# PRAYER AND SOCIETY:

# AN EXEGESIS OF A LATE MEDIEVAL

# BIDDING PRAYER

**A DISSERTATION**

Presented to

The Senate
of St. Stephen's College, Edmonton

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

## MASTER OF THEOLOGY

**by**

**Jeanne Henry**

**Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island**

National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services
Acquisitions et services bibliographiques

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-30194-X

Canada

# ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate a late middle ages English bidding prayer. As such, the thesis becomes a history of the Christian Church by way of its intercessory prayer. That prayer has variously been called the peoples' prayer, prayer of the faithful, petitionary prayer, bidding the beads, beads-bidding, the bedes on Sunday and bidding of prayers. Throughout the middle ages any of these terms simply meant praying of prayers.[1]

Intercessory prayers date from the church's earliest period where it was the custom to request prayers simply on behalf of certain persons or events. This request took the form of a direction to the assembled congregation telling them whom and what to remember in their communal prayers. Intercessory prayers were never absolutely fixed in place nor in form within the emerging liturgy; they varied in length, in elaboration of detail, and in range of the people for whom blessings were asked.

The medieval English bidding prayer was a corporate intercessory prayer said by the Christian community of the faithful on behalf of both an immediate and larger community. It was offered up in the vernacular, English replacing the Latin of the remainder of the service. The bidding prayer thus truly belonged to the local community who prayed it since it was in the language spoken by the worshippers and included people or situations within their community.

[1] After the reformation "bid" took on the sense of order or direct so that in the reign of Elizabeth, for instance, the "bidding of prayers" meant the directing of prayers, and later still the call to the people for communal prayer became the bidding prayer as it if were a kind of prayer qualified by the adjective "bidding". This, however, is the terminology which has remained to identify the intercessory prayer.

The biddings were usually added to the devotions, instructions and notices attached to the half of the mass known as the Service of the Word.

I have chosen a specific fifteenth century text of this prayer, but its roots appear in Jewish and early Christian intercessory prayer. Part I of the thesis examines those roots while Part II examines in detail the chosen prayer manuscript, reflecting in that examination something of the role of the clergy (monastic and secular), the parish structure, the importance of benefactors, the pilgrim who travels for the sake of his soul, and the woman whose churching service welcomes her back after the birth of her child.

What I have not chosen to examine is the separate and self-contained section of the prayer dealing with the dead. The bidding prayer is divided into two categories of prayer, those for the living and those for the dead. In the former category are included prayers for those people who are associated with the spiritual side of the Christian's life from the pope and the archbishop down to the vicar's clerk. As well, in this category of the living are those individuals not connected with the church but with the secular world. These would include the king, the merchant, the farmer, the family. Thus, in the category of the living are the two estates of the Christian people: the spiritual and the temporal. The third estate is the dead.

The prayers for the dead essentially categorize those same peoples as are listed in the first two estates but usher in the doctrine of purgatory. Because the latter was an ideal made up of many ancient elements whose origins are complicated, often obscure and require a far-

reaching modification in the Christian imagination, it is an area very different from the inquiry of the present thesis. I have talked of indulgences, pilgrimages and funerals as they reflect the imagination of the medieval Christian concerning the final state of the soul, but I leave the doctrine of purgatory to be handled by others.

The tone of the bidding prayer is an interesting one. Given the fact that it is a form of petitionary prayer, there is no sense of humility and self-abnegation on the part of the one who is asking that God's blessing be given to the archbishop or the woman who has recently given birth. Nothing declares the praise of God, nor the sense of the worthless servant before the master. Instead it is possible to detect a certain amount of forwardness and even importunity in the prayer. Why? Because it is a community prayer. The individual who is invited to recite the biddings is considered an emissary of the praying community, not pleading for selfish needs but for the needs of the entire community with which that individual is identified. There is not room in this medieval intercessory prayer for reliance upon one's own merits or for demanding a reward for one's good deeds. This is a prayer which relies upon God's mercy and grace.

It is very difficult to trace a smooth and connected path from the roots and development of the prayer up to the fifteenth century example analyzed. This is because of the exigencies of history: the Dark Ages were indeed that and material is not extant which allows one to make definitive statements about either the shape of the prayer or its development during that period. I have chosen, then, to offer in a snapshot form material which does exist in order to

suggest that the prayer was vital enough in the liturgical history of the church and that it survived and reappeared throughout many centuries; certainly in the late middle ages several versions of the prayer can be found.

I have indicated earlier that the exegesis of the prayer became a look at the history of the Christian church. Two results of that exercise are: a much greater awareness of the church's Jewish roots in both a religious and cultural sense and a less than positive view of the church as it existed at the end of the fifteenth century. In the first instance the shape, content, influences and spirituality of the Jewish intercessory prayer was a rewarding addition of information. In the latter case, through my investigation of church documents, registers, wills, charters, rolls and economic histories, I found a less than praiseworthy religious organization that should have had the welfare of Christians as their foremost objective but did not; here was a clergy significantly concerned with its own aggrandizement.

The English bidding prayer of the 15th century was a vital part of liturgy. It brought forward the tradition of prayer for the welfare of the church's people, its tone and content truly determining it as "public" prayer.

# Acknowledgements

Both my love and appreciation are expressed to my advisor, Dr. J. Frank Henderson, and my husband, Neil Henry, for their insights, patience and perseverance.

**Table of Contents**

**Part I: Roots and Historical Development of Intercessory Prayer**

Introduction 10
*Tefillah* 14
New Testament 18
First Epistle of Clement 21
*Didache* 23
Tertullian 26
Origen 30
Apostolic Constitutions 36
Jerusalem Stational Liturgy: Egeria 40
Constantinople: John Chrysostom 45
Rome: Good Friday Prayers 46
An Eleventh Century Vernacular Bidding Prayer 49

**Part II: Exegesis of a 1483 English Bidding Prayer**

Introduction 52
The Bidding Prayer in the Sunday Liturgy 55
The Complete 1483 Bidding Prayer 72
Exegesis: 74
The Opening Command of the Prayer 74
The Clergy 78
The Pope and the Holy Church 78
Archbishops and Bishops 85
Monastic Organization 124
Abbots and Priors 134
Canons 145
Friars 150
Women of Religion 157
Parish Clergy 159
Parsons 171
King and Civil Government 180
The People of the Parish 187
Specific Tithers 196
Benefactors 200
Pilgrims and Palmers 218
The Sick 222
Pregnant Women 225
More Parishioners 231

**Conclusion** 238

## Part I: Roots and Historical Development of the Intercessory Prayer

### Introduction

Part one of this thesis is a series of snapshots, short studies of some writings which give information on Christian intercessory prayer, a prayer asking God for something desired on behalf of others. The snapshot structure has been chosen for the first portion of the thesis because a definitive statement concerning the development of the form and content of the intercessory prayer cannot be made; the connections between one piece of written evidence and the next are not clear. Material is not available which demonstrates that there has been an unbroken and continual use in the Christian church of the intercessory prayer nor how changes to its form might have occurred. The turbulent history of the church from its inception to the middle ages fostered change, interruption, truncation, or addition to parts of its liturgy depending on the period or the setting where the prayer was used.

The historical writings to be examined will begin with the Jewish daily prayer, the *Tefillah,* as it might have influenced the early Christian intercessory prayer, then will move through additional sources of evidence in Christian writings from the first century to the eleventh. This includes passages from the New Testament and the *First Epistle of Clement,* both within the

first century. The second century presents the *Didache* and Tertullian's commentary on the prayer. Origen, in the third century, makes a number of references in his extensive writings to liturgical customs and enlarges the understanding of the prayer. The composite work of the *Apostolic Constitutions* appears in the fourth century, all of its sources being extensively reworked in the process. The next century includes material from Constantinople - John Chrysostom's early prayer - as well as a *Good Friday* prayer from Rome. The overview ends with a comment on an eleventh century English bidding prayer.

From such an overview, it should be possible to draw some conclusions which will anticipate the form, content, and theological intention of the fifteenth century English bidding prayer whose detailed examination forms the second and principle part of the thesis.

Sources for a knowledge of the practice of worship in the church's early history are fragmentary. They consist of rites briefly contained and often partially described in letters and sermons; of even briefer allusions that appear in writings, often on a very different subject; of pieces of legislation produced by various councils and synods which affected liturgical matters, and of some fragments of what seem to be the texts of individual prayers. The underlying assumption in looking at these writings is that primitive Christianity was essentially pluriform in nature and that a single, uniform archetype of the intercessory prayer does not exist.

What does exist is a suggestion that Jewish statutory or public prayer as present in the synagogue was known and practiced in the early Christian church but with two differences: first, Jewish prayer was still, at the time of the church's beginning, a flexible prayer itself and not yet fixed in content or form in the rabbinic corpus; secondly Jewish prayer was devoid of the essential Christian core of Jesus Christ, on whom was centred all the worshipping activity of the new people of God.

One must avoid confusing the later (after the first century) rabbinic form of prayer, synagogue worship and Jewish life with that which would necessarily have been familiar to Jesus and his followers. It is true that contact between Jews and Christians did not end after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. but by the close of the first century the church was predominantly a Gentile church and liturgical influences from Judiasm had been somewhat marginalized[2]. New Testament Christianity eventually took its departure from the Jewish worship of the first century.[3] The variety which its liturgy had to begin with increased in the course of time as the

[2] There were many Jewish Christians still by the end of the first century who continued to observe the Law. But converts from the Graeco-Roman world already formed a large body of Gentile Christians who did not observe the Law at all. Two things were happening: Christianity was thus engaged in apologetics to the Greek and Roman world and orthodox Judaism saw heresies, in their point of view, from abroad that were having a corrupting influence on its orthodoxy. Its response was to proclaim anew the orthodox faith and to ensure that individuals were recalled to the Law of God. The result was that a new declaration about heretics was inserted into the Eighteen Blessings, a malediction not a benediction. It took its shape sometime during Gamaliel II's time(80 - 110 CE) and was so worded that Jewish Christians and Gnostics alike would find it impossible to recite. It asked that there be no hope for apostates, that Christians and heretics perish quickly with no remembrance of them and ends with the traditional Berakah of blessing the Lord who humbles the arrogant. C.W.Dugmore, The Influence of the Synagogue Upon the Divine Office (London,1964), 4.
[3] Paul F.Bradshaw, Daily Prayer in the Early Church (London,1981), 18.

Church developed and liturgical practices were subject to differing local influences and emphases.[4]

Common to the early fragments of prayers evidence, however, is public prayer, petitionary in form, asking God for blessings on the world of the individual petitioner and on the community. Evidence for such a prayer suggests that it belonged to a genre of living literature therefore the principle involved in looking at early Christian forms of the intercessory prayer is to approach a document by attempting to understand its evolved nature, not to accept it as the definitive statement about or example of a static text. Where intercessory prayer is found, referred to or suggested in some indirect way it is to be understood that this is a prayer reflecting something about the time and place within which it is found as well as theological concerns and a particular attitude toward God and God's will. The common elements of the public petitionary prayer include the form of the request for blessings, the congregational response, the objects of the blessings, the position one assumes while repeating the prayer, and the role of the prayer leader. The following examination of references to an intercessory prayer is undertaken with that in mind.

[4] Recent critical theory, most effectively articulated by Robert Taft, posits a cautious and sophisticated approach to studying liturgy. Taft proceeds from an insistence on the importance of a close comparison of the similarities and differences between liturgical practices in different geographical regions, time periods or ecclesiastical traditions to a hypothesis which attempts to account for the origin and development of those practices. This is done both in light of tendencies already observed in the evolution of other liturgical elements and within the context of their known historical information. The method regards as invalid a single, unchanged and definitive text and applauds the concept of a vital, culturally relevant and changing text. See Robert Taft, "The Structural Analysis of Liturgical Units: An Essay in Methodology," Worship 52(1978), 314-29; and "How Liturgies Grow: The Evolution of the Byzantine Divine Liturgy" in Beyond East and West (Washington, 1983), 151-92.

*Tefillah*

Part of the core of daily Jewish prayer in the synagogue was the *Tefillah,* a series of benedictions whose origin is unknown but which probably began to take shape after the return from Babylonian exile in early fifth century B.C.E.[5] The *Tefillah,* or simply the Prayer, was later known as the *Amidah* ("standing"), indicating the position adopted for it, and was also called the *Shemoneh Esreh* or the Eighteen Blessings. The latter name has been given to it because of the fact that its contents came to be fixed at eighteen separate sections, each of which eventually had a short *berakah* (blessing) added to its conclusion in order to comply with the later rabbinic requirement that all prayers must have a *berakah* form.[6]

The classical form of the *berakah*, and the one in which God was blessed for what he had done for his people[7], has as its opening the stereotypical formula "Blessed are you, Lord". The blessing seems to acknowledge the speaker's awareness that what has befallen him is not chance but deliberate action of God, thus God should be praised for it. (Exod. 18:10 for example: Blessed is the Lord who has delivered us out of the hands of the Egyptians and out of the hands of Pharoah). The blessing can range from a simple, single sentence to a complex

---

[5] On Jewish prayer, see Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman (eds.), The Making of Jewish and Christian Worship (Notre Dame,1991); See Paul F. Bradshaw, The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy,(Oxford,1992); Tzvee Zahavy, The Mishnaic Law of Blessings and Prayers,(Atlanta,1987); Elias Bickerman, "The Civic Prayer of Jerusalem", Harvard Theological Review 55 (1962),163-85; L. Finkelstein, "The Development of the *Amidah*", Jewish Quarterly Review 16 (1925-26),142-69; Joseph Heinemann, "Prayers of the *Beth Midrash* Origin", Journal of Jewish Studies (1960),264-80.
[6] Bradshaw, Origins, 19ff.

structure of principle and subordinate clauses which extend the range of activities of God and the recalling of God's past goodness all in the hope of continuing such blessings.

The first of the eighteen benedictions looks like this:

> Blessed art Thou O Lord our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob, the great, mighty, and revered God, God Most High, who bestowest loving kindnesses and art the Possessor [Creator] of all; and rememberest the pious deeds of the Fathers, and in love wilt bring a redeemer to their children's children for Thy Name's sake; O King, Helper, Saviour, and Shield: blessed art Thou, O Lord, the Shield of Abraham.

It has a *berakah* at the beginning and mentions the forefathers of Judaism, God's role as creator and protector, and ends with another blessing on God. The following units of the *Tefillah* (2 through 18) take much the same form, praising God's deeds, asking for forgiveness or healing, and always ending with a benediction. It is numbers 9, 10, 11, 13 and the last two which are of interest in terms of the intercessory prayer of a later date. Those specific units take for their content requests for a generous harvest and good weather conditions for its growth (9), liberation and blessings for those exiled and away (10), or wisdom for the judges and councilors (11). Benedictions 13, 14 and 15 ask for mercy for the pious and righteous as well as for the holy city and its rulers. The focus in 16 is on the speakers of the prayers asking mercy on "us", and an acceptance of "our" communal prayers (17). Finally, the last benediction closes with thanks to God for "our lives" and "our souls", miracles and the wonders that are "wrought at all times, evening, morning and noon." The

---

[7] For the period under discussion, inclusive language is inappropriate.

final request is for "peace, welfare, and blessing, grace, loving kindness, and mercy," with the reminder that this is communal prayer as "all of us together" ask the blessing of peace "at every time and at every hour...."[8]

The Eighteen Benedictions used in this discussion should be regarded as only one of the many forms which ultimately crystallized sometime after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. and could likely be a combination of several previous series of benedictions and petitionary prayers common among the people since early times.[9] The exact content and order of these benedictions would not be uniform until a later date and it would still have been customary among various groups in different locations to recite additional benedictions above and beyond this number.

A number of stylistic elements characterize each benediction - short, limited in scope to one basic subject, biblical idiomatic language, almost rhythmic in metre, and variable in form.[10] Asking is preceded by praise and followed by thanks. The middle petitions which are like a civic prayer for Jerusalem, ask for material blessings such as well-being, freedom, the spiritual blessings of understanding and forgiveness and the social blessings of justice, punishment for

---

[8] Dugmore, Influence of the Synagogue, Appendix, 114-125.
[9] Tzvee Zahavy, "The Politics of Piety" in Bradshaw and Hoffman, The Making of Jewish and Christian Worship, 48ff.
[10] Bradshaw and Hoffman, 24ff.

the unjust, reward to the faithful and mercy to the city of Jerusalem.[11] These were popular prayers having been created over the course of time by numerous anonymous prayer leaders and from which most of the fixed versions came to be selected and canonized. They are simple, modest and non-literary in style yet achieve their own perfection of expression. They are liturgical prayers, fundamentally petitions for the needs of the community and ultimately of the whole house of Israel.

---

[11] Bickerman discusses the *Tefillah* in terms of the other civic prayers that were found in other cities, and at other times, in the near East HTR, 163ff.

New Testament

Since primitive Christianity, like Judaism, was pluriform in its prayer traditions, it should not be surprising to find a diversity of prayer patterns developing. As the relatively fluid traditions began to crystallize and more stable, written texts began to appear (late third or early fourth century), some traditional elements were kept, others lost, others added. Thus stock phrases of prayer used in the first century can be seen as part of a common language of worship which uses common motifs. In that sense, Christian intercessory prayer would show elements of the *Tefillah* but also new elements reflecting a new knowledge. The first letter to Timothy suggests these:

> I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving thanks, be made for everyone; for kings and for all that are in authority, that we lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. Such prayer is right and approved by God our Saviour, whose will it is that all should find salvation and come to know the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus, himself man who sacrificed himself to win freedom for all mankind....(1 Timothy 2.1)

Here is the suggestion for a new prayer approach, through Christ, but a reminder to Christians of one they already knew.

The New Testament contains a number of liturgical fragments and allusions which allow a glimpse of themes, content, style and language of the early prayers. Some of the prayers reveal that petition and intercession are found frequently and often in conjunction with praise

and the proclamation of the acts of God. This suggests that the *berekah* style of prayer was continued by the early Christians. The opening formula, "Blessed be ..." is found in Luke 1.68; 2 Corinthians 1.3; Ephesians 1.3; 1 Peter 1.2 where it is followed by the relative clause "who in his great mercy..." and followed by information. Paul is the one who uses this form most frequently combining thanksgiving and petition in the body of his letters: "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4.6); "persevere in prayer, with mind awake and thankful heart, and include a prayer for us...."(Colossians 4.2).

Other prayer openings were used by the early Christians, some of which were much more direct in addressing God: "Then they prayed and said, Thou Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men..."(Acts 1.24). It seems that this more direct and intimate address of God became the preferred form; Jesus seems to have instructed his disciples to speak to God with the new and intimate address Abba. The point to be made is that the Christians' invocation of God was moving away from a specific formula. The opening of prayers became flexible, sometimes retaining the *berakah* form, sometimes other forms. The most distinctive feature, however, was that prayer was made in the name of Jesus: "Anything you ask in my name I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14: 13-14). This became the ground upon which petition would now be made and would fundamentally distinguish Christian prayer from that of other Jews. The early Christian *berakah* form adopted an extended address: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,"(2 Corinthians. 1.3) or " We thank you O

God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Colossians 1.3) or, alternatively, the thanks were offered "through Jesus Christ"(Romans 1.8). Thus praise and thanksgiving to God for His mighty works are normal in the New Testament era but now are being made in Christ's name.

First Epistle of Clement

The new form of petitionary prayer, made in Christ's name, is seen in Clement's letter to the Corinthians, usually thought to have originated from the church at Rome, circa 96 C.E. It is a long and impassioned denunciation of the church at Corinth for dismissing its presbyters and replacing them with others.[12] Clement responds to factions that have obviously developed within the Corinthian church; evidently the Corinthian Christians had not changed much since the time when Paul had responded to reports of schisms by writing his first letter to them.

Clement's letter is a lengthy and well planned one. In it an appeal is made to the whole congregation at Corinth, in the name of charity and for the sake of Christ, to end the breach. In the course of this long appeal for unity, a liturgical document emerges in the lengthy prayer of thanksgiving (chapters 59.3 to 61.3). Chapter 59.3 opens with a direct address to God, "Grant us to hope on thy name..." followed by an enlargement upon the qualities of that God: "Thou alone art the Highest in the highest and remainest Holy among the holy. Thou dost humble the pride of the haughty...." and moves into petition: "We beseech Thee, Lord, to be our helper and protector. Save those of us who are in affliction, have mercy on the humble, raise the fallen, show thyself to those who are in need, heal the sick, turn back the wanderers of thy people, feed the hungry, ransom our prisoners, raise up the weak, comfort the faint-

---

[12] The Apostolic Fathers, "The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians",trans. by Kirsopp Lake,(London,1964),vol.I,9ff.

hearted." The prayer ends 61.3) as having been made in Christ's name: "...we praise Thee through the high priest and protector of our souls, Jesus Christ, through whom be glory and majesty to Thee both now and for all generations and for all ages. Amen."

What is observable in this prayer are the bracketing blessings around a series of petitions, the extended description of God's powers and activities, the request for peace and mercy, the concluding doxological formula and the response, Amen. In the list of those for whom intercession is made, an extensive prayer for earthly rulers is included and the praise of God and petitions are made through Christ; both of these elements are specifically Christian; the essential structure of the prayer is Jewish.

Clement writes at the same time as Jewish liturgy was receiving a more fixed stamp by the rabbis. It is quite possible, then, that both Judaism and Christianity were attempting to structure their liturgy during the same period. The history of the development of Christian worship might, as in Judaism, be seen as a movement from a position of differences, fluidity and variety in quite fundamental elements to an increasing standardization of local customs.

## *Didache*

One of the more fascinating genres of early Christian literature is that of the ancient church order, the literature which purports to offer authoritative 'apostolic' directions on matters of conduct, liturgical practice, ecclesiastical organization, and discipline within the early church; a kind of manual on church practice. This literature traces its beginnings to Christ's commissioning of the disciples (Matthew 10:1-5, Mark 3:13-19) and the seventy (Luke 10:1) to do the work of ministry. Far from coming to an end with Christ's death, this designated group received a new power and wider responsibilities after Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13) when they assumed direction of the early church community. The literature of the church orders is a rich source of evidence for the thought and practice of the period in which they were composed. Qualifications, conduct and duties of a bishop, as well as the behaviour in church of deacons, laymen, women and children, the adoption of orphans, the acceptance of alms, ordination, and the eucharist are all subjects covered in the attempts to organize and regulate the primitive church.

A number of documents make up this group of church orders. Some parts of the different documents are similar to one another and point to the fact that they have been built upon, added to or subtracted from, or revised and rewritten to reflect changing historical and cultural circumstances. This literature on the origins of Christian worship ranges from the first

through to the fifth century and includes the *Didache*, *Didascalia*, *Apostolic Church Order*, *Apostolic Tradition*, and *Apostolic Constitutions*.

The *Didache*[13] likely came from Syria and seems to be the earliest of these documents, probably intended as a teaching document for Gentile Christians. It was likely written late first or early second century[14]. On the face of it, it would seem to be dated before wandering prophets were replaced by a settled and permanent local ministry; episcopacy was not yet the universal form of church government it was to become. Because the *Didache*, along with other works, claims to be apostolic, neither the name of the author nor the place and date of its origin is revealed.

It consists of two main sections and a conclusion. The first section (chs. 1-6) contains instruction on the theme of the "Two Ways": moral teaching which sets out the difference between the "Way of Life" and the "Way of Death". The second section deals with liturgical matters and particular aspects of church discipline. It includes instructions on baptism (ch.7), the practice of twice weekly fasting (Wednesday and Friday as opposed to the Jewish fasting days of Monday and Thursday) and thrice daily prayer (ch.8), "eucharistic" prayers (9,10), the

---

[13] The full title is The Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles through the Twelve Apostles or The Teaching of the Apostles. It takes its name, *Didache*, from the first word of its Greek title.

[14] Early studies of the document placed it between 70 and 90 C.E., that is prior to Clement's letter to the Corinthians. Some modern critics suggest a later date, 120-180 C.E., because of its use of the New Testament and refined assumptions about the Trinity. See John M. Court, "The Didache and St. Matthew's Gospel", SJT 34 (1981), 109-20. For a discussion on its history, its discovery, its suggested importance to the early community, see Henry Bettenson ed. The Early Christian Fathers (Oxford,1956), 55ff; John F. Baldovin, "Christian Worship to the Eve of the Reformation" in Bradshaw and Hoffman, 156-183; Bradshaw, Origins, 80ff.

ministry of apostles and prophets (11-13), the Sunday Eucharist (14) and the status of bishops and deacons(15). It concludes with a warning about being eschatologically vigilant. It is, however, chapter 10 that is of interest here.

Chapter 9 makes specific reference to what is to be said or done in connection with the eucharist and is followed by a specific form of thanks which shall be given in chapter 10. While it does not use the word "praise", it is, in fact, praiseful thanksgiving through Christ which opens the prayer: "we thank thee, holy father, for thy holy name which thou has caused to dwell in our hearts... through Jesus thy son." God's power as creator is acknowledged as well as recognition as the giver of food and drink. To be remembered is God's holy church and its deliverance from worldly evil. The prayer closes again on praise and amen. Thus, while it is not as encompassing as Clement's in its petitionary nature, it does include several of the same features: thanks, petition for continued blessing for the church and for some of the needs of those within the church, a reminder of God's power, closing praise, amen. It belongs to the growing genre of literature which may be called vital literature; it circulated within a growing Christian community and formed a part of its heritage and tradition. Though later it would be subject to revision and rewriting, it reflects historical and cultural circumstances.

Tertullian

Another and somewhat richer source of prayer information than the Church Orders comes from the late second, early third century by way of Tertullian (circa 160-220), a native of Carthage, a convert to Christianity, a lawyer and the author of a long list of apologetic, theological and controversial works in Latin.[15]

Tertullian is adamant that the Lord's Prayer constitutes the foundation of all prayer but he has added a "superstructure of petitions for additional desires"[16]. He is the first Christian theologian to write in Latin and may have created the language of western theology. His treatise on prayer is passionate, zealous and intense in its seriousness, broadening the theological understanding of the church's central prayer. Tertullian's conviction was that prayer is *essentially* petitionary. In Chapter I of his writings, On Prayer, he argues that with Christ a new form of prayer has been determined "for in this particular also it was needful that new wine should be laid up in new skins."[17] For him, prayer embraced not only the veneration of God but also a petition for humans; "plainly, it is universally becoming for God to be *blessed* (Psalms 103:22) in every place and time, on account of the memory of His benefits due from every man."[18] He sees the various clauses in the Lord's prayer as part of "our own

[15] "On Prayer", The Writings of Tertullian, Ante-Nicene Christian Library, ed. By A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Edinburgh: 1966),Ch. VII, 178-204.
[16] Tertullian, Ch. X.
[17] Tertullian, Ch. I.
[18] Tertullian, Ch. III.

petition" to God. In praying "Hallowed be Thy name" for instance, one petitions "that it may be hallowed *in us* who are in Him, as well as in all others for whom the grace of God is still waiting" (Isaiah.30:18). Not only is God honoured as holy, but we are made holy through him. In obeying this precept, we would be "praying for all" (1Timothy 2:1), even for our personal enemies.

When praying "Thy will be done in the heavens and on earth", what, asks Tertullian, does God will? "We petition, then, that he supplies us with the substance of his will and the capacity to do it, that we may be saved both in the heavens and on earth."[19] In praying that God's will be done, Tertullian suggests that "we are even wishing well to ourselves, insofar as there is nothing of evil in the will of God."[20]

When the exegesis of the Lord's prayer is finished Tertullian adds a short chapter (10) which says that petitionary prayers of our own may be added

> since there are petitions which are made according to the circumstances of each individual; our additional wants have the right - after beginning with the legitimate and customary prayers as a foundation, as it were - of rearing an outer superstructure of petitions....

---

[19] Tertullian, Ch. III.
[20] Tertullian, Ch. III.

His *Apologeticum*, Ch. 39, #2, provides a balance to the discussion above on individual prayer by defining the Christian society as a communal group which offers up public intercessory prayers:

> We are a body knit together as such by a bond of piety, by unity of discipline, and by the local bond of common hope. We meet together as an assembly and congregation, that, offering up prayer to God as with united force, we may wrestle with Him in our supplications. This violence God delights in. We pray, too, for the emperors, for their ministers and for all in authority for the welfare of the world, for the prevalence of peace and for the postponement of the end.

With passion and characteristic literary precision, Tertullian requests prayer for a larger world than just the local community by inviting prayer for the civil authorities and for peace and welfare for all.

It is Tertullian, too, who makes it very clear that there is an attitude both spiritually and physically which prepares one for prayer, "for what sort of deed is it to approach the peace of God without peace in one's heart?".[21] We need, therefore, to make peace with our brother; even if we *must* be angry, such anger should not be maintained beyond sunset, "as the apostle admonished" (Ephesians 4:26). To be free from anger when approaching God in prayer is not all; one must be free from "all perturbation of mind, the exercise of prayer [ought] to be free, uttered from a spirit such as is the Spirit unto whom it is sent. For a defiled spirit cannot be acknowledged by a holy Spirit...."[22]

---

[21] Tertullian, Ch. XI.
[22] Tertullian, Ch. XII.

Tertullian also makes some obvious points about the methods of worship: hands are raised, in fact "we, however, not only raise, but even expand them; and taking our model from the Lord's passion, even in prayer we confess to Christ."[23] Nor do we sit when praying: "...for the custom, which some have, of sitting when prayer is ended, I perceive no reason...." Part of his agitation about sitting comes from the fact that this is the position of heathens who sit down "after adoring their petty images...; on this account the practice deserves to be censured in us because it is observed in the worship of idols."[24]

Tertullian's concluding chapter is entitled "Of the power and effect of prayer". He starts it by reminding his readers that if "old-world" (meaning Old Testament) prayer was effective in freeing individuals from fire, beasts, and famine, how much more powerful is prayer which receives its form from Christ "who conferred on it all its virtue in the cause of good." This kind of prayer "...consoles the faint-spirited..., escorts travelers..., nourishes the poor, governs the rich, upraises the fallen, arrests the falling and confirms the standing."[25] These elements of prayer reflect the kind of petitions which make up parts of the bidding prayer twelve centuries later and a continent away.

---

[23] Tertullian, Ch. XIV. He explains the term "spread" as the expansion of Christ's arms on the cross.
[24] Tertullian, Ch. VI.
[25] Tertullian, Ch. XXIX.

## Origen

Origen (circa 185-254), almost contemporary with Tertullian was an Alexandrian biblical scholar, exegete, theologian, teacher and preacher; above all a fertile author who had a very sophisticated sense of what prayer was. His treatise on prayer attests to the fact that by this time, early in the third century, its form and content had acquired authenticity as a vital tradition of the church. Using First Timothy (I Timothy 2:1."First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be offered for all.") as a structural definition of prayer kinds, Origen initially considers what should be prayed for, the information being readily available in Matthew 6:33, Luke 12:31, John 3:12 ("Set your mind upon God's kingdom, and the rest will come to you as well"). His paraphrase is: "Ask for what is great, and what is small shall be added unto you" or "ask the things of heaven and the things of earth shall be added unto you".[26]

There are four kinds of entreaty that attain this end: supplication, prayer, intercession and thanksgiving and it is worth while looking at Origen's brief elaboration of each and the intercessory one in particular:

> I believe, then, that supplication is offered by one who needs something, beseeching that he receive that thing; prayer is offered in conjunction with praise of God by one who asks in a more solemn manner for greater things; intercession is the request to God for certain things made by one who has greater confidence; and thanksgiving is the

---

[26] Origen: On Prayer, trans. and annotated by John J. O'Meara in Ancient Christian Writers, Part IV, Supp. Ch. 31, (New York, 1954), 14.2.

> prayer with acknowledgment to God for the favours received from God....[27]

He goes on to give supporting evidence for each and suggests that, in intercession, it is *we* who pray but the Spirit who intercedes with God on our behalf or someone else who intercedes on behalf of others.

In the first case, he refers to Romans 8:26:

> for we know not what one should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intersession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit because he maketh intercession of the Saints according to the will of God.

Prayer is assigned to us but intercession is assigned to the Spirit as being superior and as having a knowledge of God ("confidence") not given to us. Additional examples used by Origen for the understanding of intercessory prayer are (1) when Joshua intercedes with God for the defeat of the Amorites (Joshua 10.12f) and (2) when Samson, being mocked in the house of the Philistines, prays to bring down the house, defeating the enemies of his people and dying with them (Judges 16.30). Origen writes that their words are intercession, different from "prayer", whose words must be united with the praise of God.[28]

---

[27] Origen, 14.2.
[28] Origen, 14.4.

Origen's treatise on prayer is a significant turning point in the examination of petitionary prayer. He is one of the earliest, most systematized, and most original of Christian thinkers on prayer. In the first place, he has a very sophisticated sense of what prayer is. Essentially he sees it not as petition but calling on God in praise and he is the first to clearly separate these two functions. He conceives of prayer as primarily an attitude by which we stand before God to acknowledge His divinity according to the church's understanding of divine revelation, a revelation simultaneously trinitarian and doxological. Origen's view is that "something having the force of praise should be said of God through Christ, who is praised with Him and by the Holy Spirit, who is hymned with Him."[29]

Origen is one of the first to write extensively and thoroughly on preparation for prayer; that preparation is of merit in its own right since it constitutes, as it were, an act of faith in the simple reality of God: "Through his very disposition for prayer he adorns himself so as to present himself to God and to speak to Him in person as to someone who looks upon him and is present".[30] He talks about attitude and proper deportment. Standing, "extending one's hands and elevating the eyes,[31] is to be preferred above all others: for the position taken by the body is thus symbolic of the qualities proper to the soul in the act of praying."[32] Kneeling is

---

[29] Origen, 33.1.
[30] Origen, 8.2.
[31] Origen makes clear that reference to the uplifted "pure hands" and an attitude "without anger and contention"(18) is how one ought to pray.
[32] Circumstances can permit other positions -"sitting for serious foot ailment or lying because of a fever"- but standing is the normal pattern.

required at the time of confessing one's sins; this is the attitude "proper to one who humbles and submits himself"(31.3)[33]. Chapter 32 adds clear remarks on the direction in which one should face while praying. East is the essential cardinal point of direction because of the direction of the rising sun. This becomes the obvious direction in which to pray because it is the act "which symbolizes the soul looking toward where the true light rises."[34]

He then goes on to make a point which is worthy of emphasis: "the attempt to pray constitutes prayer itself or to phrase it somewhat differently, the act of being in prayer is prior to the act of prayer understood as utterance." This composition - which Origin calls "remembering God"(8.2) - is not something "insignificant when he so harmonizes himself reverently at the time of prayer." Although Origen does not spell it out in detail, what he insists on is a sense of the dependence that each one has on God: that God is God and we are His creatures. For Origen, prayer is first an existential state of relationship and then a formulation of that relationship into words,. In this sense, a conscious act of faith is also - and simultaneously - an act of prayer.

---

[33] Both kneeling and standing are evidenced as adopted postures for Christian prayer. References in the New Testament indicate standing (Mark 11.25, I Timothy 2.8, Ephesians 6.14, Philippians 1.27). Yet in all the accounts of the Gethsemane scene Christ is kneeling or prostrate (Matthew 26.39, Mark 14.35, Luke 22.4). Bradshaw (Daily Prayer) suggests that probably standing was the prevalent form but that the confessional stance was kneeling. Frescoes, sarcophagi, ancient glass, mosaics in the earliest basilicas and, above all, the Roman catacombs exhibit the faithful praying as was common among the Jews: standing with hands raised and slightly extended toward heaven.

[34] Origen, 32.1. The practice of orientation, of facing the east during worship and prayer, was common among the Egyptians and Persians (see Tertullian, Apologetics 16.11). The Christian significance overlying the custom was not only because paradise was assumed to lie to the east (Genesis 2.8), but also that Christ's ascension had taken place "to the east" and the final "coming of the Son of man" was placed in the east (Matthew 24.27). See the monumental work of Jean Danielou, Origen trans. by W. Mitchell (London, 1955).

There is, throughout his treatise, an almost drumbeat insistence that there is an intimate connection between our lived life and our prayer life. Origen works this out in his commentary on the "forgiveness" clause of the Lord's prayer when he asks "who precisely is in debt?" While the first assumption is that we are in existential debt before God, he goes on, however, to insist that we have an indebtedness not only to those who make up the Christian Assembly but to the whole world who share our common humanity.[35]

His concept of prayer is nourished by his own life-long encounter with the Bible and his experiences as a person of the early church. His is a theology of prayer which reflects ecclesiastical custom and usage. Stand facing the east and raise your arms. Praise God and then render thanksgiving and/or petition. Ask God for forgiveness of sins and then lay your needs before him, needs of yourself and of a larger world. This prayer should then "be concluded with a doxology of God through Christ in the Holy Spirit".[36] Despite careful categorization of the kinds of prayer that can be offered to God, Origen's overall belief is that one must pray not only for God's involvement in an individual's existence but ask for intercession for a larger community as well.

---

[35] Origen, 28.2ff.
[36] Origen, 33.1.

The comments which end his treatise on prayer provide a fine summation of what has been suggested up to this time about prayer structure: praise and thanksgiving leading to petition and intercession and concluding with a doxology.

> I have found, scattered in the Scriptures, four [parts of prayer] that need to be outlined and each one should organize his prayer according to these. Here are the component parts: at the beginning, in the prologue of one's prayer, one should with all one's strength glorify God through Christ, who is glorified with Him, in the Holy Spirit, who is praised with Him. Next each one should thank God for all His benefits, recalling both those bestowed upon men in general and upon himself in particular. This thanksgiving should, I think, be followed by a confession of one's sins and we should ask of God first to heal us and so deliver us from the habit which leads us into sin, and then remit our past sins. After the confession comes the fourth point, which in my view is that we should petition God, for great and heavenly gifts, for oneself and for all, for one's relatives and friends; and, finally, the prayer should end with a glorification of God through Christ in the Holy Spirit.[37]

[37] Origen follows this up with scriptural support: glorification (Psalm 103.1-7), thanks (II Kings 7.18-22), confession (Psalm. 38.9, 37.6), petition (Psalm 27.3) and an ending doxology (Romans 16.27 or 2 Timothy 4.18).

Apostolic Constitutions

A further and valuable witness to prayer form and the religious practices of the early church is a text almost contemporary with Origen known as the *Apostolic Constitutions*.[38] It is compiled from texts with a claim, like the *Didache*, to being regulations for the church; a manual of ecclesiastical life and law containing instruction, exhortation, and examples for proper Christian living. It is comprised of the *Didascalia*, the *Didache*, and the *Apostolic Tradition* along with some other material.[39] All of the sources were considerably reworked in the process of compilation, probably carried out in Antioch between 375 and 380 C.E.[40] Both the compiler and his theological position are still being debated.[41]

David Fiensy[42] in his Prayers Alleged to be Jewish: An Examination of the *Constitutiones Apostolorum* sets out to examine the prayers in book 7 and 8 of the *Apostolic Constitutions* showing that they include a version of some of the benedictions used in the synagogue for Sabbath and festivals and that Book 8 gives a picture of the pattern of blessing and

---

[38] The Apostolic Constitutions trans. by L. O'Leary (London, 1906).

[39] Books one through six are based on the *Didascalia*, a church order which professes to have been written shortly after the events in Acts 15 (see R.H. Connolly, *Didiscalia Apostolorum*, Oxford, 1929). The *Didache* was used by the compiler of *Apostolic Constitutions* as the basis of book 7, chs. 1-32, the *Tefillah* in 7, chs. 33-38 and *The Apostolic Tradition*, a church manual assumed to be the work of Hypolitus of Rome, used in the eighth book. The Clement of Rome liturgy seems to have been used in some of the very long prayers and the compiler of all of this has added his own editorial hand.

[40] It is unlikely that is was earlier than this because the *AC* makes reference to the feast of Christmas, which was just beginning to make an appearance in eastern churches.

[41] Bradshaw, Origins, 93-95.

[42] David A. Fiensy, Prayers Alleged to be Jewish: An Examination of the *Constitutiones Apostolorum* (California,1985),85.

intercession which became part of the early church's prayers of the faithful. The prayers in *Apostolic Constitutions*, 7.33-38, follow closely the contents of the first six of the seven benedictions of the *Tefillah* and in the same order. To begin, *AC* 7.33 is similar in content to the first Benediction in that both prayers praise God of the fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for his might and his protection. *AC* 7.34 reflects the second benediction in speaking of God's power and ends with the blessing of God who "shattered the bonds of death." *AC* 7.35 corresponds to the third benediction, that of sanctification, mercy, kindness and wisdom of the creator. The fourth benediction recited on the Sabbath is the same as *AC* 7.36 in that both prayers exalt the seventh day as a day of rest. *AC* 7.37 corresponds to the fifth benediction as they are petitions to accept the prayers of the peoples: "which are offered, in the spirit and with the knowledge to you through Christ." In petitionary form 7.38 lists God's intercessory role, through Christ who "rescued (us) from the sword, removed (us) from an evil tongue." Added to this is "thanks through Christ who also has given (us) an articulate voice for confessing (you) and who has also added ... a useful taste, appropriate touch, sight for seeing, the hearing of a sound, the ability to smell vapours, hands for works and feet for walking."[43]

Even more significant than the above prayer was another prayer included in the *Apostolic Constitutions* where the church community prayed for the needs of those gathered as well as

[43] Fiensy, 85. Although a portion of the wording would change because of who recited the prayers in the synagogue(the oral history of the benedictions is that each person reciting them composed his prayers in a semi-impromptu manner) by the end of the first century the content, the order, and even some of the actual phrases of the prayers were becoming fixed. By the middle of the third century much more rigid forms and content would be obvious to whomever heard them.

for the church, the clergy, those who attend the church and those who do not. That prayer is the *Litanic Prayer for the Faithful* in Book 8 of the *AC* and is a fine example of a petitionary prayer. After the first part of the service (keeping in mind that this is by now the fourth century and a few centuries of organized worship service have passed) "the deacon is to say: Catechumens, go in peace."[44] The faithful (those already baptized) kneel and "beseech God through his Christ." The list of exhortations to prayer is subsequently long and comprehensive. A selection includes the following intercessions:

> Let us pray for the peace and tranquillity of the world and the holy churches....
> Let us pray for the holy, catholic and apostolic church....
> Let us pray for this holy parish....
> Let us pray for the episcopate of those who, throughout the world, "rightly dispense the word of truth"(2 Timothy 2.15)....
> Let us pray too for our priests...all deacons and ministers of Christ....
> Let us pray for readers, singers, virgins, widows, orphans, those who live in marriage and their children. May God take pity on them all....
> Let us pray for those who in the holy church present offerings and give alms to the poor.
> Let us pray for those who bring oblations and first fruits to the Lord....
> Let us pray for our brethren who are afflicted by illness....
> Let us pray for those who are travelling by land or sea, for those who are condemned to the mines, to exile, to prison and chains...to an oppressive slavery.
> Let us pray for our enemies....
> Let us pray for one another....may he save us and bring us into his heavenly kingdom.[45]

---

[44] Lucien Deiss, Springtime of the Liturgy: Liturgy of the First Four Centuries, trans. by Matthew O'Connell (Minnesota, 1979),224.
[45] Deiss, 224-225.

With any compilation, a thought has to be given to the editor/compiler/redactor. In whatever way the text for the prayers was obtained, the significant fact is that the redactor brought together in one text all the other important documents to date which say something about the ecclesiastical and liturgical nature of the early Christian church. That he changes, expands upon or omits some of the source content is indicative of the redactor's commitment to the shape and context of the prayers as they fit a growing, and by this time, officially recognized Christian community.

The structure of the liturgy has taken shape, the catechumens and the baptized are recognized, the prayers assigned to bishops or deacons show a clerical hierarchy and Christians are no longer a group whose faith and church are in peril from official persecution. The prayer of the faithful has shown Christians' concern for a world larger than their own immediate and localized one. This is a public prayer in a more sophisticated sense than any before it.

In a similar sense the bidding prayer that is the focus of the second part of this thesis also reflects an interest in a wider world. In looking at the elements of this fourth century petitionary prayer, it will become obvious that they bear a strong resemblance to most of the elements of the fifteenth century prayer.

Jerusalem Stational Liturgy: Egeria

With the intercessory prayer becoming a vital part of the early church's liturgy, it assumed a specific and public role in the expression of faith. An occasion on which it was used, in addition to that *within* a church was that *outside* the church in stational liturgy. This very public form was one in use from the early fourth century until the end of the tenth and has come to be known as urban stational liturgy.[46]

This was not just ordinary Sunday worship but rather a particular kind. Its essential elements were four: (1) it always took place under the leadership of a bishop or his representative;[47] (2) the form of the liturgy was mobile, meaning it was not always celebrated at the same sanctuary or shrine;(3) it involved procession of the clergy and people from one church to the station church (*statio* being, from early times, the term for the Christian assemblies of worship) where the eucharist was offered, litanies and other prayers having been recited on the way; (4)it was the urban liturgical celebration of the day, any other service was subordinated to it both in scale and style.

---

[46] See for a very thorough examination of stational liturgy John F. Baldovin, S.J. The Urban Character of Christian Worship. The Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy *Orientalia Christiana Analecti* (Rome: Pontifical Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987).
[47] These are the cities for which there is most evidence about the stational liturgy, but other cities and towns like Alexandria, Antioch and Milan had them as well although the evidence is relatively incomplete.

The Jerusalem sacred sites for such a processional liturgy were those traditionally associated with the life and death of Christ. Edifices for worship and shrines at sites traditionally associated with the life of Christ made Jerusalem both a centre of pilgrimage and a tribute to the imperial order.[48] These sites would have included the complex of buildings at Christ's place of crucifixion and burial;[49] Bethlehem, some five and a half miles south of Jerusalem, was used as a stational church on special occasions such as Epiphany; the tomb in the village mentioned as the home of Lazarus, Mary and Martha provided another stational site as well as the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane near its foot. Several other churches in Jerusalem proper seem to have contributed to the unfolding of the stational pattern of the journey.[50]

Such a significant centre as this would become a magnet that drew Christian travellers. One of its most enthusiastic was Egeria, assumed to have travelled from either northern Spain or western France. Like her much later fellow pilgrim, Margery of Kemp, she is assumed to be of some means or connections or both in order to undertake such an extensive and expensive journey. The sole extant manuscript of her account of her stay in Jerusalem is known as the *Peregrinatio Egeriae.* This and other corroborating documentation places Egeria's pilgrimage between 381 and 384 C.E.[51]

---

[48] C.Kopp, The Holy Places of the Gospels (New York,1963), 380ff.
[49] Baldovin, 48.
[50] Baldovin, 53.
[51] John Wilkinson, Egeria's Travels (London,1971),3.

Essentially she wrote a travel diary but the major part of the manuscript is taken up with a description of daily, weekly and annual liturgical services in Jerusalem where she seems to have spent a considerable time. This is an informative document and Egeria's own curiosity and careful attention to detail are part of its delights. What Egeria has to say on the liturgical practice during processions from site to site[52] along with her description of duties of bishop, presbyters and deacons is not much different from the liturgical practices of the medieval service. Thus it is with her description of the actions of the clergy that one begins.

First in the processional hierarchy is the bishop. Egeria defines the bishop as one who, like the patriarch of the Jewish family, heads the Christian family. It is he who occupies the chief seat at service (the seat seems to have been portable in Jerusalem, being moved from the Anastasis to the Martyrium{45.2} to the Mount of Olives{44.5} when necessary), blesses the people and offers his hand to be kissed by each (24.2). He takes the leading part in the Eucharist (29.3) and leads many of the prayers (24.2,3,6).[53]

The presbyters assist the bishop (43.5), take their part in preaching, read lessons from Acts and the gospels(29.5; 34; 43.3) and lead prayers (24.1) and psalms(24.9). The deacons, like the presbyters, lead prayers (24.8) and psalms (24.9) but they do not read lessons nor preach.

---

[52] The places visited by Egeria comprise three main types: there are the caves, houses, or buildings connected with both Old and New Testament people; secondly, there are the martyria, a term usually applied to the tombs of martyrs; and thirdly, the places associated with Christ and his ministry.
[53] The numbers in brackets indicate chapters and sections of chapters in Wilkinson's Egeria's Travels.

They read the names of individuals at the intercession and convey the instruction for the people to bow their heads for the bishop's blessing(24.6).

The elements of the services Egeria speaks of are psalms (although she seems to make no particular distinction between hymns, psalms and antiphons), prayers, dismissals, lessons and preaching as well as separate and minimal information on the eucharist and baptism.[54] What is clear and confirmed by her was the inclusion of the intercessory prayer at morning and evening service. Egeria notes that at morning service between the psalms, prayers are interspersed (24.9, 32.1) and are usually said by a presbyter or a deacon (24.1, 44.3) and sometimes by the bishop (35.4). For the morning office, the bishop arrives at the site with his clergy and immediately enters the church. Here he first says "the Prayer for All"(24.2) mentioning any names he wishes. He then blesses the catechumens and the faithful separately. After this he comes outside and everyone comes up to kiss his hand, he blesses them one by one and the dismissal takes place.

Egeria notes that at the morning office the bishop is only present for the intercessions, conducting them alone and from "inside the screen" whereas in the evening he remains in front

[54] Egeria provides relatively detailed descriptions of the daily offices and the celebration of feast-days but nowhere does she provide a systematic description of Baptism or the Eucharist. Since part of her manuscript is missing it may be that she had written such a description but it has been lost. The more likely reason is that she was unwilling to commit to paper her knowledge of the Christian mysteries, reflecting the thinking of her time that this part of Christian teaching was strictly confined to baptized persons and that the unbaptized were deliberately excluded: "The newly baptized come into the Anastasis and any of the faithful who wish to hear the Mysteries; but, while the bishop is teaching, no catechumen comes in, and the doors are kept shut in case any try to enter."(47.1)

of the screen (25.5). "One of the deacons makes the normal commemoration of individuals" and each time he makes a bidding, a large group of boys responds with a *Kyrie Eleison*. When the deacon has finished all that he has to say, the bishop first recites a prayer and prays "the Prayer for All." The prayer and commemoration for all (24.9) which the bishop says may thus be understood as a collect prayer, collecting intercessions which have preceded it. The response "*Kyrie eleison* or, as we say, 'Have mercy, Lord'" seems new to Egeria(24.5) and it would be, not coming into frequent use in the west until the sixth century.[55] Egeria would have been used to the simple response, "Amen", inherited from the Jewish sources.

What is seen from Egeria's writings is that by her time, late in the fourth century, the prayers of the faithful were part of a public liturgy, were participatory and intercessory in nature, and were offered by the bishop or deacon on behalf of individuals or groups. There seems to be very little in the prayers, except the response of the *Kyrie*, with which Egeria is unfamiliar. What is confirmed by Egeria's description of the intercessory prayer (the prayer of the people, the prayer of the faithful) is a similarity with the petitionary prayer put forward in the writings already discussed. What will become obvious at a later point is that Egeria's testament to her activities and observations provides a window on to roles, actions, words and behaviour associated with the intercessory prayer a thousand years later.

---

[55] Joseph Jungmann, The Early Liturgy (London, 1966), 294.

Constantinople: John Chrysostom

Contemporary with Egeria's travels but taking place further east, was a similar kind of stational liturgy. This was the stational liturgy of St. John Chrysostom (347-407 C.E.) in Constantinople. The text of the liturgy used here shows that the intercessory prayer was a significant component of it. Chrysostom's Great Litany used at processional sites gives a detailed outline of the intercessory "usual prayers" or as they were later referred to, "the usual insistent demands".[56] These prayers or demands fall into three categories of petitions: for the universal church, for the rulers of the church and the land, and for the protection of the city. The Great Litany shows a blessing being requested for healthful reasons, for abundance of the fruits of the earth, as well as for travellers, the sick, and for those in captivity. It becomes clear that by the end of the 5th century, the intercessory prayer was firmly established as a central liturgical unit, was public and expressed the piety and needs of the people.

---

[56] Baldovin, 233

Rome: Good Friday Prayers

The solemn prayers concluding the liturgy of the word on Good Friday are the oldest surviving text and the oldest form of the prayer of the faithful in the Roman rite. They are roughly contemporary with Chrysostom although there is no universal agreement on that, some scholars placing them as early as the fifth century[57] and some as late as the eighth (Roman Ordinal 24 as evidence). Though at an earlier time they were probably a regular part of the Sunday liturgy, later use of the prayer was limited to Holy Week. The Good Friday liturgy evolved over time from the development of Holy Week at Jerusalem in the late fourth century; the Friday of the Paschal fast was transformed into Good Friday separating the passion from the Pasch. The latter eventually came to designate the resurrection alone. The evolved Good Friday liturgy included the liturgy of the word, the intercessions, veneration of the cross, and, at a later date, reception of communion.[58]

The liturgy of the word on Good Friday consisted of readings followed by intercessory prayers; thus it had the form of a simple eucharistic synaxis.[59] The intercessions are called

---

[57] The Bidding Prayer for the Church's Year ed. By David Konstant and Paul Burns,(England, 1982), 9.
[58] Reception of communion probably owes nothing to the liturgy of fourth century Jerusalem but to a desire of Romans in the late seventh and early eighth century to receive communion on this day, traditionally a day when the eucharist was not celebrated. To celebrate it meant that the eucharist was reserved and held over from Maundy Thursday. K.W.Stevenson, "On Keeping Holy Week", Theology, vol. 48, no. 725, January, 1986.
[59] The term *synaxis* was used in the early church for that part of the service which included the three elements of: reading from the scriptures, psalmody, and prayer. As a developed form the *synaxis* preceded the celebration of the eucharist and was probably inherited from synagogue worship. Earlier Christians continued to worship in the synagogue while celebrating the eucharist in their own houses; when they were no longer

*orationes solemnes*, and as the solemn prayers of Good Friday, they are the earliest known form of the prayers of those who have been baptized.

They consist of a series of biddings by the deacon each followed by a period of silent prayer by the congregation and a collect by the celebrant. They begin by an invitation to pray "for the holy Church of God, that our God and Lord may be pleased to give it peace, keep its unity and preserve it throughout the world." A silent prayer, kneeling, follows. Other prayers are subsequently prayed including those for all orders of the church. The emperors and catechumens are prayed for by asking "that our God and Lord would open the ears of their hearts". This is the time of the year for baptisms. It is the time when God renders "Thy Church fruitful with new offspring" and catechumans "being regenerated in the font of baptism... see that they be united to the children of they adoption."

The prayer then moves to include those in the general community who suffer any perils:

> Let us pray, dearly beloved, God the Father almighty, that He may purge the world of all errors, remove diseases, keep off famine, open prisons, break chains, grant a safe return to travelers, health to the sick and a port of safety to those who are at sea.
>
> Let us pray. Let us kneel. Arise.
>
> Almighty and eternal God, the comfort of the afflicted and the strength of those that labor: let the prayers of those who call upon Thee in any

---

part of the synagogue, they prefixed the essential elements of the synagogue service to the eucharist, thus the service came to have two parts: The Service (or Liturgy) of the Word (also called Mass of the Catechumens), and The Service (or Liturgy) of the Mass (also called Mass of the Faithful).

> tribulation be heard by Thee: that all may rejoice that in their necessities
> Thy mercy relieve them. Through our Lord. Amen.[60]

Heretics, pagans and Jews are prayed for that they may be delivered "from their darkness". This prayer is each followed by kneeling and a space for silent prayer. The faithful then arise and listen to the priest's collect addressed to God: that these prayers be accepted to the glory of God and "Thy Holy Church through our Lord."

These intercessions, essentially arranged in the 6th-7th centuries in Rome, find their reflection in the bidding prayer of the 15 century in Britain but their path from Rome to Britain is neither direct nor without turbulence.[61] In the sixth century their place was taken by a litany of Eastern origin and the *Kyries* survive as a relic of this litany. When this litany fell out of use in the west, the understanding of intercession in the western liturgy was lost to the church historians until the bidding of the bedes appeared in the official vernacular form in the eleventh century.[62]

---

[60] Roman Missal, 295.

[61] See for a general history of the geographical movement of the prayer: David Dumville, Liturgy and the Ecclesiastical History of Late Anglo Saxon England: Four Studies (London, 1992) and Henry Mayr-Harting, The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England (London,1991).

[62] F.E.Brightman, The English Rite (London: 1921); H.O.Coxe, Forms of the Bidding Prayer (London: 1840).

An Eleventh Century Vernacular Bidding Prayer

Congregational intercessions in the vernacular respond to the worshippers' needs for participation and for a feeling of specific inclusion in the prayers of the church. Thus, the intercessory public prayers gradually came to cover the full range of matters for which prayers could be offered: the church, the state, the departed, and men (some women) in their various callings. They became more flexible, could be individualized and gave scope to the initiative of the celebrant.

Once into the eleventh century the quantity of evidence for parts of the service to be conducted in the vernacular increases and vernacular rubrics attend some missals, sections of the Ordo for visiting and anointing the sick and in Kalendars.

What seems obvious, then, is that texts which have directly to do with people - private devotions, penitential texts, offices for the sick and dying - were increasingly produced in the vernacular. Where individuals were required to participate more fully in the spoken aspects of the liturgy, evidence shows these were not in Latin but in the vernacular; well into the eleventh century "the vernacular was nibbling at the margins of the liturgy and was poised to assume a more substantial role in liturgical books"[63]. Whether this was due to a substantial

---

[63] Dumville, 132.

increase in vernacular literacy or an ecclesiastical policy that showed a greater concern for the language of the congregation is difficult to say. It is, however, the eleventh century that produces the first extant bidding prayer in Anglo-Saxon.

Though the ecclesiastical history of the intercessory prayer is indistinct between the 8th century Good Friday version and the 11th century vernacular version, what is distinct is the prayer's structure and theological intent.

The general structure is very simple: an invitation to prayer given by the celebrant, the petitions themselves, pause for silent prayer, and a final prayer also said by the celebrant. The York Minster XI century prayer begins with a detailed statement of intention:

> Wutan we gebiddan god ealmitigne
> Let us pray God Almighty,
>
> heofena heah cyning
> heavens' high King
>
> sancta marian eakke godes halgan
> and Saint Mary and all God's saints,
>
> thaet we moton godes aelmihtiges willan gewyrcan
> that we may God Almighty's will work,
>
> that hwil the we on thyssan laenan life wunian
> the while that we in this transitory life continue;
>
> thaet hy us gehealdan gescyldan
> that they us uphold and shield
>
> with ealra feonda costnunga

against all enemies' temptations,

gesenelicra ungesenelicra,
visible and invisible:

It is then followed by a *Pater Noster* and the invocation of the faithful who ask prayers for pope, king, archbishop and alderman and for all those who share in a wish for peace and friendship toward the church, as well as for all those within the English nation. A silent P*ater Noster* follows and then there are petitionary prayers for godmothers and fathers, guildfellows and sisters, as well as for those who seek alms at this holy church. After another *Pater Noster* prayers are asked for the souls of the dead. By this prayer, in which the people are to take part, there are large general intentions: intercession for Holy Church, for the civil authorities, for those with various needs, for all mankind, and for a holy death.

This 11$^{th}$ century example from the diocese of York is the first that illustrates the bidding prayer's structure, intent and form which will be found in Britain over the next four centuries. The exegesis of the 15$^{th}$ century manuscript which follows will show essentially the same pattern as this 11$^{th}$ century vernacular prayer: call to prayer, intercessions, silent prayer and collect. It, too, will be in the language of the people who pray it.

## Part II: Exegesis of a 1483 English Bidding Prayer

### Introduction

This part of the thesis introduces its main focus, a 1483 Middle English bidding prayer. There is first an introduction of the prayer including a discussion of its place in the Sunday Mass, its structure, participants, and meaning. This is followed by an exegesis of specific segments of the prayer. Nine other English bidding prayers ranging in dates between 1349 and 1500 have been examined for comparative information on the prayer with the 1483 prayers being chosen because of its breadth of detail. The method of analysis for this prayer follows information already outlined: that there is an overall structure of the prayer, that there are specific divisions to it, and that it reflects both the universal and the particular. To this method of analysis is added another very specific one of presenting the prayer's social and theological context by reflecting the concerns of a particular parish at a particular time.

The chosen prayer text is the 1483 text, "The Bedes on the Sondaye" from the *Liber Festivalis* edited by Caxton and found in the collection of bidding prayers compiled in 1840 by H. O. Coxe in his Forms of Bidding Prayers. The text can be geographically located through its details: it would have been used in the province of Canterbury but not in the diocese of Canterbury since it asks blessings for the Archbishop of Canterbury "our Metropolitan", for

the bishop of our diocese, but especially for "the Person and curate of this Chirche". The latter would allow for identifying the church as a parish church not a cathedral church. That church, however, is probably more than a village church for its clerical staff seems to have included more than a ministering priest.

This bidding prayer is probably a prayer text used in a parish area near the coast because of its references to water: it asks for "pees both on the londe and on the water" and prayers for "alle treure shypmen & marchauntes, where that they be on londe or water".

As a 15th century prayer, this manuscript reflects something of the medieval society of an older order but is more obviously a prayer in a transitional period of history. Consequences of the Black Death, the recurrence of the Hundred Years War, the abuses of the church, economic recession in many areas, enclosures, agrarian consolidation and civil strife are its background. But so too is an expanding middle class and pronounced capitalism. In religion, conservatism was the order of the day but the age was on the eve of the Reformation. The agricultural worker was still tied to the land, but the cloth industry and ship building were providing opportunities other than agricultural ones. Social ascendancy and political power might lead to exploitation but it might also be used to endow art and architecture. Tensions of the period were manifest everywhere but they could be seen as creative not just destructive.

Above all of this, however, are the changes in the realm of religious affairs. The church occupied a position of religious supremacy, commanding a wealth which gave it immense social, economic and cultural influence. Its central 15th century feature, however, was the failure of spiritual leadership by the papal monarchy, the monasteries, as well as the secular clergy. The only Englishmen to have kept alive the missionary zeal of the early church were the Lollards, and by the time of the setting down of this bidding prayer even they were now only a small sect with little scholarship and even less aristocratic support.

Given such a milieu, the 1483 bidding prayer takes on an interesting character. It stands as part of a spiritual tradition, but a tradition now being perpetuated in the middle of transition, some of it good, some of it not so. An analysis of the prayer will show those things which the prayer represents as part of a continuum: the estates of humankind, the orders of the clergy, the pattern of tithing or pilgrimage. What it will also show is the inclusion of sailors and merchants in its blessing as well as particular benefactors or the character of the archbishop of the time. There are, then, generalizations that can be made about this prayer that are common to all bidding prayers; there is also specific evidence to be seen which allows for its uniqueness. The first specific objective is to look at it as part of the tradition of Sunday mass.

## The Bidding Prayer in the Sunday Liturgy

The celebration of Sunday mass in the medieval church displayed a pattern of common elements stretching from the second through the sixteenth centuries without significant alteration. Sunday was the day of the church, the day on which the people of God gathered locally to listen together to the Word of God, celebrate the Eucharist and share in the joy of their faith.

> On the day named after the sun, all of your people who live in city or countryside assemble in the same place, And the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read for as long as time allows. When the lector has finished, the president addresses us, admonishing us and exhorting us to imitate the splendid things we have heard. Then we all stand and pray, and, as we said earlier, when we have finished praying, bread, wine, and water are brought up. The president offers prayers of thanksgiving, according to his ability, and the people give their assent an "Amen".
>
> Next the gifts over which the thanksgiving has been spoken are distributed, and each one shares in them, while they are also sent by the deacons to the absent brethren.
>
> The wealthy who are willing make contributions, each as he or she pleases, and the collection is deposited with the president, who aids orphans and widows, those who are in want because of sickness or other cause, those in prison and visiting strangers; he takes care of all in need. St. Justin, Apologia 1, 67 3-6.

While the above is a second century account, a late medieval account differed little from that basic outline. Those in the late middle ages who gathered for Sunday mass followed its outline and shared in the general intercessory prayers of the church, usually either preceding or

following the sermon.[64] The celebrant would invite his parishioners to pray with him for peace in the land, for the state of the Church, for its prelates and clergy, and for the temporal lords. The prayer was directed to God to make intercession for the various needs of the Church and was, quite simply, the asking of God for something which is desired. Praying the intercessory prayer was a conscious awareness of one's relationship to God, emphasizing the discovery of the presence of God within the concerns of daily living. It was the prayer most invariably found in a form where fixed responses are made by the people to short petitions said or sung by the leader.

Theologically and theoretically, a bidding prayer is a prayer which understands God's power to change events. Its primary effect is in attuning a prayerful mind to the will of God, increasing and focusing concern in a way which could be effective. It should elevate the soul to God through knowledge of God's will. To ask for blessings for the clergy, the sick, for those who farm the land or those who give birth to children is an attempt to bring all into harmony with the divine will. If the intercessory prayer achieves its purposes, it makes the faithful aware of the presence and will of God in their daily life.

---

[64] It has been suggested in a number of works,significantly that of G.G.Coulton in The Medieval Village, (Cambridge,1925) that "a sermon was a rare event" in thirteenth and fourteenth century England, indeed so rare that a typical parishioner heard fewer than the "statutory four times a year". Recent scholarship indicates the contrary. That books of sermons were available so that the average parish priest would not be expected to compose his own; that while sermons were preserved in Latin, they were certainly delivered in the vernacular; that priests were urged to know the sacraments and to preach concerning the ten commandments, the seven sins and the elements of the faith as contained in the creeds; that priests were required to "preach the faith in well known words" and illustrate it with exempla and familiar allusions are all pieces of information which are found in decrees, treatises, council documents and the literature of the period. The unmistakeable implication of this is that sermons were delivered on Sundays for those who went to hear them.

Traditionally, the bidding prayer was a significant part of the Mass; after receiving baptism and after the community's liturgy of the word, the new Christian was brought in to the congregation and all then "offer prayers in common for ourselves for him who has just been enlightened and for all men everywhere" (Justin Martyr Apology I, 65). Thus only those baptized and those in full communion with the church have traditionally taken part in this intercessory prayer, since it was expressly regarded as a prayer of the faithful. In turn, the people of God consciously exercise this priestly office on behalf of the entire world.[65]

As a prayer, it had three noteworthy characteristics:

1) it was a petition addressed to God, not the expression of adoration or thanksgiving alone.

2) it was a petition to God chiefly for blessings of a universal kind: on behalf of the whole Church, the world and all those beset by various needs or dangers, as well as for the faithful actually making up the assembly.

3) it belonged to the whole congregation because the assembled would respond to the priest's invitation, through a single "Amen"; this Amen did not simply function as a conclusion to a prayer made by the priest but was an assent to the collection of the prayers of the whole congregation. A *Pater Noster* and *Ave Maria* as well as *Kyrie*, *Gloria* and Psalm could all be

[65] The Scriptures teach that the entire people of God, even though divided into ordained and laity, have a priestly character and office. "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (I Peter 2:9). The community is priestly through its union with Christ.

part of the congregation's response. The gathered church, in offering this prayer, stood as the supplicant and advocate appointed for all categories of humanity.

The bidding prayer's proper place in the mass is at the end of the liturgy of the Word, logically so as it was seen as the fruit of the word of God working in the hearts of the faithful. Instructed, stirred and renewed by the word, all stood together to offer prayer for the needs of the Church and the whole world. In that position it also became a hinge between the two parts of the mass: it terminated the liturgy of the word in which God's works and the Christian's duties are brought to mind and it ushered in the liturgy of the eucharist by stating some of those intentions for which the sacrifice is to be offered. It was called the prayer of the faithful simply because it was the faithful, the baptized, who prayed it.

The prayer of the faithful consists of several parts: the announcement of the intentions, the biddings, the responses of the congregation, the concluding prayer by the celebrant. There may be some introductory comments by the priest but these would be brief, addressed not to God but to the people and would relate to the liturgical season or perhaps to the theme of the feast being celebrated that Sunday. After the introduction, there are three sets of intentions in any prayer of the faithful, namely for:

1. the needs of the Church, that is, for the pope, the bishops and the priests of the parish, as well as its larger environs including other church communities;

2. the needs of the civil society; for the king and other nobility, for the peaceful state of the realm, good weather for abundant crops and for those who toil generally;

3. the needs of the local community; those who are present or traveling, those who are poor, ill, in debt or in sin, those who are pregnant, those who are benefactors and contributors of tithes or loaf.

Of utmost importance in the prayer of the faithful is the congregation's participation since this is one of the few instances in the mass in which their active involvement is recognized and encouraged. For this involvement to be as real and meaningful as it can be responses need to happen frequently throughout the prayer. There are several ways this seems to have been accomplished:

1. with a short acclamation, usually "amen" which is the easiest form of participation and establishes its litanic form.

2. by offering a silent prayer during a designated pause, probably after each category but perhaps more often.

3. by the communal recitation of a longer intercessory formula especially a *Gloria, Kyrie, Ave, Pater Noster* or a combination of these.

The conclusion of the prayer belonged to the priest and was usually in the form of a collecting prayer, limited to asking God to hear the petitions expressed. In order that the bidding prayer was truly a reflection of where it was being used there seems to have been a fixed form of

expression of the universality of the Church followed by a free form of expression concerning the locale and its people.

Existing examples of the bidding prayers of the Middle Ages vary in length but in form and wording are substantially the same; however, they do cater to a particular church's habits or usage. In the latter case, for example, the prayer used at Salisbury Cathedral (circa 1442) asks blessing for archbishops, bishops but not the pope. Its blessings that were locally specific are those for the Earl of Shrewsbury (at that time, John Talbot) but there is no evidence of the church's petition for pilgrims, farmers or pregnant women and their children. By contrast, the locals are included in the York Missal of 1446 where prayers are asked for "our holy father the pope of Rome and all his trewe Cardynals" for the safety of all "true pilgrymes and palmers where so ever they be on water or on londe." and for "all women that be with chylde in this parysshe or any other."

While it might be suggested that cathedral churches or abbey churches would be more likely to concentrate their biddings on clergy, king and benefactors and parish churches direct their biddings to the local community, this cannot be wholly true. The biddings used at the cathedral church of York, for example, are quite inclusive. Because these prayers did allow for some individual additions or subtractions by the priest directing them, they reflect surprising categories of people, sometimes including specific individuals, sometimes excluding whole groups as shown above.

According to the Sarum missal the bidding prayers, rubricated as "the bedes on the Sundays",[66] were to be said on Sundays as part of the procession prior to the sacrament of the eucharist in both cathedral and collegiate churches.[67] In parish churches, they were said not necessarily in the procession (since the church may have been too small to have had one), but at least after the gospel and in front of an altar. It is necessary to keep in mind that a liturgical procession had to have a definite end point and was not a meaningless walk round the Church: before mass it led to the high altar, at other times to the font, the rood screen or a side altar.

The ordinary, not festival, Sunday procession according to the Sarum might have looked like this: its route began by the north door of the presbytery, went round by the south aisle and past the font to the rood screen where a station was made and the bidding prayer said. The procession thus closed at the choir where priest and deacon would assume their positions near

---

[66] "Bidding the bedes" was the original term used for the "praying of prayers" down to the time of the Reformation. Coxe attributes the phrase to St. Dominic's development of the rosary:

> S. Dominick having contrived the Rosary or circle of Pater nosters and Ave Marias in honour of the Blessed Virgin, he had bits of glass or wood threaded on a string in order to number these prayers with, there being fifty of them, viz. a Pater noster and then nine Ave Maries, etc. To number these, he ordered a larger bit to be strung for the Pater noster and lesser ones for the Ave Maries, which, on account of their being thus used to tell the bedes or prayers, had the name themselves of 'Beads' given them, by which name they are distinguished to this day." (6-7)

[67] In consecrated chapels and private oratories or in monastic churches mass was heard daily. Simmons says, in The Lay Folk's Mass Book, (London: EETS, 1879) that "the decrees of councils and the formal injunctions of the canon law required every one to hear mass everyday, whether holy day or not, with exception of the common people, who from being necessarily employed in labour or otherwise were obliged to do so only on Sunday and high days"(pxxxviii)

their home places in the chancel. In much more vivid detail is the description of the procession at Salisbury cathedral:

> After this, did they always go round the church with [the procession] in which walked, first, the vergers, to make way through the crowd; then came the boys with the holy water; tne cross-bearer, followed by the two acolytes abreast, the thurifer, the subdeacon, the deacon, the priest; behind, the lower canons; then the upper canons, all in their choir array, and though proceeding two and two yet so wide asunder as to leave a lane, as it were, between them. Whenever he was present, the bishop, in a silk cope, walked the last of all, wearing his mitre, and leaning upon his pastoral staff. This procession, singing all the while, first went out the presbytery, through its north door, then turning to the right, walked all round it, and going down the south aisle, as far as the baptismal font, nigh the south porch, thence passed over into the nave, up which it marched till it reached the choir's great or western gates, above which always arose the rood, in the loft over what is now called the screen. There they halted, and, drawn up into a body, made a station, during which was said aloud, in English, by the celebrant, the *bidding-prayer*, in which God's blessings were craved for His Church in this land, for the king, the archbishops, the bishops, the bishop of the diocese in particular, for the dean: in parish churches, for the parson, for the winning from the Paynim of the holy land, for peace, for the queen and her children, for the souls of the dead, - more especially those who had been, while alive, that church's friends. Whether the bishop was there or not, the celebrant always went at the head of the procession; and upon Sundays that were not holy days as well, sprinkled with holy water each altar which he met upon his road. In obedience to a well-known liturgical principle the process, at starting from the north presbytery door, turned to the right, - so that, while coming back, it might follow the sun's seeming path in the heavens. For like reasons, on occasions of woe or sadness, the usage was to walk the wrong way, to turn to the left, the side of gloom, and cold, and darkness, - to go, not along with, but against the sun.[68]

[68] Daniel Rock, The Church of Our Father as Seen in St. Osmund's Rite for the Cathedral of Salisbury, Vol.IV (London, 1905),210.

There seems to be no evidence for *where* the bidding prayer was to be said, but equally so there seems to be no consistency on what point *in* the mass this prayer was to be said. Despite having suggested that it was said after the liturgy of the word, there is some uncertainty. Thomas Simmons, in his discussion of the rubrics of The Lay Folks Mass Book,[69] believed that the bidding prayer was said after the offertory, suggesting that "after the offertory" is not to mean immediately after the anthem, but extended to mean the whole of the oblation rites which come at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.[70] Brightman suggests that in the earliest structure of the mass the bidding prayers followed the sermons but eventually it became customary to use it before the sermon, hence before the eucharist. Grisbrooke says they were conducted before the offertory, thus functioned as the close to the liturgy of the word[71]. There is simply no agreement other than to say it preceded the eucharist itself and probably signaled some sense of closure to psalms, reading and sermon.

What does seem to be consistent, however, is the action of the priest in conducting this prayer. The usual manner of conducting prayers is that the priest, within the chancel "would read prayers with his face to the east and his back turned upon the people who were in the body of the church."[72] Coxe outlines the rubrics of a 1349 bidding prayer to show the very different demands on the celebrant while conducting the bidding prayer:

---

[69] Thomas Simmons, The Lay Folks Mass Book .
[70] Simmons, 318.
[71] W.J.Grisbrooke, "Intersession at the Eucharist", *Studia Liturgica*", Vol.I, 1966, 148 .
[72] Coxe, 5.

> In the thirteenth century we meet with a form of Bidding the bedes, as it is called, which seems to have been used on holy days in the Priest's stall or seat by the Chancel; since in using it the Priest is required *to turn himself to the people in the body of the Church*, and shall say to them in English, 'ye shulle stonde up and bydde your bedys.' After which he is ordered to turn himself again, and to say the prayers here appointed in Latin. Then he turns himself again to the people and says to them in their Mother tongue, "And ye shalle bid for the goude man and good wife," etc which when done he turns his face again to the altar, and says Psalm 121, etc .[73]

Simmons notes that there is a marked absence of rubrics in the York form of the prayer but other rubrics show "that the priest turned to the people whilst bidding their prayers, and to the east at the psalms and prayers.[74] Thus the celebrant seems to have been outside of the rood screen, facing the congregation and directing them to pray.

As with many other situations which involve the performance of this prayer the theological attitude underlying an action is significant. In this case what was noted about the Jewish intercessory prayer has relevance to the medieval intercessory prayer. The *Tefillah* is recited while standing and facing Jerusalem, the place and symbol of holiness. Carmine de Sante in his book Jewish Prayer suggests that

> by reciting the *Shemoneh-esreh* while standing, the praying community expresses its readiness to accept and obey the divine will....[75]

---

[73] Coxe, 3.
[74] Simmons, 319.
[75] de Sante, 79.

Standing most likely had the purpose of allowing the psalm to linger in the mind; because it was prayer and an encounter with God, one had to stand.

Biblically, however, not even this custom seems to be a consistent one as is shown in Nehemiah 8:5:

> Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above them; and when he opened it, they all *stood*. Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people raised their hands and answered, 'Amen, Amen'; and they bowed their heads and *prostrated* themselves humbly before the Lord.

What these examples suggest is that which the opening lines of numerous bidding prayers suggest: there are a variety of positions which the parishioner may take in bidding the prayers, probably depending on the direction of the celebrant. Simmons and de Sante suggest that the early church inherited standing but Coxe in discussing St. Chrysostom's bidding prayer, says that this prayer "performed in common both by ministers and people," was done by both of them "in the posture of kneeling or prostration."[76] In what appears like another reference to the bidding prayers, Coxe says that after those were excluded who could not "partake of the holy Table [the penitents and catechumens] they made another prayer, in which they all fell prostrate upon the earth together, and all in like manner rose up together."[77] The information here suggests that the choice between kneeling or standing may be at the whim of the

[76] Coxe, xxxiii.
[77] Coxe, xxxiv.

celebrant or because of local custom. In the parish using the 1483 prayer, the direction is to kneel.

Connected with this part of the service was the reading out of the specific names from the Bede-roll, a list of deceased for whom liturgical prayers were said. This catalogue of names was short on ordinary occasions, but on feast days would include reasons why parishioners should pray for the dead, particularly for deceased benefactors whose contribution would be mentioned, presumably as an example and stimulant for their successors. It was the curate's duty to read the parish Bede-roll. He was paid a fee for placing the name of the deceased on the list, as well as for naming them from year to year on their anniversary.[78] Very similar to this Bede-roll was the "Quethe-word", the first announcement of the death of a parishioner and for which a fee was charged.

In addition to this kind of Sunday notice, the pulpit functioned as the place from which all kinds of ecclesiastical or quasi-ecclesiastical business was announced to the inhabitants of the district. From here, also, the sermon, frequent or infrequent, was preached, a liturgical passage of scripture was read, or the moral lesson to be extracted from a saint's life was propounded.[79] Instruction in the articles of the Creed, or the Ten Commandments were given from the pulpit; it served as the place for preaching and teaching.

---

[78] E.L.Cutts, Parish Priests and their People in the Middle Ages in England,(London,1898), 496.
[79] One of the earliest books ever issued from an English press was Caxton's *Liber Festivalis* (1483) which was a book of sermons for Sundays and feast days. It was a set of four lengthy discourses published, in order to

As well, banns of intended marriage, warnings to parents to make sure their children received confirmation, announcement of the bishop's visitation, and indulgences that would be given in exchange for carpentry skills or a helping hand were all among the possible communications from the pulpit. Here, too, notice of all manner of civil proceedings was made: the name of the person left as executor of John Barkeby's will so that those owed or claimed payment could be accommodated; announcement that the wall Agnes Paston had built across property of common access was now taken down; that Margaret Basun, threatened with excommunication for having stolen a silver ring belonging to Alice Braymer, had been found innocent and excommunication was pronounced against those who had falsely accused her.[80] If the church was the centre of all parochial life, social as well as religious, the service itself was the way in which one's existence, spiritual and temporal, was focused.

Having finished mass, the parishioners have completed their religious obligations for the moment and disburse into the church yard. The custom of using the churchyard for purposes of business and pleasure was common and persistent in the middle ages: a peddler might take the opportunity which such a gathering of people provided for displaying his wares; there may be festivals, games and a full scale market going on; someone may be asleep near a hedge; handball or wrestling may

---

help priests fulfil the obligation imposed on them by Archbishop Peckham in his celebrated 1281 Constitutions of the Synod of Oxford which set out in detail the points upon which people must be instructed.

[80] Abbot Gasquet, Parish Life in Medieval England, (London, 1906), 211ff.

be in full swing. One of the canons of the Synod of Exeter, 1287, strictly requires parish priests to publicly proclaim in church that no one dare carry on combats, dances or other "improper sports" in the churchyards nor stage plays or farces.[81] The churchyard also gave a certain protection: villagers might find prolonged refuge there in time of war; ploughs and other agricultural implements placed in the churchyard had certain immunities, (most likely freedom from seizure for debt). One of the less acceptable events, at least from the view of the clergy, was the church ale held within the church house but spreading to the yard as festivities and drunkenness grew. While it was hardly equivalent to the parish tea, it took the form of a gathering for the charitable purpose of providing a small sum of money to aid others: the Bride Ale, for a newly wed couple, a Whitsun Ale to provide money for the poor, or a Bid Ale where one might pray and pay to help get an individual out of trouble. Assuming that the activities in the churchyard were not too prolonged in their distraction, parishioners might return for evensong usually in mid-afternoon while it was still daylight. From all accounts, evensong was not as well attended as the morning service there being many other available diversions.

---

[81] Cutts, 317.

The parish played a dominant role in the social and spiritual life of its parishioners. On Sundays and feast days the church yard was the venue for exchanging news and greetings. The church bells not only tolled when one of the faithful died, when services were underway or about to begin but rang for joyous events as well as threatening ones and functioned somewhat as a village clock. The late-medieval parish church had within or on its walls artistic work as well as ecclesiastical antiquities. As a structure the church could complement, compete with or overshadow in grandeur the manor house within its environs. This, parishioners held, was as it ought to be for here God was joined to the labourer or the lady. Here the faithful could steadily build up the capacity to know and to love God as well as one's neighbour, made in God's image and of whose needs, material and spiritual, medieval parishioners were acutely aware.

And who were these parishioners? Everyone was a parishioner. On week days the congregation was perhaps made up of mostly women, maybe travellers, some whose work permitted them to be present, clerks and scholars attached to the church as well as the boys in the school. If it was daily mass early in the morning it may have been a less motley group: only those who were on their way to perform the duties that took up the rest of the day and who stopped to repeat their *Pater Noster*. On Sunday, however, everyone was required to be in church. But whether one was in church or not, all could be united in spirit to the act of worship through the *Sanctus* bell. It was rung at the beginning of the mass and also at what

was considered the most sacred time of the sacrifice, the consecration and elevation of the elements and was intended to give notice of the most solemn parts of the mass. While in some churches this bell was large and set somewhere in the roof, rood beam, or chancel arch, it was possible that it was small and rung by hand out of a side window.[82]

Whether the service was daily Matins at 6 or 7 o'clock, High Mass later in the morning at 9 or 10,[83] or evensong somewhere around 3 in the afternoon, the most important celebration of any one of these services was on Sunday. Sunday was the day of rest, set aside and enforced by the clergy in order that Christians might be free from the week's temporal affairs to tend to the soul's affairs. The duty of every Christian on every Sunday was to hear and watch divine service and Holy Mass, pray, and listen to the priest instructing them in their belief and duty. Latin was the language of public worship of the Church, except for the vernacular bidding prayer and the sermon, notices, and instruction. Aesthetically, Latin may have lent dignity to worship and it was possible, through habit, to know the general outline of the structure of the service and gain from that. But the fact is that major portions of the mass as the epistle and gospel would be incomprehensible to most of the congregation. It might be argued that this incomprehensibility of the language was offset by a whole array of the visible: the dominant

---

[82] Gasquet, 148. Bells were used in a variety of ways, the most obvious was that situated in its own tower or bellecote on top the church and used to call the faithful to attendance at the services. In other ways they were used at funerals, when the eucharist was transported outside of the church, on festive occasions and, as mentioned, at the most solemn moment of the Mass.

[83] Cutts, 205. There is no definitive information that suggests daily celebration of mass was part of the Anglo-Saxon church. It was after the Norman conquest that weekly celebration was ordered, and it is not until 1215 by the Constitution of Peckham that the once weekly, preferably Sunday, mass was required. Only later did it become general practice for the priest to say mass daily.

colour (white, purple, green) of the vestments if the parish could afford them; the series of gestures and movements that indicated the stages in the mass (such as the gospel being carried solemnly in procession after a selection had been read, or the raising of hands when the priest called on the faithful to "Lift up your hearts"); the *Sanctus* bell being rung; or the censor sending clouds of smoke heavenward; or the candles been elevated in homage; as well as the very public and solemn blessing of the holy water. There was a physicality that could be understood even if the language of its performance could not.

To draw some conclusions about the bidding prayer in general as it was part of Sunday mass at the beginning of the 15th century is to understand its particularity. It was a prayer that could respond to the locale, the composition of the congregation and the particular desires of the celebrant. This is not to say, however, that it was without definite content and form. As well as reminding parishioners of the basis of their faith through their responsive *Pater Noster*, it was a prayer of intercession said by the faithful. Because it was said in the vernacular it reflected a measure of pastoral concern in the Middle Ages. "Ye shulle stonde up and bydde your bedys" simply meant the praying of the prayers, prayers which included the church, the state, the departed, and people in their various callings. Some of those callings were to the church, to politics, to the land or away in a ship. The late medieval bidding prayer reflects these areas and indeed is a prayer structured on such divisions in the medieval world.

The Complete 1483 Bidding Prayer

## The Bedes on Sunday

Ye shal knele down on your knees and lyfte up your hertes, makyng your prayers unto Almyghty God for the good state and pees of al holy Chirche, that God maynteyne, save, and kepe it. For our holy Fader the Pope, and alle his trewe college of Cardenallys, that God for his mercy hem maynteyne and kepe in the right beleve, and it holde and encreace, and al mysbeleve and heresye he lesse and destroye. Also ye shal pray for the holy lande, and for the holy crosse that Jhesu Crist deyed on for redempcion of mannys sowle, that it may come into the power of Cristen men, the more to be honoured for our prayers. Also ye shal praye for al Archebyshoppis and Byshoppis, and in especial for the Archebysshop of Caunterbury, our Metropolitan, and for the Bysshop of N our Dyocysan, that God of his mercy gyve to them grace so to govern and reule holy Chirche, that it may be to honour and worshyp of Hym, and savacion of our sowles; ye shal also pray for al Abbottis, Pryours, Monkys, Chanons, Frerys, and for alle men and wymen of religyon, in what ordre, estate, or degree that they stonde in, from the hyest astate to the lowest degree; ye shal also praye for al them that have charge and cure of Cristen mennys sowlis, as Curates, Persons, Vycaryes, Prestys, and Clerkys, and in especiall for the Person and Curate of this Chirche, and for all the Preestes and Mynystris that seve therein or have servyd, and for alle them that have taken ony ordre, that God yeve them grace wel to kepe and observe it to thonour and helthe of theyr sowlies; ye shal also prayen for the unyte and pees of al Cristen royames, and en especial for the good state, pees, and tranquylite of this royame of Englond; for our liege Lord the Kyng, that God for his grete mercy sende hym grace so to governe and rewle thys royame, that God be blessyd and worshippyd, and prouffyt and savacion of this londe; also ye shal pray for our liege Lady the Quene, my lorde the prynce and al the noble progenye of them; for al dukes Erlis, barons, knyghtes, and sqyers, and al other lordes of the Kynges counceyl which have ony rewle and governaunce in this londe, that God be plessyd, the londe defendyd, and to prouffyt and savacion of alle the royame; also ye shal praye for the pees both on the londe and on the water, that God graunte love and charite emong alle Cristen people; ye shal prey for alle our parissheus where they ben on longe or on water, that God save

them from alle maner of parellis, and for al the good men of this parisshe, for theyr wyves, childrene, and meyne, that God them maynteyne, save, and kepe; ye shal also praye for al trewe tithers, that God multeplye theyr goodes and encrece, for al trewe telyers that laboure for our sustenaunce, that teyle therthe, and also for al the greynes and fruytes that ben sowen, sette, or doon on the erthe or shal be doon, that God sende suche wederyng, that they may growe, encreace, and multeplye to the helpe and prouffyt of alle mankynde, ye shal praye for alle trewe shypmen and marchauntes, where that they be on londe or on water, that God kepe them from al perillys, and brynge them hoom in saefte wyth they goodes, shippes, and marchaundyses, to the helpe, comforte, and prouffyt of this royame; ye shal also pray for al them that fynden ony light in this Cherche, or yeve or byquethe, boke, belle, chalyce, or vestement, surplys, autercloth or towayle, londes, rentes, lampe or lyght, or any other adoournement, wherby Goodis servyse is the better servyd, susteynyd and maynteyned in redyng and syngging, for alle them that therto have counseylled that God rewarde and yelde it them at theyr moste nede; also ye shal pray for al trewe pylgryms and palmers that have taken theyr waye to Rome, to Jherusalem, to Saynt Katherynes, or to Saynt James, or to any other holy place, tha God of his grace yeve them tyme and space wel for to goo and to goo and to come to the prouffyt of their lyves and sowles; ye shal also pray for al them that be seke or dyseased of this parisshe, that God sende to them helth the rather for our prayers, for al the wymmen that ben in our Lady bondis and wyth childe in this parisshe or in any other; that God sende to them fayr delyveraunce, to theyr chyldren right shap, name and cristendome, and to the moders puryficacion; and for al them that wold be here and may not for sekeness, for travayl, or any other leeful occupacion, that they may have parte of al the good dedis that shal be doon in this place or in ony other; also ye shal pray for al them that ben in good lyf, that God them hold long therein, and for them that ben in dette or in dedely synne, that Jhesu Crist brynge them out thereof the rather for our prayers; also ye shal pray for hym or her that this day yaf the holy breed, and for him that first began and longest holdeth on, that God rewarde it hym at the day of dome, and for al them that doon, wylle, or say you good, that God yelde it them at theyr nede, and for them that other wyse wolde, that God amende them. For all these and for all chrysten men and women ye shall saye a Pater noster, and an Aue maria.[84]

---

[84] H.O.Coxe, Forms of Bidding Prayer, with Introduction and Notes (Oxford, 1840), 29-35.

Exegesis

*The Opening Command of the Prayer*

> Ye shal knele down on your knees and lyfte up your hertes, makyng your prayers unto Almyghty God…

This particular prayer opens with a clear direction: "Ye shal…." This sense of immediacy should not be misinterpreted as a direction, in the modern sense, to each individual but instead to the congregation taken as a whole who were more likely inclined to think of themselves as a body corporate than as a collection of separate individuals. As such, they would tend to live actually and psychologically imbedded within a religious world which defined, enclosed, and heavily circumscribed their sense of self and their interpretations of experience. Their moral worth and their proper place in a social hierarchy had the weight of custom as well as the sanction of the church and state behind it. The prevalent theory in the middle ages was that one's inner character consisted of elemental moral virtues (prudence, temperance, fortitude, justice), an indication of the continuance of group modes of understanding, not individual ones. Coupled with this was the widespread view that if one did look inward seeking self-understanding what was to be found was God at the core of self-consciousness.[85]

---

[85] Julian of Norwich writes that upon looking inward she "saw my soul as wide as if it were a kingdom and from the state which I saw in it, it seemed to me as if it were a fine city. In the midst of this city sits our lord Jesus...." Julian of Norwich: Showings ed. by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (New York: Paulist Press, 1978) 163.

By the late middle ages, there may have been an increase in the depth of awareness of what could be called individuality, that is, sensing more aspects, sides or details of character (Chaucer after all became a master at seeing and rendering characters more three dimensionally). But people, on the whole, accepted a delineation of individual personality according to widely accepted moral types or in simple social categories, a categorization reinforced by the Heralds' Debate of 1453-61[86] which still divided Englishmen into churchmen, nobles and others, though in the last group it distinguished between craftsmen and "common people". The clear divisions reflect the traditional way of dividing the population into the estates spiritual, with the pope at the head, and temporal, with the king at its head. However, with the gradual disturbance of the old feudal system through the growth of towns, a third estate was recognized — the commons who were essentially the townspeople of substance. Much of the constitutional development of the later middle ages is a record of the emergence of this estate into a position of equality with the other two.[87] Thus who the medieval "ye" is at the beginning of the prayer is not distinguished by an individual consciousness but by a relationship to the world ordered theologically under God. The directness of the address conveys a sense of immediacy but not one of uniqueness: you collectively, not you individually.

---

[86] R.W. Southern, The Making of the Middle Ages (New Haven, 1953), 98-112.
[87] In the forms of the bidding prayers after the Reformation the king and his family are treated separately as a first estate.

The immediacy contained in the first line of the prayer, however, does imply popular participation; the community of the faithful are here and now assembled under the leadership of a member of the church's hierarchy, who enlists the participation of the people. The notion inherent in this part of worship is that prayer must first of all be offered by the assembled community, their collective prayers rising up, as it were, toward the altar. There the priest associates himself with these prayers and sums them all up in his priestly *collectivo*. Hence the people, the assembled community, are therefore called to prayer.

In carrying out this call, the celebrant bids his worshippers to kneel. Two closely related acts determine the rationale for this posture at this time in the history of the church: one of event, one of attitude. As already suggested, the most recognized posture for prayer, liturgically speaking, was standing. The Council of Nicaea underlined the posture of standing on Sunday and the days of Pentecost so that "all things may be uniformly performed in every parish or diocese." Standing was the attitude of praise and thanksgiving. Hence standing was obligatory during the psalms, hymns and Eucharistic prayer. The attitude was a celebratory one.

But kneeling was early introduced for penitential and ordinary ferial seasons as well as in private prayer, there being, it was assumed, an inner sense of penitence attached to private prayer. Thus kneeling is tied to the emotions of self-abasement and supplication, a position

which abandons the erect posture of human active life and of praise and thanksgiving. It is not a great move from penitence to petition; and in both cases the suppliant position is used. Thus in this bidding prayer the officiating priest, asking the congregation to pray for some special intention, bids them to kneel.[88] And that is a choice he had.

But a very practical event also mitigated against the congregation standing: the introduction of permanent seating in the nave. Parishioners of the ancient church remained standing for most of the service, a practice continued in England well into the fourteenth century. Congregational space was open, fluid space, except for seats for the officiating clergy, the aged and the disabled ("the weak must go to the wall"). The mobile congregation ebbed and flowed throughout the nave, gathering wherever the action was. By the time of this prayer, benches had probably been introduced on a much larger and more fixed scale bringing about an increased rigidity to the experience of the service and perhaps a greater ease for kneeling. Such is not to say that the congregation now only sat or only knelt. To move one spiritually, one often was required to move physically, thus there was kneeling and standing throughout the service as well as movement into and through the church proper. To kneel (or stand) was a participatory action; in the prayer of the faithful to change position meant to participate.

---

[88] Two of the texts used for comparison indicate "stonde", five indicate "mak" and two more indicate kneel.

The Clergy

*The Pope and the Holy Church*

> ...makyng your prayers unto Almyghty God for the good state and pees of al holy Chirche, that God maynteyne, save, and kepe it. For our holy Fader the Pope, and alle his trewe college of Cardenallys, that God for his mercy hem mayntenyne and kepe in the right beleve, and it holde and encreace, and al mysbeleve and heresye he lesse and destroye.

The pope being prayed for at the date of this bidding prayer was Sixtus IV (1471-1484), a Franciscan, an accomplished and sought after preacher, a theologian of some repute, and wealthy enough to have lavishly gifted the dukes of Milan to back his election. Strict in his personal life but ruthlessly determined and unscrupulous, he inaugurated a line of pontiffs who systematically secularized the papacy. He organized two crusades against the Turks, both expensive and both ineffective. In addition, as a loyal Franciscan, he greatly increased the privileges of the mendicant orders, and subsequently their disfavour, as Chaucer's portrait of the Friar would indicate. As Pope, Sixtus could approve a new feast on one hand — the Feast of the Immaculate Conception — with its own mass and office and, on the other, set in place the destructive Spanish inquisition in 1478, check its abuses in 1482, and in 1483 confirm Thomas de Torquemada as grand inquisitor.

Sixtus, along with Ferdinand and Isabella, established the Spanish Inquisition. Its purpose was to discover and punish converted Jews (and later, Muslims) who appeared to be insincere in

their practice of Christianity. However, soon no Spaniard could feel safe from it; even St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Theresa of Avila were investigated for heresy. The Spanish Inquisition was much harsher, more highly organized, and far freer with the death penalty than the previous medieval inquisition established, formally, by Gregory IX in the mid-thirteenth century to stop the spread of Albigensianism in southern France. While the usual punishments of the latter inquisition were penance, fine, and imprisonment, for the former a sentence of guilt meant torture, confiscation of property or death. Sixtus was a pope for whom the extermination of heresy was a passion.[89]

The office of cardinal had been established as part of a college of administrators before Sixtus' time as pontiff. It was he, however, who increased their stature. With him they came to rank as princes of royal blood. A cardinal usually had to be, minimally, in priestly orders, reside in Rome and preside over the ecclesiastical and political business of the papacy. When assembled in Consistory[90] they functioned as his immediate counsellors and with Sixtus enjoyed regal privilege.

---

[89] A.S.Tuberville, Medieval Heresy and the Inquisition,(London,1964),31ff.

[90] Consistories (meetings in the presence of the pope) are of three kinds: public, where foreign dignitaries were received, cardinals received their red hats, and stages in the process of canonization are carried out; semi-public, where bishops from the area around Rome as well as cardinals attend to aspects of church business; and private, where only pope and cardinals are present. This latter functions as the ordinary court in which the more important business of the papacy is transacted.

To Sixtus, however, the business of the holy see took second place to the aggrandizement of the papal state and of his own family. Soon after his election and flouting his own election oath rejecting nepotism, he made two youthful nephews cardinals and a swarm of other relatives were enriched and advanced on a completely unprecedented scale.[91] He, along with his relatives, was involved in the disputes and turmoil of Italian politics, war with Florence, and territorial gains where possible. With Sixtus' costly military and building operations as well as the demands of his greedy relatives, papal expenditure increased enormously during his reign. To meet this expense, even a parishioner in a Kent village had to contribute to Peter's pence, the ecclesiastical tax paid directly to the Pope. What the parishioner would not know was that his tithe had little to do with his own spiritual salvation but everything to do with the pope's chosen role as Renaissance prince.

The miller of Trumpington in Chaucer's "Reeve's Tale" had only one bedchamber; in this he and his wife, his grown-up daughter, his baby, and two undergraduates from Cambridge who visited him, all slept. What the miller didn't know about and would never see was the Sistine Chapel. Yet he was helping to pay for it. The chapel had walls painted by Umbrian Masters, who, along with great sculptors and musicians of the time, had been summoned to Rome by Sixtus, essentially at the miller's expense. Nor would the miller know that his increased and endless access to the purchase of indulgences to amend for his sins was a direct result of

---

[91] J.N.D. Kelly, The Oxford Dictionary of Popes (Oxford, 1986), 250.

Sixtus' need to shore up the papal deficit. If the miller felt that his tithes were extraordinary, the privileges of the clergy outlandish, the costs of burying his wife more than he could afford, and that the cure of his soul was not being attended to, he had no recourse for a hearing as Sixtus had banned all appeals to General Council.

In much of the last century and a half of the middle ages life was unusually disturbed in both church and State. Politically, English energies had been heavily strained by the hundred-year long struggle with France (1338 - 1453) and, on a smaller scale, by the civil Wars of the Roses (1455 - 85). But if these wars had economically drained the country, so too had the church. From 1309-1377 the Roman papacy had moved from disorderly Rome to Avignon. The problem of housing this great bureaucratic machine led to enormous public expense. It was also a move that undermined the reputation of the papacy as a neutral, final court of appeal. While located in France a number of French popes were elected who, obviously enough, nominated a generous number of French cardinals. The return of the pope and his curia to Rome in 1377 (to the pilgrimage church of St.Peter, not Constantine's church of St. John Lateran) was followed in 1378 by the cardinals splitting into two irreconcilable factions, each electing a candidate which it claimed to be the rightful pope.[92]

---

[92] A.L.Smith Church and State in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1913),162.

The nations of the western world lined up on different sides. On one side was a faction backed by France, Scotland, Naples, Hungary and Spain; the other side was supported by much of Italy, Germany, Flanders, and by England. The fragmentation this caused was felt down to the local level, chapters of cathedrals and monasteries being split over which candidate was the rightful pope. Compromise was an alien concept. The resultant chaos and bitterness was long and considerable but it was obvious on all counts that it could not be allowed to continue for ever. The reasoned solution put foreword, drawn from its source in church history, was that the ultimate source of authority was not the papacy but general councils - assemblies representing the whole church.

Thus got under way the Councilar Movement which attempted to institute reform. It ordered periodic meetings of general councils, a move that had implicit in it a challenge to medieval papalism since it asserted its superiority to the Pope; its enactments were to be obeyed by all, popes included.[93] For a number of complex reasons this revolutionary approach to the papacy collapsed but so far as the domestic history of the English Church is concerned the period of the Avignon Papacy and Councilar Movement had several effects. The first of these was that because the papacy had for almost half a century been preoccupied internally, it found little time to attend to its outlying areas and therefore to limit the gestures of the English monarchy. The second is that the financial strain imposed on it by its residence at Avignon markedly

---

[93] C.H.Lawrence, The English Church and the Papacy (Hertfordshire, 1965), 87.

increased its demand for aid from the very territories it had neglected. This, coupled with England's lack of its share of high ecclesiastical appointments in Rome, left the present and future faithful of the English church much to be unhappy about.

The fourteenth and early fifteenth century in England saw, then, a very uneasy relationship with the Pope and continuing financial demands made on England by the Roman curia was generating vigorous local resistance. Such uneasiness came to a head in 1343 when a kind of memorandum was drawn up for submission to the pope. This was a submission basing its case not on theological argument, tradition, or precedent but on local conditions and argued as follows: financial aid for the papacy made it impossible for churches to honour the wishes of their own benefactors to their own English church. Such wishes were specified as having been designed to ensure that

> the divine services of God and the Christian faith might be honored, extended and embellished, hospitalities and alms given and maintained, churches and buildings worthily preserved and kept, devout prayers in the same places offered up for founders, poor parishioners aided and comforted and, in confession and otherwise, fully instructed and indoctrinated in their mother tongue by those who had change of souls.[94]

Thus, if monies secured were to be sent abroad, what would be left at home to do the job promised to local benefactors? Although the letter seems to have had no real strength on its

---

[94] J.C.Dickinson, The Later Middle Ages (London, 1979), 314.

own, coupled with the increased pressure of the English parliament it became a useful extra weapon for the English Crown in its unending encounters with the papacy.

Such a pressure had long term results. The Statute of Provisions, passed by Parliament in 1351, ordered that local clerical elections and presentations were to be free from papal pressure and that appointments, if made by papal nominations, were liable to be forfeited to the Crown, especially so if a local appointee had been removed through the new papal appointment. Thus, the Statute transferred the patronage of many livings from papal to English hands. Along with this were the Statutes of Praemunire (1353, 1365, 1393) which declared that anyone taking the king's subjects out of the realm (to serve on the papal curia for instance), and not on the king's business, would be liable to imprisonment and forfeiture of land and goods. Coming into the kingdom with papal bulls of excommunication or documentation would be likewise punished. This meant no papal appointments made within England and no knights or clerics on papal business riding out of England.

*Archbishops and Bishops*

> Also ye shal praye for al Archebyshoppis and Byshoppis, and in especial for the Archebysshop of Caunterbury, our Metropolitan, and for the Bysshop of N our Dyocysan, that God of his mercy gyve to them grace so to govern and reule holy Chirche, that it may be to the honour and worshyp of Hym, and savacion of our sowles;

If Chaucer's miller of Trumpington sensed that he was less well off than he would like to have been because of a taxing policy that continually drained his resources, how was the far off Pope accomplishing this? Through a highly bureaucratized, wealthy and self-indulgent archbishopric, one which was much more interested in things political than in things spiritual.

In asking prayers for all archbishops and bishops, the bidding prayer essentially outlines church hierarchy. England was divided into two provinces, each headed by an archbishop - that of York and of Canterbury. These provinces included a number of local units known as dioceses, each headed by a bishop. In the case of this 1483 bidding prayer, the Archbishop of Canterbury is called "our metropolitan" which makes clear that he is exercising provincial and not merely diocesan power. The use of the possessive pronoun "our" instead of the definite article "the" gives a tone to the prayer which suggests a degree of familiarity.

A discussion of the archbishopric is begun by looking first and most prominently at an archbishop as a territorial magnate. From the earliest periods of conversion to Christianity, England's rulers signified their acceptance of the faith of God by giving portions of their own lands to the representatives of Christ, protecting what they had given with force if necessary. Christianity could thus hardly have succeeded without the leadership of kings eager for the promise of eternal life, and prepared by generous endowments to buy salvation the best way they knew how.[95] The medieval concept of an archbishop continues this tradition of gifting of land.

The picture of the archbishopric for Canterbury is a composite of all things that would contribute toward wealth. The archbishopic held landed property long before the Norman Conquest. These early holdings lay in the south-east of England and over time as populations increased, new lands, especially woodlands and marshy areas, were brought into cultivation, manors were divided, and new hamlets appeared peopled with the archbishops' tenants.[96]

These ploughlands, pastures, salt marshes and deep woods had not been acquired at the same time. At certain times landed endowments were generous and rapid, at other times not, but there is hardly a generation wherein some land holdings were not bequeathed to the church.[97]

---

[95] Early records of spiritual administration are nearly impossible to find. During the centuries when the Britons were being evangelized, conversion was essentially tribal: kings accepted Christianity and their peoples followed suit. Mayr-Harting, 13-39.
[96] F.R.H du Boulay, The Lordship of Canterbury (London, 1966), 16-51.
[97] E.F Jacobs, The Medieval Registers of Canterbury and York (St. Anthony's Hall Publications, #4, 1953).

The earliest endowments seem to have been acquired in the richest Kent country-side, round Canterbury itself, and from there within a radius of a dozen miles north, east and south; at the same early period the see acquired considerable lands in West Sussex. Before long this nucleus seems to have been enlarged by gifts or purchases in central and western Kent, along the routes to London, and by a very valuable block of Middlesex lands at Harrow and Hayes plus additions at Essex and Suffolk.[98] As one of the greatest landlords of medieval England, the archbishop of Canterbury held his land "in demesne as of fee" of the king, meaning that he retained from the King all those lands not enfeoffed to knights nor allocated to the monks of the cathedral.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, was, by the fifteenth century, quite simply a powerful territorial magnate, having his palace, estates and 30 or more manors composed of many villages with their fields and woods.[99] His largest territory was in Kent with manors and large tracts of woodlands both north and east of the cathedral city. South of Canterbury, on the

98 du Boulay, 16-52.

99 Originally the Archbishop lived with his community, there being some sort of monastic community at Christ Church from 610 C.E. lasting for a generation and then fading out. But within a short time of establishing a community priests seem to have been living in their own houses and receiving stipends, like clerks rather than monks. There was an attempt to return to community life by the beginning of the 9th century and, as part of this design, pains were taken to establish a community with a nucleus of its own estates. It was thus at this times that the separation between the estates of the archbishop and those of the community was effectively begun. Until the late twelfth century, the archbishops were either monks or identified themselves with the religious life, so that their title of abbot was real. By the early thirteenth century, however, that separation had been effected between archbishop and monks; the archbishop and the community became distinct. See J.A. Robinson, "The Early Community at Christ Church, Canterbury", Journal of Theological Studies, XXVII, 1926, 225-40. Eric John "The Division of the *Mensa* in Early English Monasteries", Journal of Ecclesiastical History, VI, 1955, 143-55.

downlands and near Romney March was his richest bailiwick[100] of all. He enjoyed lordship over coastal property and ports and ferries; the pattern which emerged by the late middle ages was a chain of ownership from Canterbury to London plus most of Surrey, Westminster and Lambeth. He owned numerous manors in Sussex and many north of the Thames in Hertfordshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. The largest of his holdings was indeed vast: huge Old English estates were transferred from royal to church lordship, each covering many square miles with their constituent villages and fields. In time they would break up. As populations increased and cultivation extended, the map of his estates would change somewhat but in essence this was the pattern established for several centuries, great even by comparison with continental church lordships.[101]

The archbishop traversed between his manors constantly, being both the largest landowner and God's representative. They (the archbishop and his familia) brought to village after village experiences and ideas from the outside world. These were ideas brought not necessarily to an ignorant pastorate; every manor on its own was involved in some kind of trading and droving which took a fair proportion of the inhabitants far afield on occasion.

---

[100] The term "bailiwick" means the organization of demesne manors into administrative units. This was initially fixed as a system in the late thirteenth century. One, for instance, would centre on Maidstone and include Oldborough, Charing, Boughton, and Tenyham. These groupings of local management would include stewards of the estate, bailiffs, receivers and auditors, woodsmen and reapers among others. The Earl of Essex, the eldest brother of the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time of this bidding prayer, was fined 13s 4d for failing to take up his office as reeve of Otford. He was exonerated "by special grace" which probably suggest it was helpful to be the Archbishop's brother. du Boulay, 266.

[101] F.R.H. du Boulay, "The Achbishop as Territorial Magnate", Medieval Records of the Archbishops of Canterbury (London, 1962), 50-70.

Villagers thus had a worldliness of their own. There seems to have been a network of routes throughout the southeast of the country over which men (and some women) moved with the archbishop's pigs, grain and wool bound for the markets in London or elsewhere on the coast.[102]

The Archbishop's own tenants included a variety of people whose physical work, payments and forms of obedience differed from place to place, but all were obliged to serve a lord whose fundamental nature, economically, was often to travel with a large household from manor to manor. The archbishop's mobility distinguished him and his manors from the manors which belonged to the monastic houses. For the monks, food and money were wanted at an unmoving center; for the archbishop, supplies had to be made ready, now here, now there, usually supporting him for set periods of one, two or four weeks each year, and many of the services were organized for those occasions when provisions had to be gotten in, guides and bearers tended to and rooms readied.

The very mobility of the archbishop was responsible for a division of labour depending on the services he required. Two main types appeared: the supply, carriage and storage of provisions he would need as he stopped at each manor for set periods of weeks each year, and the work which everywhere and always was needed to keep a rural economy going. In the first case

[102]F.R.H du Boulay, "Denns, Driving and Danger", *Archaelogia Cantiana*, LXXVI, 1961, 75-87.

duties began with the arrival of the cross-bearer through the gate of the archbishop's land. The duties were continued as long as he stayed, provided he did not exceed his customary sojourn. If he departed early and the full quota of agreed upon services had not been performed, the rest were canceled and neither side had any further claim in respect of that occasion. But all had, meanwhile, been carefully reckoned. A measure of labor was sometimes calculated as the provision of one man mounted, who would carry a sack whose contents weighed less than 4 bushels of wheat. A certain distance of its transport was counted as one service, an extended distance as two.[103] Apart from carrying out these services, other preparations were needed for the archbishop's arrival and were required of the local tenants. These might include provision of litter, forage and stabling, or the housing of his cross-bearer, carter, washerwomen, purveyor, clerk, baker, knights, servants and chief steward as well as their horses. Besides the obligations associated with his visits, there were the on-going ones of ploughing, harvesting, weeding, stooking, shearing, roofing, wood cutting, wattle making, brewing - all trades needed in the upkeep of the archbishop's estates.

If these were tasks continually or momentarily surrounding the yearly visits, there were, as well, other kinds of labor or goods owed the archbishop. There were rents owed the archbishop, divided into two main sorts: those rendered in kind or cash. The former might include hens, eggs, male hawks, fish and part of the wax obligation. Others might include a

[103] B.H. Putnam, Enforcement of the Statute of Laborers (New York, 1908), 405.

plough, wheels, carts, horseshoes, eels, cumin, pepper, oats, barley, salt, oysters. A cash payment might take the form of "pannage" the payment for the right to pasture pigs in the archbishop's forest. Since these pigs could destroy the oak or beech, wood from which the archbishop would make a pretty penny, his loss had to be compensated for. It seems not to have been a burdensome amount, rather less than the profit from selling a pig; farmers would increasingly find it desirable to deliberately damage the forest to keep the archbishop's men from cutting it or from setting up a summer residence for him. These were woods well suited to rearing pigs and it was better to keep the archbishop out of them.

It was not, however, unheard of for tenants to refuse service for all or some of the tasks, bargain with the archbishop and come to some financial agreement; refusal of services was widespread during the fifteenth century. The refusal was not based on exploitation but on a sense of personal freedom or its converse, seigniorial rights. In the late middle ages the archbishop's tenants objected much more to the idea of servility than to the real requirements of their contracts.[104]

Why was freedom such an issue by the late middle ages? New wealth; new wealth of the formerly obscure and it was visible in every county in the archbishop's province. Fifteenth century church rolls show what must long have been a fact: the flourishing of private skills,

---

[104] du Boulay, Lordship, 168

trades and landed enterprise behind the facade of manorial routine. Many men were prospering in positions of strength: cloth making in the area of Cranbrook, chalk and lime businesses on the north Kent coast, river transport, tile making, brewing, and building throughout. Causing resentment was the contrast between what the unskilled worker could earn for himself and the demands of an archbishop who offered no pay and saw disobedience as a sacrilege. There was, as a result, a general spirit of disobedience noticeable in deliberate acts of defiance with a sense of rights and justness at their core[105].

Who was this archbishop who acted as one of the greatest lords of medieval England; who not only held in demesne (lordship) knights and manors but those numerous properties which supplied his personal income and provided him with all of his comforts? For the period under consideration of the 1483 bidding prayer that person would have been Thomas Bourgchier.[106] He was born about 1404 or 1405 of noble and even royal descent (his mother being the daughter of the Duke of Gloucester). At an early age he attended Oxford and although not marked as a distinguished scholar, he does seem to have been interested in literature and was

---

[105] The most poignant of examples that reflect a spirit of defiance was from a period a little earlier than the 1483 bidding prayer but echoed in what happened later. In Kent, Archbishop Courtney summoned six tenants from Wigham, near Canterbury, for failing to perform their due service of driving carloads of hay and litter to his palace at Canterbury. The service was not particularly difficult and had, in fact, been partially performed. What offended the archbishop was that the work had been done secretly on foot and not with carts, the men being ashamed of the obligation and refusing to acknowledge it openly. This the archbishop found, at the tribunal at Saltwood, was contempt of himself and of his office. The tenants were sentenced to parade like penitents round Wigham church, each carrying on his shoulders a sack of hay and straw and walking slowly, enforced and overseen by the archbishop's sheriffs. Though this resistance was seen as defiance by the archbishop, it was nonetheless forming in men's minds new attitudes toward the order they knew.
[106] Walter Farquhar Hook, Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury, Microfiche PR02 0002 #1160 V5 fich 4&5.

throughout his life a patron of the learned in art and literature. He became chancellor of both Oxford and Cambridge, the latter while bishop of Ely. His first entry into the clergy seems to have been through the prebend of Colwick in 1424 followed by his appointment to the deanery of St. Martin le Grand in London. Because of the parliamentary interest of his family much was accomplished in procuring for him higher honours, always swift and forceful and the next was about to take place.

In August of 1433, Thomas Polton, bishop of Worcester, died at Basel where he was attending the General Council. Because he had died *in curia* the pope assumed the right of nominating the successor. He did not nominate Thomas Bourgchier but was pressured into changing his initial nomination through political manipulation. He was reminded that the Council of Basel, presently sitting, was dealing with the controversy opened at the Council of Constance concerning the subordination of the pope to a council, that council having the power to depose the reigning pontiff, a council firmly supported by England. The Pope, Eugenius, was not, therefore, in a position to hazard a rupture with the English government who might vote in the Council's favour. Thus, through a number of additional machinations, Thomas Bourgchier, on the 15th of April 1434, received the temporalities of his see; and on the 15th of May he was duly consecrated as Bishop of Worcester in the church of Blackfriars, London, his kinsman, Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, officiating.

He was, the very next year, attempting to receive a move to the more opulent see of Ely, but, due to a number of political entanglements it did not happen until 1443 and, once there, he remained at Ely for some ten or eleven years. A number of rather telling comments by his biographer reflect his time at Ely:

> That Bourgchier was culpably negligent of his Episcopal duties, when in his youth he became bishop, first of Worcester and then of Ely, is not to be denied. [The Ely historian] asserts that, during an incumbency at Ely of ten years twenty three weeks and five days, he officiated only once in his cathedral; that once being on the day of his installation....
>
> The fact probably is, that during the whole period of his occupation of the see of Ely, the young prelate was so absorbed in politics, that he thought of his bishopric only as a service of income.[107]

The biographer, however, does add that Bourgchier was, where known, personally popular, easy tempered, and a man of the world whose judgment was coldly correct. He was not a man "much vigorous of mind and wisdom; but he was distinguished for his moderation & candour".

When the metropolitan see of Canterbury became vacant with the death of Archbishop Kemp in 1454, the country was already in some turmoil. Henry VI's imbecility could no longer be denied nor concealed from parliament and Richard, Duke of York, had thus been appointed protector and defender of the realm. Through Bourgchier's family, as well as through his own constant pressure, the House of Commons had agreed to forward the name of Bourgchier,

---

[107] Hook, 280-81.

Bishop of Ely, as the successor of Kemp to the see of Canterbury. Thus, in February, 1455, Bourgchier, supported on one side by the Bishop of London and on the other by the Bishop of Winchester,

> approached the cathedral of Canterbury, which was superbly decorated for his enthronization. The great west door, when thrown open, exhibited the prior and Bourcghier's half-brother, arrayed in white copes; and the services of the church were performed with more than their usual magnificence.
>
> At the banquet in the great white hall of the palace, the Duke of Buckingham officiated as Lord High Steward; and the new archbishop was supported by all the magnates of the kingdom, to many of whom he was nearly related by ties of blood.... The hospitality was conducted on a scale of great splendor.[108]

To give him his ecclesiastic due, very early in his appointment, Bourgchier instigated a day of humiliation, a kind of spiritual stock taking for his bishops and suffragan bishops which had not been done before. As archbishop he commanded and required all the bishops of his province to "admonish and persuade" all their subjects, both clerical and lay, to "institute and observe on the Lord's day and other festivals, and on every Wednesday and Friday, processions, at which certain suffrages bearing upon the state of the church, the country, and on Christendom in general, should be introduced into the litanies".[109]

---

[108] Hook, 284.
[109] Hook, 285.

Although he did not, as was done by later primates, draw up new offices or prayers, he did require more frequent use of the forms with which people were or could be familiar. Thus one might probably have seen a more frequent use of the bidding prayer since part of his determined purpose was to see the forms become more flexible by leaving it to each clergyman to "adapt them to the circumstances of the case". He could be credited with the reason the bidding prayers of the southern province are rich in specific details.

His worldly awareness, as far as the politics of England were concerned, are reflected in an early indulgence of forty days granted "to all and every one of our subjects" who repented and confessed, and interceded with God for three essential things: the extermination of the Turks, "the persecutors of our orthodox faith; for the restoration of the King of England and the welfare of his kingdom; and for an end to the dangers on the country from abroad and at home."[110] Each individual was required either to say mass, psalms, the Psalter of the Virgin Mary or go on pilgrimage.

In the first of his concerns Bourgchier was alluding to a subject which had once caused considerable alarm among thoughtful parishioners but now, in the fifteenth century, had been heard with comparative indifference: that the eastern empire had ceased to be Christian and that its capital was in the hands of the Turks. Bourgchier, however, was well aware of

---

[110] Hook, 290.

dangers still at hand and close to home. During his primacy, Italy itself was threatened and in 1477 the Venetians purchased a rather precarious peace for themselves and the Church by surrendering some towns on the Adriatic and several of the Greek Islands. The city of Otranto was captured and the Turks were threatening the walls of both Rome and Vienna. That he should remind his contemporaries of the efficacy of solemn prayer in the face of this danger says something for him as an inspired ecclesiastic as well as a political player.

Information such as the above and that which follows, all in its very specific detail, comes from a set of medieval records known as the Archbishops' Registers which recount the administrative system of the province of Canterbury.[111] The record is a product of an archbishop's central office, his chancery or secretariat (though it was not always called by those names). Most registers begin by a rehearsal of all the documents connected with the new archbishop's promotion to the see. Of these, the papal bulls of provision were of the first importance, and a special place was also often given to recording the reception of the *pallium*, a strip of white lamb's wool which signified that profession of obedience had been made to the Apostolic See. Until he had received this the archbishop could not perform certain acts such as taking part in the consecration of other bishops. Thus, when Archbishop Bourgchier (1454-86) had received the *pallium*, the register notes that he was welcomed in great state at

---

[111] The most comprehensive accounting of these records is Irene Churchill's The Administration Machinery of the Archbishopric of Canterbury (London, 1933) Vol. I, 4. The set of ordination and institution records are edited by F.R.H.du Boulay, The Register of Thomas Bourgchier (Canterbury and York Society, 1957).

the south door of St. Paul's cathedral with songs and music (*cum canticis et organis*) and led to the high altar before presiding over a meeting of Convocation.

After all the formalities of his election and provision were over the archbishop could proceed to appoint, or reappoint, his principal helpers such as his chancellor and auditor of Causes, the official of the Court of Canterbury, the commissary general of Canterbury, and many others. Men like these had tasks that required legal training and experience. Their duties were to assist the archbishop in carrying out his "jurisdictional" functions, which derived from his appointment, as opposed to his functions of "order," which were sacramental in character and derived from his ordination.

Such helpers held their posts during the archbishop's pleasure, and when he died their commissions lapsed, though they most frequently continued their work after reappointment by the new archbishop. Some of these assistants had work which involved the whole province, some belonged to the diocese of Canterbury alone. As for the diocese of Canterbury proper, though it was under the general jurisdiction of the archbishop, this jurisdiction was in certain ways shared between the archdeacon of Canterbury and the commissary general. Thus there were some churches where the archdeacon had the right to visit and to induct new incumbents, and others where he was excluded and where these tasks were performed by the commissary general. The archdeacon once appointed was irremovable, possessed "ordinary"

jurisdiction in his own right, held his own court and appointed his own officials. But the commissary general was the archbishop's own assistant and could be removed by him. His commission lapsed when the archbishop died.

All those who have so far been referred to assisted the archbishop in his function of jurisdiction. In brief, this amounted to seeing that benefices were kept filled with suitable incumbents, and to regulating the discipline of both clergy and laity through administrative action and through the ecclesiastical courts. Within the diocese a different set of functions belonged to the archbishop in respect of his "order." These may be summed up as the consecration or blessing of persons and things which might be performed only by a man in episcopal orders. Even here however, the archbishop had helpers in the shape of suffragan bishops. These had usually been ordained to the title of some remote or national see, in Ireland or in Wales, and spent their lives in several English dioceses performing clerical duties.[112]

From the early part of the 14th century the employment of a suffragan for such purposes became fairly common and the intention was that they should give help to the diocesan bishop on a temporary basis. Their appointment was made by a commission for a limited period and renewed from year to year and implied no tenure. The suffragan bishop had no place in that

---

112 A. Hamilton Thompson, The English Clergy and their Organization in the Later Middle Ages (Oxford, 1947), Appendix II.

diocese's administration; his indispensability came from the fact the he could perform ordinations, confirmations, consecrations of chapels and churchyards, consecration of sites polluted by bloodshed, consecration of the holy oil and chrism on Maundy Thursday and the blessing of numerous objects for sacred use.[113] Others of the diocesan administration could not. He was a general utility man with no jurisdiction outside his normal see. He could minister among the people but had neither legal nor canonical authority over the clergy, either to administer discipline or correct abuses. He was not exactly a busy man and sometimes exercised his functions in more than one diocese at a time. His lack of stature is exhibited by the fact that, when he presided at ordinations they took place, only in very rare instances, at the high altar; he was not to be mistaken for the regular bishop in full authority. His services were not paid by fee but by bestowal of the spoils of benefices given to him by the bishop, which might include rectories or prebends in a collegiate church or the headship of a hospital, all lucrative.[114]

---

[113] Thompson, 48-50

[114] Six suffragan bishops worked in succession for Archbishop Bourgchier: Richard Clerk, bishop of Ross, county Cork, acted until 1465, simultaneously while acting in Salisbury diocese; from 1465-67 his place was taken by John Green, bishop of Kilfenora, county Clare and who was an Augustinian canon of Leighs priory in Essex. He, too, worked and held churches in various dioceses, including York, Conventry, Litchfield, and Lincoln. The next suffragan was William Westkarre, bishop of Sidon in the patriarchy of Antioch, who was an Augustinian canon of Burscough, Lancashire and left the suffragan role having succeeded, in 1456, in becoming prior of Mottisfort in Hampshire. Westkarre was an Oxford master in theology and well thought of for his scholarship and administrative ability. Henry Cranebroke, prior of the Augustinian house of Combwell in Kent was at Canterbury until his death in 1474. He may have been a favorite of Bourgchier's if the evidence of the wealthy benefices are true. When he died his place was taken by Richard Martin, a superior of the Canterbury Franciscans. He held his first ordination in the diocese in 1474 and remained there until Bourgchier's death. He himself did not die until after 1498, when he is seen to be occupying spacious apartments in the Franciscan convent at Canterbury. Charles Cotton, The Grey Friar's of Canterbury (2nd ed, 1926). du Boulay, Register XIV. H.E.Salter, Chapters of the Augustinian Canons, Canterbury and York Society, Vol. XXIX, 99-104, 115, 117.

If there were difficulties among suffragan bishops, local bishops or archbishops the place where some of the difficulties and disagreements could be aired was at convocation, an ancient provincial assembly of the church (Canterbury was one of only two assemblies, the other being York, separate and distinct since the eighth century). The Register is quite full with the events of convocations, which, in written outline follow a clear pattern: convocation begins with the address to the Bishop of London, whose duty it was, as dean of the province, to communicate the call for convocation to other bishops. After the address comes an introductory paragraph setting out the reasons for the convocation. Here, the bishop expresses his reluctance to summon the clergy, regretting the inconvenience caused to them. But most of all he centers on the urgent problems or dangers which face the church and the realm. After the introduction comes the central and most important paragraph where the Bishop cites other bishops, deans and priors of cathedrals, abbots and elected priors, the archdeacons, chapters, convents, and clergy of their dioceses. They are required to appear before the archbishop in such a place on such a day to deal with matters set out in the introduction, to consent to those things agreed upon to be done concerning the church and to receive what is decided to be just or what the nature of the business requires.[115]

[115] Churchill, 18-32.

From the Register of Thomas Bourgchier the convocation minutes make it quite clear what his duties were. The clergy of the southern province met in convocation 13 times during Bourgchier's 32 years as archbishop. The minutes of three convocations are included in his register and indicate that the main orders were business (taxational, judicial and legislative) and the overwhelming question of the clergy's relationship with the king and the secular government.

In the first instance (taxation), the clergy were being asked for more money by the king, their own archbishop and by the Pope. The grant of a clerical tenth to the King was the usual outcome of a convocation in this period but the demands were increasing in frequency and in amount, in two ways. In the first place, the crown was no longer confining its tax demands to wartime. During earlier phases of the Hundred Years War periods of peace had been accompanied by lulls in taxation but there were no such lulls now. Tax demands were made more frequently in the reign of Henry VI than at any other time during the previous century and a half.

The other way which the crown put pressure on the church was by devising taxes designed to make up for the deficiencies of the out of date *Taxatio*. That old taxation document did not include property acquired by the church after 1291. Since then new benefices had been created - colleges and perpetual chantries, for example - and there had been shifts of wealth

which affected the value of tithes. These the crown was not officially taxing. But least acceptable of all, was a tax based on property which allowed the many unbeneficed clergy to get off scot-free.

The crown, therefore, set out to exploit what it saw as this untapped wealth of the clerical estate. A 1406 convocation was induced to grant, in addition to a tenth, a tax of 6 shillings and 8 pence to be levied on every chaplain, stipendary or salaried, every chantry chaplain, on vicars and clergy beneficed in cathedral or collegiate churches, and on every other beneficed person who commonly escaped payment of clerical taxes.[116] Thus, along with the efforts of the popes to tax Canterbury clergy for the crusades against the Turks, the southern province felt it was being rather hard pressed.

In judicial matters the Register reports on the Convocation of 1460 where a John Bredhill, rector of St. Nicholas' Church, Calais (still an English possession), was charged with holding a number of unspecified heretical opinions and warned to present himself daily before convocation until further notice. He seems neither to have been dismissed nor burned because the Archbishop's records show that he still held benefices when he died in 1471.[117] In the 1463 convocation Bourgchier was dealing with a chaplain, one Michael Gerdyn, accused of forging papal and other letters, and a certain Simon Harrison, a Dominican, who was accused

[116] A.K. McHardy, "Clerical Taxation in Fifteenth-Century England: The Clergy as Agents of the Crown", The Church Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century, ed. by Barrie Dobson, (Gloucester, 1984), 174.
[117] Du Boulay, Register 86-87, 305.

of saying mass in Lambeth parish church although he was, by his own admission, in acolyte's orders. In cases like this censure or fine or penance were judgments rendered by Bourgchier.[118]

On the legislative side, convocation minutes in the register record few entries, but the ones entered have common themes. In 1463, Archbishop Bourgchier decreed that lay officers making arrests and acting violently in churches or consecrated places should incur, *ipso facto*, the sentence of excommunication, with absolution reserved to the diocesan bishop. At the same time the archbishop, by his metropolitan authority and with the unanimous consent of the bishops and clergy in the provincial council, promulgated a penal statute against clergy who wore kinds of clothing officially considered scandalous on a cleric.[119] Bourgchier was concerned that the younger among the clergy affected the manners of the laity and indeed accused them of "becoming fops, with a sword and dagger dangling on the one side, and an embroidered purse hanging from a gilt girdle on the other". Hook, Bourgchier's biographer, records evidence from British Museum manuscripts which enlarge upon this rather interesting form of dress by indicating that their cassock was supplanted by a doublet, their shoes were monstrously long with turned up toes and they "indulged in reveling drunkenness and low scenes of debauchery".[120] It seems that by appearing with lay dress over some portion of their

---

[118] du Boulay, Register, 100, 102.
[119] Du Boulay, Register, 108-11.
[120] Hook, 209.

monastic attire they avoided violation of the letter of the law which in spirit they disregarded, about which Bourgchier felt rather strongly.

The constitution against lay officers takes up much discussion in the Bourgchier convocation minutes because it reflects not simply specific cases of violence but touches upon two allied, but separate, problems confronting the church in 15th century England. The first of these was the interference of secular officers with clerical liberties, particularly the arrest and indictment in lay courts of men in holy orders. Bourgchier called his first convocation in 1460, five years after being made archbishop and he called it to deal not only with the conduct of his clergy but with the prosecution, and what he felt to be persecution, of his clergy.

At the session in May written articles from the bishops asked that two categories of people should be declared excommunicate: sheriffs, including with them other officials and juries who caused priests to be indicted on false charges; and those who cited clergy to secular courts by writs of *premunire facias* and *alia injusta brevia.*[121] Neither complaint was new. In the latter case common law courts were felt to be anti-clerical and would weigh the scales against the plaintiffs in these cases. Benefit generally preserved clergy from execution, although not from arrest or trial or being outlawed consequent to indictment.[122] From as early as 1434, the

---

[121] du Boulay, Register, 85-86: those things which they could guard against ahead of time and other brief injustices.
[122] L.C. Gabel, Benefit of Clergy in England in the Late Middle Ages (New York, 1969), 30-60. C.B. Frith, "Benefit of Clergy in the time of Edward IV" The English Historical Review, XXXII, 1917, 175-91.

convocation of Canterbury (and York) expressed its fear about both forms of judicial harassment, and petitioned parliament for remedy. In 1449 it was conceded that individual priests maliciously indicted for rape might have the king's letters of pardon. But even this was a result of a tradeoff by convocation granting to the king a polltax on chaplains traditionally exempt from taxation. In 1460 when Bourgchier again brought attention to these two serious grievances his trade off was that without some relief and change for his clergy the convocation would be unwilling to give any priority to Henry VI's request for a subsidy. For nearly thirty years Henry's government had allowed clergy to be persecuted by what might be proven as false indictment; such allowance may have been the final reason Archbishop Bourgchier and some of his suffragans attached themselves politically to the House of York, unable to rescue their clergy from the increasingly mad Henry.

Edward IV would seem, on the surface anyway, to have responded to Bourchier's requests, for his early declaration to his first parliament (1461) developed the thesis that England's recent tribulations were God's doom for the Lancastrian rule.[123] What in fact Edward was doing was developing propaganda designed to recruit clerical enthusiasm for the new political order; what he was not doing was acting with any speed in remedying the grievances articulated by Bourgchier and his Bishops.[124]

---

[123] K.B. McFarlane, "The Wars of the Roses", England in the Fifteenth Century: Collected Essays (London, 1981), 97.
[124] du Boulay, Register, 93-4.

However, in November 1462, the convocation of Canterbury presumably agreed to a charter (not a law) that promised to relieve all clergy in holy orders from the two perils which had threatened them throughout Henry VI's reign. It offered a radical solution for the long-standing complaint about malicious indictment because it stated that all common law prosecutions of ordained clergy were forbidden; those persons would be tried only in church courts.[125] That, however, seems to have made little difference in what is clearly a preoccupation of the archbishops of both Canterbury and York; clergy were still being indicted and arrested. The two primates and their clergy, in 1476 thus requested a bull from Pope Sixtus IV which was intended to forbid the arrest and trial of members of the clergy by secular authorities under pains of excommunication; but in 1481 Bourgchier was still being asked by convocation to urge the King to restrain his judges and officers.[126] At the very end of his episcopacy Bourgchier made another attempt to win some kind of recognition or enforcement of Edward's concession; in return for two clerical tenths, Richard III confirmed Edward's charter but his parliament agreed to nothing.

The charter in 1462 under Edward IV was an expression of royal benevolence in the flush of a new political order but the king's sympathetic intention, however genuine, did not put an end to his subjects' litigation's against the clergy, nor his judges from hearing their suits. The public disregard of the charter points up two things: the attitude that society had taken toward

---

[125] du Boulay, Register, 102-7.
[126] du Boulay, Register, 134-5.

the clergy since clearly it was difficult for most Englishmen in the province of Canterbury (and elsewhere) to accept the lifestyle of the majority of the clergy around them, and the impotence of the crown to introduce change without parliamentary support. Does it also suggest that bishops were out of touch with the concerns of their own parishoners? In particular, the declining number of ordinands to the secular priesthood in Bourgchier's province reflected the growth of popular anticlericalism.[127] Despite his royal connections and his political role as not being totally partisan, Bourgchier could not win any parliamentary enactment intended to protect his clergy. The ineffectual Yorkist charter was buried with Richard III but events which would lead up to the reform of the church itself were not far behind.

The difficulty which the church was experiencing was not merely the interference of secular officers with clerics and clerical jurisdiction, but lay in the ineffectiveness of the law of excommunication itself, not only because it could not stop attacks upon the ecclesiastical world from outside, but also because it was becoming an unmanageable weapon among ecclesiastics themselves.

Bourgchier's Register shows that the bishop's articles of 1460 are mainly directed against sheriffs, undersheriffs, false jurors, and other "violators of the Church's liberties" but their main concern is with the ineffectiveness of the spiritual penalties. What the records speak of is

---

[127] R.L. Storey, "Gentleman-Bureaucrats", Profession, Vocation and Cultures in Later Medieval England ed. C.H. Clugh (London, 1982), 97-109. Churchill, Administration, 4.

the defect in the procedure of excommunication and public name calling. They request that in future transgressors should be summoned to convocation and, already having been excommunicated, should be openly denounced and sent back among their neighbors under their publicly known censures until they seek absolution.

This may not have been a realistic remedy, as an entry in the registry indicates. Because of the rather haphazard and in fact defective publication and carrying out of the censure "many of our people believe themselves to be bound by sentences of excommunication, and for this reason [believe] grace is withdrawn from the people and great discords result."[128] That absolution, not excommunication, was the end of the procedure seems not to have been clear. The spiritual, and hence, the public order of the realm depended much on the understanding of the gravity and meaning of this censure.

The law of excommunication was ineffective largely because it was too severe and applied as penalty for an ever-widening number of cases; there were too many canons which carried excommunication, and frequent use bred contempt. But this was not a problem unique to Bourgchier's reign. Evidence shows that as early as the twelfth century the Third Lateran Council (1179) had warned that sentences of excommunication were not to be used lightly and the First Council of Lyons (1245) had to clarify that mere association with an

[128] du Boulay, Register, xxxiii. An ecclesiastical censure excludes those subjected to it from the communion of the faithful as well as other possible deprivations. It does not suggest that it has power to severe the union between the soul and God, since that union is held to depend on the effect of God's sanctifying grace and therefore unaffected by any act of the church. It is therefore possible to be divorced from the church but not from God.

excommunicate did not mean excommunication for the associate. Almost 200 years later Englishmen were still talking about association with an excommunicate which made excommunication sound like an infectious disease. At Basel in 1418 the council ruled that only the most notorious and explicitly denounced excommunicate was to be avoided by other people.

During Bourgchier's archbishopric the number of general constitutions to which the penalty of immediate excommunication applied was very high but he made efforts to lessen these numbers somewhat by suspending the automatic excommunication attached to five areas which affected the clergy themselves. Of these the first had to do with wills. It forbade regular clergy to charge for the probate and registration of wills, regulated the amounts which might be taken by clerks and scribes for writing wills, and prohibited the clerical executors from holding on to the goods of the testator. The second constitution regulated the sums which archdeacons, their officials and clerks might charge for providing letters of ordination, institution and induction. A third item controlled what could be charged by archdeacons and their officials for inducting new incumbents. A fourth and famous one was the law limiting the wages which chaplains might demand and the last was to prohibit married clerks and laymen from acting as agents of persons with "moral or spiritual jurisdiction" when the latter were being investigated for improper behaviour. It would be risky to suggest that Bourgchier was successful in curbing the above named abuses since one only need read the register of

John Morton, who followed Bourgchier as archbishop, to understand that even into the sixteenth century abuses of the convocation's constitutions were frequent (documents 31, 42 of Morton's Register) thus convocation decrees seem to have made little difference.

But a question suggests itself: would the church rigorously enforce a regulation that limited a source of its revenue? One of the principle rights of the see of Canterbury was the probate of two kinds of wills: those of deceased persons with notable goods in more than one diocese of the province and intestate wills. Wills, or more strictly speaking testaments, are many sided documents and present an intimate picture of the life and society of a testator's times: they name his wife, his children, his bastards, the members of his household; they detail the furniture and cups in his house, the horses in his stables, the sheep in his pastures; they specify the works of piety and mercy to be done for his soul, the restoration of the tithe he has forgotten, his gifts to churches and chantries, the vestments, the plate and fine linen left for masses, the wax he donates, the books and objects of art he bequeaths.[129]

The lawyer of the church is interested not only in the form of the document - how it is protected, implemented and recorded - but he also requires to know how much has to go to the kinsmen, come to the church, or be spent in works of mercy and charity. The church's

---

[129] Margaret McGregor, Bedforshire Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 1383-1548, Publication of the Bedforshire Historical Record Society 58 (1979) 1-191.

legal basis was clear enough: it simply exercised its right to see that the goods of the dead were administered for the repose of the testator's soul.

As executor and registrar, the church indicated those groups of people who were to administer the goods of the intestate wills as well as those who were to collect goods or debts until administration could be granted. Permission was sometimes given to spend part of the money on funeral expenses. Because Bourgchier's archbishopric coincided with the civil wars his register indicates that some of the greatest lords of the land sometimes died before they were able to make a will. Bourgchier's record includes the estate of Edmund, Duke of Somerset (killed at St. Albans) and Richard, Duke of York (killed at Wakefield). Though nearly all of the commissions were issued in Bourgchier's name the actual long-time testamentary assessor and judge was one John Stokes, referred to more than once in the Paston Letters.[130] While wills themselves are not at issue at the moment, only Archbishop Bourgchier's role in executing them, suffice it to say that the Register reveals that their execution was essential to the Church and discussion shows that such execution was often cause for distrust and even antipathy toward avaricious clergy.[131]

The next ecclesiastical duty that takes up much of Bourgchier's register is the institution to benefices and ordination covering the years 1454 to 1483. These entries are worth a short

---

130 The Paston Letters ed. by Norman Davis (Oxford,1983), letters no. 258, 338, 347, 351, 525.1.
131 du Boulay, Register, 170-1, 183, 200.

analysis for what they reveal about the kind of benefices, the clergy assigned to them, and the actual conditions of ordination, thus a reflection of the state of the clergy at the time of the 1483 bidding prayer. The majority of entries are notes of the institution of incumbents to benefices within the diocese and the immediate jurisdiction of Canterbury including the Calais jurisdiction. The total of different benefices in the Canterbury jurisdictions was 371, of which 207 were rectories, 125 vicarages, 31 chantries, 4 college benefices, 3 hospital benefices and the single archdeaconry of Canterbury.[132] Twenty seven of these were in the Calais jurisdiction, under the King's patronage. Benefices seem to have been vacated approximately once every ten years on average during Bourgchier's archbishopric, more often from resignation than from death. If incumbents resigned for reason of age or ill health they could look forward to a pension from the revenues of their old benefices, a kind of social security provided in few other situations.

[132] The 1483 Bidding prayer does not mention archdeacons but since he is an important figure, he needs a footnote. He seemed to be less than a likable man (for reasons that will become clear), or at least the position he held seems to be regarded with less than positive esteem. He would have been an officer attached to the cathedral church whose main duty was supervision of the churches of the diocese held by the Bishop. Archdeacons seem to have been unpopular, essentially because of the grasping way they dealt with parishioners. Most were, first and foremost, ecclesiastical lawyers. They were not theologians nor Biblical scholars. The spiritual comfort of their parishioners meant much less to them than the fee due to them in each parish, particularly a fee in lieu of hospitality to them and their attendants when they made their yearly visitation. The archdeacon or his deputy (later in the 15th century) was the business officer who oversaw the collection of fees and the punishment (usually a fine) of those who defaulted. Chaucer's summoner, a most undesirable but not exceptional member of this class, was attached to the service of an archdeacon and was the person who exacted fees and offered the easy avoidance of ecclesiastical correction (punishment) through money payment.

The educational quality of the clergy in the province of Canterbury during Bourgchier's time shows a reasonably high degree of qualification: about 21 percent were university graduates having qualifications in theology, canon or civil law or both, or arts alone. There was one doctor of medicine, one bachelor of music, one "Scholar of Oxford", and 94 who were described merely as master. The well known late medieval predominance of ecclesiastical lawyers over theologians is borne out in this small sample. What is noteworthy is that in a large number of cases the patron of the above individuals was the archbishop himself.[133]

While on the surface what looks like an admirable situation - having such qualified men to minister and spread the gospel - in fact many of these men were usually absent from their benefice, involved in secular duties elsewhere. To counter any suggestion that they might not be doing their job, the argument went that these clergymen were contributing even greater benefits, benefits for the whole country rather than for only a defined or circumscribed parish or dioceses. True. Few except the clergy were qualified to fill offices, or to discharge the duties for which an educated mind was required. As well, there is possibly a certain logic to the clergy becoming jurists, diplomats, ambassadors, chancellors and judges but many took on these positions at the double expense of the parish: it paid for their upkeep but did not benefit from their presence. The priest in this kind of position simply abandoned his duty as pastor of the flock of Christ.

---

[133] du Boulay, Register, 225, 260, 271, 324, 330, 335.

As Bourgchier's register indicates the clergy's heightened sense of the state's need of them continued well into the time when it was no longer necessary for them to function in that role. If they had then returned to their clerical duties the hostility toward them, very clear in the 15th century, would not have been as heightened.

The clergy, however, had persuaded themselves of two things: that with their withdrawal from secular affairs the Church would be greatly exposed to the attacks of her heretical enemies, and that the clergy itself would suffer a loss of dignity if excluded from the highest offices of the land. It was quite in keeping with his image of himself and the history of the archbishopric, then, that Bourgchier should be appointed Lord High Chancellor to the King and that he should serve several kings as a clerical statesman.

It is also quite in keeping with the history of the position that when the king's exchequer was low, the archbishopric provided Bourgchier's salary as minister of state, not the king, and that when Bourgchier was due to retire a pension would be provided from the same source, not from the king. It was, however, the king (several over Bourgchier's tenure) and his court that Bourgchier seems most interested in during his term in office. His Register reflects this secular preoccupation as its ordination court records show that he was never present for ordinations which took place in his cathedral. Only a small proportion of clerics beneficed in the

Canterbury jurisdictions seems to have been ordained within the diocese, none seemingly supported by Bourgchier.[134] Several reasons might account for this low statistic: Canterbury benefices could have been filled by clerks originating in other dioceses; some clerks were ordained in the diocese but might have to wait some years for a benefice so that the record of their institution may show up in the records of Morton, the archbishop after Bourgchier. What is significant in Bourgchier's Register is that most secular clerks whose ordination and institution are both recorded were ordained fairly early in his reign and the total number who were presumably intended for work in the diocese seems insufficient in itself to meet the numbers needed through death or resignation. The conclusion, from the fact that the register shows that benefices were filled, meant that many of the clergy must have been ordained elsewhere than in the diocese of Canterbury. Given the information about the physical richness and desirability of benefices in the province, and about the almost total political preoccupation and therefore non-resident status of Bourgchier, these were, on the one hand, clergy who desired to be part of this diocese but who, on the other hand, had to come from an already ordained status elsewhere since it could not be carried out under Bourgchier.

Of the few cases where the incumbent's ordination in the diocese of Canterbury can be traced an interesting event is obvious: the patron who presented the clerk to his benefice was only rarely the same person as the patron who had presented him for ordination. A desired

---

[134] du Boulay, Register, 249, 1122.

commitment to the welfare of the parishioners took second place to the political and economic priorities which a certain benefice might provide anywhere in the diocese. To receive major orders a clerk must possess either private means, the guarantee of a religious house that the ordained would have some means of support, or a patron who would provide the benefice. In the latter case there is much evidence in the Register that the patronage of parish churches was a commodity, not only in Canterbury but everywhere else, and often part of manorial rights. There are also indications in the Register that monasteries as well as lay patrons were sometimes giving or selling the rights of next presentation (p 261, 247, 354, and 357).

One last aspect of Bourgchier's archbishopric is left for consideration: his role in education and as patron of the Arts. Hook mentions that "the archbishop ...was a literary man and an encourager of learned men"(311-355). Because Canterbury was one of the two richest sees in England (the other being Winchester) this affected the patronage at Bourgchier's disposal.[135] He himself had studied at Oxford and became at separate times chancellor of both Cambridge and Oxford. One of his main tasks as such was to investigate and attempt to change the accusations made of both those institutions: that clerical learning was of little regard, obvious from the scandalous lack of discipline of clerks and monks and from the abuse of church patronage which resulted in neglected parishes (Hook, 291).

---

[135] Helen Jewell, "English Bishops as Educational Benefactors in the Late Fifteenth Century", The Church, Politics and Patronage ed. by Dobson, 146.

Bourgchier undertook, on the part of himself and his suffragans, to enact a regulation that no one should be admitted into holy orders within the province of Canterbury who did not produce a testimonial, either from the archdeacon or the chancellor of the University, attesting to his education. Whether or not they were personally interested in education, medieval bishops were the leading officials of an institution which theoretically provided some kind of learning, carried out under provincial and diocesan legislation. Within the clerical body certain standards of literacy were hoped for, and there were points in the cleric's career in which some testing was considered appropriate. Ordinands had to be examined in literacy by the archdeacon of the diocese of Canterbury and they could be refused for lack of learning, or their ordination made conditional upon further attendance at school. Those clerics aspiring to have charge of parishes might undergo further examination and in the same manner institution to a benefice might also be conditional upon learning. That both conditions occurred with some frequency sheds light on the range of problems involved in providing educated clergy to the province.

The most common defects were lack of knowledge of the doctrines of the church, illiteracy, and having little or no acquaintance with the scriptures. The prescriptions for remedying this vary: Sir John Brice on being instituted as rector of Weston in Gordano (Somerset) in April 1453 was, "in view of his present lack of knowledge," required to study for "two whole years

in the school at Wells," and to offer himself for examination in Easter week each year; Sir John Burgeys, on being instituted as rector of Hornblotton (Somerset) in March 1456, was "diligently to apply himself, for a whole year, to obtaining at least a grammatical and literal understanding of the Holy Scriptures, and the daily round of divine office," and to be re-examined before Easter 1457.[136]

In 1455 Archbishop Bourgchier had recognized that there were in the diocese among the secular clergy '*idioti et indocti, litterarium imperite ac peve porsus ignari*',those who were ignorant yet dangerously entrusted with the care of souls[137]. But to know the extent of this is very difficult because evidence is neither clear nor complete, the biggest lack of available information being for those ordained and instituted who were not university men.

It could be assumed that because of his relationship with Oxford and Cambridge, Bourgchier regularly had the educational standards of churchmen in the province before his eyes and would know something of what was taking place in his province. As well, the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 required cathedrals, and other churches with sufficient resources, to maintain school masters to teach clerks, poor scholars and children the elementary articles of the faith. While this provision seem to have been followed in England in spirit more strongly than in fact, grammar schools were set up within Bourgchier's province, the register indicating new

---

[136] Jewell, 148.
[137] du Boulay, Register, 206.

statutes as well as regulation of fees. It appears, however, that Bourchier would not have instituted these himself, leaving it, instead, to bishops who were interested and involved in all sorts of educational matters: testing the abilities of priestly candidates, investigating the teaching facilities in an abbey or priory, licensing those to teach in particular places and approving the regulations associated with ecclesiastical foundations.[138]

Bourgchier was a friend and supporter of John Caxton and of John Dunstable who, if not the inventor of modern musical counterpoint, was the great encourager of it in England. As well, Bourgchier had a number of close literary friends, among them the great chronicler of the fifteenth century, Thomas Arnold. Bourgchier left, to both Oxford and Cambridge, a bequest of 100 pounds each as a fund that "poor scholars may be able to borrow of these monies." His will shows that he was an extremely wealthy man, and a generous one.

It may be concluded that Episcopal patronage of educational causes, educators, or literate endeavors of various kinds forms one of the most practical and promising aspects of the church hierarchy's activities in the late 15th century. As well, it may be argued that this was an area of activity embraced deliberately, sincerely, and with some very real appreciation for the consequences which might accrue. To close Bourgchier's review as Archbishop of

---

[138] The Wells Cathedral Statutes provide a revealing bit of information about cathedral schools for boy choiristers. While they tend to talk about "obstacles to discipline" and how to alleviate these, the statutes end by promising forty days indulgence, under appropriate conditions, to those of the dioceses who helped the choristers. This seems an ingenious way of financing an educational system. A. Watkin. Dean Cosyn and Wells Cathedral Miscellanea. (Somerset Record Society, lvi. 1941) 98-109.

Canterbury at the time of the 1483 bidding prayer is to suggest that perhaps he was such an archbishop: aware of what changes could come to an institution needful of change and a participant in some of those changes.

It would, however, take more than the affable, peace making archbishop of Canterbury to change a system that had become less involved with spirituality than with legalities. The records of the period of Bourgchier's archbishopric, in their composition and in the character of the documents which they contain, reflect an ecclesiastical system which was firmly entrenched and immobile. Over time it had largely been built up as a system of correction and prevention, not one of spiritual growth. The highest officers of the church exercised powers which were preeminently judicial: their pastoral care was not characterized by evangelical exhortation or biblical/theological education but in bringing their subjects to task for defaults against the spiritual code with a reward and punishment system executed with strict legal propriety. In the eyes of Bourgchier's parishioners the episcopate were first and foremost judges whose powers, carried out by themselves or their deputies, were corrective and enforced by pains and penalties. The benign idea of a father in God and a shepherd of souls, with the tenderness and patience which it implies, may have existed in theory but the prevailing aspect of episcopate paternity was its severity, and the attitude of the pastor to his flock was correction not compassion.

The province of Canterbury was really no exception to the rule; each diocese, in its internal government, was a microcosm of the English church as a whole. That governing body was, in theory, a corporation of clergy whose essential and foremost duty was to maintain a continual succession of services, in choir and at altars, for the benefit of the living and for their souls when dead. But outside of church the interests of this corporation, whose governing members by training were for the most part better lawyers than theologians, were occupied largely by matters of financial and legal business: the maintenance of the fabric of the church (whether carried out or not), building projects which required the constant retention of masons, management of large estates and endowments, trade, patronage, discipline of clergy, defense of the rights of the church against litigation, and the exercise of jurisdiction over tenants (their real spiritual subject). All these, over against the main object for which the church was founded, implied a preoccupation with interests which were mainly secular.

The attitude of the Crown and other patrons to prebends as convenient sources of income for statesman and government officers stocked (overstocked?) churches with men whose interests lay elsewhere. The tendency, developed by the 13th century, of abusing appointments to benefices was thriving by the fifteenth; men appointed to rectories and vicarages were more and more absent from their living, either because they were at some university, were in the household or in the train of some great nobleman, or as was most common, holding several livings and attending to none. Prior to Bourgchier's time, in General Council and by papal

decree, stringent rules had been drawn up to regulate the evils of absenteeism. Non-residence, where cure of souls was involved, required a dispensation since the vicar at his institution had taken an oath that he would reside in this benefice.[139] Entries in Bourgchier's Register indicate, through admonition or injunction, that these orders had frequently been broken.

The influence of the Church in parliament, the fact that the Crown sought for and found its most competent ministers among the bishops and clergy and the position of the king as founder and patron of Episcopal sees necessarily gave the crown a powerful voice in the nomination of the episcopate. Consequently, when a vacancy occurred in a see the practice was for the king to transmit his wishes to the pope with the recommendation of a suitable nominee. This was neither a new custom nor a means for certain papal acceptance, but by the 15th century in most instances the royal candidate was accepted or a compromise arranged. Bourgchier's appointment had been no exception to this arrangement.

Thus anti-papal legislation, discussed earlier, did not render the pope's part in this process obsolete. The claim of the Holy See to take part in such appointments and to stamp them with its seal of authority had been recognized too long to be neglected or rejected. The truth, however, may be found in the words of Thomas Gascoigne, a critic of the Church in his day, and one who could say that there were three things about bishoprics in the latter half of the

---

[139] Irene Churchhill, "The Archbishop and the Cure of Souls", Canterbury Administration Vol.1, 95. The Administration Machinery of the Archbishopric of Canterbury illustrated from original records (London, 1933), Vol. 1, 95.

15th century: a bishop in England is made by "the will of the King, the will of the pope or the court of Rome, and the money paid in large quantities to that court....".[140] The diocesan machinery went on as usual. Archbishops and bishops of the later 15th century reflected the steady growth in the influence of the Crown over the choice of spiritual rulers of the church and led somewhat naturally to the crisis which befell the church in the reign of Henry VIII. It is not fair to suggest, however, that the trial of strength between the spiritual and temporal powers is the only aspect in the prelude to the Reformation. The internal condition of the English Church, that is the state of things which the diocesan administration reflects, shows a church in need of change. It may but may not be unfair to read the bidding prayer as a pleaful and heartfelt prayer in its request that "God of his mercy give to them [the Bishopric] grace so to govern and rule holy chirche."

*Monastic Organization*

> Ye shal also pray for al Abbottis, Pryours, Monkys, Chanons, Frerys, and for alle men and wymen of religyon, in what ordre, estate, or degree that they stonde in, from the hyest astate to the lowest degree.

While there was still, by the time of this bidding prayer in the late 15th century, a very large number of monastic institutions scattered all over England, their large expansion of the 11th

[140] Thompson, 24.

century was slackening. Not only were the numbers of new foundations fewer but they were essentially smaller in scale than those set up in the hundred or so years which immediately followed the Norman Conquest.[141] Part of the reason for this was financial: new monasteries were now founded by people from the squirearchy, who did not have at their disposal the huge estates of the early Norman barons. Another part was consolidation: older monastic orders wanted to consolidate the strong position they had by now acquired. Though reduced in number monasteries were still a potent force in the country and monastic estates formed an essential element in the structure of English political power as well as in the social pattern of the land. England's imperial armies could be recruited from the tenants of lands belonging to bishops and abbots; monasteries and monastic estates could provide havens of peace in a land otherwise dominated by political feuding; and the choirs of men who prayed for kings were patronized since fervent and continuous prayer was still part of the hoped-for safe passage to the gate of heaven.

At the heart of every monastic rule lay an echo of the words in the Acts of the Apostles which defined the life of the apostles and early disciples - a body of believers, men and women "united in heart and soul..." who claimed no possessions but held "everything...in common "

[141] Both an increase in English wealth and population contributed indirectly to the spread of monasticism, but it had other causes as well. In some instances a monastery was founded after military victory either as an act of thanksgiving or as reparation for the lives lost. In other cases one would be founded as part of penance (witness Henry II who founded three abbeys as a result of his involvement in the murder of Thomas Becket), as a substitute for a journey to the Holy Land, as a charitable gesture from someone with wealth who hoped for a peerage, or to placate a wife. The motives were certainly varied and might occur in various combinations; evidence is not really very conclusive that would lead to suggesting there was any pattern. Dickinson puts the early number of monasteries at 61 and by the end of the twelfth century at 1100. Dickinson, 95.

(Acts 4:32). The question that has to be asked, even before the 15th century is : can the good life, the Christian life, be led in a world of earthly joys and pleasures or must it involve renunciation, stern discipline, an ascetic life, and celibacy? Chaucer's monk, with his cheerful disinclination to follow rules that were too strict for the more relaxed ways of the modern world, would suggest that it cannot.

> The reule of seint Maure or of seint Beneit,
> By cause that it was old and somdel streit
> This ilke Monk leet olde thynges pace,
> And heeld after the newe world the space.[142]

He has provided the starting point for many discussions of late medieval monasticism. Because the characterization is so vivid, some have believed him copied from a real personality.[143] For others he is typical of the monks of his time, representing institutions that had replaced the rigour, zeal, and piety of former times with the comfortable existence of celibate gentlemen's clubs. In any assessment of the role of the monk the quiet satire of the portrait raises intriguing issues based on the ideals of the Christian life which the monks were originally committed to uphold. Let the model for the role of monk be found in a Benedictine monastery, a community vowed to the lifelong service of God according to the precepts set out in the Rule of St. Benedict; these rules were composed in 6th century Italy and kept fresh in the minds of its followers by daily readings from its provisions in Chapter.

---

[142] F.N.Robinson (ed.), The Works of Geoffery Chaucer, 2nd edn.(London, 1957), 18-19.
[143] D.Knowles, Orders II, 365-366.

On his profession as a monk, the follower of the Rule must promise "stability, conversion of his life, and obedience". [144] He must renounce personal property knowing that henceforth his life is to be one of self-denial, chastity, humility, and frequent prayer within the enclosure of the monastery; he must render absolute obedience to the abbot as Christ's representative there. He should practice silence at all times, and "when he speaks, do so gently and without laughter, humbly and seriously, in few and sensible words, and without clamour".[145] The most important activity of each day was participation in the Divine Office, the set round of prayers, lessons and psalms which brought the community together in the choir of their church for the night office after midnight and for the seven offices of the day. "Let nothing be put before the work of God". But liturgical prayer formed only one part of an ordered existence, in which meditative reading and manual labour (including domestic duties) were also prescribed.[146] There was necessary variety, then, even within an unchanging routine.

The monastery described by the Rule was a largely self-contained community where the concept of the communal life embraced virtually all aspects of the monks' existence. They worshipped together, slept where practicable in a common dormitory or in case of sickness in a special room provided as an infirmary. Property and the resources needed for the brethrens' support were held in corporate ownership under the controlling hand of the abbot, himself elected by the community. Individual monks were strictly forbidden private possessions, "this

[144] J.McCann (trans.),The Rule of St. Benedict,(London,1976),4.
[145] Rule, Chapter 7.
[146] Rule, Chapter 48.

most wicked vice",[147] though here as in other matters a certain discretion was left to the abbot. The corollary of this was that all necessities were to be supplied from the common store and guidelines were laid down governing the quantity and quality of the food and clothing to be provided. Adequate but frugal fare, sufficient yet inexpensive clothing was the aim. While wine was allowed, self-denial was expected in the matter of meat.[148] Meals were to be eaten in silence in the common refectory with readings from suitably edifying books during the course of the meal. The abbot alone normally ate elsewhere in order to entertain guests and pilgrims at his table. In the absence of guests, however, he might vary the routine of at least some of the monks by an invitation to share his meal.

The abbot of the Rule was the father of the monastery, the head of the family of monks with ultimate control over all aspects of its life. Decisions on all important matters were taken by him, though he must consider the counsel of the community. Appointments to all offices within the abbey were in his hands. As this last statement implies, however, the running of the monastery demanded delegation of responsibilities for its successful operation. In a large community the abbot would have a deputy, the prior, and deans to assist the supervision of the religious life; a senior monk would be appointed to take charge of the novices during their period of probation and training. Supplies were taken care of by the cellarer, in essence the keeper of the household. The guest-house was to be in the charge of another brother; its

---

[147] Rule, Chapter 33.
[148] "Except the sick who are very weak, let all abstain from the flesh of four-footed animals."

kitchen, which was separate from the community's and also served the abbot, was manned by more monks. There are thus the beginnings in the Rule of the administrative structure which was to become highly organized in later medieval monastic houses of any size.

Service of God, enclosed from the distractions of the world, not service of a wider society as a welfare agency, was the primary objective of the monastic community. The Rule views excursions by the monks beyond the monastery's walls with disfavour and subjects them to the strict control of the abbot. However, suitable hospitality was to be provided including accommodation and meals at the abbot's table. Charitable relief at the monastery's gate and a welcome for pilgrims necessarily placed some strain on the community's ability to live apart from the world, but attempts were made in the Rule to minimize contacts between monks and visitors.

However, in worldly terms, the success of early medieval monasticism meant that the monasteries attracted patrons who endowed them with wealth in the expectation of spiritual gain; monasteries thus became the owners of large estates, of manors and churches, an important part of society and its economy. Seclusion from the world had to be tempered by the demands of estate administration and the secular obligations attached to the ownership of land. Abbots of major houses became great magnates, subject to the demands of rulers for

secular service, and increasingly separated from the communities of which they were the spiritual fathers.

Growth in the size and magnificence of the monastic church reflected changes of emphasis in observance of the Rule. Those patrons who provided the resources to build to the greater glory of God expected a return for their outlay, the prayers of the monks for the souls of themselves, their families, and society at large. The monasteries became the great centers of organized prayer and intercession for society, qualified for this role by the fact that the monastic life was regarded as the only clear way to salvation. The liturgy became increasingly elaborate, masses multiplied and time spent in church on the Divine Office was considerably increased.

Under such a regime there could be little time for the other activities prescribed by the Rule: manual labour and sacred reading. But manual labour as a regular part of monastic life had been undermined by another development, that of copying manuscripts. With their facilities for study and writing the monasteries developed as centers of learning as well as worship, a pattern supreme until the middle of the $12^{th}$ century. After that the monks were to find themselves eclipsed by the secular scholars of the universities, and in the $13^{th}$ century, by the friars.

The presence of the Black Monks at Oxford was a belated response to 13th century developments. These include the high esteem in which university studies were held and the challenge of the friars, who themselves had rapidly become intellectual orders with major centers at the universities. The university monk may be seen as a positive adaptation to these challenges however, official acceptance of a widespread relaxation of the Rule undermined both the intellectual and spiritual benefits that might have accrued. The following serves as example: at least from the end of the 12th century St. Benedict's prohibition against meat eating had been increasingly disregarded.[149] Now the Black Monks were officially permitted to eat meat on a regular basis four days a week, except during the four weeks of Advent and the nine weeks between Septuagesima and Easter. That this was a breach of the Rule was underlined by the regulations governing its practice: meat was only to be eaten in a dining room other than the refectory, and only half of the community was to be absent from the refectory at a time. But such restrictions did little more than preserve appearances and mocked the Rule itself.

Similarly difficult to restrain were other developments which eroded the fully common life of Benedictine monasteries and blurred the dividing line between the lifestyle of monks and that of colleges of secular priests. The first of these was increased control of private funds and more individual privacy. The abbot had long had his own private establishment and with his

[149] D.Knowles, The Religious Orders in England,I,pp17-21.

external concerns and absences from the cloister he had ceased to exercise close paternal control over the monastic family envisaged by the Rule. Other members of the community then often secured their own separate quarters in the house, beginning with the prior, and continuing in the 14th century with returned graduates in theology and senior monastic officials. By the end of the century the monastic dormitory was being partitioned into private cells.

Concurrently the "wage system" [150] had been introduced and in the 14th century payment of a fixed allowance of money replaced the system of providing clothing from a common store.[151] In addition, individual monks began to be paid for various services performed in the monastery, so that monastic officials might now receive fees for the offices they held and for masses said at endowed chantries. In these and other ways [152] the English Benedictines had by the 15th century moved a long distance from the reality of renunciation of the world that in earlier centuries had brought them admiration, patronage, and influence. Material comfort appears larger in their lifestyle than fervor and asceticism.

---

[150] This is Knowles' phrase in The Religious Orders in England, II, ch. 18, where these developments are discussed in detail.
[151] Knowles, The Religious Orders in England, I, 287-89. The clothing allowance was generally in the neighbourhood of one pound in the early fifteenth century.
[152] R.H. Snape, English Monastic Finances in the Later Middle Ages, Cambridge, 1926, ch. VI.

For many of Chaucer's contemporaries the worldliness of the church of their day was commonplace, its wealth the object of repeated attacks in a time of heavy taxation.[153] A bill said to have been presented to parliament in the early part of the 15th century (1410) suggests that "these worldly clerks, bishops, abbots and priors, who are such worldly lords be put to live by their spiritualities; for they…do not do the office of true curates as prelates should, nor do they help the poor commons with their lordship as true secular lords should nor do they live in penance nor in bodily travail as true religious should, by means of their possessions". [154] Later in the century (1421) Henry V summoned a special assembly of representatives of the Benedictine order to discuss a list of specific reforming proposals.[155]

They were not dealing here with scandal, but with developments in Benedictine houses that had eroded the distinctive features which had separated the lifestyle of monks from that of the secular clergy. They were addressing modifications of the traditional concept of the monk as a member of a community apart from the world, committed to personal poverty, deriving his necessities from a common store, and dedicated to the maintenance of worship and intercession in the abbey church.

---

[153] For the anti-clericalism of the late fourteenth century see M. McKisac, The Fourteenth Century, (Oxford,1959),289-291.
[154] H.Rothwell (ed.),English Historical Documents, (London,1975),IV,669.
[155] D.Knowles, Orders,II,182-184.

That meat eating, money payments to individual monks, personal rooms in the monastery, and trips outside the confines of the cloister, were all common and valued features of 15th century Benedictine houses is indicated by the opposition of the monks' representatives to the proposed changes and restrictions.[156] There was a plain unwillingness to reverse the trend towards a less restricted, more comfortable and individualistic life within the monastery, which perhaps only conformed to the rising living standards in society generally.

*Abbots, Priors and Monks*

Normally, large monasteries were presided over by an abbot though in the case of a monastic cathedral the bishop theoretically filled the abbot's place. Since the bishop was seldom a monk, as was the case with the already discussed Bourgchier, and never resident within the monastic community, the second officer after the abbot was the prior who assumed the actual management of the house. The life of both abbot and prior, by the time of this bidding prayer, was one which assumed privilege, wealth, estates, and residences separate from the actual spiritual and community life of their order.[157]

---

[156] The proceedings of the 1421 meeting are printed in W.A.Pantin, Documents Illustrating the Activities of the General and Provincial Chapters of the English Black Monks,1215-1540, II, Camden Society, third series 47, 1933, 98-134.
[157] Although a little later than the period considered for this prayer, a vivid picture of the life of a prior and an entire cathedral monastery can be found in the journal maintained for William More of Worcester between 1518 and 1536. Journal of Prior William More edited by Ethel S. Fegan (Worcestershire Historical Society, 1914).

The abbey exercised an ever-present dominance over its surroundings and even over the local parish church which might be a dependent chapel served by a chaplain appointed and salaried by the abbot. The abbot's lordship was over an area affecting the inhabitants both inside and outside the abbey. His officers collected rents, tithes, and other dues for the maintenance of the ecclesiastical corporation.

Until the end of the eleventh century no essential separation of abbot from his religious community had taken place. He dined and slept with the community he headed, and attended offices in church along with them. The vital change was made when Henry I laid claim to the revenues of a vacant abbey. To avoid the latter happening, the abbey lands and its income were divided: the abbot was ensconsed in the vacant abbey, the monks remained at the monastery. The abbot was to have complete responsibility and control of his residence and environs, a move which brought into being a private household of servants and officials and the separate quarters of hall, chapel and court in which he and his staff lived. By the end of the 12th century the separation of abbot from community had given a new character to monastic life; the whole social economy surrounding the abbot had become set, expressing itself in terms of revenues, buildings and time away from the monastic community attending to manors or counseling kings. The abbot was like a public servant, an overlord, constantly on the move, either round the circle of his manors or on distant journeys. He was almost continually

occupied with external business, either connected with his feudal and economic position, or with the life of the Church in a national sphere. Few abbots, under such conditions, can have remained true spiritual fathers of their monks.

It was the prior, in the absence of the abbot, who became head of the monastery. While at one time the term "prior" might have been used in a vague sense as applied to various secular officials, it came to denote quite specifically the monk who ranked next to the abbot and deputized for him. Later it was also applied to the heads of houses in the mendicant orders, the regular canons, and of the small houses dependent on an abbey. In any case, his duties were far reaching: he was ultimately responsible for the buildings, the worship and the inances of the cathedral, and for the education, discipline, and salvation of the monks under him, as well as being drawn in to both local and national politics.[158]

Both the Hundred Rolls of Oxfordshire and the Statues of the Realm give evidence of the wealth, the aristocratic role played, and the economic concerns of abbots and priors in monastic institutions from the late 13th century through to the late 15$^{th}$ century.[159] Many of the lords listed in the Hundred Rolls were churchmen, such as the abbot of Eysham, a leading Oxfordshire magnate who held a small hamlet called Estwelde. The position of such ecclesiastics, apart from the fact that they held land on behalf of an institution rather than in a

---

[158] R.A.L. Smith, Canterbury Cathedral Priory, A study in Monastic Administration( Cambridge, 1943) 42ff.
[159]E. Stone (ed.) Oxfordshire Hundred Rolls of 1279, Oxfordshire Record Society 46, 1969 ,59-60.

personal capacity, was clearly closely analogous to that of the secular lords. Archbishops, bishops and the richest abbots are put on the same level as dukes and earls; abbots, priors and archdeacons are equated with barons and knights.

Thus, by the fifteenth century some churchmen seem almost indistinguishable from lay lords. Their incomes were comparable;[160] they derived their revenue from manors of similar type; they held courts; they disliked and avoided manual labor, and many enjoyed the relaxation of the chase, the meals of the richest houses, the wines of the best grapes, and the songs of minstrels.[161] They came from aristocratic families, and as the sons of earls and barons they gained preferment in the hierarchy and presented their relatives to local and not-so-local benefices.

Not every abbot or prior fits into this picture as there were poor houses around the country; the picture, however, is one gleaned from existing records. Christ Church Cathedral, Canterbury, reflects some of the tendencies that have been generalized in the above

---

[160] Christopher Dyer, Standards of Living in the later Middle Ages. Social Change in England c.1200 (Cambridge, 1989), 32. The *valor ecclesiasticus*, complied in 1535 reflects the broad pattern of churchmen's incomes in the mid 15th century. Seventeen archbishops and bishops were worth L400 to L3,500 per annum, in line with the wealthier end of the secular peerage. The revenues of monastic houses, because they belonged to communities rather than individuals, are not strictly comparable with either lay aristocrats or bishops, yet 126 monasteries with L300 or more were sufficiently wealthy to enable their people to live in similar style as the members of a baronial household; many abbots, who usually enjoyed a separate endowment and lived in their own households, functioned as landed aristocrats in every sense.
[161] Smith, 350ff.

description. It is here that can be seen the move toward separatism, exclusiveness, debt, indulgence and the growth of private property.

From the eleventh century until the dissolution Christ Church Cathedral monastery was one of the most important and largest houses in the country, surpassing Glastonbury and St. Albans in its particularly privileged relationship to the archbishop. [162] This was a house which was privileged in its quantity of property, even though the Statute of Mortmain, enacted in 1279, was drawn up to impose a check upon just this type of property acquisition by religious houses.[163] To add to their riches they had the ownership of advowsons and appropriated churches, chiefly in London; from the rectors of these churches the monks claimed an annual pension. But by the time of this bidding prayer, a third and previously extensive source of wealth was waning: the shrine of St. Thomas a Becket was no longer as popular as it once was. Economic causes, civil disorder and a simple decline in the popular fervour of pilgrimage brought change. The tangible results of its earlier popularity were, however, evident: money received had been invested in plate, ornament and jewels as valuable securities which in an age of falling land values proved to be a far safer investment.

---

[162] David Knowles, "The Early Community of Christ Church, Canterbury", Journal of Theological Studies, (1983) XXXIX,126-31.
[163] T.A.M. Bishop, "Monastic Demesnes and the Statute of Mortmain", English Historical Review, (1934) XLIX , 303-6.

But investment in what? In many cases, investment in its own resources. Monastic resources divided basically into two groups: its landed endowments of manors and estates on the one hand, and its spiritual possessions - the appropriated churches with their tithes and dues - on the other. The former provided the larger portion of income. Like other landowners of the late 14th and early 15th centuries, Christ Church, Canterbury, was engaged in leasing the bulk of their demesnes for money rents, no longer being interested in agricultural production for the market.[164] The monks did not, however, entirely abandon agriculture production. They continued to need large supplies of foodstuffs, particularly grain, for the support of their community; for these they still looked partly to a handful of manors as well as to their tithes and the market.

While the larger portion of Christ Church's income and resources would come from its landed endowments, a substantial part was derived from the spiritual possessions of the house - its several appropriated parish churches - whose revenues of tithes and various offerings were paid to the monks as perpetual rector. In return for enjoying the revenues of the benefice, Christ Church (the appropriator) had the obligation of providing for the cure of souls in the church, usually by means of an endowed vicar or stipendary chaplain, and of supporting charity and hospitality in the parish. Any surplus in the balance went to the monastery.

---

[164] M.M.Postan, The Medieval Economy and Society, (London,1972),ch.6; Knowles,Orders,II,322-24.

Some of this surplus would undoubtedly be spent on "pittances". This was the elaborate system of treats which became more and more a symptomatic sign of much else that had been corrupted within the monastic household.[165] A long pittance-roll of 1464-65 recounts the wine, dates, almonds, spices and other delicacies secured at great cost and supplied to the monks at frequent intervals throughout the year. As well, great retinues of servants were hired, the Prior alone employing nearly half a hundred servants in his private household. Too, all the senior monks and obedientaries (sub-prior, sacrist, cellarer, infirmarer, almoner, cantor, chamberlain) most of whom dwelt in separate chambers, had their own household servants. Monks were allowed to go on holiday at certain times of the year, the effect of this being a pernicious one on monastic discipline and the whole concept of stability. The frequent presence of actors and minstrels at the priory, recounted in the pay records, and the multiplication of chantries in the cathedral served by secular priests must have militated against the strict observance of monastic discipline.[166]

As the life of the monastics at Christ Church increased in luxury and ostentation the once primary duty of hospitality and almsgiving fell more and more into the background.[167] While the Christ Church monks were at no period in their history conspicuous for their generosity in alms provision, the fifteenth century rolls show that their work in this direction nearly ceased

---

[165] Smith, 198.
[166] Smith, 29-54.
[167] R.H. Snape, English Monastic Finances in the Late Middle Ages.(Cambridge,1926), 112.

altogether.[168] The almoner's revenue appears to have been spent on the upkeep of his large household and on gifts and allowances to the brethren who as *paupers Dei*, were able to claim alms on the questionable grounds of poverty.

The monastic household at Christ Church, by the late fifteenth century, was not as large as it once was and its constitution by monks had changed noticeably: "from a third to a half only of those dwelling in the monastery from the close of the thirteenth century onwards, were professed monks"[169]. Three classes of occupants seem to have made up the monastic population: the regular monks, the lay brethren or *conversi*[170], and the servants. The growth of the latter class illustrates the change in the spirit of monastic life; at the time and place of this bidding prayer monks no longer assigned spiritual value to manual labor and their households were growing larger and larger through paying menials to do the work originally done by themselves. Everywhere as the period progressed, there is seen a withdrawal of the monasteries from an active share in the management of the sources of their income. The opportunity which had been taken in the earlier stages of monasticism of dignifying ordinary toil, of passing on to the world the knowledge of agriculture or industry gained in the quiet

---

[168] Snape, 112-17, Smith, 47.
[169] Snape, 6.
[170] The lay brethren represent what might be called an attempt at democratizing monasticism as they were, chiefly, from the lower orders of artisans, labourers, husbandmen, illiterate, and content to stay in a subordinate position, serving not in the choir but by plying their crafts and supervising estate workers. This was their role at the beginning of the 13th century; but by the 16th they were no long necessary, as little of the lands of the monasteries actually remained under the control of the monks. It was leased out. It was now more convenient to employ hired servants than to support a class of half–monks who, it seems, were not easily disciplined.

diligence of their lives, was progressively neglected between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The presence of the monks within the society in general, which had given monasticism its chance of doing something for the regeneration of the world which it had renounced, was ceasing to exist. So long as the monks managed their own estates, there had been almost forced upon them some realization of the possibilities of service in the ordinary duties of life. But the restriction of the main interests of the monks to within the bounds of their own environs tending to their own accounts of revenue and debt, at a time when the original ascetic enthusiasm had been lost, narrowed their sympathies, dulled their intellectual curiosity, and lessened the strength of their ties to those they could serve. Ironically, the ascetic renunciation of the world was inevitably broken down by the possessions garnered by those who had turned their backs upon that world.

But for many centuries the ascetic beliefs which underlay monasticism had been in the closest alliance with Christianity. The monastery was an endeavor to give body to the spirit of early medieval religious fervor. For centuries the religious houses stood as representatives of peace, mutual endeavor, and the things of the spirit amid the brutalities, the unending strife, the semi-barbaric materialism of the half-formed states of Europe. It was the early monks who elevated the spirituality of manual labor. It was within the monastery that things of the intellect could

be encouraged despite attack and schism. The early medieval viewer saw the monastic routine as something that proclaimed in clear, uncompromising terms the eternal truths. There was the truth that the highest form of the individual is a disciplined individual, not one drifting in whatever way the senses pushed, but steadied and strengthened by the many resources of Catholic worship.

And monastic worship had more than acted as an agent of reform. To most people during the period of early-monasticism the medieval monastic routine spoke clearly and predominately of God and his heaven.[171] The majestic cathedral or conventual church, the stained glass windows, the rich round of worship with its chanting and dignity all reflected the God who could possibly lift a worshipper out of the unkempt society which surrounded the monastery and into a taste of the promised heavenly realm of the faith. The monastic presence had been an example of disciplined behavior where lives were regulated through habitual and intensive rounds of worship. Through the opportunity for communion and confession, with daily mass, spiritual advice, Bible reading, together with time and quietness for meditation, a Christian life could be strong because opportunities for its cultivation were available.

But the period which this bidding prayer represents saw something else instead: stagnation and decay. The enthusiasm for the full asceticism of monastic life had died away and there is

[171] There is only gender specific terminology for God in the middle ages and that is male. Julian of Norwich's view of God as mother was localized and somewhat brief in duration.

evidence that even the pride in and love of the monastery itself was far in decline. Though the three priors of Christ Church Cathedral during Bourgchier's time — Thomas Goldston I (1449-68), William Peckham (1471-72) and William Seelyng (1472-94) — were energetic and resourceful they did not, indeed perhaps could not, change directions. It seems that the last half of the fifteenth century saw the monks as lease holders, concerned with supervising the embanking and draining operations of the marsh land, and repair to granaries, dovecotes and mills, but not with hospitality, spiritual well-being, alms giving nor education. They suffered from a surfeit of good food and drink and greatly relaxed their standard of discipline, but they did not neglect their property. The last century of their corporate existence saw two of their most ambitious achievements — the angel steeple at Canterbury and the reclamation of the Appledone marsh.[172]

To the early monks, England was for some time indebted for food and clothing and, indirectly, for much of its prosperity in commerce and trade. The Benedictines were the cultivators of the soil, the Cistercians had been the growers of wool. To facilitate the purchase of their crops and their wool, the monks repaired roads, erected bridges, and established fairs within the precincts of the abbey, the church and church yard being converted to a kind of bazaar.[173] When the monastery became wealthy, however, its wealth was spent on the purchase of

---

[172] Smith, 204.
[173] Smith, 142.

comforts, luxuries and church treasures. The abbot became an aristocrat and his chapter functioned as the younger members of an aristocratic family.

Throughout the middle ages, and down to the time of the Reformation, there were a few monasteries which preserved their character as schools of learning in which the demands of the mind for meditative contemplation might be met. But the individual who asked prayers "for al Abbottis, Pryors [and] Monkys" would sense that the view of these monastics in the twelfth century — a view almost childlike in grateful devotion — was different in the 15th. At best the view was hesitant; at worst contemptuous. Both the religious and the economic role played by the monastic institutions had changed. What can be said, in conclusion, is that English monasteries in the 15th century needed spiritual quickening to justify their existence as a whole.

*Canons*

The Bidding prayer mentions, in its request for blessing, additional clerics other than the first rank ones mentioned above. These are the 'Chanons, Frerys, and... alle men and wymen of religion, in what order, estate, or degree that they stonde in, from the hyest astate to the lowest degree.' These form an interesting group, not separate from a religious rule, but different from those who have been previously mentioned. The canons mentioned were the

Augustinians (or variously called the 'regular canons of St. Augustine,' the Austin canons or the Black canons). Technically it is incorrect to call them monks, the latter word being reserved for those leading the Benedictine enclosed life. Because the complicated origins of the word have only comparatively recently been unraveled, it is worth taking the time to clarify their distinction as the bidding prayer does.

In the ferment of social, religious, and intellectual reform of the 11th and early 12th centuries it was natural that there should be argument and controversy about every aspect of Christian life. One of the debates concerned the apostolic life. It had been the traditional view of monks and especially those under the rule of Benedict that their life was about prayer. Yet it was an undeniable fact that one of the main functions of the apostles had been to preach and evangelize. Out of the papal reforms that resulted from debate came a movement to convert all clergy who were not monks into canons living under a rule; and the rule to which they were subjected was the Rule of St. Augustine.

The idea of canons regular (those living according to a rule) was no novelty in the 11th century: numerous communities had paid service in some degree to the *Institutio Canonicorum* of 816 or 817, a compilation of early rules obviously including those of Benedict. But the 11th century gave new impetus to changes in the monastic world because the Augustinian rule seemed to its adherents to be closer to the life of the apostles than Benedict's

rule. They saw it as a practical way for gathering into a regular, orderly, celibate, and devout life all the many clerics who were not, and never would become, monks. But the inspiration for its spread came also from men who believed that Jesus had laid emphasis in his instructions to his disciples on poverty, simplicity, and practical good works; these three elements were emphasized in varying proportions by most monastic reformers of the late 11th and early 12th centuries.

Thus the earliest definition of the person in this new role was one who was a priest on the official list of cathedral clergy as distinct from one serving in a monastery or at a private chapel. For most of their early history the majority of such official clergy lived in large clergy houses or at collegiate churches known in England as minsters. Secular canon came to be the name of a member of one of these large institutions: as a priest he joined in a common refectory and dormitory and drew a stipend from common revenue. It was understood that he should live unmarried, but not under a vow of poverty, and that he was able to hold private property. There was then a link between the life of the secular clergy and the monastic way, the former accepted the deep-rooted belief that the apostolic church had lived what was, in effect, a monastic life, but not necessarily an intensely severe one.

In the mid-eleventh century there arose a movement chiefly in France and Italy towards raising the standards of this secular clerical life. The chief reformer was Gregory VII and his vigor in

stressing a more severe clerical life emphasized a complete lack of private property, a more monastic-like life, and obedience to a fixed rule of life with a common superior. Obviously it was important to produce a title which would clearly distinguish those leading this new form of reformed life as opposed to those who followed the old less demanding regime of collegiate churches. The name established, by the 12th century, for the new and more strict canons, was regular canon, that is, canons living by a *Regula* or rule. The rule is that of St. Augustine but essentially it differed little from that of St. Benedict. Canons of the old type came to be known as secular canons since they lived in the world (*seculum*) and not in a strict community; canons of the reformed type were known as regular canons.

As they had no immediate predecessors, the regular canons inevitably borrowed much from the Benedictine monasteries. However, the Augustinian ideal was rather less severe than that of the Benedictines with a shorter round of worship and rules over fasting and silence less exacting. They prided themselves in claiming that their life was a middle way between the austerity of the monks and the worldly interests of the laity.

What then was their role? It is unlikely that they did extensive pastoral work. They might serve in the parish church if owned by their order or attached to their collegiate church, but an examination of the code of their observances which regulated their life should suggest that their daily programme did not differ in any major essential from that of contemporary

Benedictines; the focus was still on a complex round of common worship which alongside their other responsibilities would have left them little time for pastoral activities. They aimed not to be missionaries but, like the monks of old, to influence the world in two ways: through their own disciplined and communal rejection of the world thereby inspiring a renewed quest for the Christian life in those living outside the monastery and to offer, for that same outside world, prayer and praise to God.

The regular canons were clergy and because of this and by the ancient law of the church they were subject to the bishop of the diocese in which they were situated, unless specially exempt, a privilege very rarely accorded to individual houses except for the monastic Cistercians and the Cluniacs. It was unfortunate though that this system of governance did not set an official minimum size for a new house of Austin canons. It seems that episcopal approval was all that was required and that appeared to have been easily obtainable.[174] There grew up a very large number of priories of Austin canons. The houses were popular and were often founded by private benefactors who established a house of regular canons instead of making benefactions to already existing monasteries. It was easy and quite legitimate to use a wealthy parish church, of which they held the patronage, as the nucleus for a new house. By the early thirteenth century there were in England some 260 houses of Austin canons, expanding even more in the fourteenth century. However, the average number of canons per house was from

---

[174] Dickinson, Monastic Life, 76.

one to two dozen, but some had less than 10. Differences in income were as marked as differences in size. At the time of the dissolution of the monasteries only a very few houses of Austin canons had financial resources that could compare with the wealthier Benedictine houses, and a number of the smallest houses had already been closed down. The establishment of so many houses was a testimony both to the piety of the order itself and to the convictions of its founders and benefactors. But it is arguable that the zeal behind the movement had pushed it further than was ultimately worthwhile, either financially or spiritually.

However, of those that were wealthy, sustainable and large enough to maintain themselves there was St. Augustine's at Canterbury, established in 1086 when Archbishop Lanfranc settled a small community in a church which he built at the north gate of his cathedral city of Canterbury. Thus, in close community, within the environs of a busy market city on the south east coast of England, were several clerical institutions: the seat of the archbishop, the Benedictine monastic cathedral, and the Augustinian Priory.

*Friars*

To add to this rich proliferation of clerics were the friars — the four mendicant orders of Franciscans, Dominicans, Austins and Carmelites - who insisted (at least originally) on living on alms and not on endowments. Their way of life notably complemented the work and

witness of the religious institutions of any city. They enlarged the scope of monasticism to include activities which traditionally were regarded as alien to it and the bidding prayer notes these individuals.

Most obvious of the activities of the friars was their initial preoccupation with pastoral work, followed by their emphasis upon preaching and confession. Along side the 13th century conviction that monks should live outside the bounds of everyday society, influencing not by intervention but by prayers and discipline, there grew up a complementary sentiment that religious life can be a way of evangelizing the world by the direct intervention of its members in everyday society. It was this apostolic idea which inspired the friars. They had a fresh concept of the nature of religious poverty and produced a highly flexible organization of a type previously unknown.

The most original exponent of this apostolic life in the 12th century was St. Norbert of Xanten[175] and in the early 13th century St. Francis of Assisi.[176] While both men were very different they emphasized practical good works, preaching, and pastoral work while at the same time wishing to imitate the apostles in the most direct way through poverty, chastity, and

---

[175] Norbert was responsible for founding the Order of Premonstratensian Canons (also known as the Norbertines or White Canons) at Premontre in 1120. He was a personal friend of Bernard of Clairvaux and the order he founded became almost indistinguishable from the Cistercians. Norbert himself, however , clearly continued to feel a strong call to be a missionary and move without the cloister walls.
[176] Francis (1181-1226) began to gather his followers and compose his rule in 1209 and in 1210 it was given informal, verbal approval by Pope Innocent III and its final approval in 1223.

simplicity. It was thus that they both preferred the rule of St. Augustine to that of St. Benedict. Contrary to initial impetus the movements did not remain as small groups but were the beginnings of larger ones which led to the creation of the orders of friars.

Preaching and teaching in the community replaced a life of liturgical worship secluded from the world in the cloister. Evangelization and a general raising of religious standards by pastoral work and example took the place of intercession on behalf of, but apart from, society. The success of the friars showed how well-attuned to their age their program was: "for more than a century they attracted a majority of the most earnest and brilliant of successive generations of youth throughout Europe and became the preachers, confessors, spiritual directors and theological masters of their age."[177] The monasteries, of course, continued to attract recruits and patrons; they remained important to their society as great landowners and purveyors of spiritual services but not to the same degree as at the height of their power.

Unlike the ancient Benedictine custom, or the more recent Augustinian one, a novel and valuable feature of the constitution evolved for friars was that members were professed to the order as a whole, not to a particular house. Friars' houses were situated among others in a town and were administratively grouped into provinces, depending on area, then were sub-divided into custodies. Representatives from the house attended provincial chapters, above

---

[177] David Knowles, Christian Monasticism, 116.

which were general chapters and the heads of houses were known as ministers to stress the element of service to others. Ultimately the whole order, having this elaborate machinery of its own, was freed from visitation by the local bishop.[178] This gave freedom of movement for the pursuit of mission work as well as for higher education that formed its basis.

Ironically, because of the daily round of pastoral work to which the friars were committed, there has been little primary documentation available that traces their activities.[179] What is known has mostly been pieced together from records about them rather than by them and it is essential to keep in mind that their pastoral work rivaled, even irritated, the older monastic order and the secular clergy. Their religious life, notably with regard to the question of poverty, was construed as an attack on the way of life of the latter. By the late fourteenth century and into the fifteenth friars were facing much hostile comment.

The friars' programme of living was characterized by three features: pastoral work, confession and theological study. They chose for their earliest settlement an ordinary house, usually in a town which had no public connection with existing religious houses. By their avowed objective of working for those among whom they lived, the lodging was among people, but, as it was usually the gift of public authority or a small benefactor, cheapness was

---

[178] David Knowles, The Religious Orders in England, Vol. 1 125ff.
[179] The most exhaustive study of the Franciscans and the coming of their order is done by A.G. Little in his many works and is generally informative for the mendicant orders. The most useful of them is the Chronicles of the Mendicant Friars. See David Knowles, Orders, footnote 127.

always a consideration; undoubtedly this accounted for the fact that many friaries lay in less than desirable positions near city walls, along crowded streets, or in marginal areas of the town. What this achieved, of course, was to affect not only the sympathy and response of the poor, but also of a class of the population now rising to importance and outside the ranks of the benefactors to the old orders: the merchants (wealthy or not), shop keepers and artisans who were just beginning to control the municipal administration of the young towns. These people could become benefactors (by giving fuel, clothes, food) but of most interest is that they were the class among whom lay piety could be developed and nourished. With skill and a substantial degree of sophistication, the friars tried to reinforce the often very amateurish efforts of the contemporary parish clergy.

Until this time preaching to the laity was neither common nor popular; now it was carefully studied. This was a time when literacy amongst the growing bourgeoise was expanding and the friars could provide carefully educated preachers who could intelligently expound the word of God, a marked contrast to the parish clergy, who, on the whole had received little or no effective training for this important side of their work. While the original aim of the brethren was to preach to people and minister to the poor, the naive preaching of their earliest history was altered by the realization that a more sophisticated, learned approach was necessary. True piety and sound learning are the classic ingredients for vigorous religion, but most people most of the time showed little interest in the second ingredient. The friars,

however, acquired a high degree of education and carefully studied the technique of preaching. Because of this insistence on an informed approach to their preaching they were given a long and careful training with much theological study. Over time they consequently developed a close connection with the universities, but, unfortunately, in the process of being educated they tended to lose a good deal of their initial concern for the poor. As a result of their persistent work, however, that invaluable asset, the instructed lay person, was to be found in the society by the end of the fifteenth century.

Of immense importance in the development of sound lay piety was the role the friars played in the practice of sacramental confession, that periodic confession of sins to God in the presence of a priest who could give counsel and absolution.[180] Hearing confession required insight and training; it was a delicate responsibility, one that demanded the capacity for secrecy as well as psychological and theological insight adequate to recognize both the nature of and the cure of the spiritual problems involved. Unfortunately these qualifications were rare among parish clergy and the ability in this area exhibited by the trained friars did nothing but increase the gap between friars and parish clergy. The laity attended friar's sermons and went to them for confession, in the process inspiring a jealous response on the part of the parish cleric not only because his pride had been wounded but also his pay since offerings made at services and confession were now diverted to the friars.

[180] This practice had developed gradually and after being found valuable by monks and clergy was extended to the whole western church by a decree of the Lateran Council of 1215. Dickinson, Later Middle Ages, 201.

If the parish clergy had been in short supply or had they been anywhere as competent professionally as were the highly trained friars there might not have been the degree of competitive hostility between the two. If also they had had as solid a basis of theological learning as the friars - particularly the Dominicans - they could have expounded the teachings of the church accurately, refuted arguments against it, dealt with heresy, and acquired insights essential for a good confessor.[181] The skill of the friars became increasingly sought after; their critics, meanwhile, charged them with extravagant building activities, suspect methods of attracting the faithful to go to their churches, or coercion of the too young to join their order.

There may be a number of factors which contributed, justly, to the hostility with which they were met. Their intellectual interest meant that they were often and unavoidably implicated in theological debate which characterized the late middle ages. As well, an understanding of the social and economic climate of the time would suggest the likelihood of the friars' unpopularity with the parish clergy. The latter did not take kindly to finding their work better done by others. In balance, however, the friars were an important addition to the late medieval scene; they gave out steady and unostentatious pastoral work from dozens of houses carefully sited in major centres of population and their sermons and hearing of confession was increasingly valued and appreciated by the medieval laity.

---

[181] Christopher Brooke, The Monastic World,(London, 1974),181 ff.

*Women of Religion*

While the example of the bidding prayer under discussion makes separate and distinct note of all of the male monastic orders it does not refer to any female ones. The copier only suggests that blessings should be offered for 'wymen of religion'. This lack of specifics follows the pattern of seven out of nine of the versions examined; the remaining two vary by asking blessing for "ancris" "abbatis and prioris" and "nunnys". In comparison with men, women in religion played a very minor role. There are, however, a combination of possible reasons for this and to balance the picture of the age they need a word. Perhaps the main reason for their minor role was the conservatism of the time including the influential classical Greek idea that women were naturally inferior; certainly medieval English law allowed them a markedly inferior position in term of marriage, property and war. Another quiet different element which worked to the same end was the fact of the unbroken tradition of the church which denied ordination to women and thus barred them from offering masses for benefactors, hearing confession or offering any of the priestly services. Perhaps too, that very society with its somewhat rough social conditions may well have rendered it difficult or even dangerous to have female participation in such activities as the friars' pastoral visiting. Certainly the limited medieval interest in schooling for women plus their almost universal state of penury largely

confined them to the precincts of home or the confines of the cloister. In either case they were subordinate places.[182]

By way of summary it can be suggested that the monastic world for whom this prayer seeks blessing was a world in decline. There is no one reason for such a state: it may have been financial - either too much income or not enough; it may have been administrative - great possessions led to the sense that an administrative capacity instead of a spiritual one was the required asset of an abbot; it may have been that a large number of monastic houses had abandoned that full communal life which is the essence of its ideal and replaced it with privilege and separate households for those in positions of monastic governance; it may have been that traditional rules to prevent monastics from participating too much in the non-monastic world, either through absence from the monastery or giving seculars to much access to it, undermined its potency. It might simply have been a result of changes that surely come. The Black Death had taken its toll on the monasteries and on the general populace from whom they recruited. There was, too, a certain decline in popular esteem for the monastic ideal in its conservative form as a more literate and worldly laity seemed increasingly able to weigh both doctrine and discipleship. The last word though is to say that their final affect at certain times and at certain places could be a civilizing one.

---

[182] An exhaustive treatment of nunneries is found in Eileen Power's Medieval English Nunneries, c.1275 to 1535. What she examines is the fact that within their own boundaries nuns were powerful, often worldly, sometimes spiritual, effective land owners, tradeswomen and travellers and spiritual directors.

*Parish Clergy*

> Ye shal also praye for al them that have charge and cure of Cristen mennys sowlis as Curates, Persons, Vycaryes, Prestys, and Clerkys, and in especiall for the Person and Curate of this Chirche, and for all the Preestes and Mynystris that serve therein or have servyd, and for alle them that have taken ony ordre, that God yeve them grace wel to kepe and observe it to thonour and helthe of theyr sowlis...

When the speaker of the bidding prayer thus finishes his monastic roll call he moves on to that area of the clergy which seems, by the tone, particularly dear to him: the secular clergy, those of the parish clergy who have charge and "cure of Cristen mennys sowlis" and in "especiall for the Person and Curate of this Chirche." This appears to be an all-encompassing category who play a primary role in the salvation of ordinary souls. What in fact is the case is a situation where all too often the least of these individuals was illiterate or little more literate than the laity, and the best was often absent from the parish.[183] Salvation was chancy.

There is no typical parish priest whose portrait will be true for the whole of the middle ages.[184] But in his genesis, he was one who ministered in spiritual things to those who chose to accept his ministrations. He had charge (cure) of a parish. He had ecclesiastical jurisdiction over a definite territory by being licenced by the bishop and he might or might not have much theological learning. In some areas, indeed in the earliest forms of parish organization his

---

[183] Denys Hay, Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century (London,1976),311.

[184] Sources used for this section include: Thompson, Dickinson, Cutts, Dobson, Dyer and Gasquet already footnoted as well as S. E. Lehmberg, The Reformation of Cathedrals (Princeton, 1988); W.A.Pantin, The English Church in the Fourteenth Century (Cambridge, 1955); Peter Heath, The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation,(Toronto,1969); G.G.Coulton, Five Centuries of Religion (Cambridge,1927-36).

parish jurisdiction was coterminous with the estate of the lord who invited the priest to minister to himself and his people. A later boundary made the parish coterminous with the village. Probably the parish priest, in addition to this work in the principal village, would also adopt the more ancient system of itinerant mission work by visiting remoter areas of his parish at defined times for the preaching of the word and celebration of Divine worship. If he could perform these duties he was ordained to the ministry or appointed to a particular parish.

The ordained clergyman (the incumbent or more accurately called the *curate* as one who had cure or care of souls in his parish) received his income wholly or in part from tithes allocated to the parish. If he was entitled to the whole tithes of a parish he was called its *rector*. If, on the other hand, his funds were appropriated, often by the local monastery within the diocese and then apportioned out to him, he was termed the *vicar* since he was actually acting vicariously for the monastery. In the case of a church being appropriated by the monastery the latter would receive the revenues and employ either one of their monks to perform the parish duties or a secular priest. The *parson* which the bidding prayer refers to functions in the same role as the rector that is, having full rights and tithes for the parish. Where the name comes from is disputed but English civil law suggests that it might derive from the view that the parson was the legal "person" by whom God's property in the parish was actually held.[185]

[185] Oxford English Dictionary.

Those who might assist the parish priest but who would not likely go on to take priest's orders and devote themselves to full-time pastoral duties were *clerks* and their state of literacy was not necessarily commendable. But illiteracy, which dominated large sectors of the society by even the 12th century, had long become an accepted fact of life; the ability to read and write was by no means a universally desirable attainment. Illiteracy was not the result of an ecclesiastical desire for an ignorant or amenable laity, but of a widespread non-theological factor endemic to the western world: an outlook tied to an agricultural way of life which saw no obvious value in literacy. The theological effect of this was that the clergy, who in large part came from the illiterate laity, did not necessarily find a correction in their situation when entering holy orders since many bishops of the time were disinterested in the important matter of training them.[186] Though literacy was by no means the sole necessity for a priest or his helpers and was no guarantee of true piety, its absence caused problems in conversion, confession and continuation in the Christian way of life. Tied to the quite different situation that most parish clergy received much of their income in kind and usually had to arrange for the collection of it themselves, the intellectual and theological pursuits of the priest could be limited both by time and circumstance and his parish would reflect this.

The basic parish structure had been established in the seventh century and it was, according to Canon Law, the primary context within which most ordinary Christians were supposed to

---

[186] Knowles, Orders, 188.

practice their religion. Their principal religious needs should have been met by the parish and their most tangible religious duties were to it. By the time of this bidding prayer the minimum requirement for a parish was a parochial organization with a priest in care of all souls within a definite district, who had property (sometimes only a homestead and a bed, other times a manorial establishment), livestock (two cows or twenty-two cows, some oxen or none, few sheep or many), material for administering the sacraments and the hoped for ability to instruct the people in the Creed and Our Father.[187]

In this parochial system, the parish priest was expected to administer the sacraments of baptism, penance, the eucharist, matrimony and extreme unction; to say mass for the people; to instruct them through preaching and the confessional; and to visit the sick.[188] Lay men and women had a part to play in that they were obliged to hear mass on Sundays and feast days in their own parish church, to receive the sacraments of penance and the eucharist once a year from their parish priest,[189] and to pay their tithes along with other material requirements of the church.

---

[187] The synod assembled at Clovesho in 747, attended by twelve English bishops and a number of their clergy attempted to respond to a letter from the Pope by drawing up a number of canons. The tenth included the role of the priest who was to be "thoroughly acquainted with the doctrines and services of the church to teach the Creed and Lord's Prayer, and explain the sacraments." Cutts, 61-67.
[188] Heath, 4-8
[189] Knowles, Orders, 189

While the above appears as a simple and straightforward set of roles, it was not that simple in practice. Quite recent studies on popular religiosity indicate that the layer of medieval popular culture was for some time and in some places barely influenced by schools of patristic tradition because it had, counter to the church, preserved vital links with the mythopoetic and folkloric magic consciousness.[190] The world perception that emerged from the complex and contradictory interaction of traditional folklore and Christianity made the work of the Church difficult; sometimes conciliatory, more often oppressive.

Aron Gurevich in Medieval Popular Culture speaks of two cultures in late medieval society: the culture of the clergy and popular or folkloric culture.[191] He emphasizes that the relations between the two cultures were highly diverse, there often being an attempt to suppress the popular culture or to distort or partially adapt it to the demands of official theology which tended to divide the world, rationally and neatly, into good and evil.[192] In speaking about popular culture one is speaking about that layer of consciousness, namely the unstructured sphere of notions, beliefs and superstitions hovering somewhere in social consciousness. The task which the clerical culture seems to have accomplished was not so much to replace as to restructure popular religious culture, just as the transition from paganism to Christianity

---

[190] Rosalind and Christopher Brooke, Popular Religion in the Middle Ages (Leipzig, 1984), 63-103.
[191] Aron Guerevich, Medieval Popular Culture, (Cambridge, 1988), 78ff.
[192] Popular culture should not be regarded solely as a single entity distinct from 'learned' culture: popular culture itself was composed of widely divergent components and tendencies. But the cultures of peasants, knights and townspeople, with their own traditions, can be distinguished from ecclesiastical tradition.

involved a reorganization of existing beliefs rather than a clean sweep. Parish Christianity was in this sense a kind of syncretism.

It seems possible, in light of the recent trends in medieval research, that the bidding prayers in their attention to localized persons and concerns, stand as an attempt to engage the populace in a service that was difficult to understand; they stand at the junction of the official clerical culture and medieval popular culture; they may, in their address, responsorial form and expansive content be seen as a meeting of the two forms of consciousness which formed a single cultural world. The bidding prayers of the late middle ages were found in The Lay Folks' Mass Book[193], a book which attempts to get the laity of the middle ages to take an active knowledgeable part in the church's liturgy. It explains the meaning of the service and of the ritual, tells the worshipper when to stand and kneel and puts private devotions into their mouths in rhyme.

Room for active lay participation in the liturgy had existed for centuries but under difficulties including a ceremony built largely on unfamiliar customs, the demand for mystery and awe, the neglect of Holy Communion, and non-vernacular language. As well, there existed a great

---

[193] The Lay Folks' Mass Book or The Manner of Hearing Mass, ed by T.F.Simmons for the EETS, London, 1879. Little is known about the writer of this book, presumably one Dan Jeremy, a priest or perhaps even a bishop. His work, a prayer book for the use of one assisting at mass, was written in 1150 and very likely originally in French for the Norman nobility; it was later rendered into English verse in the 14th or early 15 century. It insists that laity needed to be more than onlookers; they needed to be part of the Mass's liturgical repartee.

reservoir of private devotional literature with which the literate devout could engage themselves while mass was being conducted (a bit like taking a good novel to church). All of this centred about an act of consecration which depended essentially not on the presence of the body of the faithful at all but only on the words and intentions of those who were ordained priests. Thus the Lay Folks' Mass Book, in its cataloguing of the actions of kneeling, standing, kneeling and remaining kneeling, standing and remaining standing, "holde up both thi handes," answer the priest at the *Orate Fratres* aloud "in high" saying the *Sanctus* with the priest, and acknowledging ones sinfulness "whether hit be in loude or still," filled a necessary role. Instructions are inserted throughout the Mass Book for the people to respond in mind and heart to the spirit of the liturgy at the various stages of the sacrifice; "stande up thou, als men the biddis, hert and body." This enterprising program of active lay participation in the mass is an effort to foster lay piety despite the handicaps of language and the loss of contact with the roots of the ceremony.

The Lay Folks' Mass Book along with the bidding prayer stands as reaction to an all too common clerical feeling: that the vulgar indeed should not have the mass translated; the dignity of the holy mysteries should not be exposed to them. The Lay Folks' Mass Book includes the general confession, the Gloria and the Lord's Prayer. There is a version of the Apostles' Creed but nothing is said of the administration of the sacrament, a significant omission which might prove how completely the celebration of the mass had been dissociated

from the laity. But the tone of the Lay Folks' Mass Book - what seems to have been the writer's desire throughout - is a concern for the unlearned (in the sense of not being literate or understanding Latin) by the provision of prayers for their devotion. These prayers include all conditions of people, for deliverance from evils spiritual and temporal and for grace to live according to God's will in charity with others. The writer would have sovereign and subject, priest and people, learned and lewed of all ranks do their duty to God according "to his estate and his degree." Along with the bidding prayers, already in the vernacular, plus the constant directives for some kind of action, the parish priest could involve the congregation through his effort and commitment. The Lay Folks Mass Book incorporating the bidding prayers, did much to bridge the two languages and the two kinds of simultaneous prayers: those of the priest within the sanctuary, and those of the people in the nave.

Unfortunately this whole organization that might have the parishioner at heart could easily be abused, the right of presentation to the benefice being used not for spiritual ends but as little more than a useful position and income for a friend or relative of the patron.[194] Men were nominated, especially to the more lucrative benefices, who might lack both the vocation and the training required of an effective priest. They might be in priest's orders as the law of the church demanded but be incapable of fulfilling the fundamental duty of celebrating mass.

---

[194] Hay,50ff.

While the Lay Folks' Mass Book worked as a bridge within the church between priest and people, outside of that there were causes for tension. One aspect of the parish structure was the sometimes difficult one between monastery and village church, a relationship that was vital but often difficult. By the late middle ages many parishes had been stripped of the best part of their endowments in order to found, enrich, or sustain the monasteries.[195] This was an unfortunate situation where the monastery was now in a position to receive some or ultimately all of the parish income.

This was a time in history of high monastic expenses. They had been and still were engaged in the very expensive debt-inducing task of erecting the complex set of buildings which their way of life required. On top of this came the expenses for organizing and developing the lands which they were everywhere acquiring, usually through gift. The new Gothic style of monastic church was consigning to oblivion the old Romanesque ones and its construction often resulted in protracted financial strain. Another cost was hospitality to travelers, expressed in the Rule of St. Benedict. This expression of care rested on the shoulders of the monasteries and the biggest drain on monastic hospitality was the crown; a king's whole retinue would by no means always pay fully for its outrageous costs.[196] Very early then

---

[195] The church was legally regarded as a piece of property and lumbered with a legal vocabulary: the property was the *advowson*, the post itself knows as the *benefice*, the holder as the *incumbent*, and his nominator the *patron*.
[196] Edward I, with a household of around 200, installed himself at Lanercost Priory with extremely costly results. Dickinson, Middle Ages, 172.

monasteries began the takeover of parish income to augment their finances, and in a less generous moment of evaluation these takeovers look like simple greed.

The appropriated parishes did not usually come off well. Monks who replaced or oversaw parish clergy were neither interested nor equipped to do the pastoral work which required qualities, ideas, and sympathies different than those of the cloister. They had no status in the parish and no permanent interest in it. As early as 1102 the great national synod held at Westminster ordered that monks should not take parish churches without the consent of the bishop nor remove so much of the revenues as to leave impoverished the parish and priest serving there. The Third Lateran Council (1179) ordered that monasteries were to adequately pay the incumbents of their churches and not remove them nor alter the stipends paid to them. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) brought into being the system of perpetual vicarages in the appropriated parishes. It had found that because in some regions the parish priest had been left with so little of the share of the tithes that his life was precarious, he could neither afford an education nor attend to his parishioners. He was also removable at pleasure. Canon 32 of this Fourth Council thus set up an order that the rector of a benefice (in the majority of cases this was the monastery as ecclesiastical corporation) was to nominate a competent parish priest and to institute him as perpetual vicar.[197] Thereafter if a benefice was appropriated it was to be served by just such a vicar, his tenure was permanent and independent and he was

---

[197] Cutts,98. The series of Councilor orders suggest an ongoing problem between monastic power and parish effectiveness.

answerable to the bishop for the fulfillment of his duties. He was entitled to a reasonable and clearly defined share of the revenues of the benefice which usually would include a residence and enough support to be decently comfortable.[198]

To detail the terms of this allotment was hugely difficult owing to the enormous variations in sizes of parish revenues, but even more by the fact that the priest was paid in kind - the tithes or "a tenth part of the fruits of the earth" which, of course, varied immensely in their nature. Major tithes, "great tithes", "tithes of the corn", were reserved for the holder of the parish living, that is usually the monastery which ranked as its rector. Small tithes, "lesser tithes", "the tithes of every kind except corn", might be allotted to the vicar and a very miscellaneous lot these tithes might be: wood, milk, calves, pigs, geese, eggs, honey, wax bees, fruits of trees and orchards, doves, mills, flax and hemp.[199] As well, he was often paid a yearly cash payment and "offerings of all kinds at the altar". These might correspond to modern church collections but differ from them in that they were compulsory and given only on specified occasions like Christmas, Easter and the patron saints' festival. Fees for marriage, churching and burials were also collected. Without belabouring the entire financial aspect of parish administration, (details about which seem to be far more readily available than details about the spiritual administration), it seems that the system was somewhat equitably worked out though the excessive ecclesiastical taxation must have brought hardship to many livings.

[198]The existence of hundreds of detailed ordinances in episcopal records makes it possible to create a fairly complete picture of residence, tithe etc. of vicars. See Thompson 115 ff.
[199] Dickinson, 175ff; Dyer,115ff.

While the above system of parish organization was in place by the time of this bidding prayer, the larger problem of the incumbent's level of true piety and sound theological learning had not been dealt with. Private patronage, alongside monastic patronage, was still alive and well; bishops were not beyond being convinced to allocate livings to those men who had little or no pastoral zeal, had not received priest's orders and may never appear in the parish. But an economic system that allowed for few career choices made an ecclesiastical benefice very appealing; it offered one of the very few ways of acquiring an independent household and perhaps a reasonable standard of living. Because of this, country livings were very often used by local lords, who held the patronage, to provide for relatives, friends or servants; kings and barons treated them as bits of property to reward staff, provided the official duties of the post were carried out by deputies paid at cut-rates (were these curates?).

The assigned administrators might have the superficial appearance of clergy but not the theological training. And such a condition would continue because many medieval bishops had largely abdicated their responsibility of seeing that those called to the priesthood were adequately suited and trained; if the intellectual and spiritual state of the clergy was low, it was clearly higher than that of the laity and there was satisfaction in that. What was essential to a parish, however, was that someone should be able to perform the offices of the church. If that someone was not the rector nor even the perpetual vicar, a common alternative was a

stipendary chaplain employed to perform the duties which the rectors or vicars did not perform because they had no qualification or they were simply absent.[200]

The bidding prayer under discussion presents what might be its own situation by listing a whole roster of parish clergy. It asks blessing in general for "vycaryer, prestys and clerkys" but centres its special concern on the "person and curate of this chirche". It might be assumed then that the church in which the prayer is being used has a rector[201] who might be resident, who has cure of souls, and whose church is of a size where he is in need of an assistant. That he is called "parson" seems to be a term used interchangeably in medieval literature with rector. From its eleventh century institution parson was applied to anyone holding the parochial cure of souls and conveyed along with it dignity as well, perhaps, as endearment. Thus, since "this Chirche" has a parson and not a vicar something can automatically be assumed about the training of that individual and his institution to the benefice.

*Parson*

Since the 13th century the church had opened up a career to all ranks and classes of people and through their monastic schools young men intended for pastoral office could be trained.

---

[200] H.G. Richardson, "The Parish Clergy of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," The Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Vol. VI, 1912, 89-128.
[201] The position of rector, however, differed legally from that of vicar in that he could sue or be sued for the property or benefice he held in the name of the Church.

While there was always a strong aristocratic element among the clergy, boys from lesser ranks could, by learning, character and good service, fill the offices of parish curate, chantry priest or guild priest and might rise to higher offices.[202] It was at the King's School, Canterbury that earlier limitations on who could be schooled were severely questioned. Cranmer, though later than the dates being considered by this bidding prayer, took the liberal view that all states of boys should be able to develop their gifts. (What a loss to have a history of girls whose gifts could equally have been developed but were not.) Cranmer was only underlining a clerical view long in vogue that it was the church's duty to look out for boys who would respond to clerical training. From the school of the cathedral or monastery, grammar schools, or by being taught at parochial schools by the parish priest, an ambitious student who could find the means could continue preparing himself for the reception of orders by a lengthy university education. He would increase his ability to read Latin and would be trained in rhetoric, logic, and theology. Depending on his ability to pay he could be there a very long time. He had, however, arrived at the age of 24 or 25, so would still be a relatively young man even after seven years of study for a Bachelor of Theology.[203] Among the ambitious youths of all classes there would be some who had missed the mark either by lack of intellect, character or industry; these formed a rather numerous class of sham scholars and ineffectual clerics, Chaucer's Pardoner and Summoner provide unflatterinf portraits of this class.

---

[202] The canons of the Church, from a very early period, had made serfdom a disqualification for Holy Orders although this could be circumvented through dispensation. Men who had any serious physical handicap or were illegitimate were excluded from ordination. Lemberg, 231-41; Gasquet, 71.
[203] Cutts, 140.

However, if he had been successful so far, the next step in the career of priest was his ordination. He might have received the minor orders without difficulty, but pursuing sacred orders was more difficult . He must obtain a "title", a definite place in which to exercise his ministry so that he would not disgrace the church by being a pauper. But title was not always a cure of souls; any kind of ecclesiastical benefice which afforded a prospect of maintenance was sufficient. Thus abuse was ripe. Ordination could mean that the rewards of a benefice would become support for a career in the civil service, always needful of the literate. The number of men ordained was very large and increased rapidly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. There were four orders to which one could in turn be ordained: acolyte, sub-deacon, deacon and priest.[204] Some of the newly ordained were at once instituted into benefices (even if they had not yet reached priestly rank, but would within 2 years), and license of non-residence was given to at least some so that they might return to university to acquire the learning they needed to fit them for priesthood.

The ideal parson of the assumed parish of the bidding prayer might look like this: his parentage, education at school and university have been acceptable; he has passed the bishop's examination, has been ordained without having to require a dispensation for any impediment, he is probably 25 years old and has received priest's orders. He has been instituted by the

[204] "Minor" and "major" were also terms for the orders, the acolyte along with the door keeper and lector (sometime the exorcist) were minor orders, and by the 15th century the only one in use was acolyte. To the major order of sub-deacon, deacon and priest was sometimes added that of bishop.

bishop and does not need to request a license of non-residence. He thus goes off to his benefice. There he is inducted into possession of his church by the archdeacon, and with a solemn sense of responsibility he undertakes to fulfill his duty. These duties assume, hopefully, that he is concerned more with prayer than with worldly affairs; that he is acquainted with the doctrines and services of the church and is therefore able to teach the Creed and the Lord's prayer along with explaining the sacraments; that he can preach sometime, conduct mass, baptize, carry the Eucharist to the sick, and bury the dead are also necessary attributes.

If he is somehow uncertain of his duties in his parish he can be enlightened by the numerous handbooks available to him, instructing, advising, exhorting him to his duties and outlining the best way to fulfill them.[205] The most contemporary of them will have been written by a priest, one John Myrk, a canon of Lilleshall in Shropshire. His "Instruction for Parish Priests" outlines in "verse suitable for rote learning", what should be expected of the people, particularly during mass. Myrk bids the clergy that they inform their parishioners to leave outside "many wordes" and "ydel speche" when they enter the house of God and that they should put away all vanity, learn to say the "*Pater noster* and *Ave*", not stand about or loll against the pillars or wall, but kneel on the floor "and pray to God wyth herte meke/to give them grace and mercy eke."

[205] The manuals of instruction for parish priests, mainly though not exclusively in Latin, are the outcome of the Lateran Councils already discussed. They also owe something of their being to the canonical and moral literature of the 13th century — those manuals of pastoral theology variously called *Summa* dealing with confessional practice, penitentials etc.

This ideal ordained parson will also have access to the so-called "Lay Folk's Catechism", drawn up by John Thoresby, Archbishop of York, in the late 14th century. It deals with the fourteen articles of belief, the ten commandments, the seven sacraments, the seven works of mercy, seven virtues and seven sins. To encourage its popularization, Thoresby offered an indulgence of forty days to those who learned the catechism by heart. Only a few years later, the Archbishop of Canterbury provided his parish priests with a *brevis libellus*, covering much the same material, and, ordered his priests to copy, learn and teach it to their parishioners before his next Easter visit.[206]

There would be, then, no ecclesiastical reason for the parson of this bidding prayer to be ignorant of his clerical duties nor lax in educating the laity. Over the couple of centuries leading up to the date of this bidding prayer there would have been a systematic attempt at elaborating a programme of instruction for the clergy and through them the laity - manuals, homilies, vernacular religious and moral treatises, some in prose, some in verse dealing with the vices and virtues, the ten commandments, and treatises on sin. Not yet mentioned, and perhaps less readily available, was devotional literature, the literary result of the efforts to articulate the religious experience. Begun in the eleventh century this literature was available and added to throughout the centuries. In it, devotion is concentrated with an intensity of

---

206 Pantin, 212.

personal feeling and tenderness on the person of Christ, particularly on his passion. This Christocentric piety might have been known to the parson through the writings of several mystics, but more likely only obvious to his congregation through visual depictions of the passion in the Stations of the Cross which might have adorned the nave of the church.

The parson belonging to the parish of this bidding prayer has a curate, an assistant priest who also was entrusted with the cure of souls and able therefore to administer the sacraments, not in his own name but in the name of the parson. He is then a clergyman entrusted with the spiritual care of a body of laymen in a particular parish. He receives a stipend, is licensed by the bishop to perform minimal duties in the parish as deputy or assistant of the incumbent. The curate is not to be confused with the clerk whose role seems to be to attend upon the priest in his office and to perform a number of useful services on behalf of his parishioners.[207] At the risk of not doing him justice an example of one of his many duties might confirm his congenial position with regard to parishoners: he seem to have traveled round the parish on Sunday (after or before assisting the priest at mass is not clear) and aspersed the people with holy water reminding them of their baptismal promise "and chrystys mercyful bouldshedying./ By the wyche most holy sprynklying./Off al youre syns youe have fre perdun."[208] It would appear

[207] For his historical institution and an elaboration of his role see Cutts, 298-305.
[208] Ceremonies and Processions of the Cathedral Church of Salisbury ed. by C. Wordsworth from the 15th century manuscript ms, no. 148, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901) 143 See also Chaucer's clerk in the "Miller's Tale".

from a large number of medieval wills that the clerk was something of a favorite young man as often he is cited as being given a small bequest.[209]

Clerk, in its original sense, indicated a man in a religious order (a cleric). He was an officer of a parish church who had charge of the church and area and assisted the clergy in various duties. He might lead people in response, assist at marriage or baptism and might, if able to read and write, act as a kind of secretary, keeping accounts or attending to correspondence. He probably had a relatively easy and pleasant interaction with parishoners.

Both the clerk and the curate have assisting roles but they are very different from one another. The curate's is far broader in duties, training, and remuneration. He was to receive from the parson who employed him a fixed and sufficient salary; what he was not to get, at least by constitutional agreement of 1391, was any of the oblations, fees or offerings made in the parish. To seek these meant his stipend was obviously not large enough.[210] He was to take no part in quarrels or misunderstandings between the parson and parishioners, in fact his duty was to foster and preserve peace between them. His movements were circumscribed essentially by the boundaries of the church for he was only allowed to hear confession in the church and had to be vested in surplice and present in the choir at matins, high mass, vespers and at the required hours on Sundays and festivals. Like as many others as possible, his

---

[209] Tanner, 226ff.
[210] Gasquet,93.

presence was necessary to swell the numbers *in* the church not visiting at the west doors or out in the churchyard.[211]

It is difficult to accurately know how many parishioners there may have been listening in the nave to this bidding prayer and being ministered to by the parson and the curate. Some sources suggest that the "great and the poor seldom visited the churches".[212] The great would have access to their own private chapels to use, and the poor might be at other pursuits in the service of the great. Public worship could actually take place in more than one type of institution. There were semi-private chapels in the castles of king and nobles and in the houses of the minor aristocracy. Access to such places was limited and even those who were allowed to attend still had to fulfill obligations to the incumbent of the local parish church. A small fraction of late medieval Englishmen fulfilled their religious obligations at collegiate churches or at cathedrals or monasteries which had a parish altar. But the majority of the faithful were legally obliged to attend worship at one of the many parish churches.

All the people who were of age and not excommunicate were communicants, but the vast majority of these shared communion only once a year, at Easter, with some of the very pious perhaps receiving it more frequently. But if they did not come for communion did they come

---

[211] Gasquet, 93ff.
[212] Cutts, 201

at all? The answer seems to be that many came often, some less often; the question not answered, however, is whether they came for spiritual or social reasons.

King and Civil Government

> Ye shal also prayen for the unyte and pees of al Cristen royames,and en especial for the good state, pees, and tranquylite of the royame of Englond; for our liege Lord the King, that God for his grete mercy sende hym grace so to governe and rewel thys royame, that God be blessyd and worshippyd, and prouffyt and savacion of the londe; also ye shal pray for our lieg Lady the Queen, my lorde the prynce, and al the noble progeny of them;for al dukes, Erlis, baronns, knyghtes, and sqyers, and al other lordes of the Kynges counceyl whiche have ony rewel and governaunce in the londe, that God be plessyd, the londe defendyd, and to the proffyt and salvacion of alle the royame.

The second large division of the bidding prayer is that which gives blessings for those in civil authority. Having incorporated blessings for the local parson and curate and extended them in the most general and all-conclusive way possible to include "all the Preestes and Mynystris that serve therein or have served," the bidding prayer then focuses on the nation, its peace and the people who are affected by that peace. The request for unity and peace was a standard part of the intercession, but at this time they were precarious commodities: the century had been a particularly difficult one including war with France, struggles between Lancaster and York, the madness of a king, the exile and return of another king, murder and intrigue throughout.

"Our liege lord the Kyng", for whom the prayer asks "grete mercy" so that he may "govern and rule thys royame" was Henry VI, weak and ineffective as a ruler, pious and well intentioned as a person. None of these attributes could commend him to a period in history

which needed heroic virtues, the capacity for great decisions, and a determination of purpose. During Henry's childhood the military domination England had over France, accompanied by looting, killing and plunder, was crumbling. The great advantage that England's peaceful farmers and more peaceful burghers had experienced while their warring noblemen were out of the country, was ending. Having suffered disastrous defeat at the hands of an inspired and saintly peasant, Joan of Arc, the English were now on the defensive in France and their cause was eventually lost. The English barons, trying to make use of their mild, physically weak king, married him to Margaret of Anjou, niece of Charles VII; the political aim was to stabilize what was left of the English presence in France and ease out of the war. After a series of battles which achieved nothing, the English were finally driven out of France in 1453. Little now remained of English holdings on the continent except the fort of Calais, to which the English clung for another century. After generations of atrocious bloodshed and blind destruction, the English were considerably worse off than they had been. On this sour note the Hundred Years' War ended.[213]

Also in 1453, after eight years of marriage, Henry VI surprised everybody by actually generating a son, Prince Edward; in the same year, he unfortunately went mad. To be sure, the difference between Henry sane and Henry mad seems to be negligible since in either case he was the creature of his hardheaded advisers. To their number, however, was now added,

---

[213] B. Wilkinson, The Later Middle Ages in England, 1216 - 1485 (Longmans, 1989), 257 ff.

because she had a son to fight for, one of the fiercest of the lot, Queen Margaret, "that foreign woman".[214] Henry was a royal puppet, made to speak and act according to the coercion of the party. For a long time he was kept upon the throne only by that feeling of loyalty which the English attached to an anointed sovereign.

While Henry was temporarily mad, York acted as his protector and, when the king recovered, York laid down his authority. But York, despite history's treatment of him as initially a moderate and sensible man, was always suspect to the Lancastrians. Aware that their king was weak and their French war record unpopular and disastrous, they tried to keep York in the background. The Lancastrian party, supported by the Queen and the duke of Somerset, became a forceful faction against York; revolt, occasional assassination or mysterious disappearance, banishments, impeachments, and accusations of treason were the weapons of both the Yorkists and the Lancastrians. At last, in May of 1455, the two sides met at St. Albans in open battle, a battle generally regarded as the start of the Wars of the Roses.

Some historians catalogue the skirmishes, the numbers, the dates, the audiences with the king, the rallying of followers, arrests, imprisonment's in the towers, complaints against this or that councilor, who is protecting the queen and what the king is having for lunch. But what has proven to be far more useful about these ongoing civil wars is the view of social historians

---

[214] In the first act of Richard III, Shakespeare has left a memorable portrait of her in old age - a savage hag, without husband, son, power, influence or beauty, but still raging, still unreconciled, laying on her enemies many furious curses. Even allowing for poetic license she is a formidable force.

who seem to suggest that the most outstanding fact about them was their limited character[215]. They suggest that these were not wars of principle, wars between social classes, or religious sects; they were battles between groups of aristocratic professionals. Bitter these struggles certainly were, but neither faction wanted nor was able to rouse the whole of the countryside so that most of the battles were fought between "armies" of retainers. But they, along with others, knew that the real core of the boil was Henry VI, who for thirty nine long years occupied the throne without filling it; simply by his presence preventing anyone else from really ruling.

The fifteenth century presents a ragged texture of constant civil strife, a century in which country houses and castles were besieged, but not town or city,the towns seeming, as a rule, not to have taken sides. Atrocious murders were committed secretly in the midst of an ostensible peace. Traitors switched sides again and again. There were episodes of wild, despairing flight and lost causes suddenly redeemed, of children murdered because of their position on a genealogical chart. It was like an insanely complicated and very brutal private game played at a furious pace and cost by a few totally absorbed players in the midst of a countryside sometime oblivious, sometimes disturbed, most of the time occupied with trying to live their lives.

---

[215] Norman Davis. ed. Paston Letters & Papers of the Fifteenth Century (Oxford, 1971) Part II;J.R Lander, Conflict and Stability in Fifteenth Century England (London, 1969);R.B. Mowat, The Wars of the Roses 1377-1471 (London, 1914).

But how does this affect the bidding prayer under examination? Closely. When Archbishop Bourgchier appeared in the world of politics the duke of York was acting as protector during the king's first illness. Bourgchier's appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury, as well chancellor, was viewed as a compromise between the two factions of York and Lancaster.[216] Though he had a rather stronger leaning to the Yorkist party than the Queen would have liked "she respected him for his character, personal and official."[217] Bourgchier remained as chancellor for eighteen months, then gave it up to Waynfleet, Bishop of Winchester, his personal friend, in order to direct his attention to reconciling the two parties.

Though he is not celebrated for his intellect, Bourgchier is distinguished for his moderation and candor.[218] He acted as mediator, negotiator, and one who devised terms of agreement between Yorkist and Lancastrian factions. He housed the king and queen when required, walked in procession up the nave of the cathedral with dukes that were not of his political leaning and crowned a king for whom he had a great deal of personal affection and loyalty, but whom he knew was ineffective. He headed a small army of liveried and armed men who went off to Sandwich to begin communication with Yorkist leaders such as Warwick. By his presence, with the cross of Canterbury borne before him, he sanctified the proceedings of the day and blessed those whom he thought would be bringing peace.

---

[216] Hook,313.
[217] Hook,313.
[218] Hook,311.

And Bourgchier did a revolutionary thing: by arranging with the Earls of Salisbury and Warwick a convocation at St. Paul's Cathedral, he thus formed the closest thing to a parliament that had been seen. What he wanted was for these earls to make an oath of allegiance to Henry VI. That it did not last does not negate the intent. Bourgchier acted, throughout his time as archbishop, with good faith and the single-hearted intent for peace.

And "pees" is the optimal word in this section of the bidding prayer. The great desire for peace and effective rule for the country characterizes its tone. There is a sense of urgency, immediacy, in the blessings asked for the royal rulers; the need for "greate mercy" to be sent to the king is more than the formulaic mercy for him as sinner. It is a mercy that has a more complex desire imbedded in it: mercy for a king whose intellectual inability allows him to be a puppet pulled *un*mercifully by a variety of masters each with their own version of the story to play out.

Prayers are asked very specifically for "al dukes, Erlis, barons, knyghtes, and sqyers and al other lordes of the knyges counceyls" who have any hand in the rule of the country. The prayer-sayers of 1483 have behind them a history of earls and dukes who have not had parishioners in the forefront of their thoughts as they warred and positioned for property, power, but hardly peace. While the prayer does not mention names, the fact that it categorizes the ranks of the political players, as opposed to simply making a general statement

about those who govern, reflects a concerned awareness of what is happening in the immediate vicinity. As these lords and earls led their men at arms through different parts of England, the southwest in particular, they no doubt met with many who were weary of the mismanagement of the country. The King's job, after all, was to keep the peace within the realm: keep the peace by keeping the seas free from invasion and maintaining a sense of honest justice for all his citizens; keep the peace for the noble class who expected the king to give them scope and leadership that would enable them to further their own affairs; keep the peace so that the farmer or merchant might live well.

The state of limited anarchy that threatened in the final years of Henry VI's misrule upturned the conventions of the power game and so threatened all the players.[219] Edward IV's rule, which followed, brought a more lasting sense of leadership and stability and the bidding prayer reflects the relief of all when it says that good government will mean "that God be plessyd, the londe defendyd, [all] to the prouffyt and savacion of alle the royame...". A peaceful, stable country means a country pleasing to God and one allowed to prosper.

---

[219] K.B.McFarlane, The Nobility of Later Medieval England (Oxford, 1973), 121.

The People of the Parish

> Ye shal prey fo alle our parissheus where they ben on londe or on water, that God save them from alle maner of parellis,and for al the good men of the parisshe, for theyr wyves, childrene, and meyne, that God them maynteyne, save,and kepe; ye shal also praye for al trewe tithers, that God multeplye theyr goodes and encrece, for all trewe telyers that laboure for our sustenanunce, that teyle therth, and also for al the greynes and fruytes that ben sowen, sette,or doon on the erthe or shal be doon, that God sende suche wederyng, that they may groew, encreace, and multeplye to the helpe and prouffyt of alle mankynde, ye shal pray for all trewe shyupmen and marchauntes, where that they be on londe or on water, that God kepe them from al perillys, and brynge them hoom in saefte wyth they goodes, shippes, and marchaundyses, to the helpe, comfort, and prouffyt of this royame;

If the kind of peace being prayed for is actually felt to exist then the bidding prayer's request that God "maynteyne, save and kepe" all the "good men of this parisshe,... theyr wyves, childrene and meyne" (relations) would be a reinforcement of the actual situation. The parishioners for whom this peace is asked are those whether "they ben on londe or on water" and reflect the major preoccupations of the area: a living from the land or some aspect of trade across the channel. First of all, however, they fall into a very generalized and most important category: they are tithers.

Their definite obligation to pay tithes seems to be their major significance. Yet it is difficult to estimate to what degree tithes were paid. Giles Constable, in a very comprehensive survey of the question, concludes that tithes were probably paid by most Christians most of the time and that resistance to them usually centered around such questions as to whom they were owed or

on what things they were to be paid rather than the principle of paying them at all. He suggests though that resistance to paying them increased in the fifteenth century.[220]

Tithes are paid to the church and must be seen as different from endowments,[221] though they both affect the income and standard of living of the parish clergy. The value of the income which a medieval English parish priest received varied considerably. Clergy who served remote rural parishes where the soil was hostile and the population thin (or the other way round) must have found it hard to make ends meet. At the opposite end of the scale were the incumbents of wealthy parishes optimally placed to be affluent. In between these extremes were probably many parishes which could provide their incumbent with a reasonable or even very comfortable existence. In all of these categories, but essentially the first and the last, their most important source of revenue was the "tithe", a tenth part of the agricultural produce of the parish, a figure established long before the Norman conquest as compulsory payment by the faithful.

While parishioners receive some attention in ecclesiastical histories of the late middle ages, mediaeval church records rarely mention them except in the role of tither and that in the capacity of being troublesome. This picture is inevitably biased since, until the emergence of

---

[220] Giles Constable, "Resistance to tithes in the Middle Ages", Journal of Ecclesiastical History 13 (1962), 172-175, 184-5. See as well Norman Tanner, The Church in Late Medieval Norwich 1370-1532 for records of tithing disputes in Norwich between priory and parishes, p6.
[221] Discussed later in terms of benefactors.

church wardens' records (late 14th century), these accounts were compiled exclusively by clerics. Most cartularies show, on the rare occasions when entries concern parishioners, that their function was to render tithes and burial dues with the minimum of delay. If they wanted a more positive role, then they could donate land or money for the maintenance of altar lamps and candles or repairs to the church. The distinct impression gained from such records is that to the medieval cleric, the ideal parishioner was dutiful, had a limitless purse, did not spearhead pastoral activity, and resided in a parish which could provide a steady source of income for its priest.

The difficulty in modifying this picture is that parishioners left scarcely any records of their own more positive activities until very late in the period and, before the regular recording and survival of wills, there is little evidence of how they saw themselves. What is to be remembered, however, is that by the time of this bidding prayer late in the middle ages the status of the parishioner had already declined in comparison with early centuries; then churches were often built and endowed by the people of a neighborhood, who had claims on the tithe as well as on the services of the priest. A shift in emphasis, leading to a "them and us" mentality, developed in the course of the twelfth century as canon lawyers became increasingly influential in stressing the obligations of the laity towards their parish church.[222] While this formalization increased, churches became stratified into parochial churches (usually

---

[222] C.R. Cheney, From Becket to Langton: English Church Government 1170-1213.( Manchester, 1956), 102 ff.

the older ones found in town or countryside),and chapels, those catering for a rising and sometimes more affluent population and often connected with the residence of the benefactor. Normally tithes, dues and customary offerings were rendered to the mother church (parochial) who became increasingly hungry for funds. This whole parochial system was rapidly becoming preoccupied with financial and administrative concerns rather than with meeting the challenge of new pastoral needs in the multiplying rural communities and growing towns.

As appropriation of churches by monasteries increased these became more and more preoccupied with tithes and pension rights, not with the interests of the people who were ultimately providing this finance.[223] Even laity further up the scale than the ordinary village parishioner were regarded as just so much ecclesiastical property. Gilbert Foliot becomes a case in point: he was a knight parishioner of the church of Faversham. His tithes were the focus of much consideration in the church's records not the state of his soul.[224] It appears that the church felt that they were not getting their share and that Foliot was selling barley outside of the agreement with the church. Any feelings the parishioners may have had about their pastoral needs were normally omitted from contemporary records as irrelevant to the legalistic issues at stake.

---

[223] The Cartulary of Worcester Cathedral Priory, ed. R.R. Darlington (Pipe Roll Soc., New Series, xxxviii, 1968) no. 71, 266.
[224] The letters and Charters of Gilbert Folinot, ed. A. Morey & C.N.L. Brooke,(Cambridge, 1967) no. 357

Despite this view of the laity there seems to be no widespread reaction, through the withholding of tithes, until the later middle ages. Tithes on major crops were, of course, difficult to evade since any interested party could see at a glance what was due. Those on non-agricultural produce were more easily concealed. The result was that the possessor of the greater tithe (the monastery) received his due, while in many cases the vicar who actually administered to the parish might be forced to live at a grudgingly bare level assigned to him from the lesser tithe. Thus, the return from parochial work dwindled throughout the later middle ages, able and educated men looked elsewhere for employment, and pastoral care was increasingly left to clerics sometimes scarcely better trained than the people they served.

Sermon literature, more abundant from the thirteenth century onward, becomes an interesting source of the reaction of the laity to some of the extravagant clerical claims on the tithing or benefactions of parishioners. Since the sermon was the major teaching device, interruptions for questions or clarification were seemingly not uncommon.[225] The more determined interrogators could point out a sharp distinction between the preacher's theory and his practice. The often asked question was where was the vow of poverty or otherworldliness being exercised? Their followup to the question seems to be a shift in the pattern of giving. In particular, gifts to religious houses began to be earmarked for specific charitable purposes,

---

[225] Phyllis Barzillay Roberts, *Stephanus de Lingua Tonante*: Studies in Sermons of Stephen Langton (Toronto, 1968), 51.

often the choice being the poor or some particular parish improvements rather than to the priest as the one in charge of the parish.

Another development in this later period which changed tithing patterns was the great increase in licenses for private chapels, status symbols which drew the more affluent parishioners away from regular attendance at the mother church. The latter, though, attempted to safeguard their economic position by preventing the licensees from becoming permanently alienated from the ministrations of the parish church, hence protecting it from financial loss. A squire might be allowed to have a chapel in his own home provided he accompanied his family to the parish church on Sunday and performed his duties as a parishioner. In the cartularies this simply means continuing his financial contribution. The other persuasive condition placed on their continual contribution was, of course, a penalty: excommunication or imprisonment. In the latter case this could be punishment meted out if parishioners had not kept up the repairs of the nave, a duty imposed upon them since the 13th century. This burden of repair, renovation or even new building was a heavy one for peasant communities since a high proportion of their meager cash incomes already went in compulsory dues of various kinds.[226] The charge for fabric repairs was levied on individuals on a continual basis but other occasional ones, to repair tottering masonry or replace a worn missal, meant that the rector would normally present his demand to the parishioners *en bloc*. They would respond in a group and deal with

---

[226] J. Titow, English Rural Society 1200-1350(London, 1969), 81.

the request in various ways depending on the circumstances. Associations of parishioners were a natural development in a climate where levies could be extraordinary rather than reasonable. There are numerous cases in the cartularies of parish rectors where parishioners have been encouraged to take on more of the expenses of the church, including the chancel which was not their responsibility but, by law, the rector's responsibility. The cartularies indicate trade-offs which, like those of the parish of Gravely, in the 14th century, show that parishoners would take on the actual physical work of repairing the chancel, would supervise the work, but negotiate the price themselves.[227] What such an entry shows is that initiative on the part of parishioners led to a growing self-confidence among themselves while the clergy still saw them as irritating custodians of church furnishings.

By the late middle ages heavier demands than ever before were being made on the laity for more ornate fabric and furnishings, thus parishioners gradually evolved vestry associations for voting on the requested monies. The prototypes of both vestries and church wardens can be dimly discerned in the late 13th century, but their activities come more sharply into focus in the 14th and early 15th. Parishioners gathered to vote regular rates for maintenance, but because the rate was a charge per person it is doubtful that they were binding on anyone who had not agreed to it. Thus compulsory rates were probably rare at the time of this bidding prayer and a good deal of parochial income was still derived from voluntary gifts, legacies,

---

[227] The Glapwell Charters, ed. R.R Darlington (Derbyshire Archeological and Natural History Society, 1959) No. F.1.

and church ales. However, attitudes of the clergy had changed by the mid-fifteenth century and were somewhat more accepting of parishioners as proper custodians of church furnishings. Given the fact that parishioners were now also required to provide books, vestments and vessels, all at significant cost, it is little wonder that they expected to have some hand in their custody.

But another movement was fomenting: people at all levels of society were becoming increasingly skeptical of clerical pretensions. Compulsory payments of any kind were therefore not as easily enforced once the whole clerical mystique was questioned. The loss of revenue was particularly felt by the church at a time when there were already heavy demands on the higher clergy from both king and pope. If the laity felt they were increasingly being ignored in favour of the clergy's attention to trade, to politics, to architecture, the crown's finances, or the papacy, they then looked for alternatives. For those who felt that their local church was failing either to meet their spiritual needs or to provide scope for personal responsibility and initiative they resisted paying their tithes or joined in establishing chantries or religious guilds. Neither guilds nor chantries were new institutions but both were now, by the 15th century, significantly on the increase.[228] This meant that energy and money rather than being concentrated in general parish coffers were being channeled to individualistic activities.

---

[228] R.B Dobson, "The Foundation of Perpetual Chantries by the Citizens of Medieval York" Studies in Church History (London,1984); A. Hamilton Thompson, The English Clergy and Their Organization in the Late Middle Ages, The Ford Lectures for 1933 (Oxford, 1934).

There was, however, a positive side to this redirection of religious efforts: it pioneered a way towards an outward-looking approach by the church community towards the changing needs of society. The activities of religious guilds were many and various, and extra-parochial bequests increasingly went to such good causes as schools and almshouses. Regardless of how mixed the motives behind these developments were, they could and did lead to a real improvement in the personal dignity of the parishioners. That is not to say that these fraternities were either as large or as wealthy as their prototypes in the great Italian cities. The fraternities which played an important role in the government of some towns, like the Holy Cross Guild of Stratford-upon Avon, founded and maintained almshouses; most of the smaller fraternities in the countryside confined themselves to making modest cash grants to poor members and paying for funerals. They were not sufficiently endowed, even though they tended to attract members from the wealthier section of society, to hand out large sums. Perhaps the main charitable function of the fraternities, rather than providing formal grants, was to reinforce neighborliness and a sense of community among their members, and thus encourage informal giving.[229]

The parish church and its clergy were the losers: some tithing, benefactors, parishioners, the sense of community in Christ and the opportunity to be participants in the Christian duty of charity found channels of expression elsewhere. In the time when parishes were either served

---

[229] Ben R. McRee, "Charity and Guild Solidarity in Late Medieval England," 1993, Vol. 32, #3

by a rector or by a vicar if the rectory had been appropriated by a monastery there was a marked decline in church charity and in both 1391 and again in 1403 parliamentary statues were passed which reflected a growing concern about poverty, reminded appropriators of their charitable duties, and required bishops vetting new appropriations to order that "a convenient sum of money" be set aside from the parochial revenues for alms.[230] The numerous rebuildings of and additions to parish churches of the period 1350-1520, which in East Anglia and in the south-west were on a very large scale, attest to the limited charitable work in these areas. The rebuilding of the nave of a parish church in the new perpendicular style was a mammoth financial responsibility of the rector, thus the needs of the poor came rather a long way down the list of clerical priorities when grandeur, glorification and competition characterized the overt spirit of the day. Thus that the bidding prayer sets out the parishioner foremost as a tither holds no surprise. Whether it was in produce, labour or money, tithes provided the clerical institutions of the land with their well-being.

*Specific Tithers: Farmers*

As has already been noted, this bidding prayer is relatively specific to its area of use. To strengthen that claim would be to look at those whom the prayer mentions as tithers; they are representatives of occupations peculiar to the environs of the diocese. After the request that

[230] Record Commission (1810-1828) Vol. 2 pg. 80, 136-7; W.E. Smith (ed.), Register of Richard Clifford, Bishop of Worcester, 1401-1407,(Toronto, 1976), 128-37.

"God multeplye [tithers'] goodes and encrece," the local community mentioned include agriculturists, those who are "treweure telyers that laboure for our sustenaunce, that teyle therthe, and also for all the greynes and fruytes that been sowen, sette, or doon on the erdthe". The southwest was an area rich in wheat, peas, beans, corn, rye and barley.[231] Leeks, onions, garlic, apples, strawberries and pears show up on the records and on the tables of such notables as the Archbishop of Canterbury[232] and vegetables and fresh fruit were used in a number of the dishes described in recipe books.[233] But vegetables were not regarded as essential to the diet and garden produce could and did have a low status. By the aristocracy such produce often was associated with poverty or penance, hence the increase in purchase of vegetables during Lent and the greater amount consumed by peasants.[234]

The prayer concludes this reference to he-who-tills-the-earth-for-whatever-result by asking that God "send such wederying that they may growe, encreace, and multeplye to helpe and prouffyt of alle mankynde." The weather, of course, was crucial to householders and clergy

---

[231] The southwest's wealthy lords were known to be able to mill off a portion of the wheat for the most prized of breads, while in parts of the country where wheat was scarce, or there were less wealthy lords, maslin (wheat & rye) was used; the "gruel" bread containing rye, barley, and beans which was baked and issued at some priories was given to its servants. Dyer, 57.

[232] Peasants have left few accounts over time as they were often illiterate, and documentation had little function or place in a domestic economy in which most of the produce was consumed within the household. Wage-earners, many of whom were women and children, were often not recorded as much of their pay was in the form of their keep.

[233] Bridget Ann Henisch, Fast and Feast: Food in Medieval Society (Pennsylvania, 1990), 58ff.

[234] T.J Hunt and I Keil, " Two Medieval Gardens," proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, 104(1959-60), 91-101; J. Harvey, "Vegetables in the Middle Ages", Garden History, 12(1984), 89-99. Dyer,157. Apple orchards appear in the records of some Kentish manors(Chartham) in the first half of the 14th century, and the entry of fruit in priory records appears only at the close of the middle ages. See W. Somner, Antiquities of Canterbury, ed. by Battely, (1703),52.

alike. Extreme or even bad harvests disrupted the established routine of household or monastic life: shortages, through drought or extensive wet, could change the course of events by changes in food supply. But, in truth, by the end of the fifteenth century the cycle of bad harvests and resulting misery seems not to be so frequent and the population appears to be a less vulnerable one than in an earlier century.[235] This does not, however, change the desire to ask blessing for an increase in the harvest guaranteed by good weather.

*Specific Tithers: Shipmen and Merchants*

The prayer moves from country to town to an even larger world of occupations when it suggests that "ye shal praye for alle trewe shypmen and marchauntes, where that they be on lande or on water." It focuses specifically on bringing them home safely "wyth they goodes, shippes, and merchaundyses," for the "helpe, comforte, and proffyt of this royame." Merchants and traders, other than the monastics who were heavily involved in the wool trade, were essentially townsmen and in terms of wealth and status had much in common with the rural gentry. Merchants[236] are emphasized in the prayer because their trade on a large scale, over long distances, often involving highly valued commodities like wine, wool, or cloth gave them high profile and high profits. At the time of this bidding prayer a mercantile elite was being established based on economic superiority, compounded by their influence on a town's

[235] Dyer, 258.
[236] Commerce had become, for the first time, prominent in the theories of national policy as the long debate between the Merchant Adventurers and the Hanse League in the middle of the fifteenth century would show.

government, guilds or courts. However, the *extent* of the hierarchy depended very much on the town's economy because of its position as a port or an important regional centre of trade. Direct sea routes had been organized between London/Genoa and Southampton/Florence as early as the thirteenth century. For the export of raw wool as well as woven and expertly dyed cloth Southampton and Bristol became large and important ports as well as being noted for shipping and ship building. But by far the most remarkable body of traders in England during the Middle Ages were those who traded in wool. It had long been the largest and most lucrative kind of trade and one in which the English Kings were particularly interested for their customs revenue was drawn largely from wool and wool fells. When they desired to borrow money in anticipation of revenue it was to the wealthy wool merchants they turned.[237] When they wanted to increase taxes for war efforts it was a tax on the wool grower or an export duty on them which they imposed.

Anticipation of revenue was not only a king's prerogative, however. Monasteries, particularly the Cistercians, found wholesale contracts with export merchants still a way of funding their clerical expenses. The Cistercians, in an earlier century, bought expansive tracts of land, often marginal, enclosed them and stocked them with large flocks of sheep. The wool which these produced was not of the ultra-fine quality needed for rich fabrics but was, nevertheless, in great demand, especially by Italian merchants. The latter, from the early thirteenth century onwards, shrewdly trekked around England to buy the clip and fells, in particular those from

[237] Eileen Power, The Wool Trade In English Medieval History, (Oxford, 1942); Cynthia Harnett, The Wool Pack,(London,1951).

monasteries. To facilitate transactions such as this lists were circulated among Italian business firms containing details as to the monastic houses with wool to sell and the quality and quantity which each produced. Contracts could be drawn up which arranged for purchase two, three, or even ten years in advance[238]. The advantage for the monastery was that the merchant paid a large lump sum of cash advance which became a loan made on the security of wool. This was a lucrative deal for the merchant as he received wool at a set value for a set period of time. The risk for the monastery was that it simply was mortgaging future resources. If grazing conditions were poor or there was sterility among the animals for any reason, the monastery had simply created for itself a huge debt.

*Benefactors*

> ye shal also pray for al them that fynden ony light in this Cherche, or yeve or byquethe, boke, belle, chalyce, or vestement, surplys, autercloth or towayle, londes, rentes, lampe or lyght, or any other adooumement, wheby Goddis servyse is the better servyd, susteynyd and maynteyned in redyng and syngging, and for alle them that therto have couneylled that God rewarde and yelde it them at theyr moste nede;

---

[238] Power, 42.

While there could be much anxiety about aristocratic incomes due to war, weather, or wool there still existed some very wealthy individuals It is not for nothing, then, that the bidding prayer mentions blessings for benefactors after those for merchants. The great English woolmen of the fifteenth century left an indelible mark upon the countryside. Some of them were Londoners, but for the most part they lived in the district where they collected their wool and were intimately connected with its life. Along with the landed aristocracy these wealthy wool men became benefactors of its churches, godfathers of its children, and makers of its local laws.[239]

While they were powerful in life, they could also make their mark in death. The concrete evidence of this would be a will which recorded their gifts, especially those funded to churches. Though there are many reasons for making a will, and wills were in no sense made by everyone who had anything to bequeath, the first task of the testator was to dispose of his (or her in the case of a woman wealthy in her own right) soul to almighty God, the Virgin May and all the Saints. Evidence seems to suggest that piety was not Christocentric.[240] After the commendation of the soul came the disposal of the body. Often, when wealth allowed, there was a family vault in a neighbouring church or abbey, otherwise, the last wish was to be

---

[239] Peter Heath, "Urban Piety in the Later Middle Ages: the Evidence of Hull Wills" in Church Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century,ed. by Barrie Dobson (London,1984), 227.
[240] A good discussion of examples of wills in N. Tanner's The Church in Late Medieval Norwich 1370-1532, where the Appendix records several long and short wills.

buried inside the church usually near the choir, next to some image or altar. Burial within the parish church was socially prestigious and money would be left for the privilege and for the work involved. It is obvious from this desire that the building, beautification, or enrichment of the church would concern the testator who wished to be buried there. And those concerns are clearly listed in the bidding prayer; whether it is book, wax, or land, the church depended upon the generosity of benefactors.

The wills of benefactors fall into two categories: short ones with only three or four bequests or long ones with a very detailed list of the dispersal of assets including clothes, horses, jewellery, cups or chairs. Almost every will contained at least one bequest to a parish church usually that to the high altar or for the upkeep of the church. Following this the next most popular bequest was for the performance of religious services in the form of masses or dirges, for the state of the deceased's soul. Charitable bequests are part of the will of those who, like Margery Dogett of Norwich, could afford more than the bare minimum of legacies. She, along with other testators such as John Baker, rector of St. John's Maddermarket also in Norwich, bequeath votive lights that might be set up in cathedrals, priories, friaries or parish churches depending on specific associations with the deceased.[241] Bequests were given to members of a religious house in the hope that the members would celebrate for the testator's soul; bequests to recluses, anchors, anchoresses were given for the same hope. Bequests to craft guilds and

---

[241] Tanner, 32ff.

pious confraternities were intended for their continued welfare as well as for the welfare of the soul of the deceased member. If the bequests were for building projects, benefactors contributed the wages of a mason, the land for an extension, the making of a window or the crafting of its stained glass. Benefactors could make donations for completing or adorning the high altar, the painting of the virgin at a side altar, the sculpted angels above it or lengths of cloth or jewelry to be loaned to the peasant bride who had none for her wedding day. Though the poor could also have been benefactors, there are few wills that record their gifts.

The bidding prayer becomes quite detailed in naming the gifts that obviously have been most useful or will be most useful in the upkeep of the church. This 1483 bidding prayer asks that its people pray for "al them that fynden ony light in this Cherche, or yeve or byquethe, boke, belle, chalyce, vestement, surplys, autercloth or towayle, londes, renta, lamps or lyght or any other adorament, whereby Goddis servyse is the better servyd, susteynyd and mayteyned in redyng and syngging...." This list of possible or actual gifts is not specific to any location but universal - they are needs of any church any place. In the case of books, those indicated in wills may be service books and song books or more often, primers and Psalters. In 1450, John Bedford of Hull listed in his will breviaries, more than one missal, and a small book with psalms, the litany and other prayers in it.[242] While these books were often left directly to family members, friends, or servants, the church, in any case, would benefit simply by more of

[242] Peter Heath "Urban Piety in the Later Middle Ages: the Evidence Hull Wills" in Church Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century, ed.by Barrie Dobson, (LOndon,1984), 226.

its parishioners having access to such texts. The secular clergy, unlike the clergy of priories, depended almost wholly upon private collections and bequests of books. [243]

Most wills reflect the wish to be remembered in masses upon the anniversary of death. Some remembrances might be monthly but more likely yearly or in perpetuity. One of the manifestations of this is the great bell which would be rung to announce this mass "as is the custom in that church or chapel for the more noble and distinguished of the town" [244]. The bell (plus the bell tower) was of enormous significance to the medieval parish church. Poor parishes might have only a single bell perched in a little billicot which topped the western gable of the church. More wealthy ones might have several bells, often large, which had to be housed in a substantial belfry. The bell's main function was to call the faithful to attendance at service or, if they could not participate, to remind them to say brief prayers on their own, notably the Hail Mary.[245] In any case, on regular funeral or festive occasions the bell heralded for its benefactor, his piety, wealth or even the uncertainty about his soul.

Parishioners were responsible by law for the maintenance of the nave in good condition and for the provision of all the incidentals necessary for the conduct of public worship. By the

[243] Tanner, 35ff.
[244] Heath, 218.
[245] The medieval form of this consisted only of two texts from St. Luke's Gospel "hail May fall of grace the Lord with thee" and "blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of the womb Jesus". In the course of the sixteenth century came general use of the addition "Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now and in the hour of our death".

thirteenth century the efficient authorities of the times spelled out these responsibilities in detail. This made it incumbent upon the parishioners of each parish to see that their church was provided with those items the bidding prayer lists specifically, including "chalyce, or vestement, surplys, autercloth or towayle."

The sacrificial chalice, by the time of its note in this bidding prayer, had gone through changes in material from clay to glass, to metal as well as changes in style. By the fourteenth century however it had a long stem, was made of precious metal, and its bowl was smaller as communion in one kind became universal.[246] While decoration (engraving, gemstones) varied with parish wealth, the one constant expense was the precious metal from which, by law, the chalice was to be formed. In such a case a benefactor was essential.

The main set of eucharist vestments, (six in all including chasuble, alb, amice, stole, maniple and girdle) for the priest was the responsibility of the laity as well as were the garments of the deacon or subdeacon if resources permitted. In some cases these vestments could amount to great sums since their material and weave were fine and much fabric was necessary for each garment. If either an outer cope or a chasuble was worn at liturgical functions on major

[246] Ministerial chalices, used for the communion of people at time of general communion, could also be used regularly to offer unconsecrated wine as the communicant left the altar. Reformation restoration of communion in both kinds caused the chalices of the 17th and following centuries to be made considerably larger than before.

festivals or processions, that cloak could be of imported heavy silk or very fine wool.[247] The girdle, that indispensable symbol of sacerdotal chastity which held the alb in place, could also be the product of fine weavers and embroiders. The cumulative expense is obvious. The blessing on benefactors who contribute to this cost is therefore heartfelt.

While the chancel of a parish church was the responsibility of its rector in terms of repair, its furnishing was usually the expense of the laity. The main function of the chancel was to provide a setting for the high altar of the church which dominated its eastern end. The altars of the middle ages were rectangular structures of stone[248] but not necessarily enormous in size. Each had as its top a large stone slab whose upper surface commonly showed five engraved crosses reminiscent of five wounds of the crucified Christ.[249] Beneath the slab was sometimes enclosed a small container which held a martyr's relics, a lucrative addition for any church, and behind the altar could be a reredos, the panels of which might be a rich tapestry, painting or carving, the latter painted and gilded. Of the altar itself little might be visible, its top and ends draped by long cloths and the side facing the congregation covered by a frontal made of wood, metal, or more often cloth. The "Autrecloth[s]", usually three in number, were of fine linen and might be ornately embroided. The bidding prayer does not specify

---

[247] In the monastic church the cope was widely used as a ceremonial choir habit by whole communities on particular feast days. See E. Bishop, "The Origins of the Cope as a Church Vestment " Dublin Review cxx (1897),17-37.

[248] The earliest altars were probably of wood, viewing the tables in private houses normally used for domestic purposes. W.H. Hope suggests that the customs after the 6th century of celebrating the Eucharist on the tombs of martyrs first caused stone altars to come in. See W.H. Hope English Altars from Illuminated Manuscripts. Alcuin Club Collections I, 1899.

[249] See, for example, the altar in the crypt of St. Augustine's abbey in Canterbury.

altercloths for the high altar only and might well have been asking blessings for the benefactors who gave cloths for additional altars where private masses were celebrated. The latter should be unlikely as the benefactor of the chapel usually underwrote all of its expenses including its fabric.

Of the "towayle" mentioned in the prayer little is known about its composition other than it should be linen or hemp if used at communion and silk if used as a covering for the altar. In the first case, such a towel was offered by the server to the priest at a time of High Mass so that he might dry his washed hands before the chalice was raised. The towel could also be held under the chin close to the breast of the communicant when accepting the host so that no particle of it might fall or be lost. Its mention in the bidding prayer as an object which might be gifted by a generous benefactor would suggest that its quality was high and therefore expensive.

There was probably no more obvious and constant cost, however, than that for candles, which directly translated into wax costs. In the bidding prayer's list of bequests candles ("lytes") begin that list and end it. Candles were a very expensive item indeed and as medieval wills demonstrate, their use had to be carefully regulated. Gifts of candles occur frequently in wills both for use at the testator's funeral rites and on later occasions.[250] It is difficult to know

[250] Tanner, 226ff.

precisely the initial reason, beyond utilitarian ones, for the great interest in candles but by the middle ages their symbolic presence was everywhere. In liturgical use they had come to signify joy, honour, Christ as the light of the world or the splendour of heavenly Jerusalem. At baptism they were held by newly baptized persons or, in some places, by all those attending baptism. At mass, candles and torches were used in the introit and gospel processions and much used throughout Holy Week, the paschal candle assuming extraordinary proportions. The huge dimension of one from a rather opulent church is described in The Rites of Durham: the candle "in latitude did contain almost the breadth of the Quire, in longitude that did extend to the height of the vault.... In conclusion the Pascal was estimated to be of the rarest monuments in England"[251]. On candlemas, candles for domestic and liturgical use for the year were blessed and then carried in penitential procession. In processions with the sacrament and especially in later medieval Corpus Christi processions, candles were carried as a mark of honour. Candles were used at dedications of churches, and were hung or set before the shrines of saints, before images and icons, and in the later middles ages, before the reserved sacrament. They were, without doubt, a valuable commodity which the church used in generous quantities.

The first of these necessary quantities was the altar lights. By law a priest could not celebrate mass without the use of light: at low mass one candle at the gospel side of the altar was

[251] The Rites of Durham, rev.ed. Surtees Society, 107.

sufficient or if the church were small and poor this may be all that appeared on the altar at any time. Myrc, in his "Instructions to Parish Priests" says:

> Look that thy candle of wax it be,
> And set it so that thou it see,
> On the lyt hals of thine altere
> And look always that it burn clere[252]

More likely, at least by the fifteenth century, the altar supported two candles, on either side of the crucifix symbolizing Christ as the light of the world, the two candles reflecting his divine and human nature. There might be a third one, lit separately to signify the most solemn part of the mass and hung above the high altar in honour of the reserved sacrament in its Pyx. Its effect would be supplemented at Easter by the large and often ornamented Paschal Candle honouring Christ's resurrection. This candle was used in the Easter ceremonies and burned until Ascension-tide. In a church like that described above in the Rites of Durham its dimensions seem incomprehensible.

The other most significant source of candle light was from the tapers burning in front of the images of the saints placed around the church and in the chapels. There could, at times, be considerable. The church warden's accounts of All Saints' Church, Derby, for 1466-67 indicates not only a very large number of saints being honoured but an even larger number of tapers. At St. Nicholas' image, for instance, twelve candles burned, maintained, in part, by the school's scholars as St. Nicholas was patron saint of school boys. St. Clement's had five

---

[252] John Myrc, Instructions for Parish Priests 1450, ed. by Edward Peacock (London,1868), #3.

candles maintained by the Guild of Bakers. Before the Mary of Pity, five candles were maintained by the wife of Ralph Mayre. Before St. Christopher five candles by five individuals, and the list goes on.[253]

In addition, lights were placed on the western side of the rood loft and on various feast days more lights would be provided. At the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a temporary wooden chandelier which could hold many candles, was set up in church and because of it, the feast came eventually to be known as Candlemas.

The popularity of these lights is indicated by the fact that gilds maintained them, the public donated to them, and benefactors left money for them in their wills. These ritual lights might have suggested to their donors that through such a light they were keeping themselves in the perpetual remembrance of Christ and the saints but it was, nonetheless, an expensive form of remembrance.

Lighting in the medieval church was symbolic as much as it was utilitarian since a very large portion of the parish congregation neither possessed anything so expensive as books nor had the capacity to read them by the light provided. As well as the inadequate facilities for lighting, churches suffered from the passionate use of darkly stained glass windows, small and

---

[253] C. Cox, Curious Church Gleanings, (London,1926),44.

excluding light, replaced only later by larger ones using newly developed techniques for staining glass. On the whole, the interior of parish churches was frequently dim and cold and because of the exorbitant expense of any form of artificial lighting, the service time table tended to be largely confined to daylight hours.

The presence of a generous benefactor, however, could counteract this. Wills constantly mention either money or wax, sometimes hives themselves, being left to a church.[254] Sometimes the use of candles was very carefully stipulated as in this Essex case where Sir G. de Braute and his wife, Joan, have been given leave to found a domestic chapel. They are to receive the mass and the Easter rites together with their free servants and guests, excluding the other servants who are pledged to attend the mother church. For this agreement the founder, his wife and heirs were to give the mother church "two wax candles, each weighing a pound, to be offered, one at the Purification, the other at the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, before vespers".[255] There seems, from the information of wills, to be a special feeling for the parish churches. Their popularity may be explained partly by their importance in the lives of the citizens, and partly by the feeling of parishioners that their parish churches belonged to them and were their responsibility more than the religious houses or other institutions were. Clergy, as well as non-clergy, acted as benefactors to parishes in which they had been born or served. Dr. Geoffrey Chaumpreis, for example, left a number of bequests to

---

[254] Tanner, 111ff.
[255] Cutts, 425.

the clergy of the two parishes of which he had been vicar, St. Stephen's in Norwich and Cromer in Norfolk. His best surplice and "all his wax in the chancel of St. Stephen's" was left to his successor vicar; money, books and the forgiveness of debt to the vicar in Cromer.[256] To have placed them as equal gifts attests to the value of both.

Without the generosity of benefators candles would have been a very scarce commodity. However, a penitent may not have regretted such a situation: a woman convicted of unchastity was sentenced to be disciplined by walking three times around the church in a penitential way while holding a wax candle weighing half a pound. She shall do this from the beginning of mass until the Offertory when she will then offer it " to the image in the chancel." All of this is to be done on three Sundays, excommunication if she refuses. The heretic must walk barefoot, partially clad, carrying a bundle of sticks and a single taper which he must take to the chancel during mass and present it at the foot of the altar. If he does not recant and is excommunicated, he is claimed so "by bell, book and candle, the candle being extinguished at the time of the pronouncement".[257]

A candle seems somehow to be symbolic of the person who has gained a degree of spiritual enlightenment. Not only was it used by the penitents who now understood their wrongdoing but candles were carried by individuals in the lenten procession to present at the altar, they

---

[256] Dickinson, 349.
[257] Gasquet, 226ff.

were carried by nuns who were to be professed or an anchoress who was to be enclosed; and by the newly married to signify their life as a couple. Candles were an accompaniment on an individual's darkest journey of all: funeral candles were placed around the hearse and careful provisions were made in wills to provide these not only for the day of the funeral but on monthly and yearly anniversaries of the death.

Funerals were a wax-costly event. While funerals were expensive for the deceased in terms of alms giving, food, clothing, and the pay for the contingent of poor folk who accompanied the hearse, wax costs were a very significant portion of the bill. The duty of mourners (paid or otherwise) was to attend the body, carrying wax torches or candles and saying prayers for the soul of the dead person. The minimal number of such persons was thirteen in memory of Christ and the apostles. Such a number was ordered for the funeral of Thomas White, a draper of Beverly. The poor attendants (hired) were to have white gowns (although black was much more usual), hoods, shoes, and were "altogether on bended knee about my body on the day of the funeral [to] say the Psalter of the Virgin Mary"[258]. Such funerals were accompanied by extravagant expenditures on wax torches and crosses to surround the hearse. In 1405 Agnes Styllyngflet provided 32 lb. of wax for this purpose. John Ganton, in 1456, left not only £2 to buy twelve torches but also 12 lb. of wax for two candles and a candle cross to burn about his body on the day of his burial.[259] William Goodknape's inventory records the wax expenses

[258] Dickinson, 349.
[259] See J.C. Smith, Index of Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 1383-1558/2 vols. The Index Library, London, 1893-95.

after his death: £17.11.4 for the day of his burial, £10.17.10. for his twelve-month day, and £5.9.0 for his second year day — the total sum would have paid the salary of a chantry priest for seven years.[260] Symbolically, the candle suggested that though their bodies were buried in darkness, their souls were united with God as the giver of light. In each of the situations examined, the individual makes a journey, the end of it being a more profound relationship with God accompanied by symbolic light.

If a spiritual value was put on wax so also was there a very clear monetary one. Not only did benefactors know the value of what they donated but wax was part of the agreed upon fee for services by the clergy: for weddings "three tapers, 3d and the whole wax for offering at mass"; for burials "all the wax tapers and wax branches used at the funeral"; for churchings and at purification, "the taper"; at principle feasts, various offerings plus "some wax, some money, which comes to the parson's use".[261] The church's desire for light, whether such lights were to serve in life or death, was enormous and the bidding prayer reflects the prominence of this need through its blessing, not once but twice, asked upon those benefactors who "fynden ony light in this Chirche."

But who were these benefactors? Donors were socially diverse and their patterns of bequests had become much more complex by the late middle ages. Benefactors fell into four distinct

[260] Heath, 217.
[261] Cutts, 496.

groups at the top of the financial register: kings, titled nobility, wealthy merchant families, and clerics. Imperial or royal generosity was usually focused in a special way on church and monastery by making large gifts of furnishings and plate, entire manors as a supporting income, and the allowance of certain fiscal rights to the monastic institution. The English nobility and the wealthy merchant families could endow churches and monasteries as well, but their gifts were usually smaller than those made by the crown and often were scattered parcels of land rather than whole manors. Clerics as a group followed an interesting and similar pattern of giving founding schools for training young secular clerics or, less frequently, alms houses for the relief of the poor.[262]

Wills show a pattern: donors explicitly stated that their gifts were bequeathed for the good of their own souls and, sometimes, those of their relatives.[263] When they made a donation they expected to be commemorated with prayers and largess to the poor, and donors were serious about getting what they paid for. Several stipulated that if their property was misused and their pious wishes unfulfilled, the gift should be transferred. While concern to have prayers and good works offered for the donor's soul was the reason behind all benefactions,[264] donors sought to achieve these ends through different means. Lay donors seemed to have a

---

[262] J.C.Smith, Index of Wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 1383-1558/2 vols. The Index Library, London, 1893-95.

[263] The whole subject of purgatory is a vast one and will only be touched in prayers for them "that bin in dette or synne". Let it be noted here, however, that the notion of purgatory reached its point of hottest interest in the west in 12$^{th}$ century, thus the idea of mitigating penalties for things done or undone was firmly fixed by the end of the fifteenth century. Prayers of others was an essential component in lessening the purgatorial stay.

[264] Tanner,250.

preference for churches, their clergy or monasteries. In the eyes of the laity these institutions seemed the best places to ask for prayers, that being their business anyway. Clerics seemed to establish more of their own institutions which appears as a kind of vindication of their own status, or perhaps reflects the thought that their fellow clerics would be the best ones to remember them with prayers.

The recently wealthy, a significant new group by the fifteenth century, became ecclesiastical donors as well. There also seems to be a clear, very social reason for it: traditionally the nobility acted as patrons and the new families who had amassed fortunes through trade or rural lordships aspired to nobility. Their ecclesiastical donations were a means of displaying wealth and asserting social prominence. It is not entirely surprising that "new" families made donations to well established monasteries since those with grand social aspirations were not big supporters of innovation.[265]

The very wealthy, especially the highest nobility, could endow institutions at a distance from their family seats. For these benefactors, the type of institution may have been a decisive factor and Benedictine monasteries seem to have been the most popular.[266] Those a notch

---

[265] Tanner, 42.

[266]One of the greatest knightly farmers of Canterbury in the 13th century was Godfrey of South Malling whose decendents still held land in Archbishop Bougchier's time. His Sussex manor at Tarring stood as the place for the archbishop's household when he came to stay (du Boulay,101). As well John Linwood or Lyndewood of Lincolnshire, one of the great woolmen of the 15th century, left legacies to churches and monasteries all over the country, particularly money to build the bell tower and pave the floor of Linwood church.

lower on the social pyramid - artisans, poorer knights and the wealthier families (not wealthiest) of outlying areas - show a preference for churches in their neighbourhoods or for a monastery that held lands in their area. This would suggest that geographical proximity to a church or monastery, perhaps contact with its clergy, was an important factor in directing both the piety and the gifts of less wealthy donors.[267] They endowed institutions they knew well, whose clerics offered them the sacraments or whose monks frequented their communities on the abbot's business. For instance, Robert Jannys' will indicates that he left money to pay for the space occupied by anchors and anchoresses within Norwich because he was particularly fond of his local parish clerics.[268]

What is significant about any class of wills in the 14th and 15th centuries is the variety of institutions that were left donations. Donors simply spread out their resources suggesting, perhaps, an attempt to hedge their bets, or amortize their risk by giving something to various type of institutions. This testamentary pattern of scattering donations reproduces, albeit on a grander scale, the act of almsgiving. The will, more than being a final disposition of property, became a final dispersion of alms including those to family, church, clerics, the city, servants, the poor, the sick, widows. As a religious sentiment it expressed concern for others in the present world as well as for the testator's passing to the next.

---

[267] See the will of Margery Dogett, widow, in Tanner,230.
[268] Tanner,251.

What it also reflected was the money economy of the time: testators seemed to have a certain amount of wealth in cash at the time of the writing of the will and some left instructions as to what property should be converted to cash through sale. This had distinct advantages for ecclesiastical institutions. A gift of property, to be of value, required a certain amount of administration on the part of the receiving institution, and properties far removed from the institution's main holdings could be more trouble than they were worth. A gift of cash could be applied to a variety of needs, including the purchase of property to consolidate holdings, the church's repair, books, wax, vestments or new buildings. In any case, ecclesiastical donations provide evidence of links between society and the church, the gift both signifying and forging connections — ones that were never simple, often complex, but always remembered in a straightforward way by the bidding prayer.

*Pilgrims and Palmers*

> Also ye shal pray for al trewe pylgryms and palmers that have taken theyr waye to Rome, to Jherusalem, to Saynt Katherynes, or to Saynt James or to any other holy place, that God of his grace yeve them tyme and space wel for to goo, and to goo and to come to the prouffyt of their lyves and sowles;

The bidding prayer shows another carefully considered link in the placement of the next group of people being blessed. The new group for whom prayers are asked are "pylgryms and palmers." Individuals might go on pilgrimage to Rome, to Jerusalem's holy sites, or any one of several saint's sites at home or abroad, but palmers were ones who had taken part in the

distinctive ceremonies of the blessing of the palms a week before Easter. As with pilgrims, palmers could be more highly regarded if their participation was in the Palm Sunday procession in Jerusalem but to have been a palmer at home was important as well. Individuals participated in the procession as it moved from one's local church to another where palms were blessed and distributed, then back home again.

Those who could go on pilgrimage out of the country as opposed to making visits to holy cities within England were pilgrims who could afford both the cost and the time for the lengthy journey.[269] In the latter case Archbishop Peckham's register shows an interesting variation of this for errant nobility: "rich laymen were not to be indulged by fines, but sent on pilgrimages if in too high a position to be flogged in public."[270] Like benefactors the world of the pilgrim was enlarged because of what he could afford.[271] These took the form of commerce by creating demands for the goods that pilgrims had seen or brought back to England while on pilgrimage. Holy relics were primary but jewels, silks, perfumes, spices and weapons were overwhelmingly popular.

---

[269] Sidney Heath suggests that privileges were also part of the package: if the pilgrim were priest he drew a stipend while on pilgrimage providing that his absence was not over three years. If a layman, the pilgrim was excused his taxes and his property was immune from all confiscation. Pilgrims in the Middle Ages,(London, 1909),25.
[270] Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland. During the Middle Ages, ed. by Charles T Martin, "*Regisrum Pisolarum,*" Fratris Peckham, Archbishop of Canterbury, Vol. III #77, London, 1885, p xxxiv.
[271] One of the effects of pilgrimages to the east was to initiate, encourage or strengthen bonds between east and west.

But whether pilgrims were of the gentry or not the fundamental idea of this Christian journey was that God exercised a benevolent influence on an individual through a sacred medium (relic usually) which was either housed or situated in some definite place. The highest of these places was, of course, the Holy Land with its sites consecrated by the presence of Christ or Mary. The tombs of Peter and Paul in Rome were almost as important. Pilgrimages to domestic shrines were quicker, cheaper but no less rewarding if done with an attitude of devotion.[272] The belief in the merit and even the obligation of a pilgrimage, whether to Jerusalem or to Canterbury, was firmly impressed on the mind of every nominal Christian, whatever the rank or station. People were strictly encouraged to hold a pilgrim in great respect; it was seen as a favor from God — the privilege of visiting a sacred place — and those unable to go might even share in this special status by mere proximity to the pilgrim. Not for nothing were badges issued or sewn on to the pilgrim's clothing.

If the pilgrimage were to Jerusalem or Rome it was sightseeing at its best, notwithstanding many disadvantages.[273] If it were to a domestic shrine of a local saint it could as easily become occasion for committing new sins as for performing penance for old ones. By the early 15th

---

[272] The composition of a pilgrimage is not the issue of this discussion, but a note on its extensiveness gives some idea of its number. Pilgrims would include people from every walk of life as the Canterbury Tales shows, but the Tales also suggest that all pilgrims were bent on holiness or devotion. Artisans in search of work would join, merchants taking goods to a distant town or those who only wanted the good company and song could swell the numbers; they might last a little or a long way depending on what was to be gained or enjoyed. It is not difficult to understand why the Wife of Bath had been three times to Jerusalem and in many lesser towns; her own tale might have been enjoyed and enhanced on each entertaining journey.

[273] Margery Kemp was a brave soul with a gift for tears and trauma and her record of pilgrimage has become a classic source of information.

century the rise of domestic shrines in England had far surpassed foreign pilgrimages. Who but the most devout would make a perilous journey overseas if two trips to Canterbury or St. David's in Wales could equal in merit one to Rome? In the former case, the relics held at each centre became a large source of profit and, along with indulgences, they were part of the persuasion for pilgrims to visit locally. The above combination (relics and indulgences), however, contributed to the final degeneration of the pilgrimage and by the end of the 15th century pilgrimages had become a less important factor in the country. Some evidence of this is supplied by the Paston Letters where pilgrimages and saints seem to be part of active belief but not a central preoccupation.[274] This situation is not necessarily so for all of England, but probably so for the gentry.

What had not disappeared, however, was the reverence for relics: Sir John Paston seems to have claimed a finger of John the Baptist, valued at £40, and wore "dayly about hys nek" a chain adorned with a piece of the Holy Cross worth £200. Elizabeth Paston had "a pece of Holy Crosse, Crossewise made, bordered with silver aboute" which she wore. So too did their friends John de Vere, Earl of Oxford, and his wife, Elizabeth Scrope, who had more pieces of the cross. But perhaps all were to be outdone by Sir John Fastolf, who had an arm of St. George "and, some say, his heart".[275]

---

[274] Davis, Paston Letters, Part II.
[275] Dobson, 197.

*The Sick*

> Ye shal also pray for al them that be seke or dyseased of this parisshe,
> that God sende to them helth the rather for our prayers

The medieval west made a firm connection between the Christian life and healing: there were general prayers for the sick and specific journeys to the shrines of saints. The cult of St. Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral owes its great fame in part to the large number of healings for which it was believed to be responsible. It was the Rome of England. Even in an age when battle, murder, and plague were not rarities, the most brutal murder of Thomas shocked England and Western Europe and even before the quick and legal process of canonization was completed in 1173 the general public was making pilgrimages to Canterbury. Their motives, like motives for founding monasteries, varied in kind and degree. Some may have been non-theological but probably most reasons were primarily religious.

While the gathering of indulgences ranked as one of those religious reasons, the most motivating of them was the hope of being cured of some illness.[276] A cure would be viewed as a miracle; the working of miracles being a sign of God's continuing presence and special favor in the world. Miracles occurred at tombs or through the dead as agent because — so the theory went — God held this dead one in particular esteem. As evidence of special favor,

---

[276] R.C. Finucane, Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England,( Oxford, 1977)." The Use and Abuse of Medieval Miracles", History, Feb.1975, 1-10.

clerical scribes recorded the miracles attributed to someone buried in their precincts. As the process of canonization was refined after the 12th century the keeping of such records became an essential prerequisite for canonization as well as accumulated evidence for hope on the part of pilgrims seeking cures.[277]

Miracles were reported by the pilgrims, some returning to the shrine to tell what had happened to them there; or once at home, others came painfully and slowly, experiencing a miracle on the spot with clerical scribes recording it. The records seem to take two forms: chronologically as miracles occurred at the shrine, or according to miracle type. Those at Becket's tomb were recorded chronologically by one monk and according to type (leprosy, blindness, lameness) by another. An interesting question, however, is what kind of selection has been made in the recording? William of Canterbury, one of the two monks who recorded Becket's miracles, seems to have had little sympathy for the peasants and their miracles, but much for those, even the least of them, which involved the nobility.[278]

Understanding this clerical bias - that the majority of local pilgrims were not gentry and that 90 percent of the events recorded concern health and illness - the medieval understanding of sickness enters the picture when looking at shrines as healing centres. Health must have been an overriding preoccupation of existence for the peasant. Other than plagues which regularly

[277] E.W. Kemp, Canonization and Authority in the Western Church (London, 1948).
[278] Finucane, 5.

decimated the population, poor and fluctuating diet, poor personal hygiene, poor sanitation, poor conditions of housing and living arrangement were all environmental elements which seriously affected anyone's resistance to disease. But what degree of sickness required a journey to a saint's site? If the degree of illness was only vaguely understood, the extent of cure was likewise only vaguely understood.[279] To live in such a society where those who had escaped an outrageously high infant mortality rate were often then perched precariously on the brink of illness because of their susceptibility to infection, any illness was no trivial matter. To recover from it was sometimes a miracle. However slight the alleviation of the symptoms, however incomplete, however temporary, it was a miraculous cure when attributed to a saint. This attitude allowed for everything from minor afflictions which cured themselves in time such as headache, indigestion, fractured bones which mended, rotten teeth which fell out, to arthritic remission and cures which could be seasonal like eye disease as a result of winter vitamin deficient diets. If there was no time requirement for the cure after the pilgrimage had been undertaken, a saint could receive credit for the cure anytime: during the pilgrimage, at the shrine, on the way home or sometime after reaching home. If there was no limitation on time in which a saint could effect a cure and no scale by which one could measure the degree or permanence of the healing, an ill person could be declared miraculously cured and there the record stood. A miracle was a miracle, and the power of faith to make the believer feel better gave a boost to what people wanted desperately to believe.

---

[279] Louis Rose, Faith Healing, (London,1971); H. Fabrega, "The study of Medical Problems in Preliterate Settings," Yale Journal of Biological Medicine 43 (1971) 385 ff. In the case of death, medieval folk were

*Pregnant Women*

> for al the wymmen that ben in our Lady bondis and wyth childe in this parisshe or in any other; that God sende to them fayr delyveraunce, to theyr chyldren right shap, name and cristendome, and to the moders puryficacion;

If the precariousness of life was reflected in pilgrimages to saints, precariousness of life was prominent as well in all that surrounded childbirth. Sarum Missal refers to "the greate daunger of childebirth". The bidding prayer asks blessing for "wymmen that ben in our Lady bondis and wyth childe" [280] and that God "sende to them fayr delyveraunce, to theyr chyldren right shap, name and christendom and to the moders purification." The obvious desire was for a healthy, baptized, Christian child with the mother returning to the church after her absence from it. In the latter case she would be welcomed back with blessing, and the ceremony known as churching or purification.

This ceremony seems to have considerable antiquity: Gregory the Great refers to it in one of his letters to Augustine of Tarsus after the latter's early arrival in England. As well, Byzantine historians give some valuable information about the observance of the feast of Purification (information incidental to their account of a riot against the Emperor Maurice in 602).[281] In

---

often not able to distinguish the dead from the living, as not all realized the pulse had some connection with life.

[280] Oxford English Dictionary explains "bondis" as confinement at childbirth.

[281] Martin Higgins, Traditio Studies in Ancient and Medieval History, Thought and Religion, ed. Johannes Quasten and Stephan Kuttner, Vol. 1 New York, 1943, p. 409-11.

the latter case the information confirms the mother's waiting period after giving birth and before returning to church as 40 days. Predominance of the Virgin in the festivities at the end of that period is obvious and some fascinating aspects of logic and information surround the importance of the Virgin at the time of a woman's churching.[282] While Leviticus 12:1-8 prohibits women after childbirth from entering the sanctuary and from touching anything sacred for forty days (7+33) having birthed a male or 80 days (14+66) if a female, such rules would not have applied to Mary the mother of Jesus. The Christian Church reckoned that since she did not conceive in sin, she therefore remained a pure and perfect virgin, not in need of purification. Thus, to venerate her and by not waiting the 40 days would be a clear indication of the Gospel's difference from the old Jewish law. Yet Luke 2:21-24 says that she did not exempt herself from the law but complied with it. In such a piece of backhanded logic the new mother is still outside the church until her purification has been completed having desired to imitate the humility of the Virgin. Thus a custom is continued but now with a new reason and model.

Mary has a number of other associations with childbirth which would make her the essential saint at this dangerous time. The Sarum Missal calls her the "consoler of women in labour, full of grace, helper of infants." It is as mother of Christ that she is witness to childbirth: through her delivery of Christ the pains "of the faithful" at childbirth have been turned into

---

[282] James O'Kane, Notes on the Rubric of the Roman Ritual, 3rd ed. (New York, 1885),211-220.

joy. If the mother brings the baby to the church to rejoice and give thanksgiving for the birth, offering it to God at the time of her purification, it is following the example of Mary who offered Jesus in the temple on the day of her purification. The reward for this is the granting of "the joys of everlasting bliss through the merits and intercession of the blessed Virgin.[283]

But she is still not in the clear. It is Pope Gregory the Great who elaborates upon her situation in his answers to Augustine's questions as found in Bede's ecclesiastical history.[284] Gregory's answer is interesting because of its praising yet damning tension: because of human sin in Paradise "our first parents" forfeited immortality but, through God's goodness, were not totally destroyed and received the power of propagation. This argument goes on: how then could baptism be denied to one of these children, freely given life by God? If a woman is delivered of a child and wants to come to the church to give thanks and to have her child baptized she is not guilty of any sin; it is the pleasure of copulation that is sinful not the pain of giving birth. If she is forbidden from entering the church "we make a crime of her very punishment" and presumably deny the mystery of baptism to the child. So, Gregory concludes, Christian women after childbirth are not prohibited, under pain of sin, from entering the church at any time, "but are free to go without delay to give thanks to God."

---

[283] O'Kane, 217.
[284] The Venerable Bedes Ecclesiastical History of England, ed. by J.A. Giles,(London, 1849),45-50.

Yet in a following part of the discussion surrounding childbirth Gregory paints a picture of her from a different point of view. Her husband is not to approach her "till the infant born be weaned". But the woman can obviously circumvent that, suggests Gregory, and a bad custom arises: because of the woman's lack of self-restraint in regard to her sexual appetite she gives the child to some other woman to nurse. Clearly, for Gregory, there is a universal habit among newly birthed mothers that "because, as they will not be continent, they will not suckle the children which they bear." (47) Those women who, obviously for Gregory, desire intercourse immediately after the dangerous, prolonged and painful period of birthing, "must not approach their husbands till the time of purification is past."(48) In this part of the answer Gregory seems to be drawing on an actual period of time of purification, something, in theory, he had previously suggested is not needful. In this same paragraph he ties woman's "incontinence", her menstrual "uncleanness", her "infirmity of...nature" and her distemper "through the fault of [her] nature," to the idea that she must not, however, be forbidden to receive the mystery of the holy communion. This magnanimous comment, though, has a counter one. If any woman out of profound respect does not presume to receive communion, she is to be commended; yet if she receives it, she is not to be judged. "It is the part of noble minds to acknowledge their faults to some extent, even when no fault exists, for an action is often itself faultless though it originates in a fault often that is done without a fault, which, nevertheless, proceeded from a fault." Could anything be more obvious?

If Gregory's letter is a thinly veiled misogynist comment and stretches logic, the bidding prayer puts all of this to rights. Its tone is quite different from Gregory's. There is a sense of concern for pregnant women, there is a desire that they be delivered "fayr" and that purification be something positive and celebratory. It reflects, in sentiment, the actual words of the service of the purification of women, both conveying a sense that thanks are rendered to God for a safe delivery and that to seek the Church's blessing is a devout and praiseworthy practice. In its simplest form the service would see the priest vested in surplice and white stole, (the colour used by the Church on the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin) and be assisted by a server carrying the aspersary. The Latin rubric requires that the woman be outside the door of the church, kneeling with a lighted candle[285] in her hand (lighted candles are carried in the procession on the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin). The priest comes to the door and sees her humbled position, in an acknowledgment of her unworthiness to enter until she is both blessed and introduced by the priest[286]. The priest sprinkles her with holy water, makes the sign of the cross over her and then says the antiphon (This woman shall receive a blessing from the Lord and mercy from God, her savior, for she is of the people who seek the Lord) and Psalm 121 (I have lifted up my eyes unto the hills: from whence commeth my helpe?).[287] Brightman suggests in a 1549 version (a little later than the example being considered here) that the priest "standyng by her, shall saye these woordes or *such lyke, as the case shall require*" indicating a certain flexibility. In any case they reflect the sentiments that God has

[285] The candle? There seems to be no instruction as to what she might do with it except hold it throughout. Given the expense of wax she might present it for use later rather than return home with it.
[286] O'Kane, 218.

given her safe deliverance and preserved her in the time of "greate daunger of childebirth." Her prayerful thanks and a psalm follow. The priest then presents to her the end of the stole which hangs from his left shoulder, which she takes in her right hand and he leads her into the church to the altar where she kneels and makes her thanksgiving , the priest repeating the *Kyrie*. Having finished the prayer he sprinkles her again with holy water saying the benediction or a longer prayer that asks God's help toward maintaining a faithful life in the present and everlasting Glory in the life to come.[288]

Though this is the essence of the ritual, and presumably it would be repeated in a like manner except for variances in the missal used or the training of the priest, the pageantry surrounding the ritual could have every degree of variation, according to status in society. Relevant to the time of this bidding prayer and to Archbishop Bourgchier of Canterbury is the purification of Henry VII's queen, Elizabeth, after the birth of the first son, Arthur, in September, 1486. Neither Elizabeth nor Henry attended the actual baptism, the godparents playing the essential role. The queen continued to be physically isolated from the court for the forty day period, but her emergence for churching was a part of the royal birth ceremonial and was splendid in ceremony and ritual.[289]

---

[287] Brightman, 880.
[288] Brightman, 884.
[289] "Royal Entry into the World" by Kay Staniland, p 297-313 in England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium. ed. by Daniel Williams, Boydell Press, 1987.

Like all public processions and rituals in the middle ages those surrounding birth intentionally contributed toward consolidating power. The churching of Elizabeth, as part of the birth and baptism activities, offered opportunity for lavish display, reward for loyal supporters, and solidification of the Tudor dynasty. In fact, what is shown was the Church's articulation of the passage from one life-stage to another. Childbirth created special spiritual needs for women and in recognition of its dangers the Church would confess her at the onset of labour and give thanks for delivery at her churching. The absence from the requirement of attending mass for forty days after the birth might even have been a wise bit of foresight: it was a time that allowed for the tensions surrounding this dangerous period to ease and a time to prepare an important welcome back into the church.[290] The psychology of the liturgy then may have recognized and affirmed the dangers that the mother had overcome.

*More Parishioners*

> And for al them that wold be here and may not for sekeness, for tryvayl, or any other leeful occupacion, that they may have parte of al the good dedis that shal be doon in this place or in ony other;

---

[290] There is on record petition to the pope for becoming a parish, the reason being the churching of women. Many parish churches seem to have been at a distance too far away for regular attendance, so many villages relied on local chapels to meet some of their parochial needs. These chapels usually only had partial sacramental rights which meant that parishioners had to travel to larger parish churches for baptism, churching and burial services. The distance could be hazardous to women recovering from childbirth and fatal to infants going to baptism, especially if the weather were bad. In a effort to avoid this danger, chapels petitioned for their own sacramental rights and privileges. Calendar of Papal Letters (C.P.L.) Vol 1-8, (London, 1902-1989). Richard Morris, Churches in the Landscape,( London, 1981), 233-4.

> Also ye shal pray for al them that ben in good lyf, that God them hold long therein, and for them that ben in dette or in dedely synne, that Jhesu Crist brynge them out thereof the rather for our prayers;
>
> Also ye shal pray for hym or her that this day yaf the holy breed, and for him that first began and longest holdeth on, that God rewarde it hym at the day of dome, and for al them that doon, wylle or say you good, that God yelde it them at theyr nede, and for them that other wyse wolde, that God amende them. For all these and for all chrysten men and women ye shall saye a *Pater Noster* and an *Ave*.

The last biddings are for travellers, the sick, the absent, those who have a good life, sinners and for those who bring the holy loaf. Thus, the bidding prayer, as it nears its end, becomes comprehensive and generalized again, asking blessing for "al them that would be here and may not." These include the sick, those who are travelling away from the parish, or whose occupation does not allow them to be present. The prayers are extended to them that "they may have part of al the good dedis that shal be done in this place or in any other." The prayer works toward the positive, the uplifting, the supportive in its comments as it nears a close. It reminds the parishioners to pray for those who have lived a good life and have done so over a long time. The prayer does not present itself as panacea, but as aid; it remembers those who have not lived a good life, distinguishing neither whether "debt or dedely synne" be their own fault or beyond their reckoning. It is Christ, with the help of the parish prayers, who will bring individuals "out thereof the rather for our prayers." The good are remembered and praised; the not so good are remembered and prayed for in the sincere belief that such prayers can change the balance.

The end of the bidding prayer for the living brings the parishioners to the immediacy of their own situation. It asks blessing for "hym or her that this day yaf the holy breed, and for him that first began and longest holdeth on." The "holy breed" is not the bread of the sacrament of the eucharist but the bread or holy loaf blessed at mass every Sunday and distributed to the parishioners. The blessed bread was, early in the history of the eucharist, designated as a substitute for communion, that is, a remedy for the absence of communion.[291] The preparation of the bread, the cutting of it into smaller pieces, and its distribution afterwards seem to have been a duty of the parish clerk, but when the blessing occurred and how the bread was distributed is not always clear nor consistent. Abbott Gasquet[292] assumes that the blessing occurred immediately after mass, and that the bread was distributed to the people by the celebrant [293] but elsewhere he cites a country church regulation of 1462 which indicates that the parish clerks distributed the bread on the north and south sides of the church at a leisurely pace after service. While it is generally assumed that both blessing and distribution took place after Mass, the scheduling may have been more flexible from place to place with the distribution even being postponed until later in the day, perhaps partially or entirely in conjunction with the parish clerk's distribution of holy water throughout the parish.[294] If so, he should have finished the distribution in time for the final meal of the day, for John Myrc

---

[291] Miri Rubin, Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture,( Cambridge, 1991), 73-74.
[292] Gasquet, 157.
[293] Gasquet,157,117.
[294] William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 6 Vols. London 1846-49, 6:613-14.

indicates that the holy loaf was an obligatory part of Sunday : "Hast thow eten any Sonday/Withowte halybrede? Say ye, or nay."[295]

Assuming, for clarification sake, that as soon as mass had ended, a loaf of bread, brought by one or more of the faithful and previously handed over to the priest at the altar (or to the clergy who had descended to the nave of the church and collected the offerings there)[296] was blessed and cut with a knife set aside for the purpose.[297] This bread was clearly to be distinguished from the bread used at the sacrament of the altar[298] the former being a general offering of the people, the latter an offering of the clergy on behalf of the people. In the early church, most likely a particular and careful selection of bread from the offerings of the people

---

[295] Instructions for Parish Priest, lines 1345-46.

[296] When the first method was used, it must have presented an impressive sight if the entire congregation joined in the offertory procession Sundays and feast days. The gifts offered by the faithful were chiefly bread and wine, but other foodstuffs or articles used by the church might be brought: oil, wax, candles, food for maintenance of clergy and the poor. By the fourth century gifts such as the latter were discouraged from being presented at the altar. Only bread and wine were encouraged, the others being handed to priests or clerks elsewhere. The bread and wine became symbolic of the other gifts that might be offered. Jungman, The Early Liturgy, 172.

[297] Daniel Rock, The Church of Our Fathers, as seen in St. Osmund's Rite for the Cathedral of Salisbury, 3 vol. (London, 1849),136. Rock indicates that special knives were unusual in shape with a decorative handle.

[298] Myrc's instruction to parish priests indicates that the altar cloths must be clean, the candles to be of wax and the bread to be of wheaten flour "thatys not sour." Other instructions indicate that the materials composing the sacrament must be perfectly pure "the Sacrist or one of the clergy should select, where possible, the finest sample obtainable of wheat, four times a year, and sift it free from all inferior grains and extraneous matter, and keep it in a clean bin or bag." It should then be taken to the mill by some "trusty person", mixing it with no other ground grain. When it is to be prepared for use "the Sacrist, or Deacon or Clerk, or other trusty person who is to bake it, should first scrupulously wash their hands and faces, and except the person who holds the baking pans, who would wear gloves, put on Albes and Amices." After mixing with pure cold water, kneaded and rolled, "successive portions of the paste should be cut into shape by one of the clergy or his assistants, and placed in an rommold" the plates of which were engraved with some holy symbol. They were baked beneath hot ashes of wood, shaken out on to a white linen cloth and readied for the Eucharist. It is suggested that the clerical baker, "before and during the progress of the making, repeat Psalms, or their Vowes or a Litany". Divine Worship in England in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries by John David Chambers,(London, 1877), 230 ff.

was made for the eucharist, but by the time of the bidding prayer this holy loaf offered by the laity had probably come from one designated parishioner, bringing a loaf to be blessed and distributed.[299] Here is a single loaf, provided by a parishioner every Sunday, cut into small pieces[300] for distribution among the people who went up and received it from the priest whose hand they kissed. This holy loaf, or eulogia, was meant to remind parishioners of unity and love, expressed by the many grains bound together as Christians should be bound together.[301] It might have been distributed as the parishioners were about to leave the church, and though most likely always of the very best that the household could provide, it was still household bread, leavened, salted and uneven in shape.

Daniel Rock, in discussing St. Osmund's Rite for Salisbury Cathedral, distinguishes among two kinds of communion: the less perfect was the communion of prayer or the privilege of joining the faithful in the liturgical celebration; the other was the perfect and full communion which involved joining the congregation in carrying an offering to the altar at the time of the offertory, afterwards participating along with everyone else in the eucharist. He suggests that offerings by those who were in full communion with the Church consisted of bread especially

---

[299] In the English church after the Reformation a Rationale of Ritual was drawn up under the authority of Cranmer (1543) which declared Holy Bread to be a godly ceremony and to be continued in the church (Collier's Ecclesiastical History, 198) but by 1547 this practice had been discouraged. In reform thinking, as a substitute for communion and a supposed means of grace, it became a hindrance to the desire for greater frequency of communion.
[300] "Because the holy loaf had been blessed, he who lost a portion of it was punished, by the discipline of the Anglo Saxon Church with a penance of four day's length." Rock, 139.
[301] W.E. Scudamore *Notitia Eucharistica*, A Commentary, Explanatory, Doctrinal and Historical of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion, 2nd ed.( London, 1876), 892.

made for the purpose, baked in a round shape. Parishioners took a small cruise of their best wine as well. The bread and wine at this offering was a sign that the individual intended to receive holy communion. The bread and wine were set upon the altar, covered, consecrated and later given to the communicants. To say therefore that one "offered" meant that the individual had the privilege of making this offering, enjoyed all Christian rights, and was in full communion with the Church .[302]

Jungmann as well as Rock suggest that the offertory procession was a way of drawing the faithful into Mass and a way of educating them in the doctrines of the Christian faith; they were helped to realize that the holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist was their sacrifice which they did together with Christ. This suggestion would be somewhat overshadowed by a situation which both authors record: the haste to leave the church before the service was over. Jungmann cites a fifth century document, *Testamentum Domini*, which (a) directs the deacon to shut the doors when the *celebration* of Mass begins and (b) on no account to open them to late comers or early leavers and (c) to insert a special prayer for them in the intercessory prayers that God may grant them more "love and fervor" presumably so that they will be more content to remain for the alotted time.[303]

---

[302] Rock, 142.
[303] Jungman, 173; Rock, 143.

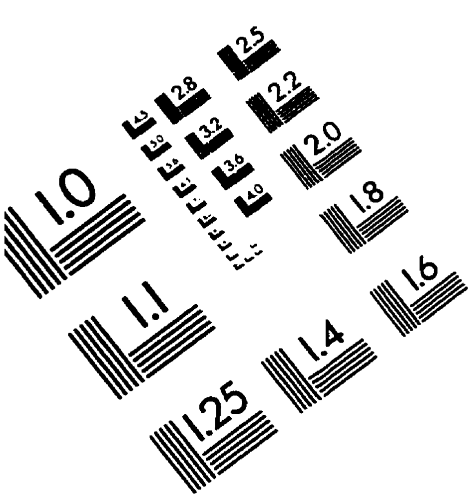
Thus the remainder of the sentence where prayers are asked for "hym or her that this day yaf the holy breed" also asks blessing for "him that first began", that is came on time, presumably with some sense of Christian discipline or "discipline of the secret," and with the knowledge that one must take part in the whole service. Being on time, like being attentive, was expected of the Christian. The unbaptized and the unworthy had been excluded. Those left shared as a community of believers and they did not leave before the sacrament of the Mass was over. Here then, is a blessing in the intercessory prayer which is almost double in value: God rewards the one "that first began" and the one who "longest holdeth on". Come early, stay late and God will look favorably on you.

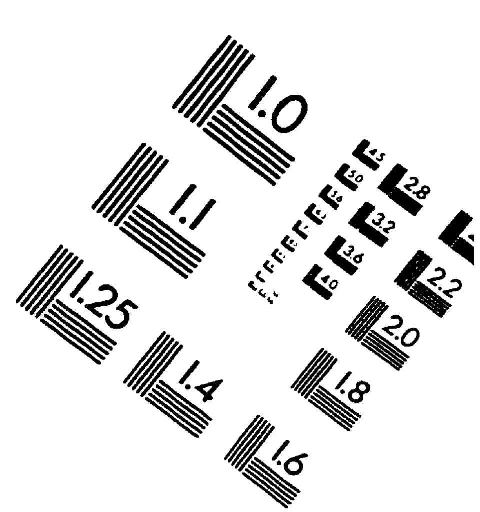
The bidding prayer is enthused with the feeling of reward for being an observant Christian and with a sense of the blessing on the community of the faithful. For those who do good, will good, or say good things, God tends to them in their needs. For those whose conduct is less admirable then Christ amends their actions. To solidify the unity of the Christian community by promoting active cooperation all are asked to say a *Pater* Noster and an *Ave*.

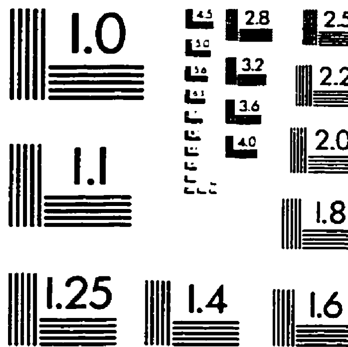
**Conclusion**

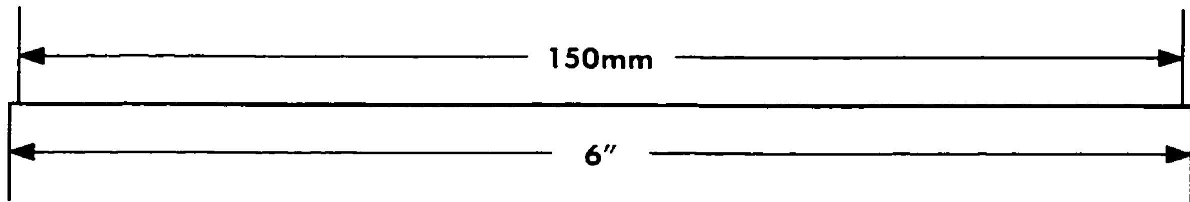
And thus this part of the bidding prayer comes to an end. In the liturgy of a late 15$^{th}$ century worshipping community, the bidding prayer expressed the convictions and commitments which supported that community socially and spiritually. It allowed those who prayed it to enter into community with all others who offered their prayers for peace, well being, safety and spiritual health. It was flexible and gave scope to the initiation of the celebrant, thereby reflecting the active world of its parishioners whether they be associated with tilling, fishing, birthing, governing or praying. As the worship offered by a praying people, the liturgical bidding prayer turned those people toward each other, toward specifically human concerns, and toward a God who, it was believed, would hear those concerns.

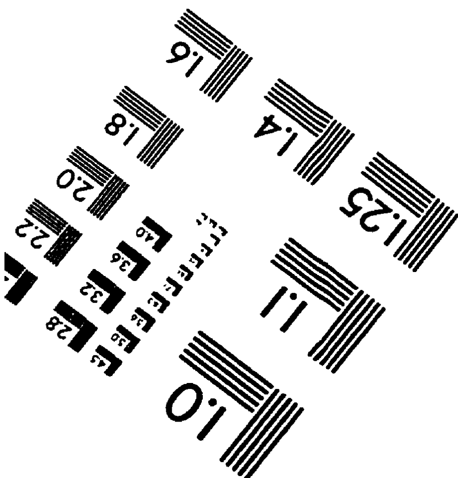
IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)









APPLIED IMAGE . Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved