taking into consideration the means that were most readily available for its female members to practice charity.¹³⁶ Funeral doles were a common occurrence at medieval funerals because of the emphasis placed on the special status of prayers of the poor, which were seen as exceptionally pleasing to God. The main duty of the poor as recipients of charity was to pray for the souls of their benefactors.¹³⁷ While many guilds mention the collection of soul-almes that would very likely be used as funeral doles to the poor, only fourteen make specific mention of charitable giving on the day of funerals.¹³⁸ The doles were primarily in the form of bread,

¹³³ PRO C 47/39/150; See Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 179.

¹³⁴ Smith, 173.

¹³⁵ PRO C 47/40/132; Smith, 185; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 167.

¹³⁶ See Patricia Cullum, “Gendering Charity in Medieval Hagiography,” in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, eds., Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 135-7, French, *Good Women*, 185.

¹³⁷ Burgess, “Longing to Be Prayed For,” 49.

¹³⁸ This does not preclude doles being much more common, but rather another underreported charitable activity instead.

however, both the Gedney guild of the Holy Trinity and Holbeach guild of Corpus Christi stipulated that ½d. and ¼d., respectively, were given to each pauper who asked for it.¹³⁹

Obits and anniversaries, or the General Mind, commemorated deceased members and benefactors, usually once a year around the celebration of their feast.¹⁴⁰ Like those celebrated under the auspices of the parish church, the General Mind “took the form of a corporate anniversary.”¹⁴¹ The Spalding guilds of St. Mary on the East Bank and St. Mary on the West Bank, each funded these corporate anniversaries. The first held their commemoration on the Sunday after Easter, and the second on the Sunday after the feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul.¹⁴² Bede-rolls were another important way guilds commemorated their dead. The bede-roll was a list of guild benefactors, which was read at high mass by the celebrant.¹⁴³ Inclusion on the bede-roll allowed for continual remembrance and intercession for the dead, and in commemorating them called to mind their reciprocal obligation to intercede on behalf of the living. The bede-roll has also been described as a “social map of the community, often stretching over centuries, and promising a continuous place in the consciousness of the parish in which he or she had once lived, not as any one of the anonymous multitude of the dead, but as the named provider of some familiar object.”¹⁴⁴ In the case of parish guilds, the departed were remembered as named

¹³⁹ PRO C 47/40/107, PRO C 47/40/118; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 161,164.

¹⁴⁰ According to Ormrod, obits followed a standardized pattern. The date of the member’s death was given in the guild calendar, the day before the obit was celebrated a bellman made a circuit of the village or town and proclaimed at prescribed stopping-points that the hearers should pray for the deceased, their spouse, parents, and children. Then the bellman also named all of the guilds that the deceased belonged to, 39.

¹⁴¹ Burgess, “Longing to be Prayed For,” 54.

¹⁴² PRO C 47/41/168; PRO C 47/41/169; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 176.

¹⁴³ Burgess, “Longing to Be Prayed For,” 54

¹⁴⁴ Duffy, 335.

members of a guild family, departed spiritual brothers and sisters. Doles to the poor were also made as offerings and good works in their names.¹⁴⁵

An examination of wills and churchwardens' accounts attests that bequests to parish guilds were popular end-of-life concerns because like inclusion on a bede-roll, they served to continuously commemorate the departed.¹⁴⁶ Bequeathing goods or money to a guild, was a continuation of good works started during one's lifetime, and as such would help one pass through Purgatory more quickly on both the merit of these works and through the grateful intercessory prayers of the living.¹⁴⁷ Men and women considered testamentary bequests to guilds to be of great importance, however this deathbed charity was often divided along gender lines. Both sexes gave gifts of money—men more frequently than women, and both sexes gave moveable items—men typically giving books and liturgical objects, and women giving household goods and clothing.¹⁴⁸ This pattern of bequests is borne out in Lincolnshire testaments. Typical guild bequests were like those of William of the Chambour from Lincoln, who left 3s. 4d. to the St. Nicholas guild in Lincoln,¹⁴⁹ John Marshall of Lincoln, who left 2d. to the Wissen guild, 2d. to the Trinity guild, and 1d. to Our Lady's guild,¹⁵⁰ and William Robynson of Lincoln, who left 10s. to Boston's Lady's guild.¹⁵¹ Testators usually did not specify how the bequest should be spent, but the monies would have been used to fund corporeal works of mercy such as establishing bedehouses, feeding the poor, sponsoring public works, hosting feasts,

¹⁴⁵ Thompson, pp. 123, 125.

¹⁴⁶ Seventeen percent of Lincolnshire testators leaving charitable bequests left provisions for one or more parish guilds in their wills.

¹⁴⁷ Burgess, "Longing to Be Prayed For," 49.

¹⁴⁸ French, *Good Women*, pp. 37-41.

¹⁴⁹ LCC 1506 &c., 8; C.W. Foster, ed., *Lincoln Wills Registered in the District Probate Registry at Lincoln*, vol. 1 (Lincoln: Lincoln Record Society, 1914-30), 28.

¹⁵⁰ LCC 1543-56, 63; Foster, *Lincoln Wills*, vol. 1, 40.

¹⁵¹ LCC 1506 &c., 14; Foster, *Lincoln Wills*, vol. 1, 46.

caring for the sick, and prisoners as well as spiritual works of mercy such as instructing the ignorant and increasing Divine Service. In this way, guild members' end-of-life charity was more encompassing than the charity they practiced during their lifetimes within their guilds.

While gifts of money were of great use to beneficiaries, donating goods to be used by guilds during services and celebrations helped commemorate and memorialize donors in more concrete ways—especially when the goods came with the stipulation that failure to pray for the benefactor would result in forfeiture.¹⁵² Bequests for liturgical objects, vessels and ornaments for the altar, and funerary items were popular ways to secure remembrance and maintain a physical presence in the religious life of a guild.¹⁵³ Edward Browne of Lincoln promised gifts of plate to guilds that agreed to pray for his soul, the souls of his parents, and all Christian souls:

To the gret gilde of Lincoln xls. or ells the valour of xls. in good plate if they will graunte me to say every yere at dyner tyme for my soul and all cristian soules de profundis...to St. Anne gilde xxs. or the valour of good plate if they will graunte me to say a pater noster and an Ave Maria at dyner tyme for the souls for my fader and of my moder and of me.

He also specified that the clerks' guild would get 14s. 4d. if they prayed for his soul at dinner time, and he left monetary bequests to the shoemakers' guild, St. Dunston's guild, as well as the Seven Sleepers, Apostles, and Lady's guilds of Boston.¹⁵⁴ Thomas Sudbery, former vicar of Louth, made provision of a silver-gilt processional cross for the use of the parish church, Lampe Light, Holy Trinity, and Blessed Lady guilds provided he was prayed for and remembered by the community. His will declared that the cross should:

¹⁵² Burgess, "Longing to Be Prayed For," 53.

¹⁵³ Duffy, 331.

¹⁵⁴ LCC 1506 &c., 2; Foster, *Lincoln Wills*, vol. 1, 23. It is not clear if Browne was a member of all of these guilds or any of them at all, but multiple guild membership was very common for those who could afford the subscription fees.

Perpetually remain in the paryche chyrch of Louth for ever ther to be ussyde and occapie in honor of god his blissyd moder Saynte James and all Saynts at every pryncipall feste. And also at the bereall of every broder and sister of the lampe light and yerly as long as the saide Master Thomas Sudbere shall haffe a nobitt keyytt in the forsaid parysh chirche of Louth itt lyke wyes to be occupied att the sayd obbytt and the said croos with the foote to be seet upon hys heys to the intent the devocyon of goode pepull shall the rather be styryde to pray for his saull.¹⁵⁵

Sudbery's cross bequest and his specific instructions for its usage allowed him to ensure that he would be commemorated at the burial of Lampe Light guild members, his annual obit, and on other occasions deemed acceptable by the churchwardens and guild officials.¹⁵⁶ Joan (or Jane) Harby, a Lincoln widow and vowess, left money and clothing for local guilds. Her bequest of 3s. 4d. to Lincoln's Great guild and a furred mantle to the St. Anne's guild followed the general pattern of women's bequests discussed earlier. The guild of St. Anne sponsored lights to burn before the image of the saint in St. Peter's church. The return does not mention a statue of St. Anne in St. Peter's, but it is possible that Harby intended her mantle to be used to adorn one, as women frequently requested that their testamentary gifts of clothing, jewelry, and girdles decorate church statuary.¹⁵⁷ The guild also sponsored Lincoln's medieval cycle plays and the mantle could have been intended as part of costuming for a female character.¹⁵⁸

While most guild members made gifts of money, goods, or land of their own volition, several Lincoln guilds actually had statutes obligating members to make charitable bequests. One of Lincoln's Corpus Christi guilds required that members leave vs. or xld., or whatever

¹⁵⁵ Dudding, *The First Churchwardens' Book of Louth, 1500-1524*, 94.

¹⁵⁶ Duffy, 331.

¹⁵⁷ French, *Good Women*, 43.

¹⁵⁸ Stanley Kahrl notes that local gentry often loaned clothing and regalia for guild plays and pageants, see Kahrl, *Records of Plays and Players*, xix.

money they can afford to the guild.¹⁵⁹ The guild of St. Nicholas and St. Mary obliged members to leave unspecified monetary bequests.¹⁶⁰ Finally, the guild of All Saints reported if a member left 2s. in value to the guild, they would provide with one mass yearly; for 4s., the guild would provide them with two masses.¹⁶¹

Commensality was another important community building activity subsidized by parish guilds that was enhanced through the corporeal works of mercy. Members endeavored to sacralize the communal meal by providing food and drink to the needy, and welcoming strangers into their company. It was an act of spiritual fellowship, and was imagined in affective terms. The language used to describe guild feasts invoked affective bonds in much the same way as suggested in contemporary prescriptive literature like the popular fourteenth-century poem *How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter*, which equated communal feasting and hospitality with loving one's neighbor as God commanded.¹⁶² Feasts were occasions for socializing, nurturing affective ties, and reconciling discord.¹⁶³ Guild feasts were meant to enact charity through the performance of good neighborhood. The return from the Holy Trinity guild in Grimsby even makes mention of the use of a "loving-cup" at guild feasts.¹⁶⁴ Feasts were a crucial part of the parish guild experience for organizations that could afford them, and a number of scholars argue that the words 'gild' or "guild" and "feast" were used interchangeably in organizational

¹⁵⁹ PRO C 47/41/159; Smith, 183; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 74, 149. This parish guild was associated with Lincoln Tailors, but was not a craft guild.

¹⁶⁰ PRO C 47/40/148; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 172.

¹⁶¹ PRO C 47/41/154; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 173.

¹⁶² Edith Rickert, ed., *The Babees' Book: Medieval Manners for the Young: Done into Modern English from Dr. Furnivall's Texts* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1923), 40. See also Sponsler, "The English How the Good Wijf Taught Hir Doughtir and How the Wise Man Taught His Sonne," 295.

¹⁶³ Feasts were also a time for guild-sponsored catechesis—didactic and morality plays were commonly performed at guild feasts, Lindenbaum, 61.

¹⁶⁴ PRO C 47/40/116; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 163.

records.¹⁶⁵

In Lincolnshire, thirty-six percent of guilds held at least one feast per year directly following the mass performed in honor of their patron saint, although guilds in other parts of the country have been recorded as holding as many as four or five a year.¹⁶⁶ The feasts were typically held a member's house, or in the case of wealthier organizations, at their guildhall.¹⁶⁷ Membership dues paid for the feast, or as was the case with the Huttoft guild of St. Mary, members took turns paying for it.¹⁶⁸ Guilds explicitly aspired to make feasts occasions that strengthened and nurtured the vertical and horizontal relationships between guild members, their spouses, and often the parish poor. Guild feasts have been likened to early Christian love feasts because of their charitable nature, in particular the implied open invitation that was extended to the poor.¹⁶⁹ Following Christ's instruction in Luke 14:12-14: "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor thy neighbor who are rich; lest perhaps they also invite thee again, and a recompense be made to thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind; and thou shalt be blessed, because they have not wherewith to make thee recompense, for recompense shall be made thee at the resurrection of the just."¹⁷⁰ By including the poor at feasts, guild members hoped to foster

¹⁶⁵ Farnhill, "Guilds, Purgatory and the Cult of the Saints," 66.

¹⁶⁶ Nationally, thirty-seven percent of guilds reported communal feasts. The number might be higher in Lincolnshire, but the nature of the records lends itself to underestimating the percentage of feasts. Farnhill argues that feasts were one of the primary focuses of guild activity, "Guilds, Purgatory and the Cult of the Saints," 66.

¹⁶⁷ See PRO C 47/39/93, PRO C 47/40/130, C 47 PRO/40/128. The Louth guild of the BVM actually undertook the responsibility of maintaining the guildhall where they and other Louth guilds held their feasts.

¹⁶⁸ PRO C 47/40/131; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 166.

¹⁶⁹ Rosser, "Going to the Fraternity Feast," 434.

¹⁷⁰ Angela M. Kinney, ed., *The Vulgate Bible: The New Testament, Douay-Rheims Translation*, vol. VI (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 399.

charity in the sense of love and affection between brethren as well as charity in the sense of alms-giving between members and society's less fortunate. They followed the instructions in Luke to the letter, as besides the poor, guild statutes do not mention additional types of guests being welcomed at their feasts. While cultivating brotherly love and peace might have been abstractly idealistic goals attained with some difficulty, as the numerous ordinances against fighting at feasts demonstrated, charitable giving to the poor at feast times is more readily quantifiable.¹⁷¹

In accordance with the injunctions to feed and quench the hungry and thirsty, and welcome strangers, most guild ordinances required members to give bread and ale to the poor on feast days or allowed paupers to come in and finish the leftovers when the meal had concluded. In Lincolnshire, thirty-five percent of guilds that held feasts made some provision for the poor. Eighty-one percent of the guilds that gave food and drink to the needy were located in urban areas.¹⁷² On the feast of the Pentecost, the Crowland guild of Corpus Christi and St. Guthlac distributed $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in alms to any poor man who asked for charity.¹⁷³ In Lincoln, the Corpus Christi guild in the church of St. Michael on the Hill, reported that "on the eve of the feast of Corpus Christi, all of the bretheren and sisteren shall come together, as is the custom, to the gild feast. At the close of the feast, four wax candles having been kindled, and four of the tankards which are called flagons having been filled with ale, a clerk shall read and explain these ordinances, and afterwards the ale in the flagons shall be given to the poor."¹⁷⁴ Some guilds went above and

¹⁷¹ See for example PRO C 47/40/147.

¹⁷² Only one-quarter of rural guilds made provisions for the poor at feasts compared to three-quarters of urban guilds. This is likely a reflection of the statistical reality of urban poverty, rather than evidence of rural guilds being more indifferent to their local poor.

¹⁷³ PRO C 47/39/95; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 159.

¹⁷⁴ Smith, 178.

beyond the basic provision of food, and even allowed for poor men to actually attend the feast itself. The Corpus Christi guild in Grantham allowed for each married couple in attendance to bring a poor man to share the meal with.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, the Winthorpe guild of the Holy Trinity encouraged each member to bring a pauper with them to the feast.¹⁷⁶ The St. Lawrence guild in Lincoln stipulated that at their feasts there were to be “as many poor as there are brethren, to eat and drink good bread and ale and a dish of meat or fish.”¹⁷⁷ Other guilds that included the poor at their feasts specified that the paupers be thirteen in number, calling to mind Christ and the apostles.¹⁷⁸ Recalling the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary annually distributed one thousand loaves and one thousand herrings to the poorest people in the city on behalf of the souls of the guild’s benefactors.¹⁷⁹ The provision of charity in the form of alms, prayers, and commemoration, makes it likely that this event took place on the guild’s celebration of a religious feast. Guild feasts were meant to be occasions for commemoration and celebration. In this sense they have been characterized as semi-liturgical functions, which echoed in some ways the masses that they so frequently followed.¹⁸⁰ For this reason it was important for guild members to mark the solemnity of the feast with a certain amount of reverence and to be in charity with one another. The spiritual works of mercy also had a role to play feasts, as guild members prayed for the living and dead, and instructed the ignorant through the sponsorship of morality plays and didactic pageants performed at the feast. For example, John English and the King’s Players were known to have performed for the Guild of St. Mary in

¹⁷⁵ Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 162.

¹⁷⁶ PRO C 47/41/184; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 179.

¹⁷⁷ Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 171.

¹⁷⁸ See Gedney, Guild of the Assumption, PRO C 47/40/104, Guild of St. John the Baptist, PRO C 47/40/106, St. Thomas of Canterbury and All Saints, PRO C 47/40/108.

¹⁷⁹ PRO C 47/39/87; Ormrod, 45; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 157.

¹⁸⁰ Rosser, “Going to the Fraternity Feast,” 433.

Boston in 1525/26 on the feast of Corpus Christi.¹⁸¹ The majority of guilds with statutes which mention feasts or feasting also contain provisions against quarrelling on those occasions, a fact that indicates communal harmony was a highly sought after ideal that was not always practiced. As a corrective these feasts were an opportunity for members to practice the spiritual works of forgiving offenses, admonishing sinners, and bearing wrongs patiently by reconciling discord within their organizations.

Lincolnshire guilds fulfilled the injunction to welcome strangers in ways that both reinforced exclusive guild communal boundaries (supporting members on pilgrimage) and engaged with the parish at large (repairing roads and highways). Welcoming strangers was a work that was frequently associated with the harboring and care of pilgrims, and the terms for pilgrim and stranger were often used interchangeably. Pilgrimage was an “obvious example of a devotion which could be both personal and corporate,”¹⁸² as pilgrims undertook religious journeys motivated by personal piety, and could also carry the petitions of their fellows, pray for their guild brothers and sisters, and bring back tokens from shrines. In the context of guild piety, the “stranger” or pilgrim, that guild members welcomed and cared for was actually a fellow guild member. Twenty-one, or seventeen percent, of Lincolnshire guilds made charitable provisions for the care of members going on pilgrimage. All of these guilds were located in the city of Lincoln. The statutes of Lincoln’s Corpus Christi guild in the Church of St. Michael on the Hill typify the ordinances dealing with charity towards pilgrims:

“If a member goes on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, each brother gives him 1d. If he goes to St. James or to St. Peter and St. Paul, all the brethren lead him or her to the cross before the Hospital of the Innocents outside Lincoln, and when he returns meet him

¹⁸¹ James Stokes, *Records of Early English Drama: Lincolnshire*, vol. 1. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 38.

¹⁸² Farnhill, “Guilds, Purgatory and the Cult of the Saints,” 71.

there and bring him to the mother church.”¹⁸³

The cross referenced in the return was an Eleanor Cross, which had been erected outside of the city’s gates, across the from the Hospital of Holy Innocents and St. Katherine’s orphanage. The members of the guild would have worn their liveries in procession to and from the city gates. When pilgrims returned, the members would have attended mass with them with them at Lincoln Cathedral. In this way, guilds visually displayed the unity and prestige of their fellowship.

Clothing the naked and visiting prisoners were the two least popular works of corporeal mercy practiced by Lincolnshire guild members. Guilds clothed the naked by providing liveries for their members. Guild members were required to wear their liveries at all guild activities—feasts, processions, religious services, and meetings. A guild in its livery “resulted in a sight imposing to the eye...and provided a colorful confirmation of the link that ties guild brothers and sisters together.” It also served to set “members apart from those who did not belong to the organization.”¹⁸⁴ Nationally, McRee found that nineteen percent of guilds that provided charity to members had a livery. In Lincolnshire, only five guilds, or three percent, mentioned liveries in their returns. They were all located in the boroughs of Louth and Boston. The guild members who wore a livery were not actually the “naked” envisioned in the Gospels. Only a single guild in Crowland explicitly provided destitute members with clothing. The guild of All Saints provided for the sick and clothed the naked, giving them a tunic and hood of russet along with 40 d. annually. But, the recipients of this charity had to be guild members.¹⁸⁵ It is likely, however, that monies and undefined “alms” allocated for members in need could have been used to fulfill

¹⁸³ PRO C 47/40/135; Smith, 178; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 167.

¹⁸⁴ McRee, “Unity and Division,” 192.

¹⁸⁵ PRO C 47/39/96; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 159.

this work¹⁸⁶ Sermons and prescriptive literature encouraged laypeople to comfort and visit prisoners, however, of the works of mercy, this appears to be the one which guilds in Lincolnshire did not make great attempts at fulfilling. Mirk's *Festial* and the *Lay Folks' Catechism* especially equated visiting prisoners with the line in the paternoster about forgiving debts, and conceptualized the prisoners to be visited as those in debtors' prisons.¹⁸⁷ Unlike in Italy, where there were entire guilds tasked with comforting prisoners, Lincolnshire only had two such organizations. Although images of saintly prisoners like SS Peter, Paul, Katherine, and John the Baptist were common in local churches, even the guilds dedicated to these saints made no efforts on behalf of the incarcerated. The guilds that provided for the imprisoned¹⁸⁸ were the Lincoln guilds of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. George. They did not perform charity for prisoners in general—only their own members, who were “falsely imprisoned.”¹⁸⁹ The guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary supported these imprisoned members with 7d. per week, and the St. George's guild provided 3d. weekly.¹⁹⁰

Lincolnshire guilds infrequently performed clothing the naked, housing strangers, or visiting the sick as individual acts, with the exception of the aforementioned Crowland guild of All Saints. As will become evident in Chapter Five, laypeople in Lincolnshire often sponsored multiple works at once by supporting institutions that performed all seven corporeal works of mercy in one location. In this way, laypeople could fund a single organization, which addressed

¹⁸⁶ PRO C 47/39/96; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 159.

¹⁸⁷ Cullum and Goldberg, “Charitable Provision in York,” 34 fn. 45.

¹⁸⁸ Black, *Italian Confraternities*, pp. 217-223; Terpstra, “Piety and Punishment: The Lay Conforteria and Civic Justice in Sixteenth-Century Bologna,” *The Sixteenth-Century Journal* 22 (1991), 697-694, “Confraternal Prison Charity and Political Consolidation in Sixteenth-Century Bologna,” *The Journal of Modern History* 66 (1994), 217-248.

¹⁸⁹ PRO C 47/40/141, Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 170.

¹⁹⁰ PRO C 47/41/152 (BVM); Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 173; PRO C 47/40/141, Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 170.

all of the corporeal works, while at the same time enabling hospital, orphanage, and bedehouse residents to practice the charitable works of praying for the living and dead in exchange for charitable benefactions.¹⁹¹ This charity was reciprocal in nature in that the poor bedehouse residents were often expected to pray for their benefactors in exchange for room and board. When guilds funded institutions that performed multiple works of mercy, they sponsored organizations that benefited the parish more broadly. Just as monastics cared for sick laypeople in their hospitals and took in paupers, these benefactions expanded the scope of guilds' charitable activities.¹⁹² The Louth guilds of Holy Trinity and the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Boston guilds of the Blessed Mary and Peter and Paul funded bedehouses. The guild of the Holy Trinity maintained a small bedehouse and provided for six poor men and women to be housed at "Trinitye beidhouse," receiving fuel and board. The bedehouse is not mentioned in the guild's 1388 return, but is recorded in the 1547 chantry certificates with no specification of its foundation date.¹⁹³ The guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Louth also maintained six poor men and women in a house they purchased called "our ladies Beidhouse." These bedesmen were given board, livery, and fuel out of the guild's land rentals.¹⁹⁴ The bedehouses run by Boston guilds were larger charitable enterprises, housing twice the number of poor than their Louth counterparts. The guild of the Blessed Mary founded a bedehouse for thirteen poor men and women, who were all clothed and fed at the guild's expense. Corpus Christi guild supported twelve bedesmen, and the guild of Peter and Paul maintained four small cottages with adjoining

¹⁹¹ Cullum and Goldberg, "Charitable Provision in Late Medieval York," 30. Some almshouses even buried the dead, having their own cemeteries.

¹⁹² Guilds established their own bedehouses, but did not support local hospitals, orphanages, or prisons.

¹⁹³ Goulding, *Louth Old Corporation Records*, 173.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 169

gardens as bedehouses.¹⁹⁵ Stamford's guild of St. Katherine supported the anchoresses who lived in the anchorage "abutting in the north wall" of St. Paul's parish church, where the guild had an altar since at least 1382.¹⁹⁶ These anchoresses were not destitute like beadsmen—each one was a member of the guild and paid annual dues in monies and wax levies.

The prominence of the works of mercy in the pious activities of parish guilds has some implications for the religious roles that women were able to play in the social space of this particular type of community. Guild members sought primarily to create fellowship with one another through the quasi-monastic practice of performing works of mercy in the conceptual "neighborhood" of the guild, to create kinship within their organizations through fraternal charity, and in a more limited way, with the larger community by enacting the works of mercy on behalf of Christ in the stranger. This sense of guild kinship, modeled on the family unit, characterized members as siblings in piety under the auspices of God the father and the mother church.

Although the family was a gendered hierarchy, in these voluntary spiritual families, men and women, at least legislatively, were members of equal standing. Women joined as the sisters, wives, and daughters of male members, but were also allowed to join as single women—widows or not yet married women—unrelated to the male brethren. As members, women participated as benefactresses, founders, light guardians, money collectors, feast organizers, and stock-keepers.

The guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Killingholme allowed women to hold office as well. Its

¹⁹⁵ Ormrod, 31; Thompson, *The History and Antiquities of Boston*, 149. According to Thompson, the four cottages were still standing in 1640, and four poor men occupied each rent-free. By 1719 the cottages were in ruins and ordered to be demolished, 149.

¹⁹⁶ Alan Rogers, ed., *The Act Book of St. Katherine's Guild, Stamford, 1480-1534* (Bury St. Edmunds: Abrimis, 2011), pp. 10-12.

statutes stated “if any brother or sister is chosen to be provost for a year,” they should be fined half a bushel of barley.¹⁹⁷

While Lincolnshire’s guild statutes used gender-inclusive language to regulate members’ behavior, evidence of actual gendered pious practice is more difficult to come by. However, taking into consideration both women’s roles within the family, and the relationship of the seven works of mercy to women’s household management, allows us to hypothesize about the appeal guild membership held for women and the willingness of guilds to accept their participation. Katherine French has argued that women practiced “churchkeeping” in a manner analogous to their housekeeping duties. It is likely that within the guild context women also played this type of role, contributing to the upkeep of the guildhall, working as cleaners, laundresses providing ale for feasts and other celebrations, and performing other elements of household management.¹⁹⁸ While it was probable that as in the medieval household where women were expected to defer to husbands, fathers, brothers, and employers, female guild members’ experiences were informed by contemporary gender expectations. However, it is also true that within the household women’s housekeeping and hospitality blended easily with pious good works. Clothing the naked, providing for the hungry and thirsty, and attending to the dead were all aspects of women’s housekeeping duties. Transferring these activities to the guild or the parish endowed them with a special spiritual import. Thus the works of mercy provided an appropriate framework for women’s participation in parish guilds.

Typically guild records do not give the impression that differences were made between

¹⁹⁷ PRO C 47/40/132; Smith, 186.

¹⁹⁸ Thompson, *History and Antiquities*, 146.

the religious obligations placed on male and female members.¹⁹⁹ The St. John the Baptist guild in Baston serves an exception. Its records state that sisters were required to gather on the feast of St. John the Baptist to dance together in procession, and attend vespers and matins of the vigil carrying a light in their hands.²⁰⁰ Here female guild members were made to act out elements of the saint's hagiography; their dancing very literally calling to mind the role Salome played in the downfall of John the Baptist.²⁰¹ There was a fine of a measure of barley levied on the sisters who failed to participate, although they could be excused in cases of infirmity or old age. It is interesting that while parish guilds sought to foster a sense of communal wholeness and kinship, that they advocate such a gendered division religious labor in the celebration of their patronal day. While the guild's sisters may not have considered anything to be amiss with their dancing, the fact remains that they were recalling the very circumstances under which St. John was martyred, allying them with the villain and not the hero of that particular story. It is possible, however, the sisters looked at their dancing as a form of collective penance.²⁰² The public nature of this procession increased the sisters' visibility within the parish, but also reinscribed traditional thinking about gender—by recreating Salome's dancing these women were

¹⁹⁹ Christine Fitzgerald, *The Drama of Masculinity and Medieval English Guild Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

²⁰⁰ PRO C 47/39/76; Westlake, 34, 122, 155.

²⁰¹ Hanawalt, "Keepers of the Lights," 29; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 34.

²⁰² In Genoa, women were barred from the chapel of St. John and excluded from the annual procession of his relics, which were kept in the chapel. The banning of women was a punishment for women bringing about his martyrdom in the first place. See Kathryn A. Smith, "'A Lanterne Lyght to the People': English Narrative Alabaster Images of John the Baptist in Their Visual, Religious, and Social Contexts" (unpublished paper presented at the Michigan Medieval and Early Modern Seminar, Ann Arbor, MI. September 29, 2012), 19. She cites Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser, "Reliquie o immagini? Culti e miracoli in Liguria," in *Quaderni Franzoniani. Semestrade di bibliografia e cultura ligure*, anno 13, no. 2 (Genoa: Associazione amici della biblioteca Franzoniana, 2000), 125-37, especially 131.

representing expected modes of transgressive female behavior.²⁰³

“for here comune profyte”: Guilds and the Parish

Although guild charity was primarily directed inwards toward the community guild members created with one another, guild members still belonged to a more broadly constituted parochial community as well. They engaged their parishes by performing the spiritual work of educating the ignorant, the corporeal work of welcoming strangers, and practicing expanded charity through sacred hospitality, increasing divine service, and beautifying the parish church. Urban guilds performed these types of charitable works more frequently than their urban counterparts. Urban guilds on the whole also tended to be wealthier than rural guilds in general, and elements of civic Catholicism may have played role in their expansive provision of parochial services.²⁰⁴

Through the sponsorship of processions, religious plays, and schools, guilds performed the spiritual work of instructing the ignorant. Prescriptive works and sermons encouraged laypeople to practice the instruction of the ignorant within the home. Clergymen considered the religious instruction of the parish community to be a clerical duty, so in funding educational endeavors, guild members were appropriating this aspect of clerical responsibility. Guild processions educated through spectacle. These processions were meant to emphasize and enact “the wholeness of the community,” however, they also had the potential to highlight the division of a community into “separate, semiautonomous subgroups.” This is more likely the case with

²⁰³ French, *Good Women*, 119. See also Kate Normington, *Gender and Medieval Drama* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), *Medieval English Drama* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009).

²⁰⁴ Shannon McSheffrey, “Men and Masculinity in Late Medieval London Civic Culture: Governance, Patriarchy and Reputation,” in Jacqueline Murray, ed., *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West* (New York: Garland, 1999), 243-78, “Jurors, Respectable Masculinity, and Christian Morality: A Comment on Marjorie McIntosh’s Controlling Misbehavior,” *The Journal of British Studies* 37, no. 3 (1998): 269-78.

urban guilds located in areas with more than one guild competing for membership and prestige. In these instances, “such compartmentalization of the populace might be described as passively divisive. It focused attention on the lines separating different elements within the local community, but it did not seek to exploit the division among those elements for partisan gain.”²⁰⁵ Certainly, seeing guild members process together in their liveries could create a sense of unbelonging in spectators, however, processions involving multiple guilds seem to provide the most opportunity for conflict to arise. Due to the scarcity of records, there is only one documented instance of a precedence dispute in Lincolnshire guild records—that between the Boston guild of SS Simon and Jude and the guild of St. George. The guilds had a public dispute over the order of marching precedence in the annual Corpus Christi procession.²⁰⁶ Despite this incident, testamentary evidence from the county actually shows that urban guild members often belonged to multiple guilds within a city at the same time. This multiple membership may have helped to ease conflict and friction amongst guilds in the same town.²⁰⁷

Guild processions ranged in complexity; well-off associations were able to present elaborately staged and morally instructive narratives to audiences of onlookers, while the procession of poorer guilds consisted only of the collectivity of members walking together with

²⁰⁵ McRee, “Unity or Division,” 195; See also Sarah Beckwith, “Ritual Theater, and Social Space in the York Corpus Christi Cycle,” in *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England*, Barbara Hanawalt and David Wallace, eds., 63-86 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Barbara Hanawalt, “Rituals of Inclusion and Exclusion: Hierarchy and Marginalization in Medieval London,” in *Of Good and Ill Repute: Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 18-35; Alexandra Johnston, “Parish Playmaking Before the Reformation,”; Kahrl, *Records of Plays and Players*; Charles Phythian-Adams, “Ceremony and the Citizen: The Communal Year at Coventry, 1450-1550,” in *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700*, Paul Slack, ed., 57-85 (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1972); “Saints Plays and Pageants of Medieval Britain,” *The Early Drama, Art, and Music Review* (1999), 11-37.

²⁰⁶ Ormrod, 44.

²⁰⁷ Hanawalt and McRee, “Guilds of Homo Prudens,” 167.

candles to the church for mass. The Corpus Christi guild in Grantham staged an elaborate procession for the celebration of their feast. “Before the time of procession on Corpus Christi Day they assemble at the church. The two priests in the sacred vestments carry the Body of the Lord attended by two boys in albs carrying the gild candles, followed by the brethren and sisters with candles. At the mass each offers as he pleases. After the mass the 2 candles are carried to the high altar by the boys and remain there. Of the other candles, two burn daily at the high altar and one at the Corpus Christi altar during mass, they give 14 loaves, a sheep, half a calf to the friars minor who go in front of the procession.”²⁰⁸ The Crowland guild of Corpus Christi and St. Guthlac, processed with a statue of St. Guthlac with cloths hung on it, carried on a hearse surrounded with lights. While for some guilds a patronal anniversary meant great expenditure and public spectacle, for others, like the aforementioned St. Swithin’s guild in Louth, the procession was more simple, consisting only of members walking together to St. Mary’s Chapel to light their single wax candle of St. Swithin’s altar.²⁰⁹

Religious plays were meant to edify, correct, and provoke introspection through the visual medium of drama. In her study of York religious guilds, Alexandra Johnston found that guild drama “was part of an organized campaign of religious didacticism of the late Middle Ages in England concerned with educating the layman in the basic principles of his faith.”²¹⁰ It is

²⁰⁸ PRO C 47/40/109; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 161.

²⁰⁹ PRO C 47/41/161; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 175.

²¹⁰ Alexandra F. Johnston, “The Plays of the Religious Guilds of York: The Creed Play and the Pater Noster Play,” *Speculum* Vol. 50 (1975), 58; See also Lawrence Clopper, *Drama, Play, and Game: English Festive Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Charles M. Gayley, *Plays of Our Forefathers* (New York: Duffield, 1907); Erika Fisher-Lichte, *History of European Drama and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Catherine Sanok, “Performing Feminine Sanctity in Late Medieval England: Parish Guilds, Saints’ Plays, and the Second Nun’s Tale,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32, no. 2 (2002) 269-304; Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1952);

reasonable to assume that Lincolnshire guild drama shared in this pedagogical motivation. Guild plays were motivated by the desire to provide “instruction and information of the Christian faith dedicated to the glory of God.” They were performed in public “for the sake of the audience gathered for the sake of their spiritual health.”²¹¹ In sponsoring drama, laypeople undertook the responsibility for educating other laypeople in the finer points of their shared religion. Guilds mounted plays on specific elements of the faith such as the Pater Noster and Creed, Biblical stories, and episodes from the lives of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and saints. Religious guilds often commissioned their clerical members to author these religious plays.

Evidence only survives for guild plays in urban areas like Boston, Lincoln, Louth, Sleaford, Stamford, and Grimsby. In Boston, the Corpus Christi and Blessed Mary guilds were known to have sponsored pageants and plays. The guild of the Blessed Mary was in charge of the cycle plays in the city, and even had a “Master of the Plaies.” Their guild feast was on Whitsunday, and this was likely the day that their plays were performed. The guild’s 1517-8 account books show that they sponsored a Noah play, which used gunpowder to provide sound effects for the thunder in the play.²¹² These plays were likely performed in public in front of the church of St. Botolph, next to the market square.²¹³ Guild members would have then left the market square and attended their feast in St. Mary’s guildhall. The Corpus Christi guild processed with the guilds of St. Simon and St. Jude, Holy Trinity, and the Ascension. These guilds’ returns mentioned that they each provided torches for the procession. By the late fifteenth-century, there were pageants that accompanied the procession as well. In 1478, Corpus

Alexandra Johnston and Margaret Dorrell, “The York Mercers and Their Pageant of Doomsday, 1433-1526,” *Leeds Studies in English* 6 (1972), 11-35.

²¹¹ Johnston, “The Plays of the Religious Guilds of York,” 58.

²¹² Kahrl, *Records of plays and players*, xxii.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, xxiii.

Christi guild member William Cawode bequeathed to his son his “garment of the Aungell,” which had been “used yerely at Corpus Christi guild in Boston Church.”²¹⁴ The guild of Blessed Mary had a Noah’s Ark built for the procession in 1518, which was carried by eight men, and bought cloths for the processional carts now featured in the procession. Their accounts also show regular payment for the carrying of banners, crosses, torches, and thuribles in the procession, in addition to musicians specially commissioned for the event, like the Earl of Arundel’s trumpeters.²¹⁵

The Lincoln guild of St. Anne was responsible for the city’s cycle plays from at least the late fourteenth-century. There were also miracle plays and saints’ plays put on in the city, which may or may not have been sponsored by religious guilds.²¹⁶ Louth had no cycle plays before 1515, but then acquired a “hole Regenall of corpus xpi. play.”²¹⁷ After this pageants were put on with some regularity underwritten by the town’s religious guilds. The Holy Trinity, Corpus Christi, Saint Peter, and “Our Lady” guilds along with Peter of Louth’s chantry, and St. Michael’s light collectively funded plays and pageants, and by 1529 the Holy Trinity guild had built a pageant house for the plays to be performed in.²¹⁸ In Sleaford, the Holy Trinity guild sponsored an Ascension play. According to their account book entries for 1480, they paid 3s. 4d. for the “hymnall of ye play for ye ascencon & the wrytyng of spechys & payntyng of a garne[n]t for God.”²¹⁹ Holbeach’s Assumption, Corpus Christi, Holy Trinity, and Nativity of

²¹⁴ Ormrod, 44; PRO PROB/11/6.

²¹⁵ Ormrod, 44.

²¹⁶ Kahrl, *Records of plays and players*, xiv. The saints’ plays were St. James, St. Clara, and St. Lawrence. There were also Pater Noster and Corpus Christi plays.

²¹⁷ Kahrl, “Medieval Drama in Louth,” 131. See also Dudding, 182.

²¹⁸ Kahrl, *Records of plays and players*, xxiii.

²¹⁹ George Oliver, *History of the Holy Trinity Guild at Sleaford* (Lincoln: Edward Bell Drury, 1837), 82.

the Blessed Virgin Mary guilds sponsored and elaborate Assumption Day play. The play featured a “Marye Cartt” drawn by four men and a “clowd” prop that was suspended on a line.²²⁰ Guilds in Boston and Grimsby also sponsored pageant ships that were drawn through the streets on annual festivals.²²¹ While these were not plays per se, visual spectacles such as these were meant to be didactic in nature.²²² Guilds consistently levied fines for absenteeism at processions, and given the important pedagogical function of plays, it is probable that this was the case with guild drama as well.

Although there is not a great deal of scholarship on the establishment of schools by religious guilds, the guilds considered funding schools to be a pious act.²²³ These educational institutions ranged from “song schools” to grammar schools that provided elementary education for guild members’ children. Only three of Lincolnshire’s guilds established schools—the Louth Holy Trinity and St. Mary guilds, and the Boston guild of the Blessed Mary. The Holy Trinity guild funded a grammar school for boys, which instructed the “youth of the town and surrounding countryside in good manners and polite letters.”²²⁴ The Louth guild of St. Mary supported a song school in conjunction with the churchwardens of St. James’ church.²²⁵ In Boston, the guild of the Blessed Mary also supported a song school.²²⁶ These educational foundations represented attempts on the part of guild members to perform charity that included

²²⁰ Kahrl, *Records of Plays and Players*, xxv, pp.18-19.

²²¹ Lindenbaum, 59.

²²² Mervyn James, “Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval Town,” *Past and Present* 98 (1983), 3-29.

²²³ Hanawalt, “Keepers of the Lights, 33.

²²⁴ Williamson, 86.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

²²⁶ Thompson, *History and Antiquities*, pp. 137-8.

their broader communities as well as their exclusive guild families.²²⁷

Parish guilds sponsored communal activities like Plow Day festivities that combined seasonal celebrations, neighborhood conviviality, and Christian hospitality. Plow lights were the frequently mentioned in Lincolnshire churchwardens' accounts, which reflects the fact that Plow Day customs were widely celebrated in Lincolnshire parishes.²²⁸ Tradition has it that plowmen and husbandmen "kept lights burning before certain images in churches to obtain a blessing for their work." On Plow Day, they "were accustomed to go about in procession, gathering money for the support of these *plough lights*...a plough was dressed up in ribbons and other decorations."²²⁹ If a house refused to donate money, or bread, cheese, and ale, the element of neighborly conviviality could be exchanged for communal sanction, as the revelers would then drive the plow "into the ground before the door or window...and in a minute or two the ground before the house was brown, barren, and ridged as a newly-plowed field."²³⁰ The day concluded with a feast, music, and dancing.²³¹ Since Lincolnshire's countryside and towns were highly integrated they shared a number of religious customs.²³² Plow collectivities were recorded in both rural and urban churchwardens' accounts—the differences seem to lay in the scale and

²²⁷ The Boston Corpus Christi guild's membership register (c. 1400-1405) records Matilda Marfleete, "mistress of the school in Boston, as a member," Thompson, 177. The register does not mention the Boston school of which she was mistress. If it was a guild-funded school, this represents another way that female members participated in guild life.

²²⁸ Stokes, vol. 2, 429.

²²⁹ T.F.T. Dyer, *British Popular Customs* (London: G. Bell, 1876), 37. See also Brand, *Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*, (London: Revers and Turner, 1905), 495.

²³⁰ T.F.T. Dyer, 41.

²³¹ In his work on Lincolnshire, James Stokes found that while records from most of Lincolnshire's parishes "contain no evidence of music or mimesis, records from six parishes, situated in five different parts of the county, suggest the likelihood that their Plough Day customs included music and mimetic elements," 429. These parishes are Grimsby, Saxilby, Leverton, Holbeach, Market Deeping, and Wigtoft.

²³² Stokes, vol. 2, 371.

degree of the elaboration of festivities and that urban Plow Day celebrations display aspects of civic religion as well. Wigtoft, Sutterton, Leverton, Louth, and Holbeach each had a plow light. These could have been simply lights sponsored by husbandmen or more formal sub-parochial organizations, but the records do not provide enough evidence to determine which. The villages of Horbling and Thimbleby both had plow guilds. Horbling's "plowe lyethe" had masters and aldermen,²³³ and William Joneson (d. 1524) left a bushel of barley in his will to "the plow gyld."²³⁴

In urban Lincolnshire, Plow Monday was celebrated with more elaboration than found in the rural villages. The towns of Grimsby, Saxilby, and Market Deeping held annual Plow Day collections, where young men to carrying a ceremonial plow through the streets were accompanied by pipers playing music.²³⁵ In Grimsby, the Trinity guild (mariners) maintained a Noah ship, which was kept in St. Mary's church before the plow light. On Plow Monday, the guild porters drew the ship through the town in procession with musicians, drummers, guild members, and town burgesses.²³⁶ In terms of evidence from churchwardens' accounts Thomas Bradely paid churchwardens 8s. 1d. that he had "gederyd apon plow day" in 1513, and again the following year.²³⁷ This money likely funded a plow light in the church—the keepers of the plow light were known to carry one in the annual Corpus Christi processions.²³⁸ Kirton-in-Lindsey's churchwardens' accounts also mention a "plough guild." Since there are no extant membership lists for these plow guilds it is not possible to know whether they were gender-exclusive

²³³ LRO Horbling Town Book Par/7/10.

²³⁴ LCC 1506 &c., 79, Foster, vol. 1, 132.

²³⁵ Stokes, vol. 2, 429.

²³⁶ Ibid., 423.

²³⁷ Dudding, 149, 159.

²³⁸ Stokes, vol. 2, 427.

organizations. If they were male-only social groups, women would have helped husbands, brothers, and sons with preparations and decorations for their processions.²³⁹

Although the laity were typically encouraged to practice the corporeal works of mercy over the more difficult spiritual works of mercy, guild members felt that an important part of their work as Christians was to ensure that their communities were provided with adequate religious services in accordance with the spiritual works. The increase of divine service was considered a duty of piety, and those guilds that could afford it hired a chaplain or priest to provide extra services. In Lincolnshire, forty-nine percent of parish guilds sponsored a chaplain or priest, and sixty-two percent listed the augmentation and maintenance of divine service among their motivations for foundation. By the eve of the Reformation, religious fraternities employed more ordained priests than parish churches themselves did.²⁴⁰ Urban guilds funded the majority of chaplains and divine services. Boroughs, with their larger populations of transients and poor offered guild members the opportunity to practice charity unique to an urban setting— with the increase of divine service, guilds provided for clergy who could perform both corporal and spiritual works of mercy for a diverse and growing population. The St. John the Baptist guild in Grantham hired a chaplain, who was required to celebrate daily for the good estate of the king and queen, Edmund, Duke of York, and for all souls. He was expected to assist daily in the choir at matins, mass, vespers, and the other hours, as well as provide certain lights his own cost.²⁴¹ In Alvingham, at the foundation of the guild of Corpus Christi, “all the charitably disposed gathered together and discussed how they could maintain and increase divine service. They decided that when their goods were sufficient to support a chaplain to have a daily mass for quick and dead.”

²³⁹ T.F.T. Dyer, 40-1.

²⁴⁰ Sanok, “Performing Feminine Sanctity,” 281.

²⁴¹ PRO C 47/40/113; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 163.

The chaplain was also required to give other necessary help in the parish church.²⁴² It is likely that most guild sponsored chaplains were utilized in much the same way as chantry priests—to provide specific religious services, but were also expected to be of general use in the parish church without cost to the parish²⁴³.

Guilds also enacted the spiritual works of mercy through their foundation or maintenance of chantries. A number of Lincolnshire guilds started out as chantries, and as their benefactors and financial resources grew, they were able to expand the scope of their activities. Chantry priests were engaged to celebrate mass for the chantry's benefactor; however they were also obliged to help in the parish "with a specific obligation to assist in and bolster the celebration of the liturgy at no cost at all to the parish." Therefore, chantry foundation was considered a good work, and their founders were looked upon as "good doers."²⁴⁴ The guild of the Invention of the Holy Cross, Grantham was initially founded as a chantry by Roger De Walsthorp in 1347. He provided for masses to be said for himself, his benefactors, his family, and the souls of all the faith departed. After an unspecified period of time Ralph Brown, "and two others" began to pay for lights in the chantry, and eventually hired a chaplain as well.²⁴⁵ Similarly, the Whaplode guild of St. Katherine was founded by a monk "who had a chapel built and had a chaplain celebrate, after his death certain men continued the chaplain's salary in honor of god and saint katherine and for the safety of their souls."²⁴⁶ The Louth guild of the Holy Trinity annexed the defunct chantry of St. Thomas of Louth and utilized it for its own religious services.²⁴⁷ While

²⁴² PRO C 47/39/73; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 155.

²⁴³ Burgess, "Longing to Be Prayed For," 57.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

²⁴⁵ PRO C 47/40/111; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 162.

²⁴⁶ PRO C 47/41/180; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 31.

²⁴⁷ PRO C 47/41/163, Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 175; Williamson, pp. 83-86, 92.

guilds may have subsumed chantries for their own purposes, reinvigorating a local chantry actually benefitted the community at large through their intercessory prayers.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the parish church was considered to be “God’s house,” and parishioners took their responsibility to maintain and beautify it seriously. Guilds contributed by donating to the fabric in the nave of the church, and supplying costly vestments and vessels. Guild members were performing a Christian duty, but also wished to be commemorated as well.²⁴⁸ The linking of church upkeep and commemoration is evident the corporate activities of guilds. Guild members felt that the care of religious buildings was an extension of their communal good works, and were proud of their ability to provide for their local parish church or chantry. In addition to subsidizing furnishings and ornaments, guild members also took on the more mundane responsibility of fixing roofs and windows, and expanding existing structures to allow for larger services. Thirteen Lincolnshire guilds listed church repair among their primary reasons for foundation. The guild of the Blessed Mary, Boston played a substantial role in rebuilding the church of St. Botolph in 1309.²⁴⁹ The Huttoft guild of Corpus Christi specified in their return that, “all their goods accumulate for the use of the church, the honor of God, and the maintenance of the guild, and are spent to the uses of the church in repairs, pictures, images.”²⁵⁰ Likewise, the Burgh guild of St. James required members to give a measure of barley to go towards church maintenance.²⁵¹ In Louth, the guilds of Our Lady, St. Peter, and the Trinity were instrumental in the building of Louth’s St. James’

²⁴⁸ Burgess, “Longing to Be Prayed For,” 53.

²⁴⁹ Ormrod, 51.

²⁵⁰ PRO C 47/40/128; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 166.

²⁵¹ PRO C 47/39/41; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 158.

church spire.²⁵² Collectively the guilds loaned churchwardens over £44 over the course of the fifteen-year construction process, which spanned from 1500 to 1516.²⁵³

In addition to church repair, guild also sponsored public works projects as well. At first glance, public works projects do not seem like charitable enterprises, but they had a spiritual import for religious guild members.²⁵⁴ Scholars have linked the repair of roads and bridges with the work of mercy of receiving the stranger, who was “invariably depicted in art...as a traveller.”²⁵⁵ As meritorious travellers, such as pilgrims, were often exposed to danger, the maintenance of travel routes allowed guild members to offer them a small measure of aid.²⁵⁶ Of course the more mundane impetus to road and bridge repair could have been practical and economic in character, however, contemporary prescriptive literature also linked charity and public works. As discussed in chapter two, the *Lay Folks’ Mass Book* included a bidding prayer that encouraged readers to pray “for thaim that brigges and stretes makes and amendes that god grant us parte of thare gode dedes and thaim oures.”²⁵⁷ Bridge and street construction were considered good deeds and deserving of the prayers of strangers. Two urban Lincolnshire guilds specified bridge maintenance in their guild records, the Stamford guild of the Assumption of St. Mary, and the Deeping St. James Corpus Christi guild. The guild of the Assumption was located in the church of St. Mary by the Bridge, and founded in 1210 for the dual purpose of maintaining a daily mass and bridge upkeep. Their statutes stipulated that neither their guild mass or

²⁵² Louth had at least nine parish guilds, although they are all not mentioned in the churchwardens’ accounts, Williamson, 83.

²⁵³ Williamson, 87; see also Goulding, *Louth Old Corporation Records*, 175.

²⁵⁴ Thomson, “Piety and Charity in Late Medieval London,” 187-8; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 15.

²⁵⁵ Cullum and Goldberg, “Charitable Provision in York,” 37.

²⁵⁶ Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 15.

²⁵⁷ Simmons, *Lay Folks Mass Book*, 65.

guildhall should be removed outside of the parish of St. Mary by the Bridge.²⁵⁸ The guild of Corpus Christi's compotus book (1541-1550), showed payments made for bridge repair work, which demonstrates that the guild was still performing one of the tasks for which it had been founded as late as the mid-sixteenth-century.²⁵⁹

Conclusion

The activities of parish guilds must be considered as a whole to understand the motivations and pious goals of guild members. They were an expression of religious corporatism founded on the Christian ideals of mutual charity and communal harmony. Unlike parish participation, which required payment of tithes and care of the nave, or will-making, which was required by the Church, guild foundation was voluntary and sprung out of local, grass-roots piety (even if social pressure may have accompanied membership). Laypeople were taught that the works of mercy were the appropriate way to put the doctrine of charity into practice through the performance of good works in their communities. Therefore, the works of mercy provide a way of understanding many of the corporate activities of religious guilds. They were integral to guild piety as they allowed laypeople to commemorate and emulate Christ in their relations with one another and were central to the idealized microcosmic Christian societies that guilds sought to create. At the same time guild records reveal that guild members were selective in their performance of the corporeal works of mercy. Guild membership enabled men and women to enact community through the performance of good works that were meaningful in local contexts. However, laypeople conceived of community in multiple ways—making distinctions between fellows and spiritual kin, and these respective differences characterized

²⁵⁸ PRO C 47/41/174; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 15, 177.

²⁵⁹ S.W. Skene, "Corpus Christi Gild at Deeping St. James," *Fenland Notes and Queries* IV (1900), 309.

their charity. There were quasi-monastic elements to guild membership, as membership involved variations of the “habit,” rules, and vows that characterized the cloistered lifestyle. While guild members were not actually cloistered and did not take vows of chastity or poverty, their livery, oaths of loyalty, and vows to uphold guild regulations did set them apart from non-members.

Guild membership allowed laypeople to appropriate clerical concerns as they performed both the corporeal works designated for the laity, but also the spiritual works designated for clergy as well. Although the laity were typically encouraged to practice the corporeal works of mercy over the more difficult spiritual works of mercy, guild records reveal that guild members thought that the traditionally clerical concerns of the spiritual works were suitable for their corporate pious activities as well. The spiritual works of mercy had a role to play at funerals, and also feasts, as guild members prayed for the living and dead, forgave offences, admonished sinners, and instructed the ignorant through the sponsorship of morality plays and didactic pageants performed at the feast. Guilds engaged their parish communities by performing works typically practiced by parochial clergy—educating the ignorant, sacred hospitality, funding spiritual works by hiring chaplains (input on selection of clergymen serving their communities), who would provide religious services for guild chapels and parish churches.

Charity as effected through the works of mercy looked different in urban and rural settings. Urban charity involved an element of civic stewardship—guild members took on the responsibility for the religious health of the community, which included outsiders. The sheer number of urban poor, transients, travellers, and pilgrims in cities gave urban guild members more opportunities to provide care and hospitality to strangers. Interestingly, although cities in Lincolnshire had hospitals, prisons, and an orphanage, guild charity was not directed towards

these organizations. Instead, members established their own institutions that served as conduits for charity. In a rural context, notions of community were much more localized.

From the records themselves, it is difficult to determine a difference in men's and women's guild practices and participation, but it is likely that guild membership enabled men and women to mitigate and circumvent certain social and gender norms on the one hand, while serving to reinscribe restrictive gender and social roles on the other. Guild notions of community as spiritual kinship created spaces for women to belong on equal terms as men—at least legislatively speaking. But, men and women also most likely acted out traditional social roles in the context of guild membership. Lincolnshire's guild records do not specifically mention female duties, but just as women's duties in the parish were an extension of their duties in the household, their responsibilities may have been similar in the guildhall and at feasts.

Chapter 5
‘for the health of my sowle as it may please God’: the Seven Works of Mercy and End-of-Life Charity

And therewith repair hospitals,
help sick people,
mend bad roads,
build up bridges that had been broken down,
help maidens to marry or to make them nuns,
find food for prisoners and poor people,
put scholars to school or to some other craft,
help religious orders, and
ameliorate rents or taxes.¹

Late medieval wills constituted a “statement of faith,” which was reflective of a lifetime of piety centered on good works.”² Scholars working on Yorkshire found that charitable provisions in late medieval wills were frequently organized around the Seven Works of Mercy.³ Lincolnshire wills bear this trend out as well. An examination of pious conventions reveals that laypeople attempted to shape the presentation of their piety for posterity in accordance with contemporary religious and social conventions—evidence for inner belief (or at least the testamentary performance of appropriate belief) can be gleaned “from the outward investment in the practices through which belief was expressed.”⁴ Although wills only indicate testators’

¹ F.W. Skeat, ed., *The Vision of Piers Plowman* (London, 1906), 80; see also Susan Brigden, “Religion and Social Obligation in Early Sixteenth-Century London,” *Past and Present*, no. 103 (1984), 86; W. K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England 1480-1660* (George Allen & Unwin LTD: London, 1959), 112.

² Cullum and Goldberg, “Charitable Provision in Late Medieval York,” 25.

³ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴ David Hickman, *Lincoln Wills, 1532-1534* (Rochester: Boydell and Brewer, 2001), xxiii.

“pious intentions,”⁵ and not whether their bequests were actually carried out, they are still a useful source for determining the role the works of mercy played in parishioners’ end-of-life experiences, which works of mercy were the most resonant as demonstrated in testators’ deathbed piety, and how the definition and provision of charity changed over time. Additionally, will-making provided medieval testators the “rare opportunity for deliberate, “official” textual self-representation” through the practice of bequest making.⁶

The county of Lincolnshire has a large number of extant wills. The earliest recorded wills for Lincolnshire begin in the late thirteenth-century, and in total there are over forty-thousand wills surviving prior to 1600 in Lincolnshire archives alone.⁷ This chapter examines the 2,349 wills from the Lincoln Consistory Court (including the Archdeaconry Court of Lincoln), Archdeaconry Court of Stow, Episcopal Registers, and Prerogative Court of Canterbury from the late fourteenth century to beginning of the Henrician Reformation in 1534.⁸ The episcopal registers and Prerogative Court of Canterbury wills represent testators on the wealthier end of the social spectrum while the consistory court wills were made by testators of a more middling

⁵ Cullum, “And Hir Name was Charite,” 182.

⁶ Judith Bennett and Christopher Whittick, “Philippa Russell and the Wills of London’s Late Medieval Singlewomen,” *The London Journal*, Vol. 32, no. 3 (November 2007), 251. Bennett and Whittick quote Katherine Lewis’ discussion of the opportunities for self-representation will making afforded women. Will making also enabled self-representation more broadly for both male and female will makers alike.

⁷ C.W. Foster, ed., *Lincoln Wills Registered in the District Probate Registry at Lincoln*, vol. 1 (Lincoln: Lincoln Record Society, 1914-30), x.

⁸ Canon C.W Foster edited and published wills from the Lincoln Consistory Court and Stow Archdeaconry Court (1271-1532) in three volumes under the auspices of the Lincoln Record Society.⁸ David Hickman edited an additional volume of these wills with dates ranging from 1532-4. The Lincoln Consistory Court wills from 1534-6 presently exist only in manuscript form and are housed at the Lincolnshire Records Office in Lincoln. In the sample for this chapter, there are three thirteenth-century wills, eighty-six fourteenth century wills, three hundred and fifty-three fifteenth-century wills, and one thousand nine hundred and six early sixteenth-century wills.

status.⁹ The extant Lincolnshire wills are not the original testators' wills. There were three steps to having a will registered in the probate courts, which produced three separate documents. First, an original will was written, then it was submitted to the probate court, where a copy of it was made, and finally, the copy of the original will was then itself copied into the register at Lincoln. The extant Lincolnshire wills, therefore, are the registered copies of original wills.¹⁰

Wills provide information about the interpersonal relationships, religious conventions, material culture practices, and changes in devotional concerns of the broad segment of society beneath the level of the nobility. They do not, however, include the poor and those without property despite the Church's desire that all Christians make a will.¹¹ As sources, wills are not without their drawbacks; they do not provide a comprehensive picture of the totality of testators' pious beliefs and practices. Firstly, wills tend to be formulaic because the scribes who recorded them drew heavily on legal formulae.¹² Wills typically opened with a preamble stating the testator's name, testament date, locality, and occupation. The preamble also recorded the mental and physical condition of the testator, often including a commendation of their soul to Heaven. For example, Robert Hawlaye (d. 1531) of Stainton Wadingham made his will while "hole of mynd and seke in bodye," and Thomas Stedeman (d. 1533) of Goseberton commended his soul

⁹ Testators had to bequest goods worth £5 or more in multiple dioceses in order to register their wills in the PCC. Ralph A. Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People During the English Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 91; Karen Grannum and Nigel Taylor, *Wills and Other Probate Records: A Practical Guide to Researching Your Ancestor's Last Documents* (Kew: National Archives, 2004), 26.

¹⁰ Foster, vol. 1, xiv. Foster found that there were no extant original wills for Lincolnshire before wills made in the mid-sixteenth century; see also Bennett and Whittock, 252.

¹¹ Houlbrook, 89-116; F.W. Maitland and Frederick Pollock, *The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I*, vol. 2 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 314-363, esp. 356.

¹² Bennett and Whittick, 251-2; Burgess, "For the Increase of Divine Service: Chantry in the Parish in Late Medieval Bristol," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (1985), 46.

to “allmyghtty God, to Our Blessed Lady St. Mary, and to all the holy cumpeny of heven.”¹³

These standard elements were followed by religious donations, burial arrangements, bequests of moveable property, disposition of land and real property, and concluded with a list of executors and witnesses. Formula notwithstanding, the testator was ultimately responsible for the content. Secondly, wills offer only a “key-hole vision” of testators’ wealth, property, devotional attitudes, and religious practices because they do not account for pre-obit property disposition and pious establishments (like obits, chantries, and almshouses).¹⁴ The medieval Church taught that good works performed during one’s lifetime were preferable to those done after death, so it is likely that testamentary pious bequests represent a fraction of a lifetime of charitable giving.¹⁵ Additionally, will-makers might have felt more secure making arrangements while they were still alive, inaugurating “their own services in agreement with parish officials,” and therefore being able “to rest sure in the knowledge that wardens, priest, and neighbors would respect and fulfill their wishes without testamentary prompting.”¹⁶ Thirdly, although wills can offer glimpses into the piety of the middling ranks of society, they do exclude the very poor, and most women—with the exception of “reasonably wealthy widows.”¹⁷ The majority of Lincolnshire testators in this sample were mid-level clerics like rectors, and laymen who were merchants,

¹³ Stow 1531-56, 352; Foster, vol. 3, 191; LCC 1532-4, 164; Hickman, 143.

¹⁴ Clive Burgess, “Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention: Testamentary Evidence Reconsidered,” in *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England*, ed. Michael A. Hicks (Gloucester: A. Sutton, 1990), 30; Patricia Cullum, ““And Hir Name Was Charite,”: Charitable Giving by and for Women in Late Medieval Yorkshire” in *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society c. 1200-1500*, ed., P.J.P. Goldberg, (Wolfeboro Falls, NH: Alan Sutton Publishing Inc, 1992), 182.

¹⁵ In his study of Bristol wills, Clive Burgess found that numerous testators established their “most costly and intricate” post-obit services before dying, “Wills and Pious Convention,”¹⁶ Burgess, “For the Increase of Divine Service,” 46.

¹⁶ Burgess, “Wills and Pious Convention,” 18.

¹⁷ Hickman, xvii.

husbandmen, and knights. While most testators represent the upper two-thirds of Lincolnshire society, three men identifying as laborers registered wills with the LCC. Women's wills make up only ten percent of the Lincolnshire totals. Men made up the other ninety percent of testators; clerics were seven percent and laymen were eighty-three percent of the male testator population.

Lifecycle influenced the will making process. The majority of female testators were widows (ninety-four percent), while the majority of lay male testators were married (ninety-eight percent). Of lay male testators less than two percent (forty-three men) identified as widowers, and only three men (of 1952) identified as single. Only twelve married women, or five percent of female testators, left wills. Married women were unable to make wills without the express permission of their husbands, so there are a far fewer number of married women's wills than widows' wills extant.¹⁸ (see table 5.1, 5.2) In Lincolnshire, the ability of wives to make wills appears to be related to social status—the largest group of married women's wills comes from the nobility or very wealthy. Of wives' wills, ninety-one percent of these female testators were married to nobles or men of means. Single women were even less likely than wives to make wills. There is a sole will made by a single woman for Lincolnshire, that of Agnes Chapman (d. 1521), a maiden from Boston. Her will was registered with the PCC indicating that she was a single woman of some wealth.¹⁹ Since not all Lincolnshire residents, male or female, left wills, these percentages mean that we are not seeing the entire population, nor are they all at the same stage in their family's life-cycle.

¹⁸ Bennett and Whittick, 251.

¹⁹ In her study of women's wills in medieval London, Judith Bennett found that only fifteen female testators identified themselves as never married or maidens. She argues that the scarcity of single women's wills is a result of them generally having estates too modest to necessitate formal will-making, Bennett and Whittick, 259. It should be noted that Bennett did find three single women's wills registered in the PCC probate from women of means, including Agnes Chapman, maiden of Boston.

Table 5.1 Lifecycle Makeup of Will Sample

No. of Wills Total (2175)	Married	Widowed	Single
No. Lay Male Wills (1952)	98% (1906)	2% (43)	<1% (3)
No. Female Wills (223)	5% (12)	94% (210)	<1% (1)

Table 5.2 Wills with Charitable Bequests*

No. of Total Wills in Sample (2349)	No. Wills with Any Charitable Bequests 75% (1760)	No. Wills with Provisions for Traditional Charity 55% (974)	No. Wills With Provisions for Expanded Charity 98% (1725)
No. Lay Male Wills 83% (1952)	75% (1466)	55% (796)	98% (1435)
No. Female Wills 9% (223)	74% (166)	57% (94)	99% (165)
No. Clerical Wills 7% (174)	74% (128)	66% (84)	98% (125)

*Testators often practiced both traditional and expanded charity; therefore, the numbers for these categories overlap.

Sermons, prescriptive works, plays, and religious art saturated late medieval culture with messages about charity and salvation. Charitable deeds were done for the good of the soul, and were meant to be a part of a lifetime of pious practices; however end-of-life giving allowed late medieval Christians another opportunity for salvation through the supplementation and augmentation of lifetime good works. As discussed in previous chapters, late medieval Christians held gendered ideas about the performance of charity. Scholars have argued that charity was viewed as the particular province of women, and that men’s charity was frequently monetarily based, while women’s charity was expressed in the locus of the domestic home and

through the allocation of household resources such as food, drink, and clothing to the needy.²⁰

These gendered notions about charity influenced the nature of end-of-life charity as well.

Patricia Cullum found in her study of York wills that women were more likely to leave charitable

bequests than men.²¹ W.K. Jordan came to similar conclusions in his study of poverty and

charity in London.²² Men's and women's wills varied in format and content, which was

influenced by gendered practices of property ownership and disposition, as well as lifecycle.

Men's wills concentrated on funeral arrangements, property bequests, and monetary gifts, while

women's wills were characterized by a large number of small bequests of household items and

clothing to a wide network of recipients.²³ Men's wills generally were shorter and less detailed

than women's—possibly because a husband was able to give his wife verbal bequest instructions,

or assume that as executrix his wife would be familiar with his last wishes; whereas widows

could not count on a spouse for the same testamentary support.²⁴ Men were also legally

required to make arrangements for the support of their wives and dependent children; therefore,

strictures were placed on men's disposal of property and goods.²⁵

²⁰ See Patricia Cullum, "Gendering Charity in Medieval Hagiography," in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, eds., Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 135-7, Katherine French, *The Good Women of the Parish* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 185.

²¹ Patricia Cullum, "'And Hir Name was Charite': Charitable Giving by and for Women in Late Medieval Yorkshire," in *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society c. 1200-1500*, ed. P.J.P. Goldberg (Wolfeboro Falls, NH: Alan Sutton Publishing Inc., 1992), 183.

²² W. K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England 1480-1660* (George Allen & Unwin LTD: London, 1959), 30.

²³ Caroline Barron, "The Widows' World in Later Medieval London," in *Medieval London Widows, 1300-1500*, eds., Caroline Barron and Anne F. Sutton (London: Hambledon, 1994), xxxii; Cullum, "And Hir Name Was Charite," 185.

²⁴ Katherine French, "Loving Friends: Surviving Widowhood in Late Medieval Westminster," *Gender and History* (2010), 25.

²⁵ A male testator's estate was required to be divided into thirds to provide for his wife, children and debts/pious uses. Most Lincolnshire wills do not mention this tripartite division—not

As in the Biblical parable of the good wife in the Book of Proverbs (Proverbs 31:10-31), the acts of charity carried out by women were an “extension of household activity and charitable disposal of surplus was regarded as an aspect of good domestic management.”²⁶ Charitable giving was considered appropriate pious behavior for all stages of a woman’s lifecycle, and even gained further prestige in widowhood. The Gospels (Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4) recounted the special place the charity of poor widows held in the sight of God—a sentiment echoed in the popular contemporary sermons and literature.²⁷ Widows were often tasked with fulfilling the pious bequests stipulated in their husband’s wills.²⁸ These bequests were sometimes described as being on their husband’s behalf, but it is likely that more often than not, they were indistinguishable from a widow’s own bequests. While this complicates attempts to make generalizations about the nature of widows’ piety when access to supplementary material is lacking, the fact remains that widows, more frequently than not, were free to use their personal discretion when performing charity on their husbands’ behalves. Therefore, charitable works by widows still reflect the personal choices women made regarding testamentary piety.

because testators failed to uphold their obligations, but because provisions were arranged before death. See Houlbrook, 93; Grannum and Taylor, 85.

²⁶ French, *Good Women*, 185; Miriam Gill, “Preaching and Image: Sermons and Wall Paintings in Later Medieval England,” “Female Piety and Impiety: Selected Images of Women in Wall Paintings in England After 1300,” in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, eds., Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 113. In the Book of Proverbs a good wife “opens her hand to the poor and reaches out to the needy,” Proverbs 31:10-31.

²⁷ French, *Good Women*, 38; Barbara Hanawalt, “The Widow’s Mite: Provisions for Late Medieval London Widows,” in *Upon My Husband’s Death: Widows in the Literature and Histories of Medieval Europe*, ed., Louise Mirrer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992) 21.

²⁸ French, “Loving Friends,” 27.

One final challenge in using pious bequests as a barometer for religious beliefs is that the uneven survival of wills over time skews the perception of the popularity of certain practices.²⁹ While the use of wills as evidence for religious conventions and pious practices is complicated by limitations in their comprehensiveness, they do provide information about segments of the population often overlooked by other types of documentary records and offer insights into certain aspects of late medieval individual piety.

This chapter argues that scholars have traditionally defined charity too narrowly to encompass the wide range of activities perceived of as charitable by late medieval people, that the Seven Works of Mercy played an important but locally determined role in testamentary piety, and that a gendered performance of the works of mercy served as an organizing principle for testamentary charity. The following examination of Lincolnshire wills demonstrates that the quantity and quality of charitable provisions made by Lincolnshire testators was influenced by how the term charity is defined. For late medieval Christians, charity included monetary alms, but also good works and the performance of quasi-sacramental deeds of mercy.³⁰ These good and merciful works, which Augustine felt constituted a Christian “tunic of charity,” enacted the unity of the Church.³¹ Performing these works represented religious acts rooted in affective fellowship. For example, contemporaries referred to giving doles to the poor as performing their

²⁹ Peter Heath, “Urban Piety in the Later Middle Ages: The Evidence of Hull Wills,” in *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century*, ed., Richard B. Dobson (Gloucester: Sutton, 1984), 211.

³⁰ Allan D. Fitzgerald, ed., “The Seven Works of Mercy,” in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 558.

³¹ Augustine as quoted in Fitzgerald, 558.

“devotions.”³² Limiting the definition of charity also obscures the importance of the parish church in local religion—it functioned as the locus and vehicle for the laity’s prime end of life concerns, Purgatory and Judgment day.

Up through the 1530s, wills were considered to be not only legal documents, but religious ones as well. Priests or members of the clergy witnessed the majority of Lincolnshire wills, and contemporaries believed will executors were discharging a sacred duty. Mirk’s *Instructions for Parish Priests* taught that those who did not properly perform the duties of executor were guilty of the deadly sin of avarice, shirking their responsibilities to their dead neighbors and kin out of sheer greed.³³ Avaricious executors would be punished on Judgment Day, but on Earth as well. Mirk prescribed excommunication for this type of sin, saying “all false executors þat maken false testaments and despose the goodes of him þat is dede oþer wise than his will was at his departing” will be cursed by the authority of God, the father, the Son, and Holy Ghost as well as all the saints of heaven.³⁴ The punishment of false executors was also a theme in wills themselves, and in the corrective records of episcopal visitations. For example, in the closing of her testament, Agnes Webster (d. 1533), reminded her executors that they would “answer afore the hye judge of hevyn” for the handling of her final wishes.³⁵ Warnings such as that made by Agnes Webster were not in vain. Episcopal visitation documents record numerous executors presented for not fulfilling their sworn duties, like executrix Katherine Sylvester, who was charged with failing to

³² Susan Brigden, “Religion and Social Obligation in Early Sixteenth-Century London,” *Past and Present*, no. 103 (1984), 94, 103; J.A.F. Thomson, “Piety and Charity in Late Medieval London,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 16 (1965), pp. 180-1.

³³ Gillis Kristensson, ed., *John Mirk’s Instructions for Parish Priests*, Lund Studies in English 49 (1974), pp. 121-142.

³⁴ Edward Peacock, ed., *Instructions for Parish Priests* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1902), pp.21-23

³⁵ LCC 1532-34, 132v.

fulfill the terms of her husband's will, or Alicia Waytt, a woman of all-around ill-repute, who forged and tried to benefit from the falsified will of an unknown dead man (cuiusdam defuncti).³⁶

Traditional charity

Charitable bequests constituted an important element of will making in Lincolnshire. As discussed in chapters three and four, when taking a narrow view of the definition of charity as poor relief, which only included monetary aid, just twenty-six percent of testators making charitable bequests left this type of provision in their wills. If almsgiving in the form of the corporeal works of mercy is added to monetary doles and included in the category of traditional charitable giving, the percentage of charitable bequests increases to seventy-one percent. These bequests included donations to friars, religious houses, hospitals, funeral doles, and other provisions for the poor. Similar to the results Cullum and Jordan found in their analysis of York and London wills, Lincolnshire's female testators made more charitable bequests of the traditional type than men; eighty-two percent of female testators made charitable bequests of money and/or alms compared to seventy percent of laymen, and sixty-one percent of clergymen. The categories of traditional charity favored by testators were similar for lay will-makers of both sexes. Male and female testators alike favored the corporeal works of mercy over all other types of traditional charity, followed by donations to mendicant friars, monetary funeral doles to the poor, and bequests to religious houses, respectively. Clergymen made more monetary bequests than the laity, possibly because they were required to use a portion of their salaries for poor relief. While clerics were expected to practice hospitality, they made fewer provisions for corporeal

³⁶ A. Hamilton Thompson, *Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1517-1531* (Hereford: Hereford Times Limited), vol. 33, pp. 62, 65. Alicia Waytt was also charged with fornication and defaming her neighbors in that same visitation, 65.

works in their wills than laypeople did. It is likely that parish clergy performed these works during life, and may have expected their successors to continue them when they died.

The performance of the corporeal works of mercy was inextricably tied to the events of Judgment Day and, ultimately, salvation; they allowed Christians to contemplate and memorialize Christ while simultaneously emulating his good works (and those of his apostles) in the course of their everyday social interactions. Sermons and prescriptive literature taught that it was best to perform these works in life. But, they still had redemptive value for souls in Purgatory when commissioned after death.³⁷ In Lincolnshire, performing the seven works of corporeal mercy comprised fifty-six percent of traditional charitable bequests. More rural than urban testators made provisions in their wills for these types of works of mercy. Donations to Lincoln's St. Katherine's orphanage were the most popular type of traditional bequest for both rural and urban testators, with sixty-two percent of rural and eighty-four percent of urban will-makers leaving money or alms to the orphans.³⁸ In rural Lincolnshire, bequests to feed and quench the hungry and thirsty (twenty-five percent of wills), and welcome strangers, (twenty percent of wills), followed donations to the orphans. The priority given to the hungry and thirsty as well as strangers was reversed in Lincolnshire's cities; fifteen percent of testators left bequests to welcome strangers, while only ten percent fed and quenched the needy. The remaining four works were less popular with both urban and rural testators, but were included more frequently in urban wills; more urban will-makers provided for prisoners (4/5), the sick (14/22), clothing the poor (5/7), and attending to the dead (1/1), comprising eighty percent, sixty-four percent,

³⁷ Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 301.

³⁸ Donations to institutions like bedehouses, orphanages, and hospitals fulfilled all of the corporeal works at once. In this chapter they will be discussed further in their own category of "bundled" works of mercy.

seventy-two percent, and one-hundred percent of bequests in those categories, respectively. (see tables 5.3, 5.4, 5.5)

Table 5.3 Testamentary Provision for the Corporeal Works of Mercy*

	No. Wills Feeding and Quenching the Needy	No. Wills Clothing the Poor	No. Wills Relieving Prisoners	No. Wills Visiting the Sick	No. Wills Burying the Dead	No. Wills Welcoming Strangers	No. Wills With Bequests for Orphans
No. of Total Charitable Wills Funding Corporeal Works of Mercy 31% (544)	18% (100)	1% (7)	<1% (5)	4% (23)	<1% (1)	18% (97)	72% (389)
No. Lay Male Wills (454)	19% (85)	1% (5)	<1% (3)	3% (14)	0% (0)	18% (80)	73% (330)
No. Female Wills (61)	10% (6)	2% (1)	0% (0)	8% (5)	2% (1)	13% (8)	82% (50)
No. Clerical Wills (29)	31% (9)	3% (1)	79% (2)	14% (4)	0% (0)	31% (9)	31% (9)

*Orphans are included here because bequests to St. Katherine's fulfilled all of the corporeal works of mercy.

Table 5.4 Geographical Makeup of Charitable Bequests

	No. Urban Wills*	No. Rural Wills
No. of Total Wills with Any Charitable Bequest 75% (1760)	31% (540)	69% (1220)
No. Wills Monetary Doles 15% (256)	40% (102)	61% (156)
No. Wills Traditional Charity 55% (974)	36% (351)	64% (623)
No. Wills Expanded Charity 98% (1725)	31% (533)	69% (1192)
No. Wills Corporeal Works of Mercy 31% (544)	44% (240)	56% (304)
No. Wills Spiritual Works of Mercy 38% (670)	34% (230)	66% (440)

*I used Susan Reynolds, Gervase Rosser, and Colin Platt's categorization of an urban area as a place with high population density, commerce, and over 1,000 inhabitants.

Table 5.5 Geographical Makeup of Corporeal Works of Mercy Bequests

	No. Urban Wills	No. Rural Wills
No. of Total Wills Funding Corporeal Works of Mercy 30% (544)	44% (204)	56% (304)
No. Wills Feeding/Quenching 18% (100)	24% (24)	76% (76)
No. Wills Clothing Poor 1% (7)	72% (5)	29% (2)
No. Wills Relieving Prisoners <1% (5)	80% (4)	20% (1)
No. Wills Visiting Sick 4% (22)	64% (14)	36% (8)
No. Wills Burying Dead <1%(1)	100% (1)	0% (0)
No. Wills Welcoming Strangers 18% (97)	36% (35)	64% (62)
No. Wills Providing for Orphans 72% (389)	52% (202)	48% (187)

Providing food and drink took many forms. The most common ways testators chose to fulfill this work was through funeral or obit doles to the poor of bread, ale, and less frequently cheese. Giving barley, malt, and wheat to urban mendicant orders was another way will-makers fulfilled this work of mercy. Funeral doles of food for the poor were usually made in generalities, like Thomas Raby's (d. 1530) provision of "halpeny brede" be given to every "man, woman, and chyld" present at his funeral.³⁹ However, a few testators, such as John Longe (d. 1516), took the opportunity to make symbolic gestures by specifying doles be made to seven, twelve, or thirteen paupers. Longe made arrangements for thirteen paupers to be given charity at his anniversary.⁴⁰ Bread doles were also meaning-laden—"the gift of bread itself was a literal response to the bidding of the Lord's prayer."⁴¹ Friars were invariably given bequests of grain, but Joseph Beneson (d.1526), a Boston merchant provided for herrings to be given to the city's friars during Lent.⁴²

Like the poor, the sick had a unique spiritual merit; and like donating to the poor and receiving prayers that were in turn particularly pleasing to God,⁴³ provisioning the sick gave testators a particular spiritual purchase. A fifteenth-century Franciscan treatise on the Ten Commandments instructed laypeople that visiting the sick was an important element of keeping

³⁹ LCC 1520-31, 254; Foster, vol. 3, 9.

⁴⁰ LCC 1506 &c., 48, Foster, vol. 1, 70.

⁴¹ Patricia Cullum and P.J.P Goldberg, "Charitable Provision in Late Medieval York: 'To the Praise of God and the Use of the Poor,'" *Northern History* 29 (1993), 28.

⁴² LCC Pryn, 37; Foster, vol. 1, 175. Fewer testators performed these works through commensality by sponsoring a *convivium*, or commemorative feast, which often brought the poor and will-makers' neighbors together in an effort to practice the works of mercy while securing intercession, as recipients were asked to pray for the deceased at the meal, Cullum, "Hir Name is Charite," 189. These neighborhood feasts will be explored in more detail in the section on neighborliness later in this chapter.

⁴³ Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 54-98.

the commandment to honor the Sabbath. They were supposed to visit “pore bedraden men & wemen. Þe wilke been godes preisiners. & lyen in þe boondes of god in sore sekeness. And þerto haue no refresshyng. Bot of good men and mercyful.”⁴⁴ Lincolnshire testators, however, did not make provisions for actually visiting the sick. Much more common was performing this work of mercy by supporting hospitals and leprosaria,⁴⁵ funding the lantern lights that were used when the Eucharist was brought to the sick,⁴⁶ and giving money more generally to the infirm, and more specifically to named infirm persons.

Hospitals were the largest recipient of bequests for the sick, with forty-five percent of testators making bequests for the sick funding hospitals. The testators were evenly split between city and countryside-dwellers, with women and clergymen representing twenty percent of sponsors, and laymen comprising the last sixty percent. In addition to fulfilling the injunction to care for the sick, supporting hospitals could also fulfill the other six corporeal works of mercy as well. The prestige attached to certain institutions (or their inmate populations), and the intercessory prayers from the inmates of such institutions also represent important incentives for testators.

⁴⁴ James Finch Royster, *A Middle English Treatise on the Ten Commandments* (Chapel Hill: The University Press, 1911), 21. The sick were viewed as God’s prisoners, and providing for them may have fulfilled both the works of visiting the sick and caring for prisoners. As discussed later, Lincolnshire testators made few provisions for fulfilling the injunction to care for prisoners. It might be possible that they considered themselves doing this work by making provisions for the sick and infirm suffering in the “boondes of god.” Mirk’s *Instructions for Parish Priests* taught that sickness was a form of penance, 172. Therefore, caring for the sick could be viewed as caring for penitents as well.

⁴⁵ In addition to fulfilling the work of visiting the sick, hospitals could also fulfill a number of the works at once. This aspect of institutional bequests will be explored in further detail later in this chapter.

⁴⁶ Foster, vol. 1, 253.

The county of Lincolnshire had at least twenty-two medieval hospitals—over half of which were founded as leper hospitals.⁴⁷ Only a handful were sustained for any substantial duration of time, however, with the majority having fallen into disrepair, suffering from mismanagement and corrupt administration, or lack of funds within a couple generations of establishment.⁴⁸ They seem to have been a particularly urban phenomenon. At least six were located in the city of Lincoln alone with another three located in Stamford.⁴⁹ Most were founded in the early fourteenth century, with the earliest foundations being in the late eleventh century and the latest being 1485.⁵⁰ Although the county boasted a large number of hospitals, St. Sepulchre (c.1123) run by St. Katherine's Priory was by far the most popular with Lincolnshire testators.⁵¹

⁴⁷ This number changes based on the standards used to classify an institution as a hospital.

⁴⁸ F.W. Brooks, "The Hospital of the Holy Innocents Without Lincoln," *Associated Architectural and Archaeological Societies' Reports and Papers* (1935), 157-88.

⁴⁹ William Page, *The Victoria County History of Lincolnshire*, vol. 2 (London, 1906), 230-5. The Hospitals of the Holy Innocents, St. Giles, St. Leonard, Mary Magdalene, St. Bartholomew, and St. Sepulchre were in Lincoln, and All Saints, St. Giles, and St. John the Baptist and St. Thomas the Martyr were in Stamford.

⁵⁰ In their study of *maison dieu*, Cullum and Goldberg found that *maison dieu* and small almshouses proliferated in York between the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, Cullum and Goldberg, "Charitable Provision in York," 31. Lincolnshire's hospitals and almshouses seem to have been founded at an earlier date than those in other parts of the country and continued to be founded later as well.

⁵¹ J.W.F. Hill, *Medieval Lincoln* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 345; Page, vol. 2, 189; On medieval hospitals, see Rotha Mary Clay, *The Mediaeval Hospitals of England* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966); Patricia Cullum, "'For Pore People Harberles,': What Was the Function of the Maisonsdieu?," in *Trade, Devotion and Governance: Papers in Later Medieval History* (Dover, NH: A. Sutton, 1994), 36-54; Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England, 1350-1600* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 59-94; Nicholas Orme and Margaret Webster, *The English Hospital, 1070-1570* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Carole Rawcliffe, "The Hospitals of Later Medieval London," *Medical History* 28 (1984), 1-21.

St. Katherine's Priory was the most important religious foundation in the vicinity of the city of Lincoln.⁵² It was of the English Gilbertine Order, and was one of the Gilbertine's largest houses. The Priory was located a few hundred yards from the city of Lincoln's south gate. Edward I raised the first of the commemorative "Eleanor crosses" in honor of his deceased queen, Eleanor of Castile, on the green opposite the hospital and priory.⁵³ Hence the priory and hospital compound became an even more important part of Lincoln's landscape—the city's guilds used the cross as a meeting point for brothers and sisters going on or returning home from pilgrimages to Jerusalem, Rome, or Compostela.⁵⁴ St. Katherine's Priory has been identified as a hospital itself as well as the overseer of St. Sepulchre. The hospital there housed lepers, the infirm, the poor, orphans, lay sisters, and possibly widows over the course of its history. Wills leaving pious bequests to this institution attest to its multiple functions and varied inmate population—alternately referring to it as an orphanage, hospital, leper house, bedehouse, convent, and asylum. Orphans, lepers, and the infirm were mentioned as living at St. Katherine's since the late thirteenth-century. Christiana De Bennington left two shillings for the sick there, as well as "to the lepers vjd., Also to the poor children and orphans of the same hospital iijd" in her 1283 will.⁵⁵ In addition to housing Lincoln's most vulnerable populations, St. Katherine's was awarded the permission to grant an indulgence for all who contributed to the hospital's fabric or helped to maintain the sick there in the early fourteenth-century.⁵⁶ Of the wills leaving monies to hospitals forty-five percent went to St. Sepulchre/St. Katherine's. The next most popular hospital was St. Giles, Lincoln (c. 1280) with thirty-six percent of bequests. St. Giles was

⁵² Hill, 345.

⁵³ Ibid., 345.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 345. This was also discussed further in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

⁵⁵ Foster, vol. 1, 2.

⁵⁶ Page, 189.

founded to help the poor, but became a refuge for ministers and servants of Lincoln Cathedral instead. While hospitals were popular recipients for pious bequests, their popularity appears to have peaked in the late fourteenth and tapered off by the mid-fifteenth centuries. This could be as a result of the uneven survival of materials, or of the dissolution and evolution of establishments over time.⁵⁷

Another way testators supported the sick was by sponsoring the lantern lights that priests used when they brought the Eucharist to the homes of the infirm. Twenty-three percent of bequests, or five wills, that made arrangements for visiting the sick sponsored these lantern lights. Henry Cullier (1513) of Multon's bequest of 2d. "to the lantern light which is carried before the sacrament at the visitation of the sick" typifies this type of bequest.⁵⁸ Another fourteen percent of these bequests were made for stipends to be given to generalized populations, such as "every poor man confined to his bed in Stamford," to Lincoln's "poor lying in houses and other inferior and feeble persons," and the "impotent and seke persons" of Boston.⁵⁹ Nineteen percent of testators had a particular sick person in mind for their charity—all of whom were blind.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ For example, the Hospital of Holy Innocents was founded to house lepers, but by the early fourteenth century housed able-bodied, healthy persons, who paid rent. Charity and alms from the public fell away, its lands fell into disrepair, and its chapel was repeatedly given negative evaluations at visitations. See Brooks, "The Hospital of the Holy Innocents without Lincoln," pp. 157-188. The decline in donations to hospitals might be less the result of a decline in general interest in hospital inmates as objects of charity, and more an indication that charity-givers were unwilling to squander their resources on specific decaying institutions.

⁵⁸ LCC 1506 &c., 41; Foster, vol. 1, 54.

⁵⁹ William Stacy (1410) DIOC/REG/15, ff. 47r-v, Alfred Gibbons, *Early Lincoln Wills* (Lincoln: J. Williamson, 1888), 138; Geoffrey Le Scrope (1382) LCC D. & C., Misc., no. 55, Foster, vol. 1, 11; Hugh Schawe (1530) LCC 1532-4, 9, Foster, vol. 2, 189.

⁶⁰ These numbers are probably very skewed. Gifts to individual infirm persons are extremely underestimated because testators frequently did not give many identifying details about those receiving their charity. They could safely assume their executors knew the individual for whom their bequests were intended. This type of charity may also not have been formalized in a will, but given informally based on verbal instructions from the testator to their executors as well.

Thomas Ricard (d.1433) of Harlaxton generously provided a blind chaplain with a stipend for the rest of his life. Thomas Alys (d. 1522) of Lincoln remembered “Blind Jennet” in his will, stipulating that she receive “as much clothe as shall make to her a kirtill, and xijd. in money. I will that the said blind woman shall dwell in the howse that she is in duringe her lif to prairie for my soule and all christian souls.”⁶¹ Burgh Le Marsh’s Thomas Wenterton (1531) left “to the blynde wench that is with Robert Rutter v yerdes blankyt.” Finally, Robert North (1531), parson of Brinkhill made a bequest to William Tewyll on account of him “being blynde.”⁶² These bequests for the sick, blind, and bedridden are reflective of a religious culture in which parables such as Luke 14:12-14, where charity to the infirm brought special blessings and repayment in kind at the resurrection, endowed the afflicted with spiritual capital and held great spiritual purchase for testators.⁶³

Like the other works, there were a variety of ways Lincolnshire testators fulfilled the work of receiving strangers. The call to receive strangers was generally fulfilled through the institution of the bedehouse, or almshouse. These institutions were similar to hospitals, with the exception that they were intended to shelter the poor rather than the sick.⁶⁴ There was some overlap between bedehouses and hospitals, and some cases hospitals for lepers became bedehouses when leprosy became uncommon by the mid-fourteenth century.⁶⁵ Bedehouse

⁶¹ LCC 1545-6, ii, 402, Foster, vol. 1, 110.

⁶² LCC 1520-31, 377d, Foster vol. 3, 158.

⁶³ Cullum and Goldberg, “Charitable Provision in York,” 36.

⁶⁴ Hospitals were often endowed, royal, gentry, or ecclesiastical foundations; whereas bedehouses were founded by guilds, merchants, and wealthy individuals, Cullum, “For Pore People Harberles,” *passim*.

⁶⁵ Cullum and Goldberg, “Charitable Provision in York,” 31.

residents were expected to pray for their benefactors in exchange for their room and board.⁶⁶ This charitable provision for strangers and homeless poor represented a “continuum of care,” which was determined by the pious impulses and financial resources of testators.⁶⁷ In the Lincolnshire, wealthier testators founded bedehouses, while those with less money provided supplementary support by outfitting already established institutions with mattresses, blankets, and bedding for their inhabitants. Three percent of testators performing the works of mercy made provision for receiving strangers. Establishing bedehouses (thirty-one percent) and donations to beadsmen (thirty-one percent) were the most popular ways to receive strangers. Testators like Thomas Quadring (d.1528) and William Wryght (d.1530) founded bedehouses both outside and inside of their homes. Quadring, a resident of the village of Careby founded four bedehouses in the town of Grantham, while Wryght made provision for a bed to be made available for the use of the poor and wandering strangers in his Woldnewton village home.⁶⁸ Twenty three percent of testators left coverlets, sheets, blankets, and mattresses to bedehouses and alms-beds. Fifteen percent of Lincolnshire testators also welcomed strangers by actually having strangers received at their doorsteps for the distribution of bread and alms.

Public works projects also fitted into the work of receiving strangers. Mending roads and bridges do not seem like charitable enterprises, but they had a spiritual import for Lincolnshire

⁶⁶ The name bedeman seems to come from the fact that they were expected to “bid the beads” or pray for their benefactors in exchange for the charity they received. A “bedesman was a distinct person...one who was bound in virtue of a benefaction to say intercessory prayers,” Edmund Hobhouse, *Church-Wardens’ Accounts for Croscombe, Pilton, Yatton, Tintinhull, Morebath and St. Michael’s Bath: Ranging from 1349-1560*, (Somerset: Somerset Record Society, 1890), 234. See also Hobhouse, xiii.

⁶⁷ Cullum, “For Pore People Harberles,” 41.

⁶⁸ LCC 1520-31, 142d., Foster, vol. 2, 75; LCC 1520-31, 403, Foster, vol. 3, 94; Cullum discusses the phenomenon of providing alms-beds for the poor in the home in “And Hir Name is Charite,” 190.

testators. Scholars like Cullum, Goldberg, and Thompson have linked the repair of roads and bridges with welcoming the stranger, who was “invariably depicted in art...as a traveller.”⁶⁹ As meritorious travellers, such as pilgrims, were often exposed to danger, the maintenance of travel routes allowed testators to offer them a small measure of aid.⁷⁰ Of course the more mundane impetus to road and bridge repair could have been practical and economic in character, however, contemporary prescriptive literature also linked charity and public works. For example, the *Lay Folks’ Mass Book* included a bidding prayer that encouraged readers to pray “for thaim that brigges and stretes makes and amendes that god grant us parte of thare gode dedes and thaim oures.”⁷¹ Bridge and street construction were considered good deeds and deserving of the prayers of strangers. When the conception of receiving strangers is expanded to include these public projects, the percentage of testators performing this work of mercy increases from three percent to twenty percent.

One percent (7) of Lincolnshire testators left resources to perform the work of clothing the naked. Urban testators made these types of bequests more frequently than rural ones, with city-dwellers making seventy-two percent of testamentary clothing bequests. In her study of York, P.H. Cullum found that clothing provision was intimately bound up with funeral ceremonies. Will-makers arranged for torch and hearse bearers to be given a livery, and women might be given clothing as recompense for keeping vigil over the body of the deceased. In other cases, Cullum found that testators distributed items of clothing as part of the funeral dole.⁷²

Lincolnshire testators’ bequests can be similarly categorized—twenty-nine percent of testators

⁶⁹ Cullum and Goldberg, “Charitable Provision in York,” 37; Thomson, “Piety and Charity,” pp. 187-8; Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 15.

⁷⁰ Westlake, *Parish Gilds*, 15.

⁷¹ Simmons, *Lay Folks Mass Book*, 65.

⁷² Cullum, “And Hir Name is Charite,” 192.

leaving clothing bequests made such provisions in exchange for prayers, another twenty-nine percent as payment for funeral attendance, and the final forty-three percent left clothing to the poor with no specific requests for prayers or funeral attendance, although these were both probably expected. The poor to whom clothing was provided were demographically or numerically significant. Lincoln merchant William Snelson (d. 1395) provided money to clothe thirteen poor men and widows in exchange for their attendance at his funeral.⁷³ Likewise, Robert Seltorn (d. 1530) instructed that thirteen poor men receive thirteen black gowns to pray for his soul on the day of his funeral.⁷⁴ Thomas Alys (d. 1522) left money enough for kirtle to be made for Blind Jennet,⁷⁵ and Joseph Beneson (d. 1526) ensured that his brother, the “hermyt,” was provided as many habits as could be purchased with 26s. 8.⁷⁶ Clothing reflected wealth and social status. According to Cullum and Goldberg, “russet was an inexpensive cloth appropriate for the clothing of those of low social standing,” which is demonstrated by the fact that hospital inmates wore russet gowns. However, most clothing bequests do not specify the type of cloth for the clothing for the poor, widows, and hermit. Only Jane Hunte (d. 1530) specified the type of cloth to be distributed to the poor, and it was linen not russet.⁷⁷ While executors might indeed choose to give these poor persons russet cloth when fulfilling the terms of the will, will-makers were not adhering to rigid social guidelines about the types of gifts that were acceptable for the poor.⁷⁸

⁷³ LRO DIOC/REG/12, ff. 422r-v, Gibbons, 73.

⁷⁴ LRO Stow 1530-52, 1, Foster, vol. 3, 16.

⁷⁵ LCC 1545-6, ii, 402, Foster, vol. 1, 110.

⁷⁶ LCC Pryn, 37, Foster, vol.1, 75.

⁷⁷ LCC 1520-31, 313, LW 3-104

⁷⁸ It is also possible that will-makers thought paupers dressed in less cheap material would enhance the status of their funeral ceremonies.

Although few Lincolnshire wills provided for prisoners, contemporary sermons and prescriptive literature frequently encouraged laypeople to comfort and visit the incarcerated. Mirk's *Festial* and the *Lay Folks' Catechism* especially equated visiting prisoners with the line in the paternoster about forgiving debts, and conceptualized the prisoners to be visited as the unfortunate inmates of debtors' prisons.⁷⁹ Debt was conceived of as "the result of poverty rather than criminal intentions, and its forgiveness was enjoined in the Lord's Prayer."⁸⁰ Church courts also used the visitation and care of prisoners as a means of public penance, which illustrates the spiritual status such work held for the Church.⁸¹ In spite of clerical encouragement, visiting prisoners appears to be the one work of mercy in which Lincolnshire testators had little interest. This stands in stark contrast to testators in other parts of the country, York and London in particular, where prisoners were routinely remembered in wills.⁸² Although images of saintly prisoners like St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Katherine, and St. John the Baptist were common in local churches, and depictions of visiting the prisoner were found in wall paintings, stained glass

⁷⁹ Cullum and Goldberg, "Charitable Provision in York," 34 fn. 45. Originally the injunction to aid prisoners was conceived of as ransoming captive Christians during the Crusades. Perhaps as the religious and moral aspects of this work were transformed into those dealing with credit and reputation, this work of mercy became less compelling for will-makers. It is also possible that London testators knew from living in an urban environment where credit was important and debt was easy to accrue how quickly fortunes could change and were therefore sympathetic to those in debtors' prisons.

⁸⁰ Cullum, "And Hir Name Was Charite," 195.

⁸¹ Brigden, "Religion and Social Obligation," 103; Hale, *A Series of Precedents*, 318, 330, 333.

⁸² Ian W. Archer, "The Charity of Early Medieval Londoners," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, Vol. 12 (2002), 223-244, "The Charity of London Widows in the Later Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," in *Local Identities in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*, eds., Norman L. Jones and Daniel Woolf, 178-206 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Bennett and Christopher Whittick, 255, 262; Cullum, "And Hir Name Was Charite," 195-6.

windows, and pew bench ends, this work of mercy seems to have had little resonance for will makers.⁸³

Lincolnshire had a single medieval prison, which was in the castle at Lincoln.⁸⁴ Boston and Stamford had jails recorded in the mid-sixteenth century, while Spalding priory had its own jail. The monastery had the Right of Gallows, and executed eighty prisoners there between 1257 and 1525.⁸⁵ It is possible that other religious houses in Lincolnshire had similar incarceration facilities. Whatever the case may be, only five wills, or one percent of total wills funding a corporeal work of mercy, record bequests to prisoners. All of these testators were men of some status—an archdeacon, duke, knight, merchant, and rector—with wills registered in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. That these testators registered their wills with the Prerogative Court of Canterbury is significant; all but one of them focused their charity on London prisons. Edward III's brother, John of Gaunt (d.1398), John Dabridgecourt (d. 1415), John Houyngham (d.1417), and John Rudyng (d.1481) left money to “liberate” the debtors in Newgate (felons and suspected traitors) and Ludgate (debtors) prisons, London.⁸⁶ William Snelson (d. 1394), a

⁸³ Cullum and Goldberg, “Charitable Provision in York,” 34; Peter Heath, “Urban Piety in the Later Middle Ages,” 224.

⁸⁴ The earliest records relating to this prison begin in 1612. According to George Thomas Clark's study *Lincoln Castle* (Lincoln, 1876), the pipe and close rolls from the reigns of Henry II, Richard I, John, and Henry III contain numerous entries relating to the repair of the castle, including those for manacles for prisons within the castle, Clark 11, 17. William Scorer's *Guide to Lincoln Castle* also mentions medieval close and pipe roll entries for “fetters, and bolts and bars” with which to secure the castle's prisoners, 21. See also R.B Pugh, *Imprisonment in Medieval England* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968); G. Geltner, *The Medieval Prison: A Social History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁸⁵ E.H. Gooch, *History of Spalding* (1940).

⁸⁶ John of Gaunt, DIOC/REG/13, ff. 13v-18r, Gibbons, 100; John Dabridgecourt, DIOC/REG/15, ff. 137v-138v, Gibbons, 116; John Hounygham, DIOC/REG/15, ff. 180v-182r, Gibbons, 125; John Rudyng DIOC/REG/22, ff. 59v-60r, Gibbons, 196; Cullum makes the distinction between Ludgate and Newgate prisons in “And Hir Name was Charite,” 195. Perhaps Newgate was

citizen and merchant from Lincoln bequeathed money to provide the prisoners in Lincoln Castle with bread.⁸⁷ Snelson was the only testator resident in Lincoln, so his choice of prisoners in the castle makes sense. This does not, however, explain why other local testators of similar wealth and status did not make bequests for prisoners. Donations to prisoners were also temporally constrained—all five bequests were made in the period between 1394 and 1481. Perhaps this indicates changing attitudes about debt, credit, and reputation over the course of the late middle ages.⁸⁸ The lack of female testators making bequests to prisoners is unusual—wills from York and London demonstrate that testamentary charity to those imprisoned was an important element of widows' piety.⁸⁹

In their work on charity in York, P.H. Cullum and P.J.P. Goldberg noted that burying the dead, “the one work not based on the Gospel text is rarely noted as a charitable bequest.”⁹⁰ The Lincolnshire findings are no different. A single testator made what could be interpreted as a bequest meant to directly fulfill this work of mercy. Avice de Crosseby (d. 1327) left “to the church of St. Cuthbert aforesaid one carpet of ‘Raynes’ to cover the bodies of the dead.”⁹¹ Raynes cloth was an expensive type of linen cloth made at Renne in Brittany.⁹² This bequest of

popular with men of status (despite housing actual criminals) because of political connections. Accusations of treason were often reflective of subjective judgments about political affiliations.

⁸⁷ DIOC/REG/12, ff. 422r-v, Gibbons, 73.

⁸⁸ J.L. Bolton, *The Medieval English Economy, 1150-1500* (London: J. Dent, 1980), *Money in the Medieval English Economy: 973-1489* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850-1520* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England, c. 1200-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Jordan, *Philanthropy in England*.

⁸⁹ Archer, “The Charity of London Widows”; Bennett and Christopher Whittick, “Philippa Russell”; Cullum, “Hir Name Was Charite.”

⁹⁰ Cullum and Goldberg, “Charitable Provision in York,” 34.

⁹¹ LRO D. & C., Misc., no. 58, Foster, vol. 1, 5.

⁹² Foster, vol. 1, 257.

an expensive piece of fabric to be used as a hearse cloth bestowed prestige upon Avice's parish church, on the funeral ceremonies in which the object was used, and on the deceased; as she made no stipulations about which parishioners could use the cloth, Avice's charity enhanced the burial of members of her community without regard to their statuses. It is also interesting to note that the one bequest made regarding the burial of the dead came from a female testator and was a gift of cloth. Women were traditionally responsible for caring for the bodies of the dead, "sewing it into a shroud, and readying it for burial."⁹³ Wall paintings of the seven works of mercy, such as the one in Trotton, Sussex, depict women preparing a body in such a way.⁹⁴ A broader interpretation of this precept might demonstrate its wider practice. For example, a dozen Lincolnshire testators, all male, commissioned marble gravestones or effigies for deceased loved ones. The bequests were all similar to that made by John Daynes (d. 1432/3), who left orders that his executors have engraved carvings in brass (laton) or "masonry" made and decorated with his family's coat of arms to be placed over the gravestones of his mother and father. He also made a similar bequest that a like sculpture be placed above his wife's gravestone as well.⁹⁵ On this surface these acts can be read as simple memorialization of the dead, but according to testators like John de Sutton (d. 1391), gravestones had the visual impact of stirring the observer to pray for the soul of the dead buried therein. He left money to St. Mary's Church, Nottingham to beautify the section of the church where his mother was buried so that, "her tomb may be better distinguished for the health of her soul." He also made a similar bequest for the repair and perfection of his father's tomb in Holy Trinity church in Wickford.⁹⁶ In addition to encouraging

⁹³ French, *Good Women*, 192.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁹⁵ DIOC/REG/17, ff. 151v-152v, Gibbons, 159.

⁹⁶ DIOC/REG/12, f. 384v, Gibbons, 76.

prayers for the dead through visual suggestion, the previously mentioned inmates of the Hospital of Holy Innocents did bury the dead from the Canwick Hill gallows—even if the impetus was economic and not spiritual. While testators made little to no provision for the actual burial of others, Cullum and Goldberg also suggest “testators’ concerns that their own bodies should receive a proper burial, and their provision of funds to this end, must, however relate to this Christian duty.”⁹⁷ It is more likely, as was suggested in Chapter Four, that testators performed this work of mercy through guild membership during their lifetimes, or expected for it to be performed with testamentary bequests left to these organizations.⁹⁸

The most frequent way that Lincolnshire testators practiced the Seven Works of Mercy was not through individual acts, but through the sponsorship of institutions that would fulfill multiple works at once.⁹⁹ Hospitals and bedehouses provided inmates with the necessities of life—shelter, food, and clothing. In the case of the Hospital of the Holy Innocents, inmates were given “a cell and curtilage, with a sum of ten pence halfpenny a week, and forty bundles of turf at Michaelmas.” They also received a livery made of russet cloth.¹⁰⁰ In some cases, they also provided burial for their inmates, having cemeteries on their grounds.¹⁰¹ The only work of

⁹⁷ Cullum and Goldberg, “Charitable Provision in York,” 34.

⁹⁸ Parish guilds have been traditionally thought of as burial societies, and in fact, burying the dead, was the most common charitable work of mercy performed by Lincolnshire guilds. Forty-eight percent of the guilds in the county made provisions for their deceased, which included undertaking the financial burden of funeral costs for members whose families could not afford them, recovering bodies from far afield, funding candles, sponsoring requiem masses and obits, collecting soul alms, and distributing charity to the poor on behalf of the departed.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁰⁰ Brooks, “Hospital of the Holy Innocents,” 162, 166, 170. Brooks notes that the hospital inmates’ stipend and accommodation were more money than a skilled craftsman would make in wages, 167; According to Cullum and Goldberg, “russet was an inexpensive cloth appropriate for the clothing of those of low social standing,” *Charitable Provision in York*, 30.

¹⁰¹ Some almshouses even buried the dead, having their own cemeteries, Cullum and Goldberg, “*Charitable Provision in York*,” 30.

mercy not addressed directly by charitable institutions was the care of prisoners—an omission prevalent in broader Lincolnshire charity. The Hospital of the Holy Innocents, however, obliquely addressed prisoners' needs. The Hospital drew revenue from a grant from the Master of the Preceptory of the Hospitallers of Maltby—it made 6s. 8d. per year “for burying persons hanged on the city gallows on Canwick Hill and for inscribing their names in the book of the Fraternity of John the Baptist.”¹⁰² In a more tangential example, the hospital became a haven for pardoned prisoners on at least one occasion. In 1282, Margaret de Burgh, a poor widow, was hanged at Canwick Hill for harboring a thief and his stolen property. Her body was taken from the gallows and brought to the hospital for burial, where it was discovered that she was actually still alive. She was allowed to live among the inmates. In 1284 Margaret received a royal pardon, which overturned the previous death sentence on account of her miraculous recovery, and an official commission to stay on as a resident of the hospital.¹⁰³

While hospitals and bedehouses were popular with testators, the orphanage at St. Katherine's Priory was Lincolnshire's charitable institution par excellence—receiving seventy-two percent (389) of the donations made by testators practicing the corporeal works of mercy.¹⁰⁴ More urban testators left bequests to the orphanage than rural ones, eighty-four and sixty-two percent, respectively. Geographical distance from the orphanage does not appear to have been a deterrent for testators; individuals as far away as Holbeach in the southeast and Grimsby in the northeast left money to the orphans. The hospital at St. Katherine's started out as a leprosia in the twelfth century, but by the 1530s testators primarily referred to it as an orphanage. The

¹⁰² Brooks, 166.

¹⁰³ Brooks, 166; R.E.G. Cole, *Priory of St. Katharine Without Lincoln, of the Order of St. Gilbert of Sempringham* (1904), 278. *Patent Rolls 12 Edw. I.*

¹⁰⁴ This might be a low number. I counted St. Katherine's as an orphanage when orphans were specifically mentioned, and as a hospital when the sick were mentioned.

earliest evidence of orphans and sick children being housed at St. Katherine's is in the late thirteenth-century will of Christiana De Bennington (d. 1283) discussed previously.¹⁰⁵ Due to the nature of the sources, little work has been done on the orphaned children of the poor, orphans in the countryside, or the institution of the orphanage itself.¹⁰⁶ The St. Katherine's orphans were described as poor "faderles and motherless" children, "nurslings," "orphansys," and beginning in 1505, "pupils and orphans"—indicating a school may have been established for the children.¹⁰⁷ According to Ralph Shotton of Billingsborough's 1532 will, lay sisters cared for the orphans. He left 2d. to the "chylder of St. Catheryns" and 4d. "to the woman that kepys the same chylder."¹⁰⁸ Not much is known about where the orphans would have been housed, but testamentary evidence suggests that they had their own quarters. William Bucknall (d.1531) of Canwick left "to the chylder of the barne house halffe a quarter off barley."¹⁰⁹ St. Katherine's orphanage remained popular with testators throughout the period under examination—with bequests climbing steadily from the late thirteenth-century through the early 1530s.¹¹⁰ St.

¹⁰⁵ LRO D. and C., Misc., no. 53, Foster, vol. 1, 2.

¹⁰⁶ Writing on orphans has traditionally dealt with wealthy wards and orphans of means. See Barbara Hanawalt's book on medieval childhood has a chapter on orphans, but it focuses on urban orphans of wealthy families and their wardship. See Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London*, 89-108. See also Clark, "Social Welfare and Mutual Aid," pp. 390-3, "City Orphans and Custody Laws in Medieval England," *American Journal of Legal History* 34 (1990), 168-187; Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, "Gifts and Favors: Informal Support in Early Modern England," *Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000), 295-338; Jordan, 112-113; Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 317.

¹⁰⁷ LCC 1532-4, 109, Foster, vol. 2, 2. The will of Thomas Rawsby (d.1505) has the first mention of "pupils" at St. Katherine's. The orphans were nearly always referred to as fatherless, with no mention of their mothers giving the impression that orphan status meant lacking a father and quite possibly still having a living mother.

¹⁰⁸ LCC 1532-4, 25v-26r, Hickman, 66.

¹⁰⁹ LCC 1520-31, 287d., Foster, vol. 3, 137.

¹¹⁰ There is one thirteenth-century will with bequests to the orphans, three fourteenth-century wills, eight fifteenth-century wills, and three hundred and seventy-seven early sixteenth-century wills (1500-1534).

Katherine's Priory, the hospital, and orphans quarters were valued in 1535 in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, 27 Hen. VIII. There were canons, orphans, sick persons, and five lay sisters—Alice Tavernar, Katherine Jenkinson, Margaret Laynthorp, Elizabeth Thomson, and Joan Bretten, who served as nurses still living there.¹¹¹ In 1538, the house was surrendered to the Crown. Many of the canons were offered pensions, while the lay sisters were offered no compensation and no official provisions appear to have been made to relocate the orphans or infirm.¹¹²

Although all Christians were enjoined to practice the seven works of mercy, sermons and prescriptive literature presented them as uniquely suited to female piety. They were grounded in the types of household activities most commonly performed by women such as feeding, clothing, and sheltering the needy, as well as nursing the sick.¹¹³ The works of mercy that focused on the household also served to provide women with the opportunity to give charity while attempting to keep them out of the way of sin.¹¹⁴ That gendered notions of appropriate pious behavior often dictated the methods and means of the performance of the works of mercy is borne out in the Lincolnshire data (see table 5.6).¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Cole, 310.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 313.

¹¹³ Cited in French, *Good Women*, 189.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 191.

¹¹⁵ See Anna Dronzek, "Gendered Theories of Education in Fifteenth-Century Conduct Books," in Kathleen Ashley and Robert Clark, eds., *Medieval Conduct: Texts, Theories, Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Beth Allison Barr, "Gendering Pastoral Care: John Mirk and His Instructions for Parish Priests," in *Fourteenth-Century England*, Vol. IV, ed. J.S. Hamilton (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006), 93-108, *The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2008); Alcuin Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended* (Oxford: Clarendon Press); Patricia Cullum, "'And Her Name was Charite,': Charitable Giving by and for Women in Late Medieval Yorkshire," in *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society c. 1200-1500*, ed. P.J.P. Goldberg (Wolfboro Falls, NH: Alan Sutton Publishing Inc., 1992); French, *Good Women*; Ruth Mazo Karras, "Holy Harlots: Prostitute Saints in Medieval Legend," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*

In accordance with women's traditional household roles as caretakers, Lincolnshire's female testators made provisions to care for the sick and clothe the naked more frequently than male testators did. In wall paintings and stained glass windows, women were depicted performing these tasks with frequency.¹¹⁶ Unexpectedly, however, male testators made bequests to feed the hungry and quench the thirsty more frequently than female testators did. This seems unusual given women's roles as food providers within the home. Patricia Cullum notes in her work on York wills that although women were responsible for hospitality, the custom of inviting the poor into the home for food was an almost exclusively male one. She reasoned that men made this type of bequest because they expected that their wives as household managers would be responsible for the distribution of food and drink. Women performed this type of charity in their everyday lives, so practicing it in fulfillment of their husband's testamentary provision was just an extension of their normal household responsibilities. Conversely, wives would not have expected their husbands to perform this type of charity for them, and, therefore, did not make bequests of this nature.¹¹⁷ Although Lincolnshire testators primarily fed the hungry and quenched the thirsty through funeral doles to the poor and not hospitality in the home, perhaps this helps explain why men would make such provisions. It is possible that male testators were performing a work of mercy in death that was viewed as less appropriate for them in life; their

1 (1990), 3-32, "Gendered Sin and Misogyny in John of Bromyard's 'Summa Praedicatorum'," *Traditio* (1992): 233-257.

¹¹⁶ Cullum, "'Yf lak of charyte be nor ower hynderawnce': Margery Kempe, Lynn, and the Practice of the Spiritual and Bodily Works of Mercy," in *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe*, eds., John Arnold and Katherine Lewis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 177-194; French, *Good Women*, 189-199; Miriam Gill, "Female Piety and Impiety: Selected Images of Women in Wall Paintings in England After 1300," in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, eds., Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 101-120.

¹¹⁷ Cullum, "And Hir Name is Charite," 191.

bequests of food and drink represent a gendered relationship to food and its distribution. While the husband “made the food available,” the wife was expected “to dispose of it properly, as she did with other domestic provisions.”¹¹⁸ More male than female testators sponsored feasts or offered food to their neighbors, which seems to correspond with Cullum’s findings as well. Just as the popular fourteenth-century poem “How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter” urged women to commensality with neighbors, instructing them to “Welcome fair thy neighbours that come to-thee-ward/With meat, drink, and honest cheer,”¹¹⁹ husbands would have expected their wives as executrices to make arrangements for commemorative feasts.

Welcoming strangers and burying the dead become gendered activities depending on how each work is conceived. Women performed the act of welcoming strangers when it was limited to hospitality given from the home or the provision of household goods to charitable institutions such as bedehouses. While only men founded institutions like bedehouses, established almsbeds in their homes, or instructed that bread and alms be distributed from their homes, these provisions were dependent on female charity—women furnished bedehouses and widows, in all likelihood, cared for in-home bedesmen, and distributed food on their doorsteps. When receiving strangers is expanded to include mending roads and fixing bridges, however, it becomes a male dominated work of mercy. Likewise, depending on what is counted as burying the dead, this becomes a gendered practice as well. As discussed earlier, one female testator provided her parish church with a hearse cloth to cover bodies as part of funeral services. When

¹¹⁸ Cullum, “And Hir Name is Charite,” 191.

¹¹⁹ Edith Rickert, ed., *The Babees’ Book: Medieval Manners for the Young: Done into Modern English from Dr. Furnivall’s Texts* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1923), 40. See also Claire Sponsler, “The English How the Good Wijf Taught Hir Doughtir and How the Wise Man Taught His Sonne,” in *Medieval Conduct Literature: An Anthology of Vernacular Guides to Behaviour for Youths*, ed., Mark D. Johnston (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 295.

bequests for gravestones are included in this category, the percentage of testators practicing this work of mercy increases, but then it becomes a category dominated by male charity-givers.

Visiting or comforting prisoners was the only act of mercy to be performed exclusively by one sex—men. While sermons taught that the works of mercy were appropriate for all Christians, even providing biblical examples of women aiding prisoners, the Lincolnshire testators who made provisions for prisoners were all men of high status. Contemporary church decoration reveals that laypeople themselves might have preferred women not to practice this particular work of mercy. In wall paintings of the works of mercy with male and female figures, artists and patrons made clear statements about the activities they thought were best suited for each sex by often showing women perform all the works of mercy except welcoming strangers, visiting prisoners, or burying the dead.¹²⁰ Stained glass depictions of the works of mercy also reflected similar gendered notions about the appropriate performance of mercy for men and women.¹²¹ Both the lack of bequests for prisoners and the gendered nature of such bequests suggest a regional peculiarity. London testators, both male and female, made donations to prisoners. P.H. Cullum also found in her study of York wills that women did make provisions for prisoners in their wills—more frequently than male testators at the beginning of her study sample and then in more equal numbers by the end of her period of study.

After performing the corporeal works of mercy as individual or collective pious acts, bequests to friaries and monastic houses were the next most popular ways in which testators practiced traditional charity. In both cases, donations to friars and monastic houses appeared more frequently in rural than urban wills. And, in both cases, while bequests to each increased

¹²⁰ See French, *Good Women*, 192.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

over the course of the late medieval period, monastic bequests were more popular than mendicant bequests in the fourteenth-and fifteenth-centuries. In the sixteenth-century, between 1500 and 1534, donations to mendicants doubled those to monastic houses.¹²² The mendicant friars in urban centers were almost twice as popular for charitable donations than the county's older monastic institutions—with friars receiving thirty-eight percent of charitable donations, and religious houses receiving twenty-three percent.¹²³ The four major mendicant orders—Franciscan, Dominican, Augustinian, and Carmelite, became popular throughout English towns and cities in the mid-thirteenth-century. Unlike Lincolnshire's great monastic houses, merchants, not wealthy feudal landowners, sponsored the building of urban friaries.¹²⁴ Boston, Lincoln, and Stamford had friars from all four orders, and until they became defunct in 1274, there were Friars of the Sack in each of these cities as well. Grimsby had Austin and Franciscan friars, while Grantham only had a single Franciscan friary.

Mendicant spirituality, especially that of the Franciscans, represented an active piety that resonated with active life many lay people themselves had adopted. The friars took vows of poverty, which made them ideal candidates for charity, preached in town squares and market places, and performed works of mercy for urban populations. They also served as spiritual directors and confessors for laypeople, which occasionally brought them into conflict with local parish clergy. This was particularly the case in the competition that arose between the mendicants and parish clergy for the lucrative celebration of funerals, trentals, obits, and

¹²² This period, 1530-1534, had two-thirds of the monastic house bequests from 1500-1534. There are a lot more wills in general from the 1530s onwards.

¹²³ There were eighty-five religious houses in Lincolnshire, which were mostly Benedictine, Page, pp.78-244.

¹²⁴ Dorothy M. Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire* (Lincoln: The Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 1990), 85.

commemorative masses.¹²⁵ Unlike the cloistered, urban friars were exclusively male. There were cloistered nuns associated with the Dominican, Austin, and Franciscan orders, but none in the county of Lincolnshire. Donations to religious institutions included all female establishments of nuns, like the sisters of the Sempringham and Cattley Gilbertine Pories, who were frequent recipients of bequests and petitions for prayers. Although bequests to monastic institutions would have included nuns as well as monks, female testators were still more likely to leave money to friaries than priories and convents. Perhaps mendicants' focus on the works of mercy resonated with women's pious impulses—contemporaries viewed the works of mercy as particularly suited to women's caretaking, and indeed, the Virgin Mary, who performed all of the works for Christ served as an exemplar.¹²⁶ Lay male testators made more bequests to friars (thirty-seven percent) than monks as well (twenty percent), while clergymen were more likely to leave donations for monks than friars. Lincolnshire testators did not usually distinguish between the four orders in their bequests; instead they left money to the “four orders of friars at Lincoln”

¹²⁵ Owen found that this competition became such a conflict that in many towns, local clergy petitioned the diocesan authorities to limit the friars' ability to preach, celebrate masses, and serve as confessors and spiritual directors. For example, the prerogatives of Grimsby's friars were curtailed by statute as early as 1307. Previously, in 1298, the Pope had decreed all friars needed to be licensed by a local bishop before they could act as confessors. According to Owen, Lincolnshire bishops took advantage of this decree and severely limited the numbers of this type of license granted to mendicants, 89. In terms of conflict over burial and funeral rites, Owen points to an armed skirmish in 1376 between Dominican friars in Boston and bishop John Buckingham as illustrative of these tensions. Lord Huntingfield left instructions that his funeral was to be celebrated by the Dominicans, but the bishop thought he should oversee the ceremonies. When he tried to enter the funeral service, Dominican friars wielding swords and bows barred his entry. Bishop Buckingham then petitioned an English Council to address the situation, 91.

¹²⁶ Mirk's sermon for the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary describes how Mary performed the seven works of mercy for Christ from his conception to his death—housing him in her own body for nine months, feeding the infant Christ “wyth hur owne brestys,” clothing him with her own hands, nursing him as a sick youth, caring for him when he was imprisoned, and helping to bury his body and lay it in its tomb, Theodore Erbe, ed., *Mirk's Festial: A Collection of Homilies* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1905), 231.

or the “two orders of friars at Grimsby.” When they did specify an order, Franciscan and Austin friars were the most popular orders singled out.¹²⁷ This would suggest that while most testators identified with mendicant spirituality in general, in particular, the works-based spirituality espoused by the Franciscans and Augustinians resonated with testators as well. (see table 5.6)

Table 5.6 Types of Traditional Charity Bequests

No. Total Charitable Wills Funding Traditional Charity 55% (974)	No. Wills Monetary Doles 26% (256)	No. Wills Friars 38% (368)	No. Wills Monks 23% (224)	No. Wills Corporeal Works of Mercy 56% (544)
No. Lay Male Wills 82% (796)	77% (197)	81% (298)	71% (159)	83% (454)
No. Female Wills 10% (94)	9% (24)	8% (29)	9% (21)	11% (61)
No. Clerical Wills 9% (84)	14% (35)	11% (41)	20% (44)	5% (29)

Lincolnshire testators also practiced the works of mercy by leaving bequests to hermits and anchoresses. While these types of bequests are not necessarily statistically significant when compared to provisions made for orphans or friars, they do represent some of the ways in which testators could enable others to practice good works through their donations. Hermits and anchorites, which included men and women, both practiced a contemplative lifestyle, but in

¹²⁷ According to Owen, the Dominican order was the least popular of the four—in the sense that they were less patronized than the others and widely disliked by the residents of the towns in which they established their friaries. For example, in 1399, “unknown persons” attacked Boston’s Dominicans by scaling the friary walls and attacking the friars in their beds, 91. Wills do bear out the fact that of the four orders, testators left bequests to Franciscans, Austin Friars, and Carmelites before they provided for the Dominicans.

different ways. Each took vows and underwent a ceremony that bound them to a “rule of life”—anchorites were also enclosed by a religious ceremony performed by a bishop.¹²⁸ However, anchorites were cloistered like monastics, whereas hermits preached and wandered like mendicants. Donations to both reflect particular elements of lay piety. Twenty-two Lincolnshire wills mention bequests left to at least thirty-two anchorites between 1391 and 1534.¹²⁹ It is difficult to know exactly how many individual anchorites there were in this period since the majority of bequests did not give their names. Eleven Lincolnshire wills record bequests to eleven hermits. Leaving donations for anchorites was more common for urban testators, with thirteen of the twenty-two anchorite bequests made by city-dwellers. Meanwhile, rural testators made more bequests to hermits than urban testators did, comprising ten of the eleven wills making provisions for hermits.

Gender informed the demography of each type of solitary lifestyle, the charitable works solitaries performed, and type of testator making bequests to them. While anchorites could be male or female, of the thirty-two Lincolnshire anchorites, eighteen were identified as anchoresses. Hermits, on the other hand, were exclusively male. Expectations that women would be cloistered, or at least not wander, prohibitions on female preaching in public, and the unsuitability of construction work, like mending roads and highways, excluded women from a hermit’s life. Anchoresses devoted themselves to contemplative and intercessory prayer in their cells, which fulfilled the work of praying for the living and dead. They also sewed clothing for the poor, which fulfilled the work of clothing the naked. Male anchorites wrote devotional

¹²⁸ Rotha Mary Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1968), pp. xvi-xvii. See also Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985).

¹²⁹ Here I say “at least” because some of the bequests just stated “anchorites” without mentioning a number of individual anchorites.

books for clergy, laypeople, and other anchorites, thus fulfilling the work of educating the ignorant. Testators who left money to anchorites, then, were supporting these recluses as well as the good deeds they did for others. While anchorites received support from charitable donations, they were expected to have a measure of their own wealth as well. They needed to be brought food and clothing, as well as have refuse removed from their cells, so they often employed servants to do this work. Hermits, who were mendicancy practicing peripatetics, sustained themselves by doing good works in their travels. Many hermits came from the ranks of the clergy and monastics. Like supporting friars funded the education of the ignorant by enabling them to preach and teach, sponsoring hermits addressed that same need as well as the additional works of praying for the dead, gathering alms, and welcoming strangers by fixing roads, highways, and bridges, and manning lighthouses.¹³⁰ In the case of anchorites and hermits, male testators left bequests for both more often than women did—laymen made sixty-four percent of bequests to anchorites and eighty-two percent of those to hermits. Women and clerics each made eighteen percent of donations to anchorites and nine percent to hermits. Although women did not make up a large percentage this type of provision, they were more likely to leave bequests for anchorites (four bequests) than hermits (one bequest).

Finally, about one-third (thirty-two percent) of total Lincolnshire testators made provisions for charity that cannot be definitively qualified, but would fall under the category of traditional charity. This charity was characterized for in testators' wills as general "good works" or "acts of charity" done for the health of the soul. These bequests were flexible in that they could be used for the greatest benefit of the testators' communities. The wills' executor, which more often than not was the deceased's spouse, was responsible for determining the most

¹³⁰ Clay, *Hermits*, xvii.

spiritually rewarding way to allocate the residue earmarked for charitable deeds—sometimes under pain of divine judgment. When a spouse was unavailable as executor, friends, neighbors, churchwardens, and respected members of the community collectively decided how to make the most of these pious bequests.

Religious education provided a basic template for laypeople to follow regarding the practice of charity through performing the works of mercy and the provision of alms. Lincolnshire testators used this template as a guideline, and then adapted it to their own local individual concerns and communal needs. Therefore, their performance of the works of mercy did not fall neatly into seven discrete categories, but instead encompassed a broad interpretation of these works by the laity.¹³¹

Expanded charity

As previous chapters have demonstrated, late medieval people conceived of charity in broad terms. In addition to the traditional charitable acts discussed above, laypeople practiced an

¹³¹ As discussed in Chapter Four, participation in religious guilds also offered laymen and women opportunities to actualize the virtues of charity and good neighborhood, but through corporate activities that enacted the seven works of mercy. Bequests to guilds funded corporeal works of mercy such as establishing bedehouses, feeding the poor, sponsoring public works, hosting feasts, caring for the sick, and prisoners as well as spiritual works of mercy such as admonishing sinners, instructing the ignorant, and increasing Divine Service. Twenty percent of testators performing traditional charity made bequests to one or more religious guild. As demonstrated in previous chapters, individual and collective pious concerns were frequently closely aligned. However, in the case of Lincolnshire testators, there appears to be slight divergence in the pious priorities of testators as individuals and the piety collectively expressed in guild charity. Lincolnshire testators show less concern with burying the dead, caring for the sick and imprisoned, admonishing sinners, and instructing the ignorant than guilds did. Feeding and quenching the poor increasing Divine Service, and praying for the dead were charitable concerns shared by individual will-makers and guild members alike. It seems that charity expressed individually through bequests and performed corporately through guild activities was complementary in nature. Guilds addressed the concerns of a self-selected community of believers, while wills were an extension of this piety that supplemented lifetime group charity with pious acts resonating with the individual at the end of their life.

expanded type of charity that included church upkeep and beautification, commensality, and neighborliness. These were each important aspects of living “in charite,” and helped to constitute what Augustine referred to as the Christian “tunic of unity.” When considering medieval charity comprehensively, the percentage of Lincolnshire testators making charitable bequests increases from forty-two percent practicing traditional charity to seventy-three percent practicing expanded charity.¹³² Of this seventy-two percent of total testators making expanded charitable bequests, lay men and women made slightly more pious bequests than clergymen, with seventy-four percent of each making this type of compared to seventy-two percent of clergymen. Expanding the definition of charity evens out the gender disparity between the pious donations made by men and women. Where women made more pious bequests in the category of traditional charity, they made the same percentage of bequests in the category of expanded charity. However, gender still influenced they type of expanded charity men and women practiced. Broadening the conception of charity also recalibrates the nature of testators’ pious interests. Whereas provisions to St. Katherine’s orphanage dominated traditional charitable bequests, church donations become the primary manner of expanded testamentary charity (ninety-one percent), followed by spiritual works of mercy (thirty-eight percent), and the corporeal works of mercy (thirty-one percent).¹³³ (see tables 5.7, 5.8, 5.9)

¹³² Many testators also practiced both types of charity as well.

¹³³ These donations were not just for “forgotten tithes,” but included repairs, expansion projects, commissioning images, refurbishing altars, sponsorship of lights, and other types of church décor.

Table 5.7 Testamentary Provision for the Spiritual Works of Mercy*

No. of Total Charitable Wills Funding Spiritual Works of Mercy 38% (670)	No. Wills Instructing the Ignorant 7% (46)	No. Wills Forgiving Trespasses 2% (16)	No. Wills Praying for the Living and Dead 87% (580)
No. Lay Male Wills 81% (546)	20% (9)	63% (10)	82% (473)
No. Female Wills 10% (66)	15% (7)	6% (1)	10% (59)
No. Clerical Wills 9% (58)	65% (30)	31% (5)	8% (48)

* I only counted the spiritual works that could be quantified in this chart.

Table 5.8 Geographical Makeup of Spiritual Works of Mercy Bequests

	No. Urban Wills	No. Rural Wills
No. of Total Wills Funding Spiritual Works of Mercy 38% (670)	34% (230)	66% (440)
No. Wills Instructing the Ignorant 7% (46)	30% (14)	70% (32)
No. Wills Forgiving Trespasses 2% (16)	69% (11)	31% (5)
No. Wills Praying for the Living and Dead 87% (580)	33% (192)	67% (388)

Table 5.9 Types of Expanded Charity Bequests

No. of Total Wills Funding Expanded Charity 98% (1725)	Guild Bequests 17% (298)	Church Decorations/Repair/Decorations 92% (1589)	Commensality/Neighborliness <1% (11)
No. Lay Males 83% (1435)	82% (245)	84% (1327)	73% (8)
No. Female Wills 10% (165)	10% (31)	10% (153)	18% (2)
No. Clerical Wills 7% (125)	7% (22)	7% (109)	9% (1)

Parish churches were the locus of communal religious life. While the laity were required by statute to care for the nave of their local parishes church, their provision of books, images, devotional objects, vestments, and repairs went beyond mere obligation—the majority of late medieval parish churches actually had liturgical objects and ornaments in excess of what they needed for their services.¹³⁴ In addition to ensuring that the machinery of the liturgy and sacraments were provided for, laypeople also invested in their churches to “link the perpetual

¹³⁴ Clive Burgess, “Longing to Be Prayed For”: Death and Commemoration in an English Parish in the Later Middle Ages,” in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Commemoration in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds., Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 53, Burgess and Beat Kümin, “Penitential Bequests and Parish Regimes,” 611; J. Charles Cox, *Churchwardens Accounts from the Fourteenth Century to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1913), 11, 244; Carol Cragoe, “The Custom of the English Church: Parish Church Maintenance in England Before 1300,” *Journal of Medieval History* 36 (2010): 20-1; Charles Drew, *Early Parochial Organisation in England: The Origins of the Office of Churchwarden* (London: St. Anthony’s Press, 1954), 5-6; Duffy, 132-4; French, *People of the Parish*, 27-30; Hobhouse, xii.

memory of one's own name with the worship of the community.”¹³⁵ Clive Burgess argues that “at the same time as the penitential system was rejigged, practical obligations were imposed on the laity to provide for buildings and equipment...in practice the two often combined: to fulfill or start to satisfy their penitential obligation, parishioners might repair or embellish church fabric, or donate vessels and vestments, and, parish pride apart, this was done because donors wished to be remembered and prayed for by contemporaries and successors.”¹³⁶ Therefore, church donations were obligatory, penitential, and commemorative in nature. They fulfilled a Christian obligation, but at the same time they were considered a good work, which rewarded benefactors with a place in their church's sacred history through inclusion on the bede-roll. The bede-roll was a list of church patrons that was read at high mass by the celebrant.¹³⁷ Inclusion on the bede-roll allowed for the continual remembrance of and intercession for the dead, and in commemorating them, called to mind their reciprocal obligation to intercede on behalf of the living.¹³⁸ The bede-roll has also been described as a “social map of the community, often stretching over centuries, and promising a continuous place in the consciousness of the parish in which he or she had once lived, not as any one of the anonymous multitude of the dead, but as the named provider of some familiar object.”¹³⁹

Katherine French found that the study of bequests revealed a “material culture of piety,” in which men and women both valued making bequests to their churches, but in very gender specific ways. Parishioners of either sex commonly left livestock, wax, and grain to their churches. Women gave personal and household items to their churches, while laymen and clergy,

¹³⁵ Duffy, 330

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Burgess, “Longing to Be Prayed For,” 54.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 49.

¹³⁹ Duffy, 335.

with their access to literacy and monetary resources, left more books and liturgical items. Women overall gave more material goods than money.¹⁴⁰ Lincolnshire testators replicate this general schema. While laymen made eighty-four percent of total church bequests, only thirteen percent of them left devotional objects to their churches. Thirty-four percent of clergymen left devotional objects. Women made this type of bequest the most, with thirty-eight percent leaving a devotional object to their church. In terms of the types of devotional objects provided for, men typically left office books, chalices, vestments, crosses, and images, while women left sheets, kerchiefs, and towels to be made into altar cloths.¹⁴¹ Women were also more likely to leave jewelry or clothing to their churches, with the intention that these gifts would be used to adorn a saint.¹⁴² For example, Alice Arnold, a Spilsby widow, left a girdle to Our Lady in St. Peter's church, while Haconby widow Catherine Burton left a black vestment to her parish church, a pair of jet beads with five silver rings (rosary) to Lincoln Cathedral, and a "corse girdle with a pendyll and silver buckle."¹⁴³ In addition to leaving more moveable goods than men, French also found that women left more explicit directions for how their goods were to be used. Conversely, men frequently relied on the discretion of churchwardens to carry out their wishes. French argues, that "by offering suggestions, women posthumously involved themselves in parish administrative decision making." They were able to maintain the complementary

¹⁴⁰ French, *Good Women*, 38-41.

¹⁴¹ These divisions are not absolute, and often depended on the status of the testator. Wealthy women like Lady Alice Bassett and Lady Elizabeth Darcy had greater access to money and education; both left missals, office books, and psalters to their churches. See LRO DIOC/REG/15, ff. 63r-64r, Gibbons, 117 (Bassett); LRO DIOC/REG/15, ff. 66v-67r, Gibbons, 110 (Darcy). Joan Bukland, widow of Richard Bukland, esquire, left a mass book, processional, two gilt chalices, vestments, and censer to her church, LRO DIOC/REG/20, ff. 55r-56r, 84v-85v, Gibbons, 181.

¹⁴² French, *Good Women*, 43.

¹⁴³ See LCC 1520-31, 89d, Foster, vol. 2, 130 (Arnold); LCC 1520-31, 281, Foster, vol. 3, 77 (Burton).

relationship between housekeeping and church-keeping by merging notions of “home economy and domesticity” in their end of life pious practices.¹⁴⁴

Giving household goods allowed women to contribute to the parish church and its liturgical life in ways that visible connected the individual testator with the religious experiences of the community. Although laymen were less likely to give household items that would readily link them to their churches, some like Robert Seltorn of Alkborough did. He provided his church with a cope of blue velvet embroidered with his initials on it—an even more direct link of a liturgical item with the identity of its donor.¹⁴⁵ Clergymen were more committed to capitalizing on the potential commemorative opportunities such personalized bequests provided. For example, Thomas Sudbery, former vicar of Louth, made provision of a silver-gilt processional cross for the use of the parish church, and its guilds provided he was prayed for and remembered by the community. His will stated that the gift of this cross was intended to stir “the devocyon of goode pepull...to pray for his saull.”¹⁴⁶ Sudbery attempted to insinuate himself into the liturgy by obliging his fellow parishioners to look at this cross and pray for him by way of thanks.

Prescriptive literature, sermons, and the Bible itself taught that the love of God was best demonstrated through the love of neighbor—the love of neighbor “was most eloquently expressed through the seven works of corporal mercy.”¹⁴⁷ Neighbors, however, did not fit into pious bequests in a way that would be obvious to outside observers. While they no doubt served as testamentary executors, witnesses, and advisors, and were the beneficiaries of charity in the form of church donations, public works, doles, the increase of Divine Service and more,

¹⁴⁴ French, *Good Women*, 43.

¹⁴⁵ Stow 1530-52, 1, Foster, vol. 3, 16.

¹⁴⁶ Dudding, *The First Churchwardens' Book of Louth 1500-1524*, 94.

¹⁴⁷ Brigden, “Religion and Social Obligation,” 102.

neighbors as such were only explicitly mentioned in eleven of the total testaments in this study. Neighbors featured in four wills as will supervisors, six wills as recipients of food or hospitality, and two in regards to funeral arrangements. Wills specifically mentioning neighbors are overwhelmingly rural and primarily confined to the first few years of the 1530s. Thomas Smyth (d. 1530), John Curtes (d. 1530), and Thomas Wylson (d. 1533) each left instructions that neighbors should help oversee and supervise the carrying out of their testamentary instructions. Thomas Bottery left instructions that his neighbors should help his executors to appraise the values of his goods.¹⁴⁸ All four men were survived by their wives, so it is likely they were enlisting the help of friends their wives knew, who would help them in the role as executrices.¹⁴⁹

In both rural and urban Lincolnshire, domestic charity and Christian hospitality practiced through sharing a meal were important aspects of the enactment of community. They fulfilled the piou requirements of feeding and quenching the hungry and thirsty, but also helped to constitute community in terms of those who were included and excluded from this commensality.¹⁵⁰ These occasions often brought the poor and will-makers' neighbors together in an effort to practice the works of mercy while securing intercession, as recipients were asked to pray for the deceased at the meal.¹⁵¹ These meals called to mind Luke 14:12-14, where feasting with the poor rather than the rich garnered spiritual rewards at the Resurrection, as well as charitable Christian love feasts.¹⁵² While prescriptive writing urged clergymen in particular to practice hospitality, of the six wills that made provisions for commensality by sponsoring a

¹⁴⁸ LCC 1520-31, f. 261, Foster, vol. 3, 66.

¹⁴⁹ French, "Loving Friends," pp. 24-25.

¹⁵⁰ Clark, "Social Welfare and Mutual Aid," 386.

¹⁵¹ Cullum, "And Hir Name is Charite," 189.

¹⁵² Cullum and Goldberg, "Charitable Provision in York," 29; Gervase Rosser, Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England," *The Journal of British Studies* 33 (1994), 434.

convivium, or commemorative meal, laypeople performed this sacred social duty much more frequently than clerics did. Only a single cleric and a single woman made this type of bequest, while the other laymen made the remaining four bequests. Avice De Crosseby (d.1327) made bequests for bread to be distributed to Lincoln's poor on her burial day and week's mind, and for a feast with her friends, neighbors, and poor to be held at her week's mind.¹⁵³ In a rather unique bequest, John Longe (d. 1516) of Croft left money to local cleric Sir William Gybson "and hys successors one monthe in every yere to go his friends and make merie with them inhoneste."¹⁵⁴ Vicar Sir William Crosse (d. 1532) left instructions that corn be distributed to his poor neighbors.¹⁵⁵ Robert Bulle (d.1532) of Swineshead stipulated that bread be doled to the poor at his obit, and instructed that his wife Johanne provide breakfast for all those offering prayers for his soul on his burial day, week's, and month's minds.¹⁵⁶ Gilbert Tylson (d.1533) provided for a young cow to be prepared for a feast to be held among his neighbors on his burial day.¹⁵⁷

While some parishioners made modest commensal arrangements for their obits, wealthy Leverton parishioners Walter Bussche and William Frankyshe arranged for elaborate commemorative celebrations. Neither Bussche's nor Frankyshe's testaments survive in probate records—instead both were recorded in Leverton's churchwarden's accounts. On the day of his obit, Bussche made provisions of cheese and "gud ayle" for parishioners, along with doles to be made for two poor women living in the church-house, and six "other" poor women as well.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ LRO D. & C., Misc., No. 58, Foster, vol. 1, 5.

¹⁵⁴ LCC 1506&c., 48, Foster, vol. 1, 71.

¹⁵⁵ LCC 1532-4, 32, Hickman, 89.

¹⁵⁶ LCC 1532-4, 225r, Hickman, 79.

¹⁵⁷ LCC 1532-3, 192r, Hickman, 173.

¹⁵⁸ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 21; Edward Pishey Thompson, *The History and Antiquities of Boston and the Villages of Skirbeck, Fishtoft, Freiston, Butterwick, Benington, Leverton, Leake and Wrangle: Comprising the Hundred of Skirbeck, in the County of Lincoln* (Boston: John

William Frankyshe left three roods of arable land to fund an obit for his soul, his wife's soul, and all Christian souls, to pay two parsons for performing the dirige and mass, the offering, a clerk for preaching, and to provide bread, cheese, and drink for the parishioners of St. Helen's on his October 23rd obit day.¹⁵⁹

Several testators also followed a common practice of making bequests to provide food and drink for parishioners participating in Rogation Week activities.¹⁶⁰ For example, the previously mentioned John Longe provided 12d. yearly to purchase bread and ale for Croft parishioners during Rogation Week.¹⁶¹ Thomas Quadring of Careby (d.1528) left money for "brede and ale" to be given to parishioners "in the days of Rogacions called Crosse weke." Robert Peycoke (d.1532) of Kirkby St. Peter instructed that on the Tuesday of Rogation Week, bread and ale was to be given "to refreshe them that go in procession."¹⁶² Both obit and processional commensality might be even more common where arrangements made with churchwardens and recorded in churchwardens' accounts like those made by Franckyshe and Bussche.

Finally, neighbors were important attendants at testators' funerals. Robert Mablesen (d. 1530) and Agnes Webster (d. 1533) made end of life provisions that included their neighbors in the funeral and commemoration process. Mablesen instructed that his anniversary be kept "amonges my neybors" in the chapel of his parish church.¹⁶³ Webster stipulated that her

Noble, 1856), 564. The churchwardens' accounts for 1495 record receipts from his executors, so he must have died between 1492-1495.

¹⁵⁹ LRO Leverton PAR/7/1 f. 21; Thompson, *History and Antiquities*, 565.

¹⁶⁰ Duffy, 136.

¹⁶¹ LCC 1506&c., 48, Foster, vol. 1, 71.

¹⁶² LCC 1532-4, 186v, Hickman, 53.

¹⁶³ LCC 1532-4, 64d., Foster, vol. 3, 112.

neighbors approve her preferred burial location in the “church of Seyntt Ceade of Welburn in the southe yle afore Ower Lafye chapel dore.”¹⁶⁴

Spiritual works of mercy

Although the spiritual works of mercy had traditionally been considered the province of clerics and the cloistered, as demonstrated in previous chapters, by the late Middle Ages laypeople had selectively incorporated some of these practices into their own piety.¹⁶⁵ Thirty-eight percent of Lincolnshire testators making charitable provisions sponsored spiritual works of mercy. In the context of Lincolnshire’s local piety, performance of the spiritual works of mercy centered on increasing divine service through funding stipends for parish clergy and establishing chantries,¹⁶⁶ securing prayers for the dead (eighty-seven percent), and instructing the ignorant (seven percent). Sixty-six percent of wills with provisions for spiritual works of mercy were from rural testators, while the remaining thirty-four percent came from urban will-makers. In general, laypeople made more bequests for spiritual works than clergymen did—women made ten percent of these bequests, laymen made eighty-one percent, and clerics made nine percent.

Sermons, prescriptive literature, and deathbed counsel encouraged the dying to make reparation for their sins by giving to the poor and funding good works.¹⁶⁷ The doctrine of

¹⁶⁴ LCC 1532-4, 132v, Hickman, 220; see also Ian Forrest, “The Politics of Burial in Late Medieval Hereford,” *The English Historical Review* 125 (2010), 1110-1138; Mirk’s *Festial* featured sermons that advocated against lay burial in the church building.

¹⁶⁵ Chapter Four explored this theme arguing that as corporate bodies of laypeople guilds appropriated clerical concerns in their performance of spiritual as well as corporeal works of mercy (although guilds and clergy were not in conflict as they worked with and complemented one another).

¹⁶⁶ Chantry foundation was typically performed pre-obit to ensure that the testator’s wishes were correctly fulfilled; therefore, endowment of these institutions is likely underreported in wills, Swanson, *Church and Society*, 297.

¹⁶⁷ Foster, vol. 2, xii; Burgess, “A Fond Thing Vainly Invented: An Essay on Purgatory and Pious Motive in Later Medieval England,” in *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay*

Purgatory “emphasized good works, both for their intrinsic merit and because those who benefited were obligated to intercede for benefactors.”¹⁶⁸ This was the “debt of interchanging neighborhood.”¹⁶⁹ In testamentary terms, will-makers were “bound to pray” for the souls of their benefactors, friends, and relatives—bound by affective bonds, but by mundane and purgatorial concerns as the dead offered help in earthly and celestial neighborhoods alike.¹⁷⁰ Performing and sponsoring good works (before and after death) could “materially affect one’s chances of salvation in the afterlife” by inducing the saints and Virgin Mary, whose patronage could shorten a soul’s term in Purgatory, to act as intercessors.¹⁷¹ Therefore, bequests abounded with endowments aimed at purgatorial relief—trentals, anniversary masses and obits, chantry foundation, donations to religious houses and friars in exchange for intercessory prayers, and services for those whom the testator was “bound to pray” formed a significant portion of individual wills.¹⁷² Clergymen made the most bequests to increase divine service—fifty-two percent of clerics performing spiritual works made this sort of provision. Laymen made thirty-five percent of these bequests, and women made slightly fewer with thirty-three percent.

Contributing to the increase of divine service by funding stipends for chaplains and

Religion, 1350-1750, ed., S.J. Wright (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 56-84.

¹⁶⁸ Burgess, “Longing to Be Prayed For,” 49.

¹⁶⁹ Duffy, pp. 160, 168, 188.

¹⁷⁰ Testators did not always rely on the strength of these bonds alone to motivate recipients’ prayers. Many wills reflect a *quid pro quo* pragmatism, with gifts being made contingent upon securing the stipulated prayers for the decedent. See Burgess and Kumin, “Penitential Bequests and Parish Regimes,” 626. Testators also placed reversions on bequests, so if “the inheritor ceased to need the gift because of death, it could then be devoted to charitable causes,” Cullum, “And His Name is Charite,” 190.

¹⁷¹ Bennett and Whittick, 255; Burgess, “Longing to be Prayed For,” 49; Farnhill, 60; Hickman, xxii.

¹⁷² The phrase “bound to pray” was common through out the wills in my sample. It suggests the reciprocal nature of intercessory prayers. Individuals left instructions to pray for relatives, benefactors, and patrons in exchange for bequests, or prayers for their own souls.

priests and building chantries “profited all parishioners, improving the services on which both living and dead depended.”¹⁷³ Rural testators were much more likely to make bequests to increase divine service, with sixty-one percent of these provisions coming from rural wills, and the remaining thirty-nine coming from urban ones. Testators funded chaplains in their parish churches for periods as brief as a quarter year, or as in the cases of Thomas Quadring of Careby (1528), Robert Benyt of Donington in Holland (1529), or Richard Qwyttyngham (1531), ninety-nine years.¹⁷⁴ Still others made provisions for a chaplain to be funded in perpetuity by endowing his stipend through land sales or rentals. These chaplains were expected to pray for the soul of the benefactor and all Christian souls. Most testators did not leave specific instructions for their chaplains in addition to his stipend, tenure, and church designations. When they did, their wishes were typified by the bequest instructions of William Gaunce of Theddlethorp St. Helen (1531), who requested that a priest should perpetually sing a mass of *requiem*, *dirige*, and *placebo* every year on the feast of St. Francis on behalf of his soul and all Christian souls.¹⁷⁵ Stipendiary chaplains were also required to assist parish clergy, so in addition to being responsible for specific religious services, they were expected to be of general use in the parish church without cost to the parish.¹⁷⁶ Just as chaplains’ salaries covered religious services for benefactors as well as sacred and mundane parish church assistance, chantry foundation contributed to the increase of divine service.

The investment of resources in a chantry was such a large undertaking that founders must

¹⁷³ Burgess, “For the Increase of Divine Service,” 65.

¹⁷⁴ See LCC 1520-31, 142d., Foster, vol. 2, 75 (Quadring); LCC 1520-31, 134d., Foster, vol. 2, 132 (Benyt); LCC 1520-31, 342d., Foster, vol. 3, 173 (Qwyttyngham). William de Roos, Lord of Helmsley provided for ten chaplains to be installed in his parish church, DIOC/REG/15, ff. 108v-109v, Gibbons, 136.

¹⁷⁵ See LCC 1520-31, 272, Foster, 3, 219.

¹⁷⁶ Burgess, “Longing to Be Prayed For,” 57.

have understood themselves as paying for more than simply personal masses.¹⁷⁷ As chantry priests, like parochial clergy, were subject to canon law limiting them from celebrating more than one daily mass without special dispensation, their sponsors expected that they would provide additional religious services to the parish.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, chantry foundation was considered a good work, and their founders were looked upon as “good doers.”¹⁷⁹ While male and female testators in Lincolnshire supported chaplains at a fairly equal rate (thirty-eight and thirty-five percent respectively), chantry foundation was an exclusively lay male enterprise. Chantry foundations only account for one percent of spiritual works of mercy in Lincolnshire wills, and all of the testators who established chantries were male. It is likely that this number is skewed because it does not take into account pre-obit chantry foundation by laymen, women, and clergy; it does, however, demonstrate something of the character of men’s piety and wealth relative to female testators. Chantry foundation and endowment were expensive, and individual male testators more frequently had access to the resources necessary to undertake this type of pious work.

Securing prayers for the dead was the spiritual work of mercy that most concerned

¹⁷⁷ Burgess, “For the Increase of Divine Service,” 50-1. Burgess also argues that a chantry priest’s endowed stipendiary services would have actually been “relatively slight in comparison with his duties to the parish in which he was placed,” 54. See also P. W. Fleming, “Charity, Faith, and the Gentry of Kent, 1422-1529,” in *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval English History*, ed. A.J. Pollard (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1984), 36-58; Michael Hicks, “Chantries, Obits and Almshouses: The Hungerford foundations 1325-1478,” in *Richard III and His Rivals* (London: Hambleton Press, 1991), 79-98; Alan Kreider, *English Chantries: The Road to Dissolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); K.L. Wood-Leigh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

¹⁷⁸ Chantry priests would have also been involved in the cure of souls, hearing confessions, poor relief, and teaching. They were expected to participate in the choir at matins, evensong, and other Divine Service dressed in their surplices, and assist at other canonical hours. See Burgess, “For the Increase of Divine Service,” pp. 50-3.

¹⁷⁹ Burgess, “Longing to Be Prayed For,” 57.

Lincolnshire testators. This category is broader than “increasing divine service” in that testators were not establishing permanent or semi-permanent stipends for a chaplain or chaplains at a parish church, but were paying particular people with spiritual capital to say specific numbers of specific masses for particular people, or for all Christian souls; these special groups included the poor, the infirm (especially lepers and the blind), friars, monks, hermits, and anchoresses as well as priests and chaplains. Testators made more provisions for prayers of the souls of others (seventy-eight percent), than they did for their own (seventy-two percent). The reciprocal nature of charity and mercy ensured that benefactors would become beneficiaries in the end. Praying for the dead (or in the case of will-makers, ensuring that the dead were prayed for by someone else) was a good work, which created mutual ties of obligation and garnered spiritual rewards.

Testators sponsored general masses for the dead as well as very specific ones. “Masses were thought to be superior to every other good work in eliciting God’s grace for the forgiveness of sins,”¹⁸⁰ therefore, will-makers were very generous in their provisions for the souls of the dead. While easing purgatorial suffering was the obvious motivation for mass sponsorship, only William Clercke (d. 1518), Thomas Kingston (d. 1518), Sir John Wade (d. 1533) mentioned it by name. Trentals and *Scala Celi* masses were the most frequently commissioned by Lincolnshire testators. A trental was a set of thirty *requiem* masses said in a single day or over the course of thirty separate days.¹⁸¹ There were multiple types of trentals, with St. Gregory’s trental being the most elaborate. There was a simple Gregorian Trental: “the celebration of mass for the repose of a particular soul for thirty consecutive days (or as close as to this as possible), usually by the same priest” and the St. Gregory’s Trental: “a trental spread out over an entire year and

¹⁸⁰ Burgess, “For the Increase of Divine Service,” 49.

¹⁸¹ Foster, v. 1, 247.

involving, as its essence, a “recapitulation of the liturgical year.” This latter trental was connected with a specific legend about the particular efficacy of a trental performed by St. Gregory to deliver souls from Purgatory.¹⁸² The legend held that one day while performing the mass, St. Gregory received a vision of his mother “suffering hideous torments” on account of a number of unconfessed sins. It was revealed to him that he could relieve her purgatorial torment by saying thirty masses—three for each of the ten principal feasts of the year. When he completed the cycle of masses, he received a vision of his mother, who appeared so radiant that he initially mistook her for the Virgin Mary.¹⁸³ Hence, St. Gregory’s trental developed a reputation for its efficacy in “the deliverance of souls,”¹⁸⁴ with the added benefit of being particularly efficacious for souls tormented by secret and unconfessed sins. Forty-eight percent of testators who made provisions for spiritual works of mercy funded trentals of some type—only five specified St. Gregory trentals. However, in his work on the St. Gregory Trental, Richard Pfaff found that the Gregorian and St. Gregory’s Trentals were frequently conflated making it difficult to know which trental was actually meant by will-makers.¹⁸⁵ Lincolnshire testators were equally vague.

In the late fourteenth-century, a new intercessory veneration became popular in England, that of the *Scala Celi* mass. English testators began sponsoring masses to be said for them at the Scala Caeli in Rome, and by the last quarter of the fifteenth century the indulgence was

¹⁸² Richard Pfaff, “The English Devotion of St. Gregory’s Trental,” *Speculum* 49 (1974), 75.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.

transferred to altars in English churches.¹⁸⁶ Initially, the indulgence was only attached to royal chapels and altars at Windsor and Westminster, but by the early sixteenth century had been acquired by other English chapels, like that of the chapel of Boston's guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary (c.1510).¹⁸⁷ *Scala Celi* masses were intended to "secure a soul's immediate release from Purgatory."¹⁸⁸ Their efficacy was drawn from a legend in which St. Bernard received a vision of the dead he was praying for during a requiem mass at Sancta Maria Scala Caeli in Rome, "ascending to heaven by a ladder—the "Scala Coeli."¹⁸⁹ Requiem masses at Rome's Scala Caeli church were then endowed with an indulgence, which through remitting the sins of those prayed for could release their souls from purgatorial suffering. Lincolnshire wills also mention Austin Friars performing these masses, fund them to be said in Boston, Lincoln, or Grimsby, and "in our ladyes quere in Spillesby at *Scala Celi*"—so there were other *Scala Celi* altars in the county besides the very popular one in St. Botolph's church, Boston.¹⁹⁰ In spite of the efficacy of *Scala Celi* masses and their availability in English chapels by 1510, they only begin to be sponsored in 1521—with a total of forty-three testators funding them between 1521 and 1536.

Another means of securing intercession and relief from purgatorial suffering was through the cult of the saints. Saints and the living were engaged in an "economy of grace," as we have seen elsewhere in this dissertation. The relationship between saints and the community of believers was one of client and patron, where in exchange for homage paid in the form of altars,

¹⁸⁶ Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, 55; see also Nigel Morgan, "The Scala Coeli Indulgence and the Royal Chapels," in *The Reign of Henry VII*, ed., Benjamin Thompson (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 82-103.

¹⁸⁷ Foster, v. 1, 258; Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, 55.

¹⁸⁸ Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, 55.

¹⁸⁹ Duffy, 375.

¹⁹⁰ LCC 1506 &c., 65d., Foster, vol. 1, 115 (Robert Goodrike).

lights, and masses, saints offered protection to the living and intercession for the dead.¹⁹¹ More than half of Lincolnshire testators made provisions for lights or saints' altars in their wills. These bequests had the dual purpose of honoring the saints and enhancing the resources of testators' parish churches—directly securing intercession for the individual while also enriching the communal mechanisms for that intercession. In helping to augment the ability of the parish to honor its saints, sponsorship of the cult of the saints can be viewed as a good work, which secured patronage for the individual and community as well.

While the intercessory spiritual works of mercy were the most frequently funded by testators in Lincolnshire, a small percentage of will-makers also made provision for the forgiveness of trespasses and instruction of the ignorant. For the most part trespasses were conceived of in financial terms—forgiving trespassers translated into forgiving testators' debtors.¹⁹² Only three percent of testators performing spiritual works of mercy forgave owed them, and these testators were overwhelmingly male—there was a single female testator who forgave debts. Most of these testators forgave their debtors outright, but John Lawes (d. 1525) and John Jelean (d. 1530) commuted the payment of monies owed into charitable works stipulating that their debtors perform charity at Christmas and fund two trentals, respectively.¹⁹³ Conversely, two testators made provisions for their own trespasses to be forgiven. Ostensibly all Christian practices were reconciliatory in nature—individuals were reconciled to God and one another through living in charity. Anketil Mallore (d. 1390) and Walter Cokeseye (d. 1405),

¹⁹¹ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 183-6.

¹⁹² The *Lay Folks' Catechism* rendered the traditional forgiveness of trespasses into forgiveness of debts and debtors. Humanity was seen as being in debt to God's charity, and if they wished this debt to be forgiven they likewise had to forgive the debts of their fellows, Simmons, 10.

¹⁹³ LCC 1520-31, 17d, Foster, vol. 1, 148 (John Lawes); LCC 1520-31, 387, Foster, vol. 3, 103 (John Jelean).

both left bequests with the explicit instruction that the monies they provided were to make amends for damages they had done to the bodies or goods of others.¹⁹⁴ It is possible that the spiritual work of forgiving debts was related to the corporeal work of caring for prisoners. Since many testators who made provisions for prisoners, made them for those in debtors' prisons, the forgiving of debts may have been a way to keep debtors out of prison.¹⁹⁵ It is difficult to know, however, since the testators themselves did not make these direct connections in their testaments. In terms of educating the ignorant, three Lincolnshire testators—John Tayller (d. 1532), William Jowytson (d. 1532), and Thomas Hawe (d. 1533)—instructed that the stipendiary priests they funded were also required to teach local children for free as a condition of their employment. Other testators made provision for the education of their own children throughout the period under consideration—instructing the ignorant as a charitable work, however, seems confined to the early 1530s.¹⁹⁶

A final, but unqualifiable, way in which Lincolnshire testators practiced traditional charity was in the sponsorship of good works for the benefit of the souls of others—parents, good friends, benefactors, specific persons, and all Christian souls included.¹⁹⁷ These charitable

¹⁹⁴ DIOC/REG/12, ff. 403v-404r, Gibbons, 57; DIOC/REG/15, ff. 12r-v, Gibbons, 113.

¹⁹⁵ In the case of London, Susan Brigden found that testators forgave debts so as not to vex” or truble any of my debtors whiche be poore prisoners,” “Religion and Social Obligation,” 86. It seems in the examples she gives, debtors had already reached a point where they had been imprisoned for their debts; testators did not want to add to this burden, so therefore, forgave their debts.

¹⁹⁶ LCC 1532-3, 101v., Hickman, 111; LCC 1532-4, 264v., Hickman, 117; LRO D&C 1534-59, 22v, Hickman, 124; As demonstrated in Chapter Three, debts were also collectively forgiven, as churchwardens' forgave debts to the parish church owed by needy parishioners.

¹⁹⁷ Testators did not generally disclose the motivations for this type of bequest. A couple did mention disposing of the residue in these types of acts was to benefit souls in Purgatory, however, it is difficult to know in the case of named persons if the act of charity was spontaneous on behalf of the testator or if the testator was fulfilling an obligation made in that person's will.

deeds defy categorization because of the flexible nature of the bequest. Testators made provisions that the residue of their estates be put to charitable acts, pious uses, or good works on behalf of others—only sometimes specifying that the executor distribute the monies or goods in works of mercy. About nine percent of testators making charitable bequests made provisions of this type; and ninety-eight percent of these testators made additional provisions for either corporeal works of mercy, spiritual works of mercy, or both. Bequests of this type were doubly efficacious good works; in funding charity on behalf of others, will-makers were also performing a charitable act.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the quantity and quality of charitable provisions made by Lincolnshire testators was influenced by how the term “charity” is being defined. Limiting the definition of charity obscures the importance of the parish church in local religion; it functioned as the locus and vehicle for the laity’s prime religious concerns, which were intercession for souls in Purgatory and the events of Judgment day. As such, the Seven Works of Mercy, which Christ would ask about on Judgment day, served as an organizing principle for testamentary charity. Will-makers took a more broad view of charity than those practicing lifetime or guild charity. Instead of only providing for those within their immediate kinship and social networks, testators adopted notions of universal neighborhood. In performing the works of mercy, they did not just practice this charity locally, but did so in ways that benefited the needy throughout the county. Charity-givers were also likely to perform multiple types of charity with their bequests in order to increase the merit of their end-of-life gifts. Lincolnshire testators also demonstrated charitable concerns that were different from those found in other

counties. Where caring for prisoners was an important work in London and York, it was not in Lincolnshire.

Although the performance of testamentary charity and the works of mercy fall in line with contemporary gender expectations, the practice of each does not fall neatly within the categories of clerical piety and lay piety. Wills illustrate that laypeople appropriated clerical spiritual works of mercy—especially increasing divine service and praying for dead. These testamentary provisions were not in conflict with clerical prerogatives, however, as they funded chaplains and stipendiary priests whose job was to provide parish churches with the necessary liturgical and day-to-day maintenance help.

Conclusion

In the late Middle Ages, clergy and laity understood charity as a broad ideology, which not only encompassed and informed the unequal vertical relationships between almsgivers and the needy, but the horizontal relationships between individuals and their neighbors as well. Charity was not only limited to financial relief in times of poverty, but also included amity and fellowship on a daily basis. Although almsgiving is more readily quantifiable, expanding the definition of charity to include the structuring of interpersonal relationships can reveal a more positive picture of communal relationships than traditionally assessed. Financial alms were an important aspect of charity; however, modern definitions of both alms and charity do not recognize that they were only one dimension of a broader religious ideology—an ideology that aimed to inform laypeople’s relationship with God and one another. Charity and alms encompassed not only the amelioration of material suffering, but the cultivation of affective communal bonds through sociability, hospitality, and fellowship as well.

Charity as a religious ideal evolved from the poor relief or divine love in early patristic writings to being characterized by the demonstration of the love of God through the love of neighbor and good works done in the world. For medieval Christians, living in a “state of charity” meant undergoing a process of social integration based on the sacramental program of the Church, which was predicated on the love dictated by the precepts of the gospel. This social integration was the “principle end of the Christian life.” Late medieval clerics embarked upon an educational campaign inspired by the broadly initiated reforms of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, by Archbishop Pecham’s Lambeth constitutions in 1281, and the emergence of mendicant

spiritualities. Thirteenth-and fourteenth-century didactic literature aimed at instructing parochial clergy grew out of these reform movements. When this literature became available in the vernacular for Latin-illiterate parish priests, authors like John Mirk used the Seven Works of Mercy as a pedagogical framework for teaching the clergy, and subsequently the laity, how to practice charity correctly. This instruction was meant ultimately to help clergy to prepare for hearing confessions, and aid their parishioners to properly confess and atone for sins, which clergy and laity alike would answer for on Judgment Day. Authors of this genre encouraged clergy to focus on teaching the laity Christian behavior through the works of corporeal mercy. Priests' manuals allowed that women had a special role in the household as moral educators and correctors, but revealed a general ambivalence about laypeople practicing the spiritual works outside of praying for the living and dead.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, writers of pastoral, homiletic, and prescriptive works aimed at lay instruction, took abstract ideas about charity and mercy and made them more concrete by specifically linking them to the concept of neighborliness. Authors used narratives and *exempla* in their texts as part of pedagogical strategies to help the laity put Christian teachings into social and religious practice. The notion of neighborliness opened up conceptual and interpretive spaces for Christian social integration, and expanded the potential for women's piety. Where gender and status may have previously limited the religious participation of non-elite women and the poor, practicing works of mercy rooted in kindness and affective bonds endowed them with a special spiritual capital as those who could perform charity and alms through their kind words, prayers, and legitimate fraternal correction. This is especially true for the poor, who became not simply vehicles for the salvation of the rich, but members of the Christian community who had an active role in constituting Augustine's "tunic of charity."

While the obligation to practice charitable works of mercy became more inclusive in the late Middle Ages, the definition of the neighbor to whom those works were done became more exclusive. Women's charitable responsibilities expanded as well—they were encouraged to perform both corporeal works in the parish that benefitted the community and spiritual works in the home that benefitted the souls of their spouses. Devotional and catechetical works reflected what clerics believed to be the most important teachings of the Church; however, clerical authors were obliged to present the material in ways which they thought would be the most edifying and easy to comprehend by lay audiences. They also had to select themes that would resonate with laypeople and their life experiences for the catechetical program to take root in the popular imagination

Laypeople in their turn strove to make religious instruction relevant to their daily life experiences. The commissioning of church adornments, sponsorship of religious plays, and authorship of didactic texts with charity and charitable living functioning as organizing principles illustrates that the laity were generally receptive to clerical teachings on charity. However, they placed their adherence to religious principles within the context of their personal needs and concerns, and selectively practiced charity and the works of mercy. In the parish and the guild, laypeople defined and enacted community in different ways. Parishioners collectively practiced the works of mercy as elements of sacred hospitality, which they performed for the community as defined by the boundaries of the parish church. Guild members' charitable works primarily focused upwards toward God and inward towards their guild family. They performed the corporeal works of mercy in commemoration of God, with their guild fellows as the "neighbor" who served as the vehicle for demonstrating that love. Testamentary charity took the broadest view of charity and the works of mercy as testators with means made provisions for all

Christian souls when possible. Although, charity in the parish and guild reflected different conceptions of the community that should benefit from the works of mercy, Lincolnshire documents reveal that countywide, Lincolnshire laypeople practiced the works of clothing the naked, caring for prisoners, and burying the dead with less frequency than found in other parts of the country. Guild members did make provision for burying the dead, but only the dead in their membership.

The clergy generally encouraged laypeople to practice the corporeal works over the spiritual ones. While clergymen urged laypeople to pray for the living and dead, their instruction about the other spiritual works was more ambivalent. The laity in Lincolnshire, however, actively took on additional responsibility in the ritual and liturgical life of their parishes through the appropriation of clerical educational initiatives by undertaking specific spiritual works of mercy. In their parochial and testamentary piety, laypeople practiced and made provisions for the works of educating the ignorant by sponsoring plays, didactic art, and schools. Guild members performed these works as well, but added the works concerned with fraternal correction and communal harmony—admonishing sinners, forgiving offenses willingly, and bearing wrongs patiently. On occasion the practice of fraternal correction brought laypeople into contact with the corrective mechanisms of the church—namely, sanctions through episcopal visitations.

While not within the scope of this present study, there is room for the expansion of the lines of inquiry raised in this dissertation. In particular, I think an in-depth discussion of religious guilds and episcopal courts in Lincolnshire as institutions of social regulation, looking at the ways in which laypeople and parish clergy used the Seven Works of Mercy as a means for framing and controlling public behavior would be fruitful. An examination of the emergence of

orphanages and hospitals in Lincolnshire as charitable institutions in conversation with Continental scholarship on the Seven Works of Mercy would provide the work started by my dissertation with more comparative breadth. Lincoln's St. Katherine's orphanage and hospital attracted countywide testamentary bequests and it has yet to be studied in depth. Scholars of Italian lay organizations have examined the roles played by religious associations in the establishment and maintenance of hospitals and orphanages, as well considered lay charity that supported widows, orphans, unmarried girls, the infirm, and prisoners. While this dissertation addresses some of these populations, an analysis using the broader categories of charity used in the study of Italy and Italian scholarship on the works of mercy would determine if charitable practice in Lincolnshire was unique, or part of broader developments in late medieval charity.

Appendix A Lincolnshire Churchwardens' Accounts

Rural

Wigtoft, St. Peter and St. Paul (1484-1533)

Extracted in John Nichols, *Illustrations of the Manners and Expenses of Ancient Times* (1797), 196-229. According to Nichols the original manuscripts of these accounts have been lost.

Hagworthingham, Holy Trinity (1487-1550)

Extracted in Ernest L. Grange, "Hagworthingham Church Book," *Lincolnshire Notes & Queries* 1 (1888-9), 5-9. According to Grange the original manuscripts of these accounts have been lost.

Sutterton, St. Mary (1490-1530)

Bodleian Library Rawlinson MS D786; Extracted in Edward Peacock, "Churchwardens' Accounts of Saint Mary's, Sutterton," *Archaeological Journal* 39 (1882), 53-63.

Leverton, St. Helen (1492-1598)

LRO Leverton PAR/7/1; Extracted in Edward Peacock, "Extracts of the Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of Leverton," *Archaeologia* 41 (1867), 236-65; and Edward Pishey Thompson, *The History and Antiquities of Boston and the Villages of Skirbeck, Fishtoft, Freiston, Butterwick, Benington, Leverton, Leake and Wrangle; Comprising the Hundred of Skirbeck, in the County of Lincoln* (Boston: John Noble, 1856), 559-575.

Horbling, St. Andrew (1533-1570)

LRO Horbling Town Book Par/7/10.

Urban

Grimsby, St. Mary (1411-1412)

E. E. Gillett, "An Early Church-Warden's Account of St. Mary's Grimsby," *Lincolnshire Architectural and Archaeological Society Reports and Papers* 6 (1955-6), 27-36. According to E.E. Gillett, the Grimsby accounts were found in some fifteenth-century chamberlains' rolls. They were so badly damaged that only a small portion of the accounts could be transcribed.

Kirton-in-Lindsey, St. Andrew (1484-1717)

LRO Kirton-in-Lindsey Par/7/1; Extracted in Edward Peacock, "Churchwardens' Accounts of Kirton-in-Lindsey," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, Second Series, ii (1864), 383-389, "Kirton-In-Lindsey: Churchwardens' Accounts," *Antiquary* 19 (1889), 18-20.

Stamford, St. Mary (1427)

Transcribed in Francis Peck, *Antiquarian Annals of Stamford* (London, 1727), Book 4. Stanley Kahrl's research found that while the original churchwardens' accounts for St. Mary's are housed in the British Museum (Cotton Vespasian A XXIV), they only contain an entry for 1427-8. This single year account was then printed by Francis Peck, Kahrl, *Records of Plays and Players*.

Louth, St. James, Louth (1500-1524)

LRO Louth St. James PAR/7/1 and Reginald C. Dudding, *First Churchwardens' Book of Louth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941); (1527-59) LRO Louth St. James PAR/7/2.

Appendix B
Lincolnshire Parish Guilds

<u>Place of Foundation</u>	<u>Guild dedication</u>	<u>Source</u>
Addlethorpe	Unnamed	CWA
Alvingham	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Amcotts	Holy Cross	Chancery Return
Amcotts	St Thomas the Martyr	Chancery Return
Barton-upon-Humber	St. Mary (Our Lady)	Will
Baston	St. Mary	Chancery Return
Baston	St. Katherine	Chancery Return
Baston	St. John the Baptist	Chancery Return
Bennington in Holland	Maidens' guild	Will
Binbrooke	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Binbrooke	St. Helena	Chancery Return
Binbrooke	Holy Trinity	Chancery Return
Bolingbroke	St. Peter	Will
Bolingbroke	Holy Trinity	Will
Boston	Ascension	Chancery Return
Boston	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return, Will
Boston	St. James, Apostle	Chancery Return
Boston	St. John the Baptist	Chancery Return
Boston	St. Katharine	Chancery Return
Boston	St. Mary (BVM)	Chancery Return, Will
Boston	St. Simon and St. Jude	Chancery Return
Boston	Holy Trinity	Chancery Return
Boston	St. Peter and Paul	Chancery Return
Boston	St. George	Will
Boston	Holy Rood	Will
Boston	Seven Martyrs	Will
Boston	Fellowship of Heaven	Will
Boston	St. Anne	Will
Boston	St. Botolph	Will
Boston	Apostles' guild (postill guild)	Will
Boston	Seven Sleepers	Will
Burgh (see also Winthorp)	St. James	Chancery Return
Castor (Caistor)	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Castor (Caistor)	St. Mary (Purification)	Chancery Return
Coningsby	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return

Coningsby	St. Mary (Nativity)	Chancery Return
Crowland	Corpus Christi and St. Guthlac	Chancery Return
Crowland	All Saints	Chancery Return
Crowland	Holy Trinity	Chancery Return
Crowland	St. John the Baptist	Chancery Return
Deeping St. James	Corpus Christi	Will
Deeping St. James	Our Lady	Will
Deeping St. James	Holy Trinity	Will
Fotherby	St. Mary (BVM)	Chancery Return
Fulstow (Falstow)	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Fulstow (Falstow)	Holy Trinity	Chancery Return
Fulstow (Falstow)	St. Mary (BVM)	Chancery Return
Gedney	Assumption	Chancery Return
Gedney	Holy Trinity	Chancery Return
Gedney	St. Thomas of Canterbury and All Saints	Chancery Return
Gedney Fen in Holland	Holy Ghost	Chancery Return
Gedney in Holland	St. John the Baptist	Chancery Return
Gosberton	Maidens' guild	Will
Grainthorpe	St. Mary (BVM)	Chancery Return
Grantham	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Grantham	Holy Cross (Exaltation)	Chancery Return
Grantham	Holy Cross (Invention)	Chancery Return
Grantham	Holy Trinity	Chancery Return
Grantham	St. John the Baptist	Chancery Return
Grantham	St. Michael	Chancery Return
Grantham	St. Peter	Chancery Return
Grimsby	Holy Trinity	Chancery Return
Hagworthingham	St. Mary (BVM)	CWA
Harlaxton	Holy Trinity	Chancery Return
Harlaxton	St. Mary	Chancery Return
Hogsthorpe	St. Leonard	Will
Holbeach	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Holbeach	St. Thomas of Canterbury	Chancery Return
Holbeach	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Holbeach	Assumption (Tilers)	Chancery Return
Holbeach	St. Mary (Nativity)	Chancery Return
Holbeach	Holy Trinity	Chancery Return
Holbeach	Plough light	CWA
Holbeach Hirne	Assumption	Chancery Return
Holland	Maidens' guild	Will
Horbling	St. Dorothy (Maidens' light)	CWA
Horkstow	Holy Trinity	Chancery Return
Horncastle	St. Barnabas and St. Lawrence	Chancery Return
Horncastle	St. Katherine	Will
Hundelby	Maidens' guild	Will

Huttoft	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Huttoft	Holy Cross	Chancery Return
Huttoft	St. Margaret	Chancery Return, Will
Huttoft	St. Mary (BVM)	Chancery Return
Ingoldmells	Maidens' guild	Will
Killingholme	St. Mary (BVM)	Chancery Return
Kirton in Lindsey	Holy Sepulchre	Will
Kirton in Lindsey	Corpus Christi	Will
Kirton in Lindsey	St. John the Baptist	Will
Kirton in Lindsey	May Guild	Will
Kirton in Lindsey	Plough Guild	Will
Kovnam or Covenham	St. John the Baptist	Chancery Return
Leverton	Plough light	CWA
Leverton	St. Helen	CWA
Lincoln	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Lincoln	Resurrection	Chancery Return
Lincoln	St. Bavo	Chancery Return
Lincoln	Resurrection or holy sepulchre	Chancery Return
Lincoln	St. Edmund of Pontigny	Chancery Return
Lincoln	St. George	Chancery Return
Lincoln	St. Lawrence	Chancery Return
Lincoln	St. Margaret	Chancery Return
Lincoln	St. Martin	Chancery Return
Lincoln	St. Mary (Great Guild of BVM)	Chancery Return, Will
Lincoln	St. Mary (BVM)	Chancery Return
Lincoln	St. Nicholas (and St Mary)	Chancery Return, Will
Lincoln	St. John the evangelist	Chancery Return
Lincoln	St. Mary (BVM)	Chancery Return
Lincoln	Holy Cross	Chancery Return
Lincoln	All Saints	Chancery Return
Lincoln	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Lincoln	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Lincoln	St. Anne	Chancery Return, Will
Lincoln	St. Nicholas, St. Mary, and All Saints	Chancery Return
Lincoln	Holy Cross	Chancery Return
Lincoln	St. Mary (BVM)	Chancery Return
Lincoln	Minstrels and actors	Chancery Return
Lincoln	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Lincoln	Exaltation of the Cross	Chancery Return
Lincoln	Holy Sepulchre	Chancery Return
Lincoln	St. Mary	Chancery Return
Lincoln	St. Dunstan	Will

Lincoln	St. Leonard	Will
Lincoln	St. Michael	Will
Lincoln	St. Robert	Will
Lincoln	Trinity	Will
Lincoln	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Lincoln	St. Mary (Purification)	Chancery Return
Long Sutton	Maidens' guild	Will
Long Sutton	St. Mary (Our Lady)	Will
Louth	St. Swithin	Chancery Return
Louth	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Louth	St. Mary (BVM or Lady guild)	Chancery Return
Louth	Holy Trinity	Chancery Return
Louth	Twelve Apostles	Chancery Return
Louth	St. George	CWA
Louth	Holy Trinity	CWA
Louth	St. Peter	CWA
Louth	St. Mary (Oure Lady or Anytime Light)	CWA
Louth	Sepulchre	CWA
Louth	Lampe Light (Eucharistic guild)	CWA
Louth	Wever	CWA
Louth	Plough Light	CWA
Luddington	Holy Cross	Chancery Return
Lutton in Sutton	St. Peter	Will
Morton near Bourne	Holy Trinity	Will
Morton near Bourne	St. George	Will
Moulton	St. Mary	Will
Osbournby	St. Thomas of Canterbury	Chancery Return
Pinchbeck	St. Mary	Will
Sleaford	Holy Trinity	Will
Sleaford	St. George	Will
Sleaford	Christoper	Will
Spalding	St. John the Baptist	Chancery Return
Spalding	Holy Trinity	Chancery Return
Spalding	St. Mary on East Bank	Chancery Return
Spalding	St. Mary on West Bank	Chancery Return
Spilsby	Maidens' guild	Will
Springthorpe	St. George	Chancery Return
Springthorpe	Holy Trinity	Chancery Return
Stamford	St. Mary	Chancery Return
Stamford	Holy Trinity	Chancery Return
Stamford	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Stamford	St. Martin	Chancery Return
Stickford	St. Mary (Our Lady)	Will
Stickney	St. Mary	Will
Sutterton	St. Mary	Chancery Return

Sutterton	St. Mary	Chancery Return
Sutterton	Plough light	CWA
Sutton in the marsh	St. Mary (Our Lady)	Will
Swineshead	All Saints	Chancery Return
Swineshead	St. Mary (BVM)	Chancery Return
Swineshead	Maidens' guild	Will
Thimbleby	St. Margaret	Will
Thimbleby	Plough guild	Will
Thurlby near Bourne	St. Firmin	Will
Trusthorpe	St. Mary	Will
Whaplode	St Katherine	Chancery Return
Whaplode	St Mary	Chancery Return
Whaplode	St John the Baptist	Chancery Return
Whitton	Maidens' guild	Will
Wigtoft	St. Mary (Assumption)	Chancery Return
Winthorpe	St. Mary	Chancery Return
Winthorpe	St. Katharine	Chancery Return
Winthorpe	St. James	Chancery Return
Winthorpe	Holy Trinity	Chancery Return
Winthorpe	St. Mary of Burgh	Chancery Return
Winthorpe	Maidens' guild	Will
Wyberton	St. Mary (Our Lady)	Will
Yarborough	Corpus Christi	Chancery Return
Yarborough	St. Peter	Chancery Return

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