UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Lay Women's Religion in the Later Middle Ages

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This Thesis has been completed as a requirement

for a postgraduate research degree of the University of Winchester

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Abstract

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This thesis assesses lay female participation in the religious practice of the later middle ages in England. It posits the questions what religious roles laywomen undertook, whether women were able to undertake duties within the Catholic Church, and if so, what those duties were. It reviews the record evidence for women's religion and makes the case for a distinctively lay female praxis. For the purpose of this work the later middle ages has been defined as c1350 – c1530.

The thesis draws on evidence from the whole of England. Originally regional in scope and confined to the south of England, it was extended to maximise the information available and to capture the whole range of female religious practices. The interaction of women within the Church has been examined through such standard records as church warden accounts, proofs of age (taken from *Calendars of Inquisitions post mortem*), bishop's visitation records and fraternity records. While these were mediated through the masculine clerks of the time, the records are made to reveal women participating in church administration and rituals. Churchings, which were universal, brought women constantly to the centre of worship. Maidens Gilds reveal the corporate religious preferences that solvent young women expressed. Other insights are extracted from examination of female wills and female religious founders. Although women often acted like men and their initiatives are frequently obscured by male scribes and husbands, the thesis demonstrates the existence of distinctively female practices and religious attitudes.

Key words: Lay Female Religion, Middle Ages, Church Warden Accounts, Proofs of Age, Calendars of Inquisitions Post Mortem, Bishop's Visitation Records, Fraternity Records and Wills

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BRS	*Bristol Record Society*
C&YS	*Canterbury and York Society*
CIPM	*Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem and Other Analogous Documents*
DS	*Dugdale Society*
EETS	*Early English Text Society*
LRS	*London Record Society*
METS	*Middle English Text Series*
SRS	*Somerset Record Society*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Rationale and Methodology

This thesis builds on three major developments in recent historical understanding. First of all historians came to better appreciate the pre-reformation religion, as practised by English laity, which has led to a revision of previously accepted orthodoxy.[1] Actually, the laity continued to be supportive of Catholicism and involved with church life throughout the medieval period, well into the sixteenth century. Secondly, historians became more interested in the history of women and the feminine slant on history and learnt how to study them. Thirdly, historians discovered the hidden voices of medieval society, both male and female, and how to detect or reconstruct them from apparently unpromising sources. These changes in perspective altered the way in which laymen were seen to participate in religious practice. This thesis argues that the religious practice of laywomen can also be reconstructed and significantly differs from that of men.

Research into the roles of the non-elite has led historians to consider the part that women played in the culture. The author's MA dissertation on Margery Kempe revealed that women were part of a lay religious practice, although Margery Kempe was an extreme example.[2] Could the same everyday practice be demonstrated for ordinary women? So far there was little research into female participation in the quotidian religious praxis of the time to reveal whether women were religiously visible. Was it possible that there was a specific female religious practice, separate from the patriarchal masculine spirituality of the period? Did women reveal their piety through a different route? Indeed, was there a specific female piety? Were women aware of having their own religious culture?   Historians have still not considered women with regard to a discrete

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[1] D. MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490 – 1700*, (London, 2003); E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400 – 1580*, (London, 2005).

[2] K. A. Clarke, 'Authority and Religion in Late Medieval England: What were the factors that gave Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe the confidence to challenge the male hegemony in religious writings' (MA Thesis, Open University, Milton Keynes, 2007).

female devotional praxis. For this thesis existing publications were examined for instances of specifically female religious practice. Some works did not address the issue at all.[3] Several works did touch on it, by historians such as Stephen Rigby, Joan Wallach Scott and Katherine French, but none were found to focus on this specific issue.[4]

Although of national relevance, the work undertaken by earlier researchers into female religious practice was restricted by their differing priorities. The key question, as noted above, was whether women had a specific religious culture within the prevailing masculine devotional praxis of the period. Although predominantly masculine, the standard sources for lay piety, this thesis argues, contain evidence of female practice too. It has been designed to try to find an answer. The focus of the thesis has evolved in the light of experience. Originally the work was intended to be centred on the south of England, combining the use of published editions and unpublished manuscripts. It rapidly emerged that the relevant sources were unevenly distributed geographically, chronologically and, indeed, qualitatively. Examples of each type source varied, some revealing much and others nothing. Searching manuscripts for examples of female practice was laborious, unrewarding, and much too slow. What was required was the widest possible spread of religious practice within which all religious experience must fall. This demanded the selection of the widest possible spread of printed sources to allow the fullest range of sources, and hence religious experience, to be examined. What became significant was that the data investigated represented the full range of recorded religious experience. The geographical area was expanded to cover the whole of England. It was decided to concentrate on printed primary sources to maximise the information garnered in the time allowed. The printed sources used are peer accepted as accurate and so are used as published.[5] Initial exploration of these primary sources has indicated that, while the number of each type of record for any one locality was limited, they were more informative when collated with similar records from other areas.

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[3] MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House*; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*.

[4] S. H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status and Gender*, (Basingstoke, 1995); J. Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, (New York, 1999); K. L. French, *The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion After the Black Death*, (Philadelphia, 2008).

[5] *The Churchwarden Accounts of Croscombe, Pilton, Patton, Tintinhull, Morebath and St Michael's, Bath ranging from A.D. 1349 to 1560*, ed. E. Hobhouse, SRS, 4 (1890).

Focusing on the varying records and collating, fully analysing and contextualising the texts, enabled a deeper understanding of the lay religious practice. A wide range of types of sources – proofs of age, churchwarden records, fraternity or guild records, wills, chantries and foundations – have been examined. Comparisons across geographical boundaries became possible. The texts chosen are representative of the full range of practice. Utilisation of a wide sweep of sources has allowed the full range and variety of each type of record to be captured – urban and rural populations, industrial and agricultural economies, and elite and popular cultures: a methodology which illuminates all variations in religious practice and so allows indications of gendered differences to be seen. This large group of sources allowed a survey of the fullest range of lay religious practice and spirituality. It also negated the possibility of single source bias, particularly visible in the churchwarden accounts. From the overall picture of the late medieval Church and lay devotion there emerged insights into female religious practice and church usage at the time.

The thesis starts from the standard sources for the smallest units of the English Church. Churchwarden accounts (for the parish) and fraternity records have been interrogated to assess levels of elite and popular religion, to identify as wide a range of social participation as possible.[6] This spread of information has exposed any variances from the official canon, sometimes indicating a specific female practice. Other sources used include wills, chantry records and artefacts produced for and by women: this last contains items ranging in size from books to large buildings (hospitals and colleges).[7] The sources enable the assessment of lay participation in religious practice and reveal how women saw themselves and their relationship to the religious world they inhabited. Finally, information from these sources is used to establish whether the women were aware of a specific female piety and, beyond that, deliberately practised a distinctive religious practice.

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[6] Accounts include *The Church Records of St Andrew Hubbard Eastcheap c 1450 – 1570*, ed. C. Burgess, LRS, 34 (1999); *The Medieval Records of a London City Church (St Mary at Hill) A.D. 1420 – 1559,* ed. H. Littlehales, EETS, Original Series, 125 (1904); *Fraternity of the Holy Trinity and SS Fabian & Sebastian in the Parish of St Botolph without Aldersgat*e, ed. P. Basing, LRS, 18 (1982).
[7] Records include *The Logge Register of PCC Wills, 1479 to 1486*, ed. L. Boatwright, M. Habberjam, P. Hammond, 2 vols, Richard III Society (2008); *The Survey and Rental of the Chantries, Colleges and Free Chapels in the County of Somerset*, SRS, II (1888).

Hence the research into these sources has turned from the highly exceptional *Book of Margery Kempe* to interrogate the commonplace written printed records. It establishes the extent to which lay women were visible within quotidian religious practice in the later Middle Ages. The period chosen is c1350 – 1540, for which churchwarden's accounts, fraternity records, and wills survive in statistically significant quantities. This period also corresponds with those changes in society which may have facilitated an alteration in women's ability to move outside the private sphere. Women's religious roles within the parish are identified through the analysis of proofs of age, churchwarden accounts, visitation registers, and guild records. How women participated in formal religious services will be examined through their attendance at baptisms and churchings. The study of women as testatrixes, religious founders and benefactresses also indicates their view of their own religiosity. The Church's perception of women, visible in the papal records and episcopal visitations, indicates a difference in the understanding of female roles between the Church and women. Lay religious practice having been defined, investigation then focuses on those women who were religiously visible. By these means any characteristics in religious practice that were gender specific to women have been identified. Whenever a specific female religious practice is discovered, further investigation has been undertaken to establish whether women were conscious of any differences in their religious practice. There emerged some evidence of a distinctive female piety.

The Church existed for the salvation of souls: a task undertaken through sermons, didactic literature and a clergy which monitored lay behaviour.[8] This was reinforced through visitations, archdeacon courts and confession, with its concomitant penances. The Church required the laity to be supportive parishioners and moral beings through the practice of Christianity.[9] Major life changes of the parishioners, from birth to death, were mediated through the church and its services. Secular aspects of life were also monitored by the clergy. Lay personal relations, legal matters, work and recreation became part of the religious world.   The mere existence of visitation records, particularly with regard

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[8] K. L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese,* (Philadelphia, 2001) pp. 31-6.
[9] Ibid p. 33.

to women, is proof that the laity did not always conform to Church authority. Any difference between expected behaviour and reality, as seen in the records, discloses a lay religion different from that disseminated by the Church. Such differences include instances of a specific female religious practice.

Literature Review

This thesis builds on existing publications, most of them recent, and is located within them. Published research, until French in 2008, has not examined lay women's piety. Previous explorations considered women's religion through their participation in monastic life, as part of gender studies and women's history. Later twentieth century feminist historians looked towards 'heroic [female] ancestors' to match those in masculine historicism, re-naming history as 'her-storey.[10] A wide variety of historiographical, social and religious issues were discovered through this research. It opened new ways of investigating and disinterring the hidden voices of previously overlooked groups. This pioneering work, into a formerly ignored section of the medieval population, has created a firm platform for later historians and has suggested new avenues of exploration, expanding the types of texts and sources that could be read. The information gained has been incremental. It forms a solid body of knowledge about women and their roles in society and monastic religion, giving a background to an examination of women and a possible female lay religion.

Caroline Walker Bynum looked at the religious significance of food for women as a way of discovering female participation within the patriarchal church hierarchy.[11] Her writings suggested an apparent increase in female influence during the period 1100-1400 (through a rise in the number of beatifications of female saints). [12] In reality this influence decreased, if not actually disappeared, through the Decretal of 1245, which prevented women from preaching and hearing confession.[13] She noted a gendered difference between the religious roles of men and women: men

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[10] Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History,* p. 18-22.
[11] C. W. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, (Los Angeles, 1987).
[12] Ibid p. 20.
[13] Ibid p. 21.

were preachers and priests and women became 'inspired holy vessels'.[14] Edith Ennem questioned the utility of some statistics on which other historians relied. She specifically considered taxation lists from which, she argued, a large number of groups were excluded: she did not, however, note women as exempt from taxation.[15] Women can be found on the various taxation records, indicating their presence in the public sphere. This validates such records as research tools for women and history.

Again in the late 1980s, Susan Bell looked at women and religion.[16] Her suggestion that women could transmit both lay piety and culture through the ownership of books reveals another area of study into lay female piety. In a pan-European study, Bell noted that noblewomen appeared to read books or were read to, and left favourite books to their daughters and friends.[17] These gifts were personalised, like the other chattels left by women to women, as this thesis will demonstrate. References to women's books were found in wills. Carole Meale and Felicity Riddy contemplated women, the books and literature they consumed, and the way women may have understood the texts.[18] These books covered both spiritual matters and secular literature.[19] Bell posited that women had a cultural influence and so possibly religious importance. Books were left by title to named women, suggesting they were either favoured books or the testatrix was aware of specific interests of the recipient. Literate women are thought to have spent considerable time consuming these books. Books formed an important part of women's lives, where they were available, as seen in the care taken to leave specific texts to family and friends. [20] David Aers and Lynne Staley also considered religion and gender in the later Middle Ages, although a specific female lay piety

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[14] Ibid p. 23.

[15] E. Ennem, E. Jephcott eds, *The Medieval Woman,* (Oxford, 1989), p. 160.

[16] S.G. Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture' in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages,* ed. M. Erler, M. Kowalski (Athens, Georgia, 1988).

[17] Ibid p. 149.

[18] C. M. Meale, ed., *Women and Literature in Britain 1150-1500,* (Cambridge, 1993); F. Riddy, *Women, Reading and Piety in Late Medieval England*, (Cambridge, 2002). These texts were considered as part of the preliminary work for this thesis but were not used directly in the work, which specifically excludes book–ownership and book reading.

[19] Bell, 'Medieval Women Book Owners', p. 151.

[20] In 1484-5 Dame Jane Barre (widow) left several books to her cousin Alice Beyman. *The Logge Register of PCC Wills, 1479 to 1486,* ed. L. Boatwright, M. Habberjam, P. Hammond, 2 vols, Richard III Society, II (2008) p. 30.

was not explored.[21] Another investigation into lay piety was undertaken by Robert Swanson, who considered lay religion as part of his wider research into pre-reformation English religion. [22]

Jeremy Goldberg identified women who moved out of the private sphere, by participating in work outside the home. Although specific to the north of England it is possible to carefully extrapolate his comments to other regions of England.[23] His work indicates how women could become more visible, and so be encouraged to participate in religious practices.   Henrietta Leyser also considered a broader range of women, reinforcing the concept of women working in the world and the way class informed women's work.[24] Kim Phillips, in 2003, concentrated her religious explorations on Maidens groups and the part they played in the parishes.[25]   She considered that the maidens were 'active within the parish but in a limited way' and agreed with French that parish roles of women reinforced the gender stereotypes of medieval female behaviour.[26]   Women were represented as saints, whores or passive recipients of religious benedictions, never as the active participants discovered for this thesis.

Marjorie McIntosh considered ways in which women worked in medieval society. She argued that women did move out of the private sphere by actively participating in the medieval economy. This was particularly noticeable among the poor, where female earning power was an integral part of the household income.[27] Christine Carpenter provides further ways in which women participated in the public domain. She discusses religion within the context of gentry culture

[21] D. Aers, L. Staley, *The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture*, (Philadelphia, 1996).

[22] R. N. Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, Religion and Observance before the Reformation*, (Manchester, 1993) p. 2.

[23] P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Women's Work, Women's Role, in the Late-Medieval North' in *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England*, ed. M. Hicks (Gloucester, 1990).

[24] H. Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England 450 -150*0, (London, 1995).

[25] K. M. Phillips, *Medieval Maidens: Young Women and Gender in England, 1209 -1540*, (Manchester, 2003).

[26] Ibid p. 193.

[27] M. K. McIntosh, *Working Women in English Society, 1300 – 1620*, (Cambridge, 2005).

through the records of charitable donations. Carpenter also indicated other routes for the pious, such as endowing schools and providing roads and bridges.[28] No historian has suggested that these women had the same opportunities as men, but there is an agreement that they were a presence in the public sphere. This acknowledgment of female participation outside the home indicates that women had the confidence to enter the workplace. They may have taken this assurance into the religious domain and so encourages the hypothesis of a specific female piety. This premise indicates how this research can progress, particularly with regard to female lay religious practice.

French examined parish communities through the medium of churchwarden accounts and other parish records.[29] Concentrating on the small but important diocese of Bath and Wells, she analysed a range of social groups and their religious praxis, looking at general religious practice rather than a specific female one. Most recently, she has considered specific female lay piety.[30] There is, however, a missing element, the exploration of a distinctive female piety. In her introduction French notes 'scholarship [...] has focused predominantly on elite women, nuns and mystics'.[31] Most women in the period worshipped at the parish church. French also states that previous historians have assumed that 'gendered religious practice did not exist or cannot be identified', a challenge that this study confronts: French herself does not consider the question further.[32] French sees female religious practice as a form of 'self- expression', a way for women to escape the patriarchal template of behaviour laid down by the Church.[33] She asserts medievalists have seen a difference in piety between men and women – although she gives no indication of which medievalists or the type of piety. French compares medieval female religious piety or practice to that of women in the modern church. She applies the finding that present-day women attend church more frequently than men to the medieval church, quoting in support

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[28] C. Carpenter, ''Religion'' in *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, eds. R. Radulescu, A. Truelove (Manchester, 2005).

[29] K. L. French, *The People of the Parish: community life in a late medieval diocese*, (Philadelphia, 2001).

[30] K.L. French, *The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion after the Black Death*, (Philadelphia, 2008).

[31] Ibid p. 2.

[32] Ibid p. 2.

[33] Ibid p. 4.

Thomas Brunton and Berthold of Regensburg.[34] She also specifically states, while offering little evidence, that women may have attended church more regularly than men as it offered them 'opportunities for involvement, self promotion and visibility [in the parish]'. She suggests that women used their domestic skills to move into the religious sphere, and exploited this religious practice to expand their social roles. This is not an indication of a specific female religious piety but of social practice.[35] Matthew Groom briefly discussed female religious practice. He concluded that there was insufficient difference between male and female praxis to indicate a specific female practice.[36]

The parish was the centre of religious and secular life, and historians have extensively investigated this aspect of society. Research has covered much of medieval religion - the clergy, the politics of religion and patronage.[37] While earlier studies looked at the clerical hierarchy and its influence in the parish, lay participation in church custom was not investigated. Alexander Brown posited that parishes at first appear similar but research suggested outside factors - such as the economy, social conditions and external influences - ensured that no parish was an exact copy of another.[38] This further validates the decision to consider an extensive range of sources over a wide geographical area. Brown did not investigate personal, lay religiosity, but the outward forms of piety – alms giving, foundations and chantries. He disagreed with Duffy's revisionism regarding lay attitudes to the pre-Reformation Catholic Church in '[his] emotively titled book'[39]. Such revisionism did, however, re-open the subject of lay participation in religious practice.[40] Burgess and Duffy concentrated on general religious practice rather than investigating lay piety.[41] French investigated female lay piety through an

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[34] Ibid p. 1.

[35] Ibid p. 218.

[36] M. Groom, 'England: Piety, Heresy and Anti-clericalism' in *A Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. S. H. Rigby (Chichester, 2009) pp. 385-7.

[37] A. Hamilton Thompson, *The English Clergy and their Organisation in the Later Middle Ages*, (Oxford, 1947); W. A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, (London, 1955); B. Dobson, ed., *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century*, (Gloucester, 1984); A. D. Brown, *Popular Piety in Late Medieval England: the Diocese of Salisbury 1250 – 1550*, (Oxford, 1995).

[38] Ibid p .3.

[39] Ibid p. 3.

[40] Ibid p. 3.

[41] C. Burgess, '' Time and Place: the late Medieval English Church in Perspective'' in *The Parish in Late Medieval England,* eds. C. Burgess, E. Duffy (Donington, 2006).

examination of female churchwardens. Her main conclusion was that there were very few, and none held the post in their own right.[42]

Religion and society were inextricably linked in the medieval period. Jennifer Ward looked at a specific group – English noblewomen – by considering the role women found themselves playing during the period c1250 – c1450.[43] Noblewomen were demonstrably part of the world. Importantly, Ward suggested women's roles were more multifaceted than would appear from the chronicles, a perception which opens the way to the revision of the place of women in medieval society. This provides for a reconsideration of female occupations and their participation in society and religious practice through a different interrogation of the sources. While the research undertaken by the historians discussed above has opened new avenues of research into lay religious practice, only French has considered a possible female praxis; none have considered a specific lay female religious practice in depth. It has, therefore, become apparent that medieval lay female religious practice is ripe for detailed investigation.

Findings

This thesis uses standard records to establish the visibility of lay women within religious practice and then homes in on those women who were religiously distinguishable. It is those women who acted as religious founders, testatrixes and benefactors who were visible in the religious practice of the period. The thesis identifies any characteristics in religious practice that were gender specific to women. It investigates whether there was a distinctive female piety.   An examination of the Church's perception of women, through the scrutiny of papal records and episcopal visits, reveals certain differences in the Church's attitude to men and women. This thesis posits that, while this gendered variance indicates that the Church regarded men and women differently, women were able to find the room to pursue their own religious practice.

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[42] K. L. French, ''Women Churchwardens in Late Medieval England'' in *The Parish in Late Medieval England,* eds. C. Burgess, E. Duffy (Donington, 2006).
[43] J.C. Ward, *English Noblewomen in the later Middle Ages*, (New York, 1992).

The churches, parishes, and female participation in both, is examined in Chapter Two through the analysis of proofs of age, churchwarden accounts, visitation documentation and fraternity records. Active female religious involvement is explored through the rituals of baptism and churching, as seen in the proofs of age and breviaries. Such sources reveal lay religious life in the parish. Proofs of age give an insight into ways in which the laity used the church for both religious and secular reasons. Service books lay out the services in which women participated and the prayers given by the priest. Churchwarden accounts facilitate analysis of the lay financial support given to the church. Fraternity records allow insights into lay choices regarding the support of aspects of religious practice. Ecclesiastical expectations of lay behaviour and morality are explored through a scrutiny of visitation records and archdeacon's records. These describe the expected behaviour of the laity and, by their very existence, indicate lay non-conformity to the rules. Such records also give an indication of lay expectations regarding priestly behaviour, through the complaints made against the clergy. This can also be used to investigate lay religion – the behaviour of the priests was an example of a Christian life, which should be the ambition of the laity. These records show how the laity, male and female, was involved in the formal aspects of religion, and highlight the expectation of the Church with regard to lay participation and behaviour.   Some differences between male and female participation are illuminated in this process.

Chapter 2 introduces the research into the formal documents. In Chapter Three, lay women's relationship with saints will be investigated. This chapter also examines the wills left by parishioners, the way in which the bequests were made and the monetary value of the goods and money left to the church. The bequests of books and sacred objects indicate religious preferences of the testator.   How women saw their religious practice emerges through the gifts they gave to the church. Chapter 4 investigates the religious and secular buildings commissioned by women, such as religious foundations, chantries, educational colleges and alms houses. It examines both the elite and non-elite choices of post-mortem remembrance through chantries, obits and bede-rolls. Why women participated can be deduced. What artefacts were given by women, such as items for the church services, are useful indicators of religious belief and practice.

The research has allowed an analysis of the devotional practice of women in the later Middle Ages, with the intention to illuminate the female role within late medieval lay religious practice and to identify a distinctive female contribution. Individual religiosity can be called female religious piety but not be a specifically female devotional custom, recognisable as such by its participants. A specific female practice becomes visible regionally, if not nationally. It will be established how women saw their role in religion and if they were aware of participating in a specific female religious practice. Such positive conclusions add substantially to the existing body of knowledge regarding medieval female lay piety. Current gender stereotypes regarding female participation in the medieval religious sphere are challenged.

CHAPTER 2: THE CHURCH, PARISH AND LAITY

The parish church was central to the life of the medieval population. Men and women were baptised into it, the milestones of their lives were celebrated in it, and they required the absolution of the Church to die peacefully. The Church was open to all and was all encompassing in the life of medieval England. The basis of this religious system was the parish. All within Christian Europe were members of a parish and the resultant parochial system fulfilled two functions, a manageable sub-group of a diocese and a well-defined and organised group for religious, charitable and social purposes. In England this parish system was well entrenched by c 1200. Parishes were defined as communities, living within an area ordained and organised by the Church, subject to Church authority, where the inhabitants had no option other than to be parishioners of that parish -'no choice [was] allowed'.[44] It is the relationship between the parishioner and the Church, with its rituals and the practices that sprang from religion, which will be examined in this chapter.

Two groups participated in parish life, the clergy and the laity.[45] The clergy had responsibility for the parish and cure of souls. Priests attached to chantries and fraternities provide an additional support to the rector or vicar. Churchwardens were the representatives of the laity through their roles as administrators of parochial property and lay representatives at bishop's visitations. Other officers (sidemen, wardens for chantry chapels and guilds, sexton and keeper of the processional cross) were drawn from the male laity.[46] Normally, the priest was responsible for the chancel and his own house, while the laity had responsibility for the nave and other parish buildings.

This chapter will investigate the ways in which the laity interacted with the Church, and those aspects of religious practice in which they actively participated. It will lay the foundation for a detailed examination of lay religion through the

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[44] *The Churchwarden Accounts of Croscombe, Pilton, Patton, Tintinhull, Morebath and St Michael's, Bath ranging from A.D. 1349 to 1560*, ed. E. Hobhouse, SRS, 4 (1890) p. xi.

[45] P. Heath, *English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation*, (London, 1969) p. 18-19.

[46] These secular offices increased from the fifteenth century onwards. Hobhouse, *Churchwarden Accounts of Croscombe,* p. xviii.

scrutiny of such primary records as proofs of age, churchwardens' accounts, bishops' registers (with specific reference to visitations) and fraternity records. It reveals use of the church by the laity and lay participation within the parish and official and personal ritual involvement. By determining normal lay practice a lay female practice has been exposed. Records in print were used to indicate lay participation in late medieval religious practice. Originally the strategy was to undertake a regional study, but it was found that extending the geographical area allowed access to the fullest range of primary sources in each category, enabling the fullest range of lay experience to be captured and hence allow any gendered differences in practice to be revealed.

To investigate the bond between laity and church, the various primary sources discussed above were interrogated. The proofs of [coming of] age of the heirs of significant landowners have been chosen as the first records to investigate lay usage of the parish church. Taking a proof of age was a legal practice to discover a person's date of birth, necessary to validate an heir's age when s/he moved to take control of their inheritance. These provide an insight into ways in which the laity used the church for both religious and secular purposes. The actual date and day of the deponent's baptism is known through the proof. From this date it is possible to analyse any activities undertaken in the church throughout the week, in addition to the expected Sunday attendance at mass.[47] This last was a popular mnemonic for individual jurors, and through it lay attendance at mass is seen to occur throughout the week. While the proofs were sometimes fallacious (there is a repetitive element to many of the mnemonics), they had to be authentic to be accepted as proof. This contemporary recognition indicates they were normal occurrences. Religious rituals in which the laity was expected to actively participate are examined. Baptism and churching of women, in which female laity took an engaged role (as opposed to a passive presence at mass), reveal a lay female religious participation to emerge from these records.

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[47] When a member of the gentry was granted a licence for a private chapel, the licensee was still expected to attend mass in the parish church on high holy days, indicating the importance of mass and regular attendance at the church. K. L. French, *The People of the Parish: community life in a late medieval English Diocese*, (Philadelphia, 2003) p. 93; L. A. Smaller,   'Popular Religious Cultures' in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, ed. J. H. Arnold (DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199582136.013.021, online publication date 2014)

Further lay participation in the parish is examined through the consideration of the churchwarden accounts. Churchwarden accounts were a contemporaneous financial record of a parish, compiled by the outgoing churchwardens on the election of the incoming wardens. Understanding how money and goods were left to the Church aids understanding of individual religious preferences through the stated destination of the donation. Female participation in some aspects of the life of the Church is seen in the records. Visitation records will provide another source of information regarding lay participation.[48] These present an insight into the moral and religious sensibilities of the medieval period through the concerns raised by the laity and their representatives, the churchwardens, at visitations. The records display the attitude and expectations of the parishioners regarding their parish clergy and representatives.[49] They indicate perceptions of failure in religious participation and suspected immorality among the parishioners through the cases brought to the visitation.

The records of the religious fraternities that men and women voluntarily chose to join indicate lay religious preferences. Unlike the compulsory participation in the life and services at the parish church, joining fraternities was a voluntary act. The value fraternity members put on their participation in religious practice is indicated through the cost of fines of entry that they were willing to pay.[50] The religious practices sponsored by the fraternity may indicate religious preferences in the laity.[51] Fraternities had female members. Women could join as individuals or jointly, sponsored by their husbands. Those women who did make a personal decision indicate religious preference, within possible financial constraints.

Proofs of Age, Baptism and Purification of Women

Taking a proof of age was a legal process. The heirs (deponents) sought to take

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[48] Bishop's registers and visitation records chronicle ecclesiastical oversight of a diocese through the cases brought before bishop or archdeacon.

[49] R. N. Swanson, *Catholic England: Faith, Religion and Observance before the Reformation*, (Manchester, 1993) p. 32.

[50] Lights were candles burnt throughout the church and especially before the altars. E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional religion in England, 1400 – 1580*, (New Haven, 1992) pp. 146-7.

[51] To the medieval parishioner, saints were their patrons in heaven and the choice of saint could be an indication of religious preference. V. Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: social and religious change in Cambridgeshire c 1350-1558*, Studies in the History of Medieval Religion, 10 (Woodbridge, 1996) p. 62. See also Chapter 3 below.

control of their inheritance, and the process of proof taking proved the date of the deponent's birth and so confirmed his/her age. The proofs of age allow a detailed investigation of lay church usage to be undertaken. Those sampled have been taken from several English regions and across a large timescale. This will illuminate any differences in chronological and geographical practice.[52] Records indicate that, while the deponents were from the minor gentry upwards, those who provided the proofs were always men, from all levels of society. Men might quote women's evidence, but the women themselves were silent. Women never gave evidence at the proof taking, although the actual birth and surrounding processes were a female preserve.[53] The intimate knowledge of the date of birth, by women who were present at the time, was not requested. Not all men were able to participate in the proof taking. Those involved in providing evidence were ostensibly uninvolved in the cases: they were disinterested witnesses. This prevented the clergy and godfathers from giving evidence. The men also had to be of an age to remember the occasion.

None of the masculine mnemonics included a memory of the actual birth: men were barred from the birthing chamber.[54] Indeed, several of the proofs include information regarding the journey to inform the father of the birth. John Speman recollected being sent, on 1 August 1385, to London from Datchet, Buckinghamshire, to find John Arundel's father.[55] Will Dickon, on 17 September 1381, was with the father, when he was informed of the birth.[56] The proof taking normally took place in or near the place of birth, and declarations were made before the escheator. In an age where few personal records were kept, and were not invoked for this purpose, the proofs relied on the memories of jurors who remembered the birth and/or baptism of the child. As discussed previously, the proofs were formulaic and repetitive although accepted as valid.[57] This ratification

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[52] Due to the overwhelmingly secular aspect of the proofs of age the geographical area was extended to include the far north of England and the Welsh Marches. This ensures a wide range of religious mnemonics. The dates noted here are those of the birth/baptism, not the date of the proof taking.

[53] B. J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers*, (Oxford, 2002) p. 102.

[54] D. Youngs, *The Life Cycle of Western Europe c 1300 – c 1500*, (Manchester, 2006) p. 45.

[55] *CIPM,* XVIII p. 384.

[56] *CIPM,* XVIII p. 405.

[57] Some proofs are so similar as to be templates into which the names of witness and villages are dropped.

allows the various proofs proffered by the witnesses to be utilised as an unmediated window into the secular and religious uses of the church. This allows investigation into lay religious practice.

Secular mnemonics form the majority proofs of age and so do not supply information regarding religious practice. Typical proofs in this category are briefly mentioned as illustrative of the complex range of memories used: John Western and John Genel remembered the birth of Beatrix Hauly as Simon Wright had been blown off the house he was building and broke two bones.[58] William Dawson, who was in Pontefract on the day of Edward Hastings' baptism, saw a man arrested for casting the evil eye on a horse.[59] Secular proofs could be linked to legal transactions. Sir Michael Ponning's bailiff retained William Borle, juror, on the Michaelmas prior to the birth of the heir.[60] John Belton deposed that Edward Hastings was born on 21 May 1382 at Camsell, Yorkshire, which was the 'year after the great rebellion of the commons in London', referring to the Peasant's Revolt of 1381.[61] Secular proofs of age also indicate ways in which the church building itself became an integral part of parish life through its use as a general meeting place. John Abdern remembered the baptism of John de Walton in December 1379 at Walton, Yorkshire, through his attendance at a cockfight in the church.[62] These proofs indicate a vibrant society whose inhabitants were cognisant of the importance of exact recollection.

Information regarding the way in which the Church was viewed by the parishioners is to be found within the records. The study shows that parishioners supported their priests, illustrated by the proof of age for John Hussy.[63] Witnesses testified to being present in the church at Barton Stacey, Hampshire, when their vicar and the rector of nearby Wherwell came to an agreement over a tithe of hay on the feast of St Margaret, 1350, after which the priest raised the child at the font.[64] The parishioners were willing to give their priest physical support in his

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[58] *CIPM,* XVIII p. 102.
[59] *CIPM,* XVIII p. 291.
[60] *CIPM,* XIII p. 53.
[61] *CIPM,* XVIII p. 291.
[62] *CIPM,* XVIII p. 226.
[63] *CIPM,* XIII, p. 257.
[64] John Minor, Stephen Carpenter, Roger French, John Iwood, William Martin and Peter Berchant were the witnesses. There is no indication which St. Margaret's day was described. The date could be either 16th November or the 20th July. Both dates would fit with a dispute over hay.

disagreement with another parson. No women were marked as supporting the parson. Again, this lack of female support underlines a problem with the proofs of age regarding gender. The female voice is never heard directly.

Of the religious mnemonics, the ritual of baptism was the most frequent. As one of the most important religious rituals, ensuring the soul would be saved, those in or around the church at the time of the ritual were aware of the ceremony.[65] Baptism normally took place on the day of a child's birth or the following day. It is this tight chronology that allows the date of the baptism to confirm the date of birth to within one or two days, so determining the deponent's age. Lay involvement in baptism is described in the proofs of age and surviving missals. It was a universal rite. All new born infants were baptised. Mirk stated that partially born, dying children should be christened: more extreme, a child could be removed from a dying mother to undergo the rite.[66] This important sacrament was, in extremis, to be given by the laity. Priests were exhorted to remind their parishioners of the correct form of words to use at baptism, which could be said by both men and women.[67] While it was anticipated that a man took precedence over a woman at a lay baptism, if a woman was more conversant with the words she was expected to recite them.[68] It was more important to perform the ritual correctly than to prefer one sex over the other. The words could be spoken in Latin or the vernacular – "I cristene the N, in the name of the fadir and of the sone and of the holy gost. Amen". Only pure, fresh water was to be used, either sprinkling over the child or used for dipping. If dipping, ideally it was done three times although once could suffice.

Children could only be baptised once, according to ecclesiastical law. The priest could complete the ritual in the church but was expected to ask the midwife, prior to church baptism, whether the words had been spoken over the child.[69] The role of midwife was vital. Only she was able to confirm whether baptism had already

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[65] The ritual could be elaborate, including processions, godparents and bells. It was one of the sacraments that could be performed even when an interdict was in operation, although under that condition there were no bells rung and voices were to be quiet.

[66] Youngs, *The Life Cycle of Western Europe*, p. 46.

[67] J. D. C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West: a Study in the disintegration of the Primitive Rite of Initiation,* Alcuin Club Collection, XLVII (1965) pp. 158-79.

[68] Fisher, *Christian Initiation*, p. 178.

[69] Ibid p. 179.

taken place. The child's mother did not attend the christening and so could not make that important statement. Mothers were unable to participate in the baptism. Churching, or purification, had to occur before the mother was allowed into the church, and this took place several weeks after the birth, often associated with celebrations. The mother was also recovering from the birth itself. Parents were not allowed to lift their child at the font, constraining the father to the role of onlooker. Godmother(s) were present to represent a quasi-maternal role in the baptism.[70] During the service the godparents of both sexes spoke exactly the same words: there was no gendered variation in the responses. A godmother had additional responsibilities over and above those of godfather(s), noted in the Sarum missal. It was their duty to ensure the mother was purified and the parish christening gown returned to the church.[71] Women took an integral part in the baptismal service. The midwife brought the child to church and confirmed whether the baby had already been baptised. On this depended whether the ritual could continue in full or not. Godmothers raised the child at the font and promised secular and religious support. The church recognised this in the instructions to celebrants in the missal.[72] Women also appear in the records as wet nurses, a role separate from that of midwife.[73]

Full church baptism was a three part ritual which could become an elaborate ceremony.[74] The child was brought to the church door by the midwife, accompanied by the godparents. The parson asked the midwife if the child was male or female, whether it had been baptised earlier and what the name was to be. After a series of prayers said over the child the exorcism of salt took place. At this point the service became gender specific. Prayers recited at the porch differed between male and female children (Appendix 1). The Use of Sarum provided additional prayers for female children. Male children did not need these prayers. The prayers were further adjurations to the devil to leave the girl child, indicating that female children were considered to be prone to harbouring Satan.

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[70] All children had three godparents. Males had two godfathers and one godmother; females had two godmothers and one godfather.

[71] Fisher, *Christian Initiation,* p. 178. It seems likely that there were several parish christening gowns as multiple baptisms could occur on any one day.

[72] Ibid p. 178.

[73] *CIPM,* XXII p. 231.

[74] T.J. Heffernan, E. A. Matter, eds., *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church*, (Kalamazoo, 2001) pp. 223-5.

The godparents then recited the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary and Apostle's creed. After further prayer by the priest the child was taken into the church. After an exhortation in the vernacular to the godparents to look after the spiritual and secular well-being of the child, the company processed to the font, the godparents carrying the infant.[75] Following further prayers and a catechism, the parson baptised the child, after which the godparents raised him/her from the font. The child was then clothed in the chrisom robe and a burning candle placed in his/her hand. After a further prayer the service was over.[76] Baptism was an opportunity to celebrate, and to make alliances and obtain patronage.[77]

The pattern of the ritual is confirmed by the mnemonics used in the proofs of age. In 1380 William Reedley brought the salt for the baptism of John Villars.[78] John Richard saw Maud, wife of Stephen Lallyford, 'lift' the child from the bishop at the baptism of Elizabeth (daughter of William Staunton) on 21 January 1405.[79] At the baptism of William Engleton (29 April 1348), Margaret, wife of John Stretton, was the child's godmother and lifted him from the font.[80] William le Hunt saw Edward Despenser lying on the altar after his baptism at Esindon, Rutland, on 24 March 1336.[81] Many proofs of age describe torches being carried to and from the church for the baptism. In 1401 John Mason, senior, made a wax candle weighing 2lb on the day of the baptism for the service.[82] The lighting of the torches is confirmed by Walter Domegood, who informed the escheator he saw six extinguished torches carried to the church. He then witnessed the procession return with the torches alight.[83] John Denwood describes carrying a lighted torch around the font at the baptism of Humphrey, later earl of Stafford (d1460) and duke of Buckingham.[84] These recollections confirm a laity playing an active part in the baptism, with women participating in the ritual at the church door and the

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[75] Fisher, *Christian Initiation,* p. 160. This included overriding the parent's wishes if necessary, keeping the child safe from fire and ensuring that it was confirmed by the bishop when convenient.
[76] Ibid pp. 158-179.
[77] Youngs, *The Life Cycle of Western Europe*, p. 46.
[78] *CIPM,* XVIII p. 224.
[79] *CIPM,* XXII p. 605.
[80] *CIPM*, XIII p. 48.
[81] *CIPM,* X p. 285.
[82] *CIPM,* XXII p. 325.
[83] *CIPM,* XXII p. 336. The name Domegood breaks down into 'do me good': the name itself may be false, which casts doubt on the entire proceeding, although, as noted above, the proof had to be plausible.
[84] *CIPM,* XXII, p. 337.

font. Torches, or lights, were an integral part of the ritual. Women were not restricted solely to participation in female baptism but were able to lift male children at the font.

Numerous accounts of jurors carrying basins and towels to the church indicate that the godparents washed and dried their hands: probably after lifting the child from the font their hands would be wet with water and chrisom oil. At the baptism of Robert Stodhow, in 1381, William Cabery carried a basin, ewer and towels to the church.[85] The items were often costly, as indicated by the silver basin and ewer Robert Adinet carried to the church for hand washing at the baptism of William Deyncourt on 26 December 1357.[86] Lay participants in the service were expected to fast before the ceremony, so the baptism often took place in the morning.[87] This may explain the food and drink provided after the baptism. John Smith carried two silver pots of clary and malmsey and four silver goblets to the church for the godparents after the baptism of Ralph Thorp.[88] From this it can be deduced that baptism was a ritual that could not be overlooked. Even where the minimum of participants were present (priest, three godparents and midwife), the length of time of the service and its multiple locations within the church would make it conspicuous.

A further duty for the godmother(s) was to ensure the child was confirmed. This could follow immediately after the baptism if the bishop was present or within seven miles of the church. Children were expected to be confirmed, whatever their age, when the bishop was reachable (the service was short and required no specific items) and it was the godmother(s) responsibility to take the child to the bishop.[89] After the baptism of Elizabeth, daughter and heir of William Staunton in the parish church of St Michael Paternoster (Dowgate ward), Maud, the wife of Stephen Lallyford, brewer, went to the collegiate church of St Martin le Grand to confirm the baptism. She lifted the heir from the bishop's hands on 21 January

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[85]*CIPM,* XVIII, p. 323.
[86]*CIPM,* XV p. 63.
[87]*The Old Service Books of the English Church*, ed. C. Wordsworth, H. Littlehales (London, 1904) p. 24.
[88]*CIPM,* XXII p. 232.
[89] Heffernan, *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church,* p .225.

1405.[90] Women had continuing accountability for their godchildren's religious life, a responsibility laid down by the church.

Several baptisms could take place, consecutively, in a church on any one day. Baptisms were observed by jurors who were attending other baptisms. Beatrice, the daughter of Simon Robertson, was baptised immediately after Robert Stodhouse (deponent) in 1381.[91] Robert Parentin's brother was baptised on the same day as Robert Mordant in 1355.[92] John Wallington's son was baptised on the same day as Walter Tallboys.[93] Joan, the wife of John Rook, gave birth to a son, John, who was baptised on the same day as Ralph Thorp at Oldbury-by-the-Hill, Gloucester.[94] The laity was expected to abstain from sexual relations during proscribed times of the church year (such as lent). If they did so, it is probable that many children would have been born within the same months, nine months after the permitted times. This could lead to several infants being born on the same day.

Religious proofs rely on recollections of lay participation in rituals other than baptism. A frequent reason cited for church attendance was the burial of relations. Mothers, fathers, siblings and children were interred, even while baptisms took place, irrespective of the size of the church. Robert Hidwin remembered the baptism of William Hilton on Saturday 7 November 1355 in St Leonard's church, Alnwick, Northumberland, as his wife was buried that day.[95] The son of Thomas Hall died on the day of Robert Mordant's baptism and was buried that same day, 29 October 1355, in the church at Turvey, Bedfordshire.[96] William Shafton buried his sister in the churchyard at Rothbury, Northumberland, on the day Walter Tallboys was baptised.[97] Marriage ceremonies were also celebrated throughout the week, during the permitted seasons. Walter More married Margaret Keynes and they and their neighbours, who attended the

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[90] *CIPM,* XXII p. 605.
[91] *CIPM,* XVIII p. 323.
[92] *CIPM,* XV p. 121.
[93] *CIPM,* XIII p. 112 .
[94] *CIPM,* XXII p. 232.
[95] *CIPM,* XV p. 29.
[96] *CIPM,* XV p. 121.
[97] *CIPM,* XIII p. 112.

ceremony, witnessed a baptism on Monday 2 May 1362.[98]

While the records sampled do not use the churching of a woman as a mnemonic for the day of a baptism, jurors remembered the rite occurring within weeks of the birth. Churching was a specifically female ritual, developed to allow the mother to re-enter the church after childbirth. It was a rite in which most women participated. Only barren and, in theory, unmarried lay women would not be churched, although they attended as supporters and guests. For every pregnancy a woman survived, she had to be purified. It was a routine ritual. Churching of a deponent's mother was witnessed some weeks after the baptism and often noted as a proof of age. Thomas Hulnewood was in Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex, with Joan, his wife, when Walter House was baptised on 16 May 1402 and was again there for the mother's churching on 24 June.[99] William Wright of Hartfield was in East Grinstead, Sussex, when Thomas Saintclare, the heir, was born on 28 October 1401 and then saw Margaret, the mother, churched on 11 November.[100] While Thomas Hulnewood's wife attended the churching ritual there is no indication of her participation in the service. It cannot be determined if Thomas accompanied his wife to a female rite or attended as a favour to the father.

Descriptions of the churching ritual appear in contemporary records and missals. As it was the godmother's responsibility to ensure the mother was churched, she possibly initiated this ritual of lay female participation. There was a twofold reason for this.[101] Purification allowed the mother to re-enter the church after the birth of her child; she was ritually unable to do so until the ceremony had taken place. The chrisom robe had to be returned and was done as part of the churching.[102] Churching also marked the time when a married couple could resume sexual relations. Mirk stated "For [if] she [the woman] have been at his [the husband] bed before, she must take her penance and he, both".[103] The mother processed to the church, veiled, and probably accompanied by female

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[98] *CIPM,* XVI p. 29.

[99] *CIPM,* XXII p. 328.

[100] *CIPM,* XXII p. 325.

[101] Fisher, *Christian Initiation,* p. 178.

[102] Ibid.

[103] *Mirk's Festial: a Collection of Homilies by Johannes Mirkus (John Mirk)*, ed. T. Erbe, part 1, EETS, Extra Series, 96 (1905) p. 59, author's translation.

relations and friends.[104] The brief ritual began with the priest meeting the woman at the church door, or at a special seat. The woman waited outside the church until the parson spoke the correct form of words. The Sarum missal suggests that the responses were spoken by several people as they are in the third person, indicative of the presence of a group of supporters for the mother.[105] The priest then sprinkled the mother with holy water and led her by the right hand into the church, saying "Thou shalt purge me, oh lord, with hyssop".[106] She then moved to the altar and gave a candle to the church. At mass, the mother received the bread before the rest of the congregation.[107]   Women were able to participate actively in church ritual through the churching service. It was a ritual which linked every mother, from a poor peasant to a queen, and allowed women a central role.

There were a few exceptions to this. There is some evidence of women being brought before archdeacons' courts for non-participation.[108] The importance of the ceremony can be seen in the prosecution of those who attempted to evade churching. There may have been financial reasons for this evasion. Giving gifts or money to the parson, at the time of churching, was not a requirement in canon law but an expected custom, despite Archbishop le Romeyn of York's decree in 1293 that churching should be free.[109] This may have been a deterrent to participation. It was, however, exceptional to evade churching: most women did attend church to be purified.

Churching took place on every day of the week: John Badcock attended the purification of the mother of Walter Fitzwalter on Tuesday 20 July 1400.[110] In Scarborough, women paid between 1$\frac{1}{2}$d. and 3d. for each churching service in 1435-6. At Great Yarmouth the records for 1452-3 show a total 34s 2$\frac{1}{2}$d. for

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[104] K. L. French, *The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion after the Black Death*, (Philadelphia, 2008) p. 61.

[105] *The Sarum Missal in English* part two, ed. F. E. Warren, IX (London, 1911) p. 164-5.

[106] Ibid p.164. Mirk also describes the priest taking the mother by the hand and leading her into the church, Erbe, *Mirk's Festial*, p. 59.

[107] French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, pp 61-62.

[108] N. J. G. Pounds, *A History of the English Parish: the Culture of Religion from Augustus to Victoria*, (Cambridge, 2000) pp. 222-23.

[109] Ibid pp. 222-23.

[110] *CIPM,* XXII p. 119.

churchings. [111] For the year of 1487-8 the records from the church of St Margaret in King's Lynn notes 54s 8d. received for purifications. It is possible to calculate the number of purifications in the two towns (*Table 2.1*). This gives an indication of the number of women who were churched in a year. If the upper figure of 437 women churched is used it demonstrates that several churchings did take place on the same day. These figures are exceptional, in that each relates to a town served by a single parish church, indicating a bustling church building. Applied nationwide, and churchings were a universal practice, a frequent occurrence – as numerous as the number of live births – and of course all involved not just the specific mothers but midwives and other female assistants at the labour and female friends. If the figures for the church service are similar across the country, and this is probable as graves had a standard cost, then perhaps the frequency of churchings can be calculated from total takings in other parishes also.

Table 2.1

Number of purifications

Costs	1 ½ d.	3 d.	Average 2 1/4 d.
Great Yarmouth (1452/3)	274	137	182
Kings Lynn (1487/8)	437	219	292

When churching took place it became a celebration.[112] The mother had survived childbirth and associated fevers. Simon Luscote used as a mnemonic the churching feast for Pernall, the mother of Alice Sancta Omera, for the baptism on 25 March 1340.[113] A later description of churching indicates a happy female gathering:-

> Sutton's wife of Salisbury which had lately been delivered of a son, against
> going to church, prepared great cheer: at what time Simon's wife of

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[111] R. N. Swanson, ed, *Catholic England: Faith, Religion and Observance before the Reformation*, (Manchester, 1993) pp. 150-163.
[112] H. Leyser, *Medieval Women: a social history of women in England 450 – 1500*, (London, 1995) pp. 130-1; P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Life and Death: the ages of man' in *A Social History of England 1200 – 1500*, eds R. Horrox, W. M. Ormrod (Cambridge, 2006) p. 415.
[113]*CIPM,* X p. 289.

Southampton came hither, and so did divers others of the clothiers' wives, only to make merry at the churching feast.[114]

This description (c 1597-9) suggests that, even after the Reformation, women continued to enjoy the female celebration of churching, despite any changes in religious practice and belief. A royal churching was described by Rozmitel.[115] He accompanied his lord to the celebration of the churching of Queen Elizabeth, wife of Edward IV. Rozmitel described a ceremonial procession to the church, returning to an elaborate feast with gifts distributed to the guests. Gifts were given to the mother, emphasizing the importance of the day. At the proof of age for John Kyriel (born 2 October 1307 in Walmer, Kent), Alexander Oxeneye recollected travelling to Ypres to buy 'whole cloths' to make new robes for Nicholas and Rose, the parents, for Rose's purification.[116] The wife of Richard Mansey gave a cock to Margaret Saintclare, at her churching on 11 November 1401, again suggesting the importance of the ritual.[117] The mother was at the centre of the celebrations, both religiously and socially. The husband was expected to hold a feast as part of the celebrations.[118]

Another mnemonic used was the election of family members into religious orders. Agnes, sister of John Willsthorpe, was elected prioress of the nuns of Arthington, Yorkshire, on 11 October 1367. On the same day Robert Proctor's son John entered the order of the friars minor in York. Both provided mnemonics at the proof of age for Margaret Chaumont, baptised at Bolton Percy, Yorkshire, on 11 October 1367.[119] Richard Griffon's daughter, Alice, professed as a nun at the priory of Thicket, Yorkshire, in the week that William Gramery was baptised at Aberford, Yorkshire, on 30 November 1334.[120] Thomas Sif, at the same proof taking, deposed his sister Alice became a nun at the priory of Appleton that year. Thomas, son of John Barker, took holy orders and celebrated his first mass at

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[114] 'The pleasant history of Thomas of Reading' in *The Works of Thomas Deloney,* ed. F. O. Mann (Oxford, 1912), p. 260. While the extract was written post reformation the survival of the ritual suggests that women enjoyed participating in churching.

[115] *The Travels of Rozmitel, 1465 – 67,* ed. M. Letts, Hakluyt Society, Series II, CVIII (1957).

[116] *CIPM,* VII p. 19.

[117] *CIPM,* XXII p. 325.

[118] French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, p 64.

[119] *CIPM*, XV p. 352.

[120] *CIPM,* X p. 239.

Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex, on 16 May 1402, the day of baptism of Walter House.[121]

On 11 October 1367 Mary Orby was baptised and Thomas Catton's brother, Henry, was inducted and instituted by the ordinary to the rectory of the church at Warkworth, Northumberland.[122] William Rilkin remembered the date of the baptism of Katherine, daughter of Bernard Missenden, in Buckingham as his own son, Robert, was professed a monk on the same day, 8 September 1402.[123] Men and women both entered religious orders although fewer women than men were used as mnemonics by the jurors. This could reflect the larger number of male religious houses in the country.

The proofs of age provide a window into medieval religious life. Men described, through their own words, their participation in the parish and church. Women appear within the records, but as silent participants. They were always involved in the birth, baptismal and churching processes, as mothers, midwives and wet nurses. Women were cited as carrying the child to church. They were not called to give evidence. Robert Cupper's wife, Joan, was at the birth of Thomasia [?] in 1386 and Magota, wife of William Payne, was the midwife. Both women were described as still living at the time of the proof taking, but were not called as witnesses.[124] John Thompson confirmed that John Neville was twenty-one by describing a conversation he had with wet nurse, Euphemia Kettlewell. She was still alive and could have testified in her own voice.[125] William Knottingley met Joan Parker, who was eighty years old, on his way to the inquisition, and she confirmed the age of Edward Hastings. She was, he said, 'worthy of credence'.[126] Churching of women, a ritual in which the female laity played a major role, was described by male jurors. The proofs do, however, indicate lay female involvement in religious practice.

Churchwarden's Accounts and Visitation Records

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[121] *CIPM,* XXII p. 328.
[122] *CIPM,* XV p. 266.
[123] *CIPM,* XXII p. 330.
[124] *CIPM,* XVIII p. 101.
[125] *CIPM,* XVIII p. 343.
[126] *CIPM,* XVIII p .291.

Churchwarden's accounts illuminate further aspects of lay participation in religious practice. The role of the churchwarden ensured that the laity became involved in the parish. The churchwarden was initiated by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 and confirmed by the Synod of Exeter (1287). Responsibility for the chancel was allocated to the priest. The remainder of the church fabric and other parochial structures were in the care of the laity, through the churchwardens. These men, for very few women filled the role, managed the goods and money given through legacies and gifts. Churchwardens were elected by the parishioners and, in addition to their responsibility for parish finances, became lay representatives for the congregation at diocesan visitations.[127] It was usual to elect two wardens, each serving for one year: in larger parishes the wardens could be elected for two years – junior warden in the first year, moving to senior warden in the second. Exceptions to this appear in Thame (Oxon) and Louth (Lincs), where there were four churchwardens at any one time.[128] Parishioners could serve as wardens more than once. Canon law stated it should not happen in consecutive years; although at least one set of records consulted indicate that continuous service did occur. The accounts were expected to be presented, verbally, to the parish immediately prior to the annual election of the wardens for the following year. Subsequent payments to scriveners for recording the accounts are sometimes noted.[129] Women could become churchwardens, although this was unusual.[130]

Extant churchwarden accounts, the contemporary record of the finances of a medieval parish, indicate this lay involvement.[131] Payments were made by parishioners for services provided to them, including graves and seats: they paid rent for houses and made gifts to the church. Tithes and other monies were paid separately to the clergy. Money was expended on cleaning, repairing and refurbishing church buildings, which could include church houses and properties for rent (these last were often gifts or legacies from parishioners) in addition to

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[127] Other names used included guardians, praepositi, fideligni, procurators, proctors, wardens, church reeves, church masters or stockmen. Pounds, *A History of the English Parish* p. 182.

[128] Ibid pp. 184-5; J. Carnwaith, ''Churchwardens Accounts of Thame, Oxfordshire, c 1443-1524'' in *Trade, Devotion and Governance: papers in later medieval history,* eds. D. J. Clayton, R. G. Davies, P. McNiven (Stroud, 1994) p. 182.

[129] Pounds, *A History of the English Parish*, p. 181.

[130] K. L. French, "Women Churchwardens in Late Medieval England" in *The Parish in Late Medieval England,* eds. C. Burgess, E Duffy (2006) p. 303-05.

[131] Pounds, *A History of the English Parish*, p. 5.

the church itself. All Saints' parish in Bristol owned several church properties which regularly brought in rents ranging from a few shillings to £4 per annum.[132]

Control of the parish finances, and the moral overview of the parishioners, gave the churchwardens their importance.[133] The support they received from the bishop at visitations gave them the power to collect those sums of money pledged to the parish but not actually given.[134] The minutiae of the warden's remit ranged from the mending of old locks to paying a scribe to write a petition to the bishop. On a larger scale, they undertook work on the fabric of the church building.[135] Churchwardens and parishioners were expected to provide enthusiastic support for the church. A stanza from *Piers the Plowman's Crede* indicates the presumed ambition of the laity for their church buildings.

> For we buildeth a burugh, a brod and a large,
>
> A chirche and a chapaile with cambers alofte
>
> With wide windowes ynfought and walles well heye
>
> That mote bene porteid and paynt and pulched ful clene
>
> With gaie glittering glas, glowing as the sunne[136]

Parishioners were also responsible for moveables such as candles, books, vestments and bells, all referenced in the churchwarden's accounts and proofs of age.

To secure a wide spectrum of knowledge the records considered have been taken from a variety of sources. This will ensure the fullest range possible of parochial information is garnered. Two London parishes have been selected, St Andrew Hubbard (Eastcheap) and St Mary at Hill.[137] These London parishes have been

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[132] *The Pre-Reformation Records of All Saints' Church, Bristol: the Churchwardens' Accounts,* part 1, ed. C. Burgess, BRS, 46, (1995): *The Pre-Reformation Records of All Saints' Church, Bristol: Wills, the Halleway Chantry records and deeds,* part 3, ed. C. Burgess, BRS, 56 (2004).

[133] S. Walker, 'Order and Law' in *A Social History of England 1250 – 1500,* eds. R. Horrox, W. M. Ormrod (Cambridge, 2006) p. 96.

[134] R. E. Rhodes, *Ecclesiastical Administration in Medieval England: the Anglo Saxons to the Reformation*, (London, 1977) pp. 125 – 136.

[135] *The Church Records of St Andrew Hubbard Eastcheap c 1450 – 1570*, ed. C. Burgess, LRS, 34 (1999) p. 6.

[136] *Six Ecclesiastical Satires,* ed. J. Dean, METS (Kalamazoo, 1991) p. 11,   l. 118-123.

[137] Burgess, *St Andrew Hubbard Eastcheap*; *The Medieval Records of a London City Church (St Mary at Hill) A.D. 1420 – 1559,* ed. H. Littlehales, EETS, Original series, 125 (1904).

examined separately due to the singular position of London in medieval life. This may have given the parishioners, particularly women, an attitude to the church and secular power unlike that in other parishes. Four other urban parishes - All Saints' (Bristol), St Edmund's (Salisbury), Ashburton in Devon and St James, Louth (Lincolnshire) – allow a variety of civic churches to be examined.[138] Bristol was a prosperous port. Salisbury, at the centre of Wiltshire's wool trade, was an affluent cathedral town.[139] Ashburton was a significant stannary town in Devon. The small Lincolnshire town of Louth was able to hold twice yearly eight-day fairs.[140] To complete the range of accounts, records from two rural parishes in Somerset, Croscombe and Yatton, were examined.[141] Croscombe has been selected as an example of an industrial village, while Yatton was purely an agricultural economy. The range of parishes selected encompasses the full range of female religious practice.

Money to support the parish was raised through wills, gifts, collections and fund-raising days: plough Monday, hock tide, rogation and Corpus Christi. The Louth accounts show the sums to be raised at Sunday collections - £10 2s 10d in the year 1507-08.[142] The wardens controlled the money, chattels and livestock left to the church in wills and the gifts in kind, such as hay.[143] Some items could be stored until needed or sold: churchwardens had to be aware of the best time to sell such objects. Other responsibilities included payments to parishioners for the upkeep of the nave and church buildings, cleaning the church, mending vestments and maintaining the churchyard. Wardens were expected to travel and attend law courts on occasion. The Louth records of 1509-10 indicate the refusal of a bell founder in Nottingham to deliver three bells, necessitating a warden travelling to London to take suit against the foundry.[144] They controlled the funds that provided auxiliary clergy through their management of the chantry chapels.[145]

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[138] *The First Churchwardens' Book of Louth 1500 – 1524*, ed. R. D. Dudding (Oxford, 1941).
[139] *Churchwarden's Accounts of St Edmund and St Thomas, Sarum, 1448-1702 with other documents,* ed. H. J. F. Swayne, Wiltshire Record Society (1896).
[140] T. Lambert, *A Brief History of Louth,* www.localhistory.org. Accessed 21 March 2012.
[141] Hobhouse, *Churchwarden's Accounts of Croscombe.*
[142] These records appear to have been transcribed verbatim and the language of the records has been influenced by a northern dialect. It describes a Kyrke and Kyrgarth rather than church and churchyard and has olderman rather than a burgess.
[143] A .J. Pollard, *Late medieval England 1399 – 1509,* (Harlow, 2000) p. 224; Pounds, *A History of the English Parish,* p. 182.
[144] Dudding, *Book of Louth 1500 – 1524*, p. 120.
[145] Britnell, 'Town life', p. 170-1.

Churchwardens participated in the provision of poor relief and succour of travellers where the resident parson was unable to fulfil charitable giving.[146] These varying roles within the remit of the churchwardens indicate their power, and the importance of their presence in the parish. The wardens' accounts reveal how the laity shared the ritual aspects of church liturgy and may illuminate female participation.

Participation in church affairs was a good work, lessening time spent in purgatory: in addition, it carried prestige within the community. While the role was, in theory, open for any member of the parish to fulfil, in practice it was a masculine domain. Records from the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries suggest that women could become churchwardens, but it is conjectured that these women inherited their husbands' roles when they were widowed.[147] Generally, widows were not under the jurisdiction of a husband or father, allowing them to act as *femme sole*. An exception to churchwardenship by inheritance is seen in the Eastcheap records. These note a woman taking the role of churchwarden in two consecutive years.[148] In a parish where the churchwardens were elected annually, Marian Gerens (or Garyn) was re-elected for a second year, and can therefore be deduced to have been a capable warden. Eastcheap was a London parish, a city where a woman could act as a *femme sole* in financial and legal affairs.[149] The ability to participate in legal matters as *femme sole* may have facilitated female participation in the financial aspects of the churchwarden's role, assisting the re-election of a woman as warden, who could fully share in the role. However, the churchwardens in Eastcheap were subordinate to the parish elite. If the financial aspects of the role were diminished, then a female churchwarden would be less involved in fiscal concerns.

The accounts show the part the church played in the local economy, through the employment of local artisans. The parishioners profited from the repairs and building works undertaken by the parish, and through the services provided to the church, such as candle production. They undertook paid work within the church,

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[146] Rhodes, *Ecclesiastical Administration in Medieval England*, p. 131.
[147] French lists women who became churchwardens. French, 'Women Churchwardens ' p. 302.
[148] French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, p. 231.
[149] M. K. McIntosh, *Working Women in English Society 1300-1620*, (Cambridge, 2005) p. 19.

with both men and women performing specific tasks. Gendered names reveal any female participation. The Eastcheap records of 1460 note payment to two women, Agnes Underwood and Margaret Ride, for 'washing', while the All Saints' accounts itemise washing but no laundress is named.[150] Many of the paid tasks did not have a name attached, creating difficulties in allotting gender to work. Lack of individualisation in the accounts could be an indication of the closeness of the parish: parishioners knew those undertaking the work in the church, negating the need to record the names in the accounts. Where gender is discernible, a difference becomes apparent in the records: the majority of donors were men. Men had more management of the disposal of their money than women, who were under the authority of male relations. Men undertook much of the paid work in church, possibly as the bulk of such work was construction and other predominantly masculine occupations. There are, however, references to women giving money, gifts and labour, demonstrating female visibility and participation in the church.

The accounts note parishioners purchasing or renting seats in the church. The position of seats was important to the laity, demonstrated through wills where testators requested burial near or under their seat in the church.[151] Interment in the church enhanced the spiritual value of prayers and obits.[152] Women purchased their own seats in the church. They also paid to change their seats, as Christiana Millance did in 1477-8, possibly to obtain a preferable position.[153] At All Saints' the seats were divided into single and pairs. Single seats were purchased by individual women, while the pairs were obtained by men for themselves and their wives, indicating an uxorious desire to support their wives' souls. The price differential between the seats was 2d (4d or 6d for seats). Women, for the most part, took 4d seats while men rented the 6d seats. Records show no reason for the relative difference in seating costs, but the variation may reflect the desirable locations. Men and women sat in different areas in the church and this may also have influenced the cost of the seat.[154] Seating costs were not recorded in every church account. Eastcheap appears to have provided

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[150] The items washed were two albs, two surplices, one rochet, seven altar cloths and two towels.

[151] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 334.

[152] Ibid p. 334.

[153] Burgess, *All Saints' Church, Bristol*, (1995) p. 86.

[154] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 171.

seats without associated costs, possibly indicating that the seating was free. The desire to purchase their own seats indicates a female understanding of religious practice: the seat gave women an increased opportunity of burial within the church, closer to the Host, with the concomitant benefit to their souls.[155]

Women appear in the churchwarden accounts through the items and money they gave as gifts to the church, albeit usually small, and the contents of their wills.[156] The gifts consisted of movable and personal items: articles such as jewellery, clothing and household utensils that were the property of women, and so available to bestow on the church. In 1489 the wife of John Brinkley left a ring valued at 6d to her parish.[157] Avice Denbold gave Ashburton church three silver spoons and Sybil Maine gave a brass pot (later sold for 3s. 3d) in 1490-1.[158] Alice, wife of Rob Drover, gave a towel to St Edmunds in Salisbury in 1482-3.[159] In the same year Isabel Caramore gave a brazen pot weighing 12 lbs. . In 1463-4, Isabel Temple gave All Saints' a basin, which was large enough to hold wine for two persons, and was later sold for 4 s. At Croscombe, Annis Clark gave the church a ring, kerchief and apron in 1477-8, while Margaret Hoper gave a silver ring.[160] Women also gave gifts of money. Again at Croscombe, in 1478-9, Maude Gardner gave 40s. and a gold ring.[161]   In 1478-1 William Blaze's wife paid 20d to have an image of Our Lady painted within the church at St Mary at Hill and in 1490-1 Mistress Plummer paid for a new canopy of velvet at the same church to be made and lined.[162] Social standing was not a predictor of gift giving. In 1478-9 Thomas Cogan's maid left a gown and kirtle to All Saints', later sold for 8s. (with 8d. commission to the upholsterer).[163]

In 1491-2, according to the All Saints' account, Janet Saddler donated a mazer weighing 11$\frac{1}{2}$ ozs. and silver weighing 8 ozs. in lieu of payment for her late

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[155] Ibid p .33.

[156] Wills are considered in a later chapter.

[157] Swayne, *St Edmund and St Thomas*, p. 369.

[158] *Churchwarden's Accounts for Ashburton, 1479 – 1580*, ed. A. Hanham, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, New Series, 15 (1970) p. 15.

[159] Swayne, *St Edmund and St Thomas*, p. 367.

[160] Hobhouse, *Churchwarden's Accounts of Croscombe*, p. 6.

[161] Ibid p. 8.

[162] Littlehales , *St Mary at Hill*, p. 94 and p. 163.

[163] Burgess, *All Saints' Church, Bristol*, (1995) p. 91.

husband's grave.[164] There was a proviso; the church would only receive the mazer after her death. She also purchased a 6d seat in the church.[165] At Eastcheap, Nicholas Honey's sister gave 6s. 8d towards the cloth for the rood loft in 1454-6.[166] In the same church, in 1457-9, a collection was made to dight and board the steeple: the congregation raised 44s. 7$_{1/2}$d. The only named donor was a lady Combe who gave 20s. – nearly half the required amount.[167] Lady Combe is thought to be Katherine Combe, widow of William Combe, alderman.[168] In 1507-08 Joan Rogers left 20 marks to buy and make a blue or white silk cope.[169]

In contrast to these gifts, in the rural parish of Yatton, Alice Ogden gave a bushel of wheat valued at 8d in 1445 and in the following year a heifer, given by Annis Hill, was sold for 4s.[170] The village of Croscombe supported a Maidens guild, which successfully raised money for the church during the fifteenth century.[171] Women also left money and gifts in their wills, although this could be contested by their heirs. In 1468-9 the wardens of All Saints' took their case to Westminster when Thomas Fyler challenged his mother's will.[172] Women could give the services of their staff. The record of costs at the 1501-02 Corpus Christi celebrations in All Saints' note a payment made to 'my lady Spicer's priest'; recompense for his participation in the Corpus Christi services.[173] Lady Spicer allowed her personal priest to support the parish church as a 'good work'. This supported her soul and the souls of her fellow parishioners. In the following year, costs noted the provision of two priests by lady Spicer: a large donor to the church throughout her widowhood.[174] Women gave what they had to hand - money and cloth in the town, wheat and cattle in the country. They engaged in the religious aspects of

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[164] Ibid p. 131.

[165] Ibid p. 131.

[166] Burgess, *St Andrew Hubbard Eastcheap*, p. 1.

[167] Ibid p. 5.

[168] *Index of Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1335 – 1558*, 12 vols, LRS, I (1893). Lady Combe lived near Eastcheap and gave money towards work on London Bridge, *Bridge House Rental Accounts for 1461-2,* eds. V. Harding, L Wright, History on-line, accessed 8 September 2012.

[169] Burgess, *St Andrew Hubbard Eastcheap*, p. 91.

[170] Hobhouse, *Churchwarden's Accounts of Croscombe*, p. 81.

[171]Ibid p. 208.

[172] Burgess, *All Saints' Church, Bristol*, (2004) p. 61. The accounts do not provide a complete record of female gift giving. The substantial goods given by Mistress Filer and Mistress Chester to All Saints' are only seen in the Church Book.

[173] Ibid p. 170.

[174] Lady Spicer was the widow of Thomas Spicer, alias Baker, who held the post of sheriff in Bristol. *The Great Red Book of Bristol*, (Part III), BRS, XVI (1951) p. 154.

society through gifts and legacies. Non-elite women, whether married or single, did not normally own property, so the gifts they could give tended to be small, portable, personal items.[175] Gifts of clothes or linen, which could be turned into garments for images or covers altars, brought the donor closer to the church through a close, physical association between the gift and the artefact.[176] Women were aware gifts did not have to be elaborate; they could acquire redemption with what they could give.

Another route for women to support the church was through the secular services they purchased. Avice Denbold paid 6d to use the church house for brewing in 1486-7.[177] Women rented properties from the church in urban areas. Mistress Brown was recompensed for making her own cellar door and stairs by the wardens of St Mary at Hill, indicating she leased property from the church.[178] Mistress Money, a silk woman, and a (unnamed) school mistress rented properties from All Saints'.[179] In the Ashburton accounts of 1486-7, there is a record of the repayment of an old debt to the church, by Joan Peach, of 2s. 6d.[180] Possibly the most unusual gift was the dock crane commissioned by Alice Chester. This was built on a wharf at Bristol, with the profits to benefit the church.[181] Testators need not reside in the parish to leave money to the church - Agnes Cogan left All Saints' 20s. although she had lived elsewhere.[182] Women ensured that their husbands', occasionally fathers', wills were fulfilled. Alice Chester effected the proving of her husband's will and the giving of the relevant bequests to All Saints': this in addition to the many gifts she gave to the church.[183] Widows

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[175] Youngs, *The Life Cycle of Western Europe*, p. 132.

[176] Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, p. 334.

[177] Hanham, *Ashburton, 1479 – 1580,* p. 8.

[178] Littlehales, *St Mary at Hill*, p. 139.

[179] Burgess, *All Saints' Church, Bristol*, (1995) p. 58.

[180] Hanham, *Ashburton*, p. 8.

[181] Burgess, *All Saints' Church, Bristol*, (1995) p. 16. Alice, or Alison, Chester was the widow of Henry Chester, mercer, of Bristol who held the post of sheriff. *Great Red Book of Bristol*, p. 152-3. She was active in Bristol's overseas trade, regularly exporting goods such as cloth to Ireland, Lisbon, Spain, and Flanders, and importing iron and wine from Spain. She may also have been a ship-owner but, more certainly, was a woman of means. More significant is her conduct as a pious and wealthy widow. Her example illustrates the significance of the material and spiritual contribution made by women, and particularly widows, to pre-Reformation parish religion. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography on-line,* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/54440], accessed 17 Sept 2012.

[182] Ibid p. 18.

[183] Ibid p. 20.

bought graves for their late husbands.[184] Widow Edgerton ensured that her husband's bequest of funds towards the building of the steeple in 1510-1 was paid.[185]

Women were paid to work in the church but the accounts indicate that this was rare. Launderers were always female, church linen had to be washed, but there are only a few records of women being paid for laundry work. Arguably, women provided laundry services as part of their religious practice, a gift of their skills. In 1464-5, in All Saints', Alison Monk was paid 7$\frac{1}{2}$d. to wash two surplices, a rochet, an alb, five altar cloths and two towels. She was paid a further 5d later in the year when she washed two surplices and a rochet.[186] Over the next several years she was retained for the same task and in 1465-6 Janet Coleman was also paid for washing.[187] In the years following 1465-6 the wives of Robert Luter and Robert Reigate were paid to [?] collar surplices and Browning's wife was paid for washing the church gear for two years.[188] Again at All Saints', in 1485-6, an unnamed laundress washed the cloths for 16d.[189] In Eastcheap, the wife of Hamlin was paid for washing and 'setting on' the albs and in 1465-66 Margaret Ride was paid 6d for washing, while Agnes Underwood was paid 16d.[190] At Ashburton in 1491-2 Alice Alford was paid 7d for washing.[191] Women also worked as seamstresses. Isabel Wynn was paid for 'marking' two of the best altar cloths and the best houselling towel of silk (a gift of Mistress Chester) in 1472-3.[192] At Ashburton in 1492-3 Alice Alford was paid 2s. for making a surplice.[193] She was paid a further 23d in 1497-8 to make a second surplice.[194] Unlike laundry work, surplice making was not a female preserve: in 1499-1500 John Soper was paid for mending vestments in Ashburton.[195]

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[184] The records consulted note the cost of a pit/grave at a constant 6s. 8d.

[185] Burgess, *St Andrew Hubbard Eastcheap,* p. 95.

[186] Ibid p. 46.

[187] Ibid p. 49.

[188] Ibid p. 49.

[189] Ibid p. 108.

[190] Ibid pp. 37-8 and p. 11.

[191] Hanham, *Ashburton*, p. 17.

[192] Burgess, *All Saints' Church, Bristol*, (1995) p. 68.

[193] Hanham, *Ashburton*, p. 19.

[194] Ibid p. 25.

[195] Ibid p. 27.

Women undertook other work in the church. They were recorded as scouring candlesticks, bowls and lamp hangings. Ellen Faroke was paid 14d in 1481-82 for this task by All Saints' - the only time a named individual was paid for this employment by the parish.[196] Eastcheap paid 6d to an unnamed woman for scouring bowls in the rood loft in 1466-68.[197] At St Mary at Hill 2d was paid to the unnamed women who drew the ale at an obit in 1477-79.[198] Women could be paid for goods they provided. Janet Howell and Amice Andrews were paid 4d for beer and wine at All Saints' church.[199] At Ashburton, in 1486-87, Isabel Burgan was paid 7d for a piece of timber, receiving a later payment of 14d for further timber, while Joan Mathew received 3s. for a beam.[200] Thus women were paid for work done for the parish in the church, although such work was often for tasks that mimicked their domestic roles – cleaning, washing and mending. While further indications of women's participation in church life are limited, they did engage in the religious life of the church.

While the churchwarden's accounts give an intriguing insight into the medieval church, the depth of detail varies between accounts. Information regarding female participation can be found, however. Women gave offerings, and the type of parish, rural or urban, was a predictor of the gifts given. The church of the affluent urban All Saints' parish was lavished with money and expensive items by wealthy female (often widowed) parishioners, while women in the small rural parish of Yatton, on a lower economic level, gave wheat and cattle. Women could participate in the church economy but the number of female names does not equal those of men in the records. Indeed, the accounts indicate where women were not paid. In a record of payment for watching the sepulchre the only names are male: if women watched they were not paid to participate in the ritual.[201] There is only one gendered mender of vestments at All Saints', a man named William.[202] A man was paid to sweep the dust in Eastcheap and John Paris was paid to clean the church at St Mary at Hill.[203] The chancel was the responsibility of

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[196] Burgess, *All Saints' Church, Bristol,* (1995) p. 105.
[197] Ibid p. 15.
[198] Littlehales, *St Mary at Hill*, p. 90.
[199] Burgess, *All Saints' Church, Bristol*, (1995) p. 46.
[200] Hanham, *Ashburton*, p. 9.
[201] Burgess, *All Saints' Church, Bristol*, (1995) p. 75.
[202] Ibid p. 226.
[203] Littlehales, *St Mary at Hill*, p. 99.

the parson, perhaps there was a bar on women entering that area which led to men undertaking the otherwise female work. Men brewed and sold ale in Ashburton, although brewing was often a female occupation, excluding women from an activity that was normally theirs.[204]

Absence from the records does not imply absence of women. Women participated in the parish. In the parishes where the churchwarden accounts do not indicate payment for work, someone fulfilled the roles paid for in other churches – the visitation records indicate where parochial buildings were found unkempt. These unacknowledged supporters may have been women. Women's actions were circumscribed by their gender, and the constraints put upon their actions by the law. Nonetheless, women appear in the records, supporting the parish and participating in lay religious practice.

In contrast to the churchwarden accounts, which imply a laity closely involved with the parish, visitation records suggest not all parishioners were supportive. Those parts of the church under the care of the parishioners could be found to be defective by the bishop. The questions asked at a visitation were routine, but the need to include queries about the church fabric implies problems with parish property were found in some communities. The apparent triviality of the failures indicates the depth of interest of clergy undertaking the visitation, and so the reliability of the records. The Bradfield visitation of 14 April 1391 noted that the pyx, chrismatory and font were unlocked, the binding on a missal was broken and the principal vestment worn out.[205] The church at Welford and Wickham was found to have damaged windows in the nave and chancel, allowing jackdaws and other birds to enter the building, 'causing a great stench in the church'.[206]   Where the church buildings were deficient the blame could initially be placed on the churchwardens. However, they were supported by the parishioners, who could be considered equally at fault for any defects. These lay supporters must have included women – as demonstrated in the churchwarden accounts - so it can be deduced that not all women upheld the parish. Many of the visitation records,

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[204] McIntosh, *Working Women*, p. 145.

[205] *The Register of John Waltham: bishop of Salisbury 1388-139*5, ed. T. C. B. Timmins, CYS, 80 (1994) p. 113.

[206] *The Register of John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1486-1500, part III*, ed. C. Harper-Bill, CYS, 89 (2000) p. 174.

however, do not indicate problems with the church property, making it a minor problem overall, albeit showing a proportion of the laity who did not support the parish.

The visitation records indicate the religious and moral anxieties of church and laity, which apprehensions are demonstrated in the cases brought before the bishop or archdeacon. These were concerned with problems regarding the upkeep of the church and antipathy towards those who transgressed the moral code. Lay unease regarding the attitudes of certain members of the clergy to their pastoral duties were also raised at visitations. Parsons and churchwardens from the local parishes congregated at a chosen church, carefully selected to be capacious enough to accommodate the court.[207] Other parishioners could attend but, with no record of the attendees, a female presence cannot be seen. The initial act of the visitation was to examine the letters of ordination, installation and induction of the resident clergy. This confirmed they were licensed, and competent to perform their religious duties. In 1499, at the church of Ixworth, William Mawnesbild, rector of Elmswell, was examined on the seven sacraments. Unable to reply, he was suspended from the 'fruits of his church' and ordered to procure a chaplain to serve the cure. Mawnesbild himself was 'to learn what was most necessary to any curate' before he could return to the parish.[208]

A diocesan visitation examined the parishes under the charge of the bishop. He or the archdeacon could compel the churchwardens to amend defects in the church and religious paraphernalia. The laity was given an opportunity to bring complaints against their clergy and churchwardens. Lay anxiety about clerical morality, with particular regard to sexuality, and legality can be seen in the case of Brother Nicholas Elmham, parish chaplain. He was cited for keeping a suspect woman in his house and celebrating the sacraments without a licence.[209] In 1511, at the visitation of St Alphege, the churchwardens of All Saints' were accused of providing no accounts for twenty years.[210] This accusation, brought against the

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[207] A. Jones, *A Thousand Years of the English Parish*, (London, 2000) p. 38.

[208] Harper-Bill, *John Morton*, p. 212.

[209] Ibid p. 175. Brother Nicholas subsequently appeared at Pakefield on 28 May and proved that the woman was his sister and she had left for distant parts.

[210] *Kentish Visitations of Archbishop William Warham and his Deputies, 1511-12,* ed. K. L. Wood-Legh , Kent Archaeological Society, XXIV (1984)p. 74.

churchwardens, was inaugurated by parishioners. The bishop ordered the accounts to be given, supporting the parishioners over the elected officials. The laity was willing to confront their parson and elected officials, confirming their interest in the parish.[211] Complaints about parishioners were also raised at visitations. These accusations could be made by their fellows; they were not necessarily made by parish officials. John Venyour and Henry Brone deposed that John Braine was absent from mass on Sundays. He was instead selling shoes.[212] Women were occasionally accused of absence from mass. Joan Mason was reported for missing mass in 1489, as was her husband, Thomas.[213] In 1492, Isabella Bovington was also accused of absence from mass: her sons were found guilty of the same offence.[214] In this particular record, men appear more often than women. There were fourteen men compared to two women.

It is in complaints regarding sexual morality that women appear most frequently in the records. Lay parishioners were reported to the court for moral and religious infringements, and the records indicate expected sexual conduct through these cases. Perceived moral failings are not seen in all visitations records but, where they appear, such reports were for sexual transgressions. Robert Weror and Isabelle, wife of William Helton, were reported to the bishop for adultery in November 1360.[215] At Beccles, Suffolk, several couples were accused of adultery at the visitation of 10 April 1499. William Dowle lived with Alice [blank] while his wife, Christine, still lived, and Edward Wastell (married) committed adultery with Denise Brown. Only the married men underwent penance – Dowle was to carry a candle worth 1d. on the next Sunday, wearing only a shirt and barefoot, and to be beaten in procession. Wastell underwent a similar penance but on two Sundays. The discrepancy may reflect the different reactions of the two men. Dowle confessed immediately while Wastell attempted to prove his innocence. Neither

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[211] M. Rubin, 'Identities' in *A Social History of England 1200 – 1500*, eds. R. Horrox, W. M. Ormrod (Cambridge, 2006) p. 394.

[212] Harper-Bill, *John Morton*, p. 212.

[213] *The Courts of the Archdeacon of Buckingham 1483*-1523, ed. E. M. Elvey, Buckingham Record Society, 19 (1975) p. 76.

[214] Ibid p. 124.

[215] *The Register of Gilbert Welton, Bishop of Carlisle 1353-1362* , ed. R. L. Storey, CYS, 88 (1995) p. 63; *The Register of John Kirby, Bishop of Carlisle 1332-1352 and the Register of John Roo Bishop of Carlisle 1325-1332* , ed. R. L. Storey, CYS, 81 (1999) p. 135.

woman was punished. Both were unmarried, so had committed fornication rather than adultery, possibly the explanation for the apparent leniency.[216]

In April 1499 at Beccles, Suffolk, John Brown was accused of adultery with Alice Skeet (married) but proved his innocence at the following court.[217] In contrast, Richard Langman (married) and Christina Fry of Marlborough, who came before the Bishop of Salisbury accused of adultery on 13 April 1390, were punished for their crime.[218] Langman was to be beaten through the market and church six times and Christine three times. They were also to abjure the offence on pain of 100s. for Langhman and 40s. for Christine. While both were punished the man received the greater sentence. In the above cases the men had to prove innocence or guilt, not the women. Men appear to have been considered more culpable than women as their punishment was greater.

Women did not need to be accused of a specific misdemeanour as they were susceptible to sexual calumny.[219] Meg Redham and Meg Quilkine were considered 'suspicious' women who had been moved out of various wards. At the St Alphege visitation they were noted as wanton, but no evidence was given.[220] It was reported they had departed for London, were no longer the responsibility of the parish and so could be dismissed. Visitations could protect women. William Wilton was denounced by the Lowestoft wardens for fornication with Margaret Starr, widow. While he had caused banns to be called three times before Lent, he refused to have the marriage solemnised after Easter; this left Margaret in an invidious position.[221] The church attempted to regularise her situation.

Consanguinity was closely monitored, and cases of spiritual incest were brought to visitations.[222] At Bradfield, Berkshire, 19 April 1391, the wardens of Welford and Wickham, Newbury, deposed that William Pitt committed spiritual incest with Alice. His father was her godfather and so they were related in the third

[216]Harper-Bill, *John Morton*, p. 169-170.
[217]Ibid p. 169-170.
[218] Timmins, *John Waltham*, p. 173.
[219] P. J. P. Goldberg, 'Women' in *Fifteenth Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, ed. R. Horrox (Cambridge, 1994).
[220] Wood-Legh, *Kentish Visitations*, pp. 74-5.
[221] Harper-Bill, *John Morton*, p. 176.
[222] Leyser, *Medieval Women*, p. 111.

degree.[223] At a visitation of 23 April 1391, John Slade and Agnes Newer were accused of marrying at Lincoln. Their banns had been challenged at Welford and Wickham church, due to their consanguinity of the third and fourth degree.[224] The Oulton wardens cited John Durant for committing incest with Isabelle, his wife's daughter, in 1499.[225] Women, while deemed culpable in sexual morals, were less so than men. The church differentiated between the sexes.

The records above show a laity involved in the church. Parishioners demonstrated an awareness of the rites required to save their souls by the correct religious rituals, performed by a parson consecrated and licensed. Their complaints of non-conformity and their knowledge of the minutiae of rituals illustrate this. Women were involved in services, particularly churching, and so were aware of discrepancies in the ritual. The churchwarden accounts indicate lay support of the parish. The visitation records indicate a less proactive population, but one willing to bring their neighbours' faults before the bishop. Lay members of a parish were definite in their expectations of their clergy and patrolled the morality of their fellow parishioners: both men and women were cited for failings. Men were accused of missing mass and for sexual misdemeanours, while women were noted mainly for moral lapses. Only three records have been found (as yet) for female religious failings: and one of the records was for an accusation of attending a local friary rather than parish church. This implication that women were less likely to miss attendance at mass on Sunday could suggest a deeper female religious commitment. Alternatively, the church was a public area where women could meet in an acceptable social sphere, so encouraging attendance at mass. The female voice, however, is not heard within the records. The accusations regarding clerical misdemeanours and parishioners' moral failings were brought by male churchwardens.

Religious Fraternities

Personal religious choice will form the final section of this chapter, which for the purpose of this chapter is explored through the decision to join a fraternity, a

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[223] Timmins, *John Waltham*, p. 117-8.
[224] Ibid p. 126.
[225] Harper-Bill, *John Morton*, p. 177.

choice that will be examined through the fraternity (or guilds/gilds) records.[226] .
Fraternity is the term chosen to differentiate the religious groups from secular
merchant/trade guilds. While secular guilds were intimately linked to church ritual
through general support of lay religion, religious fraternities were inaugurated to
support specific aspects of church ritual.[227] The number of fraternities extant in
the latter part of the medieval period indicates their popularity. London hosted
the largest number with approximately 150 religious fraternities. King's Lynn, on
the east coast, supported over seventy groups while Bodmin, in the south west,
had over forty.[228] Fraternities were also common in rural areas, illustrating that
they were an important facet of religious and social life in the medieval period. It
is this ubiquity which ensures that any interaction women may have had within
the fraternities illuminates aspects of female religious practice.

Parishioners enrolled in the fraternities to engage more closely in church practice,
aid their chance of salvation, and actively participate in the religious process.[229]
Personal lay religious preference is seen by the decision to support fraternities.
The choice of a specific fraternity need not indicate a personal religious inclination
towards the devotional aspect of the group, it could be a pragmatic decision
based on social or business requirements: the membership of prestigious
fraternities included the elite.   Other influencing factors on the choice of
fraternity include the size of the fine which could be afforded or if there was only
one fraternity in the parish.[230] Men purchased places in the fraternities for
themselves and their wives while most women paid only for themselves: lone
women with the financial wherewithal to buy fraternity places were mainly
widows. John Keyre paid 13s. 4d. plus 20d. for himself and his wife to join the

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[226] K. Farnhill, *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia c 1470-1550,* (York
Medieval Press, 2001). There is no consensus in the literature to name guilds, gilds or fraternities.
Virginia Bainbridge, despite an extensive discussion quoting researchers from Joshua Toulmin Smith
onwards, has no definitive answer and other secondary sources consulted lack consistency with
regard to names. Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, p. 62.
[227] *The Guilds of St George and St Mary in the Church of St Peter, Nottingham,* ed. R. F. B.
Hodgkinson, Thoroton Record Society, 7 (1939) p. 7.
[228] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* p. 142.
[229] D. MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490 – 1700,* (London, 2003),
p. 16.
[230] The lack/loss of records means that it is not possible to make definitive statement about the
available choice of fraternity in the Middle Ages. There were more fraternities extant than have
records available.

Holy Cross Fraternity in Stratford-upon-Avon.[231] Men's purchase of these blessings for their wives indicates an uxorious regard for their wives' souls. Alice Archer paid 6s. 8d. to the Holy Cross fraternity.[232] Later, Agnes Mayn bought her own place in the Holy Cross fraternity despite being married.[233] Instances where women entered the souls of their husbands or relations were rare but not unknown. Alice Jankyns paid 11s. for herself and the souls of her late husband and her siblings.[234] It is possible that women purchased a fraternity place for a living husband. The earlier records of Holy Cross, Stratford-upon-Avon suggest that sometimes women did this. In 1426-27, Agnes Grell (wife of Richard Grell) paid 6s. 8d. plus 10d.[235] The additional 10d. reflects the 20d that John Keyre paid for his wife. If this is so, women were willing to support their husbands' spiritual health prior to the husband's death. Women made a choice to join a fraternity, indicating a desire to participate in aspects of religious practice.

The main function of most fraternities was the maintenance of a specific religious practice in the church, such as providing and/or tending the lights that burnt before religious imagery and/or altars.[236] The Saints' supported by the fraternity were expected to act as patrons in heaven for members of the group, reflecting earthly society.[237] Fraternities gave a limited lay control over the clergy through the employment of fraternity priests. Further support was given to the parish priest by the fraternity clergy. Social aspects of the fraternity, for example annual festivals, should not be underestimated.[238] Social activities followed the religious celebrations; these were integral to the fraternity as they bound the participants together more closely through a shared purpose, e.g. eating together.[239] Fraternities indicate the religious needs recognised by the laity, through the particular saint venerated or ritual supported.

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[231] *The Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross, St Mary and St John the Baptist, Stratford-upon-Avon*, ed. M. MacDonald, DS, 42 (2007), p. 249.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid p. 66.
[234] Ibid p. 129.
[235] Ibid p. 101.
[236] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 148.
[237] Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, p. 62.
[238] Ibid p. 19-20.
[239] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 143.

Fraternities gave all levels of society access to the religious benefits accrued through good works. It is arguable that it was of more benefit to the poorer sections, which did not have the disposable income to individually purchase candles and other items for the church. Becoming a member of a fraternity allowed these less affluent parishioners to share in the adornment of the church, and accrue future spiritual benefits. While the price of a torch may have been beyond the reach of a single individual, a group could afford the cost of a perpetual light. Joint effort allowed the poor to participate in 'good works' with the concomitant final rewards after death, particularly as the blessing did not depend solely on value but on intention. The fraternities often provided access to burial rites and mourners. These functions - religious practice, social interaction and good works - confirm the important role played by fraternities within this religious society.

For widows, the money necessary to join a fraternity was found through their late husband's wills and their dowers. For other women, the financial outlay needed to join a fraternity was made possible by their economic activity in the public sphere. Their participation in the wider economy allowed them surplus income to pay fraternity fees. In rural areas they worked on the land, undertaking all agriculture work other than ploughing, and were paid for their labour.[240] While tending to be less well trained and remunerated than men, their skills allowed them to be economically productive.[241] Increases in cloth production aided female participation in the workplace. Prior to c 1300, wool was mainly exported in its raw state but during the fourteenth century it was increasingly sold abroad as cloth. This required female spinners and male weavers.[242] Cosman has posited that cloth production used five spinners to supply one weaver. There was, therefore, an increase in work for spinsters, with a concomitant increase in the overall female wage.[243] Spinning was a mainly rural occupation, but townswomen, both mistresses and servants, could also spin. The majority of single women in the towns became servants: other female occupations included brewing,

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[240] H. Graham, ' ''A Women's work ...'' :Labour and Gender in the Late Medieval Countryside' in *Women in Medieval English Society,* ed. P. J. P. Goldberg (Stroud, 1997) pp. 126-7.
[241] Graham, pp. 126-7.
[242] McIntosh, *Working Women in English Society*, p. 210.
[243] M. P. Cosman, *Women at Work in Medieval England*, (New York, 2000) p. 78.

embroidery and fine needlework.[244] The All Saints' church, Bristol, churchwarden's accounts record one women working as a silk merchant.[245] Through these and other activities, women in urban areas also participated in the economy and earned the money which allowed them to join fraternities in their own right.

The fine to join a fraternity varied. The register of the Fraternity of the Holy Trinity and Saints Fabian and Sebastian (church of St Botolph without Aldersgate) noted fines of 12d. throughout the fourteenth century, rising to 3s. 4d by the turn of the fifteenth century. Initially, the Guild of Holy Cross in Stratford-upon-Avon averaged 20s. for individuals and 40s. for couples, but c 1420 the cost had dropped to 13s. 4d. It further reduced by the end of the century to 6s. 8d. for a married couple and 3s. 4d. for a single person. The cost of a fine was generally irrespective of gender, although some fraternities showed a reduction for women. The disparity in the costings cannot be explained with any certainty, but could be an acknowledgement of women's lesser financial means.[246]

Examination of the record of St Botolph's without Aldersgate, in London, indicate ways in which women could participate in fraternities.[247] Initially there were three fraternities, St Katherine, Trinity and Saints Fabian and Sebastian. During the fourteenth century the earlier Holy Trinity had been a very popular fraternity. A decline in numbers led to its amalgamation with Saints Fabian and Sebastian.[248] In 1446 dame Joan Asterley (who had earlier been wet nurse to Henry VI), Robert Cawood and Thomas Smith applied to re-form the Trinity fraternity.[249] Subsequent letters patent permitted them to found a fraternity or perpetual guild. This comprised a master, two wardens, and brothers and sisters from within and without the parish in honour of the Blessed Trinity and the Blessed Virgin Mary. The fraternity was incorporated to provide a perpetual chantry of

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[244] McIntosh, *Working Women in English Society,* pp. 210-238. It cannot be deduced that the use of the term industry indicates large scale work.

[245] Burgess, *All Saints' Church, Bristol*, (1995) p. 58.

[246] McIntosh, *Working Women in English Society*, p. 7.

[247] *Parish Fraternity Register: Fraternity of the Holy Trinity and SS Fabian & Sebastian in the Parish of St Botolph without Aldersgat*e, ed. P. Basing, LRS, 18 (1982). This church should not be confused with St Botolph, Aldgate.

[248] S. L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London*, (Michigan, 1962) p. 36.

[249] St Katherine fraternity disappeared from the records by 1446 and by the same year SS Fabian and Sebastian appear to have been subsumed into the Trinity fraternity.

one chaplain, with an altar on the south side the church.[250] Women were able to join the early Trinity fraternity: the available records, while incomplete, indicate female participation through the names found in the lists of new entrants. Earlier records describe the rules of the original fraternity, one of which specifically stated '[the] names of the brothers and the sisters [...] that come new into the foresaid fraternity' indicating a membership which included women.[251] While the records of the ordinances of the reformed fraternity are unavailable, it is probable that they were similar to those of the earlier fraternity, as women joined both groups.[252]

Members were expected to 'pay a penny to find 13 tapers'. With no indication that women were exempt, it can be deduced that they were expected to participate in the provision of financial support to the fraternity.[253] Women provided further support. Johanna Curtis, widow, gave one altar cloth.[254] While women provided monetary support, they were unable to fill official posts in the fraternity, such as the master, and did not appear in various witness lists. Far fewer women than men joined the fraternity, as demonstrated in the proportion of male to female names in the list of members.

Ordinances for Holy Cross, St Mary and St John the Baptist at Stratford-upon-Avon, dated 15 July 1443, are of interest for the detail they display regarding fraternity expectations.[255] Women could join the fraternity 'Also it is advised and ordained that every brother and sister that shall be received in this fraternity be sworn in', although they were unable to become fraternity officials 'Also it is ordained that no brother be chosen alderman but if he ...'.[256] This is a specifically gendered clause excluding women. A similar proscription is noted in the ordinances of the Fraternity of St Katherine in Norwich (church of Saints Symond

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[250] Basing, *Fraternity*, p. 54.
[251] Ibid p. 3.
[252] Ibid p. xv.
[253] Ibid p. 4.
[254] Ibid p. 76.
[255] *The Register of the Guild of the Holy Cross, St Mary and St John the Baptist, Stratford-upon-Avon*, ed. M. MacDonald , DS, 42 (2007). The document was copied from earlier records as there are indications of previous accounts from 1407-8.
[256] MacDonald , *Guild of the Holy Cross*, p. 37.

and Jude) - 'that what *brother* (my italics) of this guild be chosen to office'.[257] At Stratford, in another gendered statute, maidens who joined the guild were expected to pay part of the 'joining fee' on entrance, the remainder being paid on marriage (while not specifying the payee). There was no similar dispensation for unmarried men. A possible explanation could be the knowledge that unmarried women had smaller disposable incomes than men. Being recognised in the ordinances, such limited means did not disbar women from the benefits of fraternity participation.

The Stratford record had proportionally fewer women registered than other fraternities examined. No overt reason is apparent, this may have been due either to fewer women desiring to join or women actively being discouraged from participating. The fine to join the fraternity was relatively high at the beginning of the fifteenth century, a further disincentive to participation, but was gradually reduced as the century progressed. This decrease did not lead to an increase in female participation. An early entry from 1409-10 shows a reversal of identification. Julianne Huggins paid the fine for herself, John her son and Isabel his wife. Julianne's marital status is not noted, but she was probably a widow. She was able to validate her son. Other women's marital status was noted – wife, daughter, maiden or widow, identifying women through their male relatives. The marital status of men is never recorded.

The records for the fraternity of St George and St Mary in the church of St Peter's, Nottingham, date from 1459. While no list of members or ordinances is available, the interest lies in the information regarding female participation, through the record of gifts given to the fraternity.[258] In 1463 Dame Margaret Cokefield gave 13s. 6d as part of a legacy.[259] Alice Plate left 20d in 1464.[260] Margaret Alcester paid 6s. 8d as part of the legacy from her late husband's will.[261] Again in 1471, Thomas Yole gave 6d for candles used at the funeral of his daughter Elizabeth,

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[257] *English Gilds - The Original Ordinances of more than one hundred Early English Gilds,* ed. L. Toulmin Smith, EETS, Original Series, 40 (1870).
[258] There were details of the fraternity chaplain's salary (£6. 7s.) and other costs. Some of these costs were paid to the armourer who burnished and repaired St George's armour.
[259] Hodgkinson , *The Guilds of St George and St Mary*, p. 20.
[260] Ibid p. 22.
[261] Ibid p. 29.

suggesting the fraternity had joined in the funeral.[262] She was possibly a member of the group, and so entitled to an official burial, or the fraternity participated in familial burials if the father was a member.

The Guild of the Holy Trinity [of] St Mary, St John the Baptist and St Catherine of Coventry records the presence of women. While few dates were noted in the records, internal evidence suggests that they run from the c 1340s to c 1450s.[263] The names in the register are listed in alphabetical rather than chronological order, with no record of the fines charged. Again women could join the fraternity – 'These are the names of the brothers and sisters of the guild [...] living and dead'.[264] Women could join in their own right, such as Alicia Box and Alicia Rysbourgh, but, as before, male names outnumber female. Unusually there were references to women being paid for services. In 1457 Alice Mason was paid 7s. 4d. for 8 capons, Julianne Wade received payment for curds and milk, and the wife of Robert Barnsley was paid 2s. 3d. for $1_{1/2}$ cesters of ale.[265] The fraternity was willing to help female members in distress. An undated request from 'your poor sister Joanne that was wife to William Irish' asking for poor relief due to her 'great age, need & poverty' was granted.[266] Such monetary support was a further reason to join a fraternity, financial aid in times of poverty.

In Cambridge, the ordinances of the guild of St Clement indicated limited female participation in running the fraternity.[267] While the introductory paragraphs (in Latin) refer only to men (brothers), the initial statute specifically mentioned women – 'At which day all the brothers and the sisters of this gild shall come together unto a certain place'. [268] The second statute stated both men and women should attend twice a year to *discuss the fraternity affairs* (my italics) and

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[262] Ibid p. 29.

[263] *The Records of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, St Mary, St John the Baptist and St Catherine of Coventry*, ed. M .Dormer Harris, DS, I (1935). The fraternity was prestigious. The supplementary list contains the names of Henry IV and VII, John, duke of Bedford and Henry, prince of Wales, Isabella, countess of Warwick and Katherine, duchess of Lancaster.

[264] Dormer Harris, *Guild of the Holy Trinity*, p. 1.

[265] *The Records of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, St Mary, St John the Baptist and St Catherine of Coventry*, ed. G. Templeman, DS, II (1944) p. 138.

[266] Ibid p. 45.

[267] Toulmin Smith, *English Gilds,* p. 274. The records were derived from three separate copies - A, B and C.

[268] Ibid p. 274.

to pay their own costs of 2d.[269] This second statute is suggestive of female participation in the fraternity, through the expected attendance at meetings where fraternity business was discussed. The fine for non-attendance is further evidence all members (male and female) were expected to attend, as both sexes paid the same amount. Only male members of the fraternity, however, could become officials: the somewhat complex voting arrangement specifically noted that 'two men' would be chosen for each post.[270]

Later statutes reinforce the inference of female participation. Both sexes swore an oath 'to maintain and sustain [the fraternity] unto his power and cunning': women were considered as trustworthy as men within the context of the fraternity.[271] The sixth statute dealt with the number of masses provided when a member of the fraternity died and the eighth with obedience to the alderman. Later versions of these two statutes had 'and sisters' added, perhaps an indication of increased female participation. Women were allowed to participate in the feasts. Statute ten stated that any 'man, brother or sister' who 'enters the chamber' where the ale was waiting to be poured, prior to permission being given by the fraternity officers, could be fined candle wax to the value of one pound.[272] There is no explanation of the division of male members into men and brothers, but it is suggestive of hierarchical partitions within the fraternity.

Women were privy to some fraternity secrets. The eleventh statute ordained that any brothers or sisters who betrayed the 'counsel' of the fraternity to an outsider had either to pay a fine or leave the 'fraternity for evermore'.[273] It is probable that the ruling elite of the fraternity (men) had secrets over and above those known by the brothers and sisters. Women were involved in the fraternity through the day to day decisions. While they could not access the levers of power by becoming officials, female sway was restricted to the general meetings, many of the male members would have had similar level of influence. A further difference in male and female participation is demonstrated in a later statute, in a

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[269] Ibid p. 274.
[270] Ibid p. 276 .
[271] Ibid p. 276.
[272] Ibid p. 279.
[273] Ibid p. 280.

different hand, noting men were to have five priests at their death while women were to be allocated two.

Again in Cambridge, the Corpus Christi fraternity was inaugurated when the St Mary gild merged with the younger Corpus Christi guild in the 1350s, possibly due to a decrease in fraternity members during the plague epidemic of 1348-9.[274] Women could become members of the fraternity, typified by the entry for Matilda, wife of John Impiton, who gave 5s. 6d for candles.[275] Women in this fraternity also gave alms – Isabella Fouke, wife of Peter Brampton, gave half a mark in addition to a candle, and Margaret Atcorner gave alms of 6d for the candle fund.[276] Records from the pre-1350s fraternities indicate that women had earlier given substantial gifts. In 1285, Alice, sister of the late Ernest Merchant, granted '... all her great grange [...] on the west side of the great messuage in Goldsmith Row' to the fraternity and in 1349 Matilda Outlaw granted a messuage in St Edmund's parish: later gifts were smaller.[277] Here again, however, women, while supporting the financial aspects of the guild, did not participate in the official workings of the fraternity.

The final records examined in this section are taken from the churchwarden accounts of the church of St Mary in Croscombe, Somerset. Cloth production and lead mining indicate Croscombe as a relatively prosperous village. The parishioners supported six groups who raised money for the church. The Croscombe groups, while functioning as fraternities, were not incorporated or possessed of statutes and seals. In small rural parishes, the groups may have been informal gatherings rather than official fraternities. However, the St James Gild in the small village of Dullingham, Cambridgeshire, had statutes, showing that it was possible for rural groups to be incorporated, if the cost could be afforded.

In Croscombe, one group behaved as a fraternity, through its support of an aspect of religious practice.[278] This was the Maidens.[279] Croscombe was not alone in

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[274] *Cambridge Gild Records,* ed. M .Bateson, Cambridge Antiquarian Society, 39 (1903).
[275] Ibid p. 27.
[276] Ibid p. 35.
[277] Ibid p 130.
[278] Hobhouse, *Churchwarden's Accounts of Croscombe.*

hosting a Maidens group. Katherine French notes other such groups across England. The term 'Maidens' was an accurate description of the gender of the group, as confirmed by the names noted in the records. Girls probably joined the Maidens from the age of twelve, when they began to take communion. The only indication the women were single is the term Maiden, an unmarried women. They were probably spinsters (in both senses of the word), who were paid for their work, giving them the earnings to support their fraternity. One other reference to women in the Croscombe records is noted in 1482-3, The Wives. The Maidens groups indicate a female laity involved with the church. Young women were willing to give their time to fundraising, and to support aspects of religious practice. They are revealed where otherwise invisible because they feature in formal records, the accounts, which could not happen in the majority of parishes where they had no independent income.

The Maidens originally maintained a light at the high altar, and later before St Sidwell.[280] Records suggest each year the church allowed the fraternities a sum of money to be used for immediate charges; at the end of the churchwarden's year the money was expected to be returned with any increase gained through collections. This supported church funds. The Maidens were a successful group, as demonstrated by their returns. In 1476-7 Margaret Smyth and Jane Boyle gave 9s 7d., whereas the Young Men (another group) gave goods and 2s. 1d.[281] In 1477-8 Annis Beak gave 3s. for the Maidens and in the following year they gave 3s.[282] The Wives raised 6s. by '*dansyng*' in 1482-3.[283] The Maidens were one of the most productive groups in the church. They were trusted, on occasion, to hold their own 'float', as the record notes money given to named Maidens. In other years the float was given to a churchwarden to hold. There is no discernible reason for this action: it is possible the warden's personal knowledge of the woman dictated the response. From the early 1480s the Maidens consistently gave the highest amount of money per year to the church. The Robin Hood group

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[279] Ibid p. 1. The other guilds were The Young Men, The Webbers (weavers), The Tuckers (fullers), The Archers (who probably personated Robin Hood and Little John) and The Hogglers (possibly field labourers and/or miners).
[280] E. Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village*, (London, 2001) p. 26; Hobhouse, *Churchwarden's Accounts of Croscombe*, p. 208.
[281] Ibid p. 4.
[282] Ibid p. 6.
[283] Ibid p. 11.

gave more, but not the regular contributions the Maidens provided.[284] The

successful fundraising of the Maidens suggests that they had sufficient financial

acumen to raise money to donate to the church. Individual Maidens disappear

from the group records on their marriage but the group continued. These female

groups were rare but they did exist.[285] The Maidens raised money from others to

give to the church rather than giving of gifts.

<u>Findings</u>

The decision to explore a wide range of sources has illuminated a consistency in

the attitudes and expectations of the laity in the chronicles over time. The

centrality of the church and its buildings to the parishioners is confirmed through

the proofs of age. Parishioners used the building as an ad hoc market place and

leisure area in addition to the religious practices undertaken. Lay participation in

church ritual is reflected in the baptismal rite and churching of women. The role of

churchwarden allowed (usually male) parishioners to share responsibility with the

village priest for the church and contents. This is also seen in the ways in which

the laity supported the Church financially and practically. A close lay involvement

in the Church is also demonstrated through the visitation records, which indicate

constancy in lay demands of clerical morality and probity. Visitation records give a

view of those parishioners who did not participate in the church and its rituals,

and the disapprobation with which they were viewed. Sexual mores are visible

through reports to the visitation courts, and the subsequent punishments given

for infringements of the moral code. The choice of fraternity can indicate lay

religious needs through the decision to join a fraternity.

Women are seen in the records participating in the crucial rituals of baptism and

churching. These were universal, ubiquitous, and frequent, focusing on all

mothers and involving all other women many times over. The roles of the

midwife, godmother and mother were important enough to be used as

mnemonics in the proofs of age. Men were aware of the presence of women in

the church and recorded this. The churchwarden accounts reveal female giving

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[284] In 1499-1500 they are not mentioned, in 1502-03 they only raised 18d.

[285] French, *The Good Women of the Parish*, p. 230.

both before and after death. Women were noted giving time, skills, gifts and (in small amounts) money to the parish and church. These women were ordinary parishioners; they did not have a large disposable income: wealthy widows gave larger gifts. Whatever their financial status, women were prepared to support the church. Women, especially widows, purchased seats, an important investment. Pew ownership demonstrated a commitment to churchgoing and increased the likelihood of a burial within the church. Women were also seen in the visitation records. While these are a negative view of women in the church, they indicate the behaviour expected of them. The records also reveal that most women abided by the rules, as seen in the small number of female names undergoing fines and punishment. Women do appear as defaulters on Sundays, but the numbers are considerably fewer than those of men. Women were probably more assiduous in church attendance. Women joined the fraternities with their husbands, another voluntary investment and commitment, and moreover not infrequently under their own names, especially as widows. They may have registered their husbands prior to the husband's death. Fraternities provided social support before death and spiritual support after death. The informal Maidens groups were female-only fraternities (sororities) that raised money for the parish. Again these were voluntary associations that indicate religious commitment and a willingness to give their money to the church. Although fragmentary, offering insights rather than comprehensive coverage, all these formal and unpromising records reveal a female laity which supported the Church, and understood the reasons for that support.

CHAPTER THREE: SAINTS AND WILLS

Chapter Two explored female participation in religious practice through official documents: churchwarden accounts, proofs of age and visitation registers. These archives, written in Latin, concealed the voices of those who did not control the records. This indicated the desirability of an investigation into documents over which women exercised more direction, their final will and testament. This chapter looks at these more personal female records. It commences with women's interaction with the saints since many of the wills reference saints and images.

<u>Saints</u>

Both men and women petitioned saints in the expectation of aid. This dependence is visible in many of the records consulted. In the medieval world folk remedies for illness were supported by veneration of the saints – religion and magic were intermingled. Sanctified objects were used as cures.[286] It is arguable that the less literate saw little difference between white magic and prayer. For the Church, it was preferable that the laity turned to religion for help.[287] The number of references to saints in medieval wills, bequests, obits and chantries indicate the success of the Church in this objective. In return, the laity expected the saints to provide protection and patronage. Saints were able to petition God on behalf of the laity. For this thesis, the term 'saint' is applied to all objects of veneration, including those religious aspects cited in lay wills, such as the Rood.

Specific responsibilities were attributed to individual saints; these were favours that could be requested. The laity was cognizant of which saint provided protection for specific ills, and chose that individual with the appropriate attributes. St Margaret of Antioch, a popular saint, was called on by women in

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[286] T. Johnston, 'The Reformation and Popular Culture' in *The Reformation World*, ed. A. Pettegree (London, 2000) p. 548. Articles such as consecrated water and palms were popularly considered to act as talismans; protection against the ills of life.

[287] A. Vauchez, 'The Saint' in *The Medieval World*, ed. J. le Goff, trans. L. G. Cochrane (London, 1997) p. 324.

childbirth.[288] Records reveal a laity that made donations to specific saints.[289] Fraternities were inaugurated to support the various aspects of the saints. The cult of saints was an integral part of medieval life.

Within the Church, both physically and metaphorically, the altar was central to religious practice. Every church and chapel had at least one – the high altar in the chancel. This altar contained the relics of the saint, when available. The saint was physically present in the church, protecting the sanctuary.[290] This altar was in daily use for the mass and the hours. Hidden behind the chancel arch and Rood screen, it was the province of the clergy. The laity, in the nave, only heard the Latin mass. As parishes grew in population and wealth, additional altars were added to the fabric of the church. These were positioned in the nave and side aisles and so accessible to the laity. Additional masses were performed at these altars, in the view of the laity. Their use as the focus for obits, chantries and anniversaries increased their popularity. The subsidiary altars were dedicated to various saints and relics and could be supported by named fraternities or a single person as part of a perpetual chantry.[291] The position and dedication of these altars were the choice of the laity, allowing them to watch the central tenet of Christianity performed within their view. It brought them closer to God. Altars were frequently named in lay wills, through a request for prayers and masses to be spoken before them.

Images were both sculptural and pictorial.[292] Known as *libri laicorum*, these images became surrogate books for a mainly illiterate laity.[293] Sculpture and pictorial images could be single figures, such as those inhabiting stained glass

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[288]*A Legend of Holy Women: a translation of Osborn Bokenham's Legends of Holy Women*, ed. S. Delaney , EETS (London, 1992) pp. 7-18.

[289] St Erasmus (or Elmo) was the patron saint of sailors and children with colic. St Thomas the Apostle was the patron of builders and the blind. D. H. Farmer, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints,* (Oxford).

[290] J. Sumption, *Pilgrimage: an Image of Medieval Religion,* (London, 1975) p.51. Offerings made to the high altar in wills were usually gifts made directly to the saint.

[291] See Chapter 5.

[292] le Goff, *The Medieval World*, p. 32.

[293] S. Gayk, *Image, Text and Religious Reform in Fifteenth Century England,* (Cambridge, 2010) p. 1.

windows, panels in rood screens or niches. Both the clergy and the laity left money in wills to provide these artefacts. Henry Key, rector of Wallington, Herts, left 5 marks to make 'a glass window with images' in the church.[294] The painted artefacts were used to reinforce the spoken word of the clergy. Despite the fears of some of the clergy, the use of images as didactic religious representations cannot be overestimated; they were seen as heightening religious fervour. The colours used in the images informed the knowledgeable. These hues were read by the laity, and added layers of meaning to the basic image. The statues were also painted, guiding lay responses.[295] To the Church, image and devotional text were the same, neither being superior to the other.[296]

Providing a light or money for the upkeep of an image in a will allowed a parishioner to show his/her devotion to the saint, showing their religious preference.[297]   Lights illuminated the saint, both physically and metaphorically. It was a gift to the saint to obtain patronage and support in purgatory. Thomas Mayhoo left 4d. to provide a light before each of the images in the church of St Andrew, Chew, in his will of 1495.[298] Richard Rawson requested that the tapers used for his months mind be placed before the images of the Virgin, St Mary Magdalene and St Katherine, in the church of All Hallows, Honey Lane, London.[299] Women left gifts to the images. In 1484, Johanne Mudeford, a widow of Glastonbury, left a gold ring and a veil to the image of the Blessed Virgin in the church of St John the Baptist. She also left a second gold ring to the image of St Katherine in the same church.[300]Wills show a laity who accepted the importance of the images. The laity also gave gifts during their lifetime, to obtain the

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[294]*The Logge Register of PCC Wills, 1479 – 1486,* eds. L. Boatwright, M. Habberjam, P. Hammond, 2 vols, Richard III Society, I (2008) p. 325.

[295]K.J. Lewis, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria in Late Medieval England,* (Woodbridge, 2000) p. 38.

[296] E. Duffy, 'Religious Belief' in *A Social History of England 1200 – 1500*, eds. R. Horrox, W. M. Ormrod (Cambridge, 2006) p. 338.

[297] Ibid.

[298]*Somerset Medieval Wills, 1383 – 1500*, ed. F. W. Weaver, SRS, XVI (1901) p. 325.

[299]Boatwright, *The Logge Register*, II p. 46.

[300] Ibid p. 328.

protection of the saints. Margaret Paston, in a letter to her husband, John, informed him that her mother was to give a wax candle to the shrine of Walsingham, to solicit help to improve John's ill health. The candle was to be the same weight as John himself.[301]

Pilgrimage was sanctified by the Church through its origins in the Bible. It was popularly understood to help the believer on his/her road to salvation.[302] Pilgrimage was a continuation of lay petitions to the saints. In a world without effective medical support, their aid was requested. A pilgrimage could be undertaken to the next village or to Jerusalem. While a saint with a specific attribute was the most desirable, any saint could be asked for help. For most Christians, travelling to the shrine of a particular saint was unachievable, but visiting a local shrine was possible. The geographical destination was not as important as the intention. Pilgrimages combined pious intent with a reflection of their trust in God to protect them: travel was perilous. Agnes Paston described these dangers in a letter.[303] Mnemonics in the proofs of age use pilgrimages as a remembrance. Walter Knotte, John Bokenhull, Thomas Hode and Thomas Credy all used a pilgrimage to St Margaret's shrine in Wellington as the mnemonic for the birth of Thomas Dounton (born 1402).[304]

Pilgrimages were undertaken as to obtain indulgences, to ask favours of the saint, to perform a penance or to fulfil vows. A bishop's register noted that forty days indulgence was to be given to anyone who went on pilgrimage to the church of Milton Abbas. [305] John Newton, rector of Aylesbech, was given permission to leave

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[301]*The Paston Letters*, ed. J. Gairdner, 6 vols (London, 1904), II p. 55.

[302] D. J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages,* (Woodbridge, 1998) p. 2.

[303] Gairdner, *Paston Letters*, II, p. 135. Agnes Paston described how two pilgrims (one male, one female) were taken prisoner by bandits as they were by the sea. The women was robbed and released. The man was going to be drowned until the captors realised his status as pilgrim. They released him and gave him money. A pilgrim was seen as a protected being, one who was to be helped on his/her way.

[304]CIPM*, XIII p. 323.

[305]*The Register of John Williams, Bishop of Salisbury, 1388 – 1395*, ed. T. C. B. Timmins, CYS, 80 (1994) p. 25.

his parish to go on pilgrimage to Canterbury.[306]   Gender was no bar to going on pilgrimage. Margaret Paston described how she intended to go on pilgrimage to pray for her husband's return to health.[307]   Margery Kempe described several pilgrimages that she undertook, travelling to Walsingham, Rome and Jerusalem among other shrines.[308] John Mull was sent on pilgrimage to Canterbury as a penance.[309] Women were also expected to go on penitential pilgrimages. Margaret of Salisbury was the mistress of Thomas, bailiff of Netherhampton. Both were sent on pilgrimage to the abbey of Kingston St Michael, where they were each to offer 20s.[310]   While records show more men than women on pilgrimage, women were aware of the importance of the journey. They went on pilgrimages as part of their religious practice.

Wills

The wills considered for this work were selected from those in print (*Table 3.1*). Examination of a wide chronological and geographical collection of documents ensured the full range of contexts and experiences to be included. The selection was made to include wills proved in the various ecclesiastical courts, allowing a broad view of post mortem religious giving in the late Middle Ages. The wills consulted range from the late fourteenth to early sixteenth centuries and cover both rural and urban parishes. The registers were selected to cover a wide social range, from the wills proved in the prerogative court of Canterbury (provincial) to diocesan to archdeacon's courts in rural Suffolk. This gave access to wills from many sections of society. While it is not known how many of the laity made wills, it is certain that only a tiny proportion survive. Many were proved in courts without surviving records. The majority of those still available are found in the

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[306] Ibid. p. 53.

[307] Gairdner, *Paston Letters*, II, p. 55. From a letter to John Paston, written in 1443. Margaret Paston was to travel from Oxneed, Norfolk, to Walsingham, Norfolk, and St Leonard's priory, Norwich.

[308] *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. B. Windeatt (Woodbridge, 2004). Although there has been some dispute about the provenance of Margery Kempe, the book does display a female piety in line with known women. For the purpose of this work, it has been accepted as a source, p. 393, p. 181, p. 160.

[309] Timmins, *John Williams,* p. 128.

[310] Ibid p. 145.

diocesan records. Very few wills prior to the mid fourteenth century survive. However, probate registers dating from c1380 onwards vastly increased the number of wills available, although still predominantly only those of the wealthy. A smaller number of wills have been discovered in civic records: e.g. some Exeter wills.

Originally wills were oral records, spoken in front of witnesses who could testify to the wishes of the testators.[311] This was necessary if the testator wanted to ensure legal support for his/her post mortem wishes. The process continued throughout the later Middle Ages as nuncupative wills, although written wills increasingly became the norm.[312] The testator spoke his/her wishes, which were later written down. The documents were accepted as legal when there were two witnesses to the oral will. The third person tone of the will of Adam de Collecott from 1269 is suggestive of a nuncupative will, 'First he bequeaths his soul to almighty God and his body to holy burial'.[313] By the late medieval period, the majority of wills were written documents, dictated directly by the testator. Wills were divided into three portions - testament, will proper and probate sentence.[314]The church courts only dealt with the bequests pertaining to the testators' souls and goods and chattels. The disposal of land was left to the secular courts.[315]

Table 3.1

T*able of geographical area, church court and chronological span*

Record	Area	Text	Court	Dates
Death and Memory in Medieval Exeter	Devon	Modern language translation	Mayor of Exeter court rolls	1244 - 1349
Fifty Earliest English Wills	Various (mainly London)	Middle English	Various	1387 – 1454
Medieval Somerset Wills	Somerset	Modern language	Prerogative court of	1383 – 1500

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[311] M. M. Sheehan, *The Will in Medieval England: from the conversion of the Anglo Saxons to the end of the Thirteenth Century*, (Toronto, 1963) p. 186-87.

[312] R. Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480 – 1750,* (Oxford, 1998) p.88.

[313] D. Lepine, N Orme eds. *Death and Memory in Medieval Exeter*, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, New Series, 47 (2003) p.145.

[314]*Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury, 1439 – 1474: Wills from the Register 'Baldwyne', Part II:1461 – 1474*, eds. P. Northeast, H. Fahey, Suffolk Record Society, LIII, (2010), p. xlix.

[315] Ibid.

		translation	Canterbury	
Bedfordshire Wills 58	Southern England and London	Modern language translation	Prerogative court of Canterbury	1383 - 1548
Archdeaconry of Sudbury	Suffolk	Critical edition	Archdeaconry court of Sudbury	1439 – 1474
Northamptonshire wills	Northampton	Critical edition	Archdeaconry court of Northampton	1474 - 1503
Logge Register	Southern England	Critical edition	Prerogative court of Canterbury	1479 – 1486
Bedfordshire Wills 76	Bedfordshire	Critical edition	Archdeaconry court of Bedford	1484 – 1533
Pre-Reformation Records of All Saints' Church, Bristol (2004)	Somerset	Modern language translation	Canterbury Court of Arches and Bristol municipal records	1261 – 1565

Wills, whatever the gender of the testator, followed the same basic format and objectives. While female wills make up a small proportion of the surviving medieval testaments, they contain information of interest to this study. The period between the date of composition of the wills and the date of probate indicates that many female wills were drawn up very close to the death of the testatrix. Most instances have two or three months between the date of the will and that of probate, others have only weeks. It is extremely likely that the destination of the soul in the afterlife was of pressing interest to the testatrix. Purgatory, the immediate destination for most Christians, was no longer a theoretical proposition for the future but a present danger.[316] This encouraged those donations of gifts and money to the church needed to minimise the time spent in purgatory. Most of the wills examined contain references to religious giving. The minimum amount mentioned was a request to the executors to pay 'all tithes forgotten'. Other wills detail exactly how the testatrix intended the church to benefit from the estate. An alternative argument is that, in this religious society, giving to the church was such an integral part of life that it automatically became part of death. In practice, the reasons behind the gifts were probably a mixture of both.

The records of All Saints' Church, Bristol indicate that a few parishioners gave to the church throughout their life and into death. Its parish records include both

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[316] The belief in purgatory had evolved to become a substantial aspect of religious belief. Unless a believer had led an exceptionally good or bad life (in Christian terms), all Christians suffered in purgatory, being purged of their sins. The prayers of the living could lessen the time spent in Purgatory. B. Gordon, P. Marshall, 'Introduction' in *The Place of the Dead; Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. B. Gordon, P. Marshall (Cambridge, 2000) p. 3; S. Tarlow, *Ritual, Belief and the Dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland*, (Cambridge, 2011) pp. 21 - 22.

wills and churchwarden accounts, allowing names to be linked across types of records.[317] While only one archive cannot prove this continuity of giving, it does provide an indication of medieval religious giving. Thomas Parnaunt was recorded as giving, during his life, 40s. to All Saints', a further 40s. for the All Saints' conduit, a banner of silk bearing the image of the Holy Trinity and a mitre for St Nicolas.[318]In his will he left 40d to All Saints' for good works and 20s. for tithes forgotten. He also left a tenement with a shop, garden and all appurtenances to the churchwardens and their successors. The money raised was to provide a chantry priest.[319] Clement Wilteshire gave 20s to All Saints' during his mayoralty and also left money for tithes forgotten in his will.[320]His wife Joan gave a pair of blue satin vestments embroidered with flowers to the church after his death.[321]In turn, Joan left 20s. to the fabric of the nave of the parish church of *Howmesdon* and 40s. for the purchase of two sets of vestments.[322]Although there is no indication of why Joan left money to that particular parish church, it is probable that it was her birthplace.   She left a further 5s to the crypt of St Nicholas and 10s to the prior and convent of each of the houses of friars in Bristol. Joan provided good works through gifts to prisoners in Newgate, Bristol (20s. of bread). She gave 6s. 8d. to the leper house of St Katherine de Brightbowe, and 6s. 8d to the four houses of 'poor and impotent beggars'. Both Clement and Joan Wilteshire show a lay piety through their pre and post mortem giving, but the extent of Joan's gifts exceeds that of her husband's. In this extensive giving to the church after death, Joan followed the pattern of other wealthy widows in Bristol.[323]

Sample of wills

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[317]*The Pre-Reformation Records of All Saints' Church, Bristol: the Churchwardens' Accounts,* ed. C. Burgess, BRS, 46 (1995).*The Pre-Reformation Records of All Saints' Church, Bristol: Wills, the Halleway Chantry records and deeds,* ed. C. Burgess, BRS, 56 (2004).

[318] Burgess, *Pre-Reformation Records,* (1995) p 24.

[319] Burgess, *Pre-Reformation Records,* (2004) pp. 48-51.

[320] Burgess, *Pre-Reformation Records,* (1995) p. 19; Burgess, *Pre-Reformation Records,* (2004) pp. 25 -28.

[321] Burgess, *Pre-Reformation Records,* (1995) p. 19.

[322] Burgess, *Pre-Reformation Records,* (2004) p. 150.

[323] Ibid.

The *Fifty Earliest English Wills* give an indication of testamentary desires from the early part of the period – the late fourteenth century onward: the Exeter wills are also early.[324] The *Logge Register* provided a record of wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.[325] The wills are from a limited time span (1479 – 1486) but provide evidence from much of southern England. The *Somerset Medieval Wills* cover 1383 – 1500 and are the testaments of the inhabitants of Somerset.[326] They too were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.[327] The parishioners making these wills were from rural and small town economies, frequently reflected in the type of gifts left to the parish and diocese. A further rural area was covered by the archdeaconry of Sudbury, Suffolk.[328] The archdeaconry of Sudbury was part of the diocese of Norwich; administered from Bury St Edmunds.[329] The wills transcribed are from the 'Baldwyne' register and date from 1461 – 1474. Two further sets of wills were consulted, from Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire.[330] The Northamptonshire wills sampled were all from the town of Northampton, a prosperous urban area. These were solely from the archdeaconry court. Those from Bedfordshire are divided. Volume 58 contains wills again proved in the prerogative court of Canterbury,

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[324]*The Fifty Earliest English Wills in the Court of Probate, London: A.D. 1387-1439; with a priest's of 1454*, ed. F.J. Furnivall, EETS, Original Series, 78 (1882); Lepine, Orme, *Death and Memory.*

[325] Boatwright , *The Logge Register*, I.

[326]*Somerset Medieval Wills (1383 – 1500)*, ed. F.W. Weaver, SRS, XVI, (1901). The translation and editing unfortunately excluded the introductory paragraph of each will. However, the testator's wishes are transcribed.

[327] Weaver, *Somerset Medieval Wills*, p. xvii. The Somerset wills are transcribed from the PCC probate registers. The registers consulted are named after testators whose wills were recorded. Some Logge wills also appear in *Somerset Medieval Will*s.

[328] Northeast, *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury.* 'Baldwyne', the initial will on the roll transcribed is now missing, presumed destroyed.

[329] Ibid pp. xliv – xlv. The area covered was the western part of Suffolk and parts of Cambridgeshire. There were several peculiars, most importantly Bury St Edmunds. This was administered by the abbey and the sacrist acted as archdeacon. All wills made by citizens in Bury had to be proved by the sacrist of Bury's court. These do not appear in the archdeaconry records except in a few cases, where the deceased owned property and goods outside Bury.

[330]*Early Northampton Wills*, eds. D. Edwards, M. Forrest, J. Minchinton, M. Shaw, B. Tyndell, Northampton Record Society, 42 (2005). *Bedfordshire Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury*, ed. M. MacGregor, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 58, (1979). *Bedfordshire Wills, 1484 - 1533*, ed. P. L. Bell, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 76, (1977).

dated from the mid fourteenth century onwards. Many testatrixes give London as their address. This has given access to wills made by the inhabitants of a large urban centre. The wills in volume 76 were proved in an archdeaconry court and are of a later date. The records above have been chosen to fulfil the criteria of a spread of geographical and chronological records. Further additional wills transcribed in *The Pre-Reformation Records of All Saints', Bristol* and *Death and Memory in Medieval Exeter* were also consulted.[331] The latter contains a complete list of testatrixes' names, in addition to those transcribed, which furnished further evidence of the numerical difference between men and women's wills (*Table 3.2*).

Men's wills, by far the most numerous, provide context. Comparison between the wills of men and women can highlight differences in religious practice. To understand female participation in religious practice, women's wills were examined in depth. Those produced by men had a less intensive examination. Any gendered differences in religious belief and practice will be highlighted. Where wills are similar in tenor, this indicates a non-gendered response by the laity. Many of the female wills consulted were made by widows: where a wife left items, she could only do so with permission of her husband: this was often acknowledged in the will. Wives were only able to leave personal goods and chattels. Widows had more freedom in what they left and men were able to leave their money and chattels completely. The number of surviving male wills was compared with those of female.[332] The relative proportions show that female wills were less than 20% of the total wills and averaged 12.6%.

Table 3.2

Numerical differences between male and female wills

Source	Male Wills	Female Wills			Total female wills	% male wills	% female wills
		Wives	Widows	Not known*			
Death and Memory in Medieval Exeter***	590	30	32	81	143	81%	19%
Somerset Medieval Wills	629	6	44	16	66	90%	10%

[331]Burgess, *All Saints' Church,* (2004); Lepine, Orme, *Death and Memory.*

[332] Not all the wills counted in *Table* 2 have been analysed for this thesis.

(1383 – 1500)							
Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury	705	10	69	41**	120	85%	15%
Northampton wills	121	3	24	0	28	82%	18%
Logge Register, part I and II	337	3	35	4	42	89%	11%
Bedford Wills v 76	270	0	18	6	24	92%	8%
Totals	2652	52	222	148	423	86%	14%

*While it is probable that the women in this column were widows there is no substantive internal evidence.

**includes one reference to 'pure virginity' and one to 'daughter of...'.

***The names of the testators are listed in this text although the wills themselves are not detailed. This has allowed a comparison of the number of wills by gender to be made.

The wills, dictated by women although written by men, give an insight into female religious practice. This is illustrated in many of the women's wills. Following the formal introductory lines, the list of gifts is often in random order. Arguably this reflects the thoughts of the woman as she considered how to leave her worldly goods. Items left to the church were co-mingled with articles left to relations and friends. It is certain that some women were influenced by others in the way they left their goods. Others, particularly widows, made their own decisions with regard to their possessions. This is demonstrated in the will of mistress Fyler, whose son Thomas contested her will. Her decisions regarding her bequests were unwelcome to her family.[333] Women did make the decisions regarding the disposition of their money and goods.

Wills: Conventional Formality

An overview of the structure of medieval wills show documents that followed a basic template, which was unchanged over time and regardless of gender.[334] This societal agreement sustains the significance of the form of words. There is no difference in format between the wills of men and women. Both follow the same formula. The language used in the wills varied between formal Latin and colloquial English; some documents use both. In the will of Alice Hill of Stoke by Nayland in Suffolk, in 1461, the initial sentences were in Latin, changed to English for the bulk

[333] In 1468/69 the wardens of All Saints took their case to Westminster when Thomas Fyler challenged his mother's will. Burgess, *All Saints' Church, Bristol*, (1995) p. 61.

[334] Northeast, *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury* p. xlix.

of the document, and then returned to Latin for the final portion.[335] In some wills, the testatrix used her will to indicate her where she wished to be buried, in the church or churchyard. While the Church agreed that a parishioner had the freedom to choose the place of her burial, it had to be within consecrated ground.[336] This nearly always surrounded the parish church. While dependent chapels proliferated throughout the period, burial rights were held by the parish church.[337] The sites chosen ranged from the churchyard to key positions within the church building: the latter often near the high altar, but it could also be close to specified statues or side altars. While the testatrix could indicate her wishes, there was no guarantee that the Church did fulfil them. Churchwarden accounts record payments to the church for pits/graves, the sum being a consistent 6s.8d over time and geography.

Money was frequently left for forgotten tithes and money or goods left to the church. There is no certainty that this was paid. While the testatrix ordered the disposal of the goods and money, there is no proof to us that she had the capital to cover the gift. The will of Lucy Sterk, from Frome in 1417, was noted as void. She was declared intestate.[338]The specified destination of the money or articles (to support an image or provide a light) provides an indication of the religious preference of the testatrix. In some wills the sacred gifts are noted among secular items. Gifts left to lay members of the family or friends include articles of religious significance, such as mass books, primers and rosaries. The gender and relationship of the recipient to the testatrix form a further indication of religious practice. The will ended with the name(s) of an executor and, normally, a list of witnesses.[339] Husbands frequently named their wives as executors. Women often gave the names of female relations or friends to be executor(s). There was often a payment made to the executor for acting with regards to the will.

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[335] Ibid p. 20.

[336] Sheehan, *The Will in Medieval England,* p.123.

[337] C. Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066 – 1550,* (London, 1997), p.88.

[338] Weaver, *Somerset Medieval Wills*, p.99.

[339]The probate copies often omit such details.

To appreciate the importance of wills to the understanding of medieval religious practice, it is necessary to consider the format of the documents in detail. This section considers the formal, even formulaic, portions of the medieval will. The initial sentence was 'In the name of God Amen' in either Latin or English, followed by the date on which the will was made. This could be given as day, month and year. On occasion, the regnal year was mentioned and, less often, the numbers of years post conquest. Following this was an assurance by the testatrix that she was of sound mind and body. This information was so important it normally came before any further dedications to God and the saints. Lady Alice West wrote – '... in hool estat of my body, and in good myndebeynge, ...' in 1395.[340] Elene Langwith, in 1480, dictated that she was 'hole of mynde and in my gode memorie being blessud be our lord God...'.[341] Similarly, Robert Bifeld said that he was 'in my gode and hole mynd, thanked be our lorde God...'.[342]Bodily weakness could be admitted. Agnes Forster 'though [she was] visited with sikness [was] nevertheless being of hole mynde and in good memorie ...'.[343]This insistence on their ability to recall was necessary in a predominantly oral society. It demonstrated the testatrix's mental competence to make the will. This decreased the possibility of the will being refused probate. If the will could not be proved, the individual was deemed to have died intestate, and the provisions in the will for his/her soul might not be implemented. The testatrix had to remember, correctly, the goods and money that they wished to leave, whether to the church or lay heirs.For the sake of their soul, testatrixes could not afford a mistake in the offerings to the church.

This initial paragraph could be florid. As a will from 1481began –

> In the name of the fader sonne and hoolly goost,iij persones
> and oon God, I John Hulcotte of the countie of Northampton [...]
> sadly and discretely remembring my silf that that this transitory
> world is butt vanyte, tribulation and desease, as is testified bi the

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[340] Furnivall, *Fifty Earliest English Wills*, p. 4.

[341] Boatwright, *Logge Register*, I p. 81.

[342] Ibid p. 153.

[343] Ibid p. 283.

wiseman Ecclesiasties [...], moreover moost specially calling to

my daily remembraunce howe corruptible, wretched and unclene

the mortal nature is of mankind and the little tyme of this miserable

life in this moost perelous and painfull pilgrimage ...[344]

Alternatively, most were simple –

Ego Margeria Counsell de Linton, Cant' diocesis, compos mentis

et sane memorie, condo testementum meumin hunc modem.[345]

The testatrix then commended her soul to God, who was always referenced. The Virgin Mary was commonly mentioned, in one form of words or another – Blessed Mary, Blessed Virgin, glorious mother of God. Frequently the saints in the heavenly court were then invoked. John Girdeler wrote ' Ferst my soule to Almyght God' in 1402. Eighty years later, in 1484, John Newburgh left his soul to God.[346] In 1485 Joan Atwell wrote '... animam meum [sic] deo omnipotenti, beate maria virginic omnibus sanctis ...'.[347]A more baroque declaration was made by James Pygott in 1485.

... first I bequeath and recommend my soule unto almyghty God

my creatour and savyour, to oure blissed lady saint Mary the virgyn

his glourious moder and to all the blissed and holy company of

heven...[348]

An unusual dedication was made by Richard Tillys in 1484. He commended his soul to God, the blessed Mary, St Katherine and St Herasina [or Herasma].[349] Some late fifteenth century wills from Northampton abbreviated the address to

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[344] Ibid p. 186.

[345]Boatwright, *Logge Register,* II p. 5.

[346] Ibid p.167.

[347] Ibid p. 110.

[348] Ibid p.274.

[349] Ibid p. 206.

'... my soul to almighty God etcetera', typified in the testament of Em[ ] Whyte in 1491.[350]This was possibly a contraction used in the probate register and does not reflect the original will.

The next item of importance was the position of the grave. The request for the placement of the grave ranged from the churchyard to before the high altar. Joan Odyll of Marston, Bedfordshire, asked that she be buried in the parish where she died.[351]In 1418, John Chelyswyk of Bridgenorth, Shropshire, asked to be buried where 'gode of his mercy for me wolle dispose'.[352]Kateryn Bilcock asked to be buried in the parish church at Houghton Conquest, Bedfordshire, specifying the church rather than the churchyard.[353]Men and women both asked to be buried next to their late spouses. Agnes Ryngland stated that she was to be buried next to her late husband, John, in the parish church of St Giles in Northampton.[354]Alicia Rondoff, from [New] Salisbury, asked to be buried in the church of St Thomas the Martyr, next to her husband.[355]Edmund Cokeyn asked to be buried next to the sepulchre of his late wife, Elizabeth, in the church of Hatley Port, Bedfordshire.[356]Both men and women asked that they be buried next to a deceased spouse. The tone of the request often indicates a companionate marriage. However, a widow, by requesting burial next to her husband, could obtain a more desirable position for her grave. In the patriarchal medieval society, men had a greater chance of a select burial site. Isabel Peche, widow, requested to be buried next to her husband, William Tresham, in the monastery of St James near Northampton.[357]Frances Skulle requested a grave before 'the ymage of Jhesu by [her] husband sir Walter Skulle'.[358] Not only did she exhibit a laudable

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[350] Edwards, *Early Northampton Wills*, p.194.

[351] MacGregor, *Bedfordshire Wills,* p. 123.

[352] Furnivall, *Earliest English Wills*, p. 30.

[353] Bell, *Bedfordshire Wills,* p. 30*.*

[354] Edwards, E*arly Northampton Wills*, p.75.

[355]*Registrum Henrici Chichele pars Secunda*, ed. E.F.Jacob, CYS, CIII, (1937), p. 471. In full – 4 vols this one being ii

[356] MacGregor, *Bedfordshire Wills*, p. 96.

[357] Edwards, E*arly Northampton Wills*, p. 78.

reverence towards her late husband,she also gained a choice site for her grave. Familial links could also dictate the burial site. Lady Alice West, 1392, asked to be buried in 'Crischerch in the Priorie of the Channones in Hamptschire [...] where-as myne Auncestres liggeth'.[359]In 1398 John Shillingford asked to be buried in the chapel of St Katherine, in Wydecombe parish church, Somerset, next to the body of his mother.[360] He was a canon of Exeter cathedral, and so could have requested burial in the cathedral. He preferred to be buried near his mother, in a relatively humble church.

Many of the requests giving specific instructions for the position of the grave indicate a religious choice, albeit one limited to the alternatives available.If there was no chapel or image of a preferred saint, then the testatrix could not ask for burial near that image. In some instances the preferences shown may be second choice. In 1504 Jonathon Mordaunt requested that he be buried in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the parish church at Turvey, Bedfordshire, wherever he died.[361] John Skyrewith, in 1485, asked that his body be 'buried in the chapell of saint John in the chirche of saint Laurence in the jury of London afore the pewe where I usid to sitte in the said chapell'.[362]His choice of seat in life, reflected in his preferred grave site, shows an individual religious preference. This was a personal choice; the patron saint of leather sellers (his trade) was Our Lady of the Assumption.[363] Many churches had a chapel or altar dedicated to the Virgin, in one of her aspects. It should have been possible for Skyrewith to sit or be buried near his guild patron saint. However, he made a deliberate decision to sit in the chapel of St John.[364] He preferred to rely on the patronage of his name saint, over and above the saint that supported his trade which, in turn, provided his

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[358]Boatwright, *Logge Register*, I, p. 232.

[359] Furnivall, *Fifty Earliest English Wills*, p. 4.

[360] Weaver, *Somerset Medieval Wills*, XVI, p. 3.

[361] MacGregor, *Bedfordshire Wills*, p.68.

[362] Boatwright, *Logge Register*, II, p. 282.

[363]www.leathersellers.co.uk/downloads/Leathersellersbook accessed 17/08/2013.This is more interesting in that the Guild of Lorimers had a chapel in the church, a close trade to the leather sellers.

[364]www.stlawrencejewry.org accessed 17/08/2013.

worldly needs.   John also wished to continue this link after death, indicating a close relationship with his name saint.

Richardina Mose, in 1473, asked to be buried below the chapel of St George in the church of All Saints, Northampton.[365]Lady Agnes, wife of Sir Richard Denton, in 1356 asked to be buried before the altar of the Blessed Virgin in the parish church of Thursby, Cumbria.[366]

Descriptions of the expected burial could be either before or after the sentences about the tithes. The wishes of the testatrixes varied from the minimalist

> 'I woll that my funerals expensis be don in honest wise
> after the discretion of my executours and no monthes
> mynd be kept or hadde for me.'

by John Haynes (London draper) in 1485 to more lavish funerals.[367] Again in 1485, John Rypon asked that the churchwardens of Saint Magnus the Martyr near London Bridge 'cause all the bellis to be rongen for me as is accustomyd and the grete bell called the trinite to ring my knell'.[368] He left £3 6s. 8d to pay for this. In 1505, Joan Cokyn, a widow of Bishopsgate Street, London, wanted 10 torches 'to bring [her] body to earth and four tapers to burn about her hearse'.[369] The definition of modest was variable. In 1480, Anne Neville, duchess of Buckingham, asked to be buried in the college church of Pleshey, Essex, wherever she died.[370]

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[365]www.allsaintsnorthampton.co.uk/history accessed 17/08/2013. The original church was destroyed in 1675 and the replacement is shorter than the medieval building. Only the tower and crypt (now under the chancel) remain from the earlier building. The wording of Richardina Mose's will indicates that she wished to be buried in the crypt – 'under the chapel'.

[366]*The Register of Gilbert Welton 1355-1362*, ed. R. L. Storey, C&YS, 88 (1999) p. 27. Richard de Denton was sheriff of Cumbria in 1350-51. Lady Agnes had high status and so could expect to have her last wishes honoured. Nevertheless, she gave her 'best beast' as a mortuary to the Blessed Virgin. This could be an indication of a rural economy, goods rather than money.

[367] Boatwright, *Logge Register*, II, p. 120.

[368]Boatwright, *Logge Register*, I, p. 451.

[369] MacGregor, *Bedfordshire Wills*, p. 88.

[370] Anne Neville was married twice: firstly to Humphrey Stafford, duke of Buckingham and then to Walter Blount, baron Mountjoy.

Her executors were to carry her body to the said church 'setting alle pomp and pride of the world apart' and paying no more than £100.[371]

The final part of a will could include a list of witnesses but always gave the name of the executor(s). The parish priest frequently appears as a witness. Robert Avery, in 1410, wrote '...I will that Henry Cole, tailor, dwelling without Temple Bar, be one of mine executors ...'.[372] Margaret Coket of Ingham, Suffolk, made her son Walter Croket her executor in 1467. One of her witnesses was sir Walter Coket, rector of Ingham.[373] In 1471, Isabel Grome of Melford, Suffolk, made Henry Bullyngton and Robert German her executors and left 13s. 4d. for their labour. Her will was also witnessed by a priest, John Stannard, the parish chaplain. The will of William Rowsewill of 'Hylffarens', Somerset, was witnessed by Sir Robert Chesterton, William Whitknyt, William Hyll and William Comer in 1522. He named his son, sir John, and his wife, Johane, his executors.[374] Alice Catisson, of Wiggenhall, Norfolk, made John Laurence, Robert Smyth and William Grouger her executors. Her witnesses included John Wilby, vicar of St Germanus and her confessor, Adam Outlawe.[375] Elizabeth Coke, London, chose as her executors her son and son-in-law, the husband of her daughter, Johane, who was also an executor.[376] It appears that the gender of the testatrix was not a predictor of executor or witness. Men and women selected those they thought best suited, or most reliable, for the task. The executor was an important role. S/he was expected to fulfil the testatrix's wishes with regard to the religious and secular bequests. If the religious requests were skimped or ignored then the soul of the deceased could linger in purgatory. The executors held considerable power over the soul of the deceased. Secular bequests provided some financial security for those left behind. Even where goods rather than money were given, the items

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[371]Boatwright, *Logge Register*, I p. 59. This sum was enough to buy approximately 3300 days of a building workers time or seventy horses. www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/results2 accessed 5 October 2013.

[372] Furnivall, *Fifty Earliest English Wills*, p. 17.

[373] Northeast, *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, p. 216.

[374] Weaver, *Somerset Medieval Wills*, p. 214.

[375] Boatwright, *Logge Register*, I p. 407.

[376] Ibid p. 312.

were available to be sold. It was important for both the deceased's soul and the beneficiaries of the will that the executors ensured that the will was proved in a timely manner. This allowed the money and items left in the will to be distributed, allowing payment for masses and other religious services requested by the testatrix.

Wills: pious bequests and bequests of religious items

The main portion of the will was the disposition of goods and chattels. Even here, those items that were to be left to the Church were normally recorded first. It is through the bequests that a divergence between male and female wills is seen. Men left greater amounts of money and goods than women. Widows left more than wives. Widows controlled their own estates, unlike wives who needed their husbands' permission to make a will. However, widows could be constrained in their legacies by their husbands' testaments. Widows may have owned property and goods only for their own lifetime.[377]Most wills, whether male or female, record money for tithes forgotten or underpaid. In earlier times, this could be in the form of goods or cattle. As noted earlier, Lady Agnes (Denton) left her best beast for a mortuary. John Olney, of Weston, Northamptonshire, also left his 'beste best' in 1420.[378] In 1480, Margaret Hancock left 12d to the high altar of All Saints Church, Northampton, for 'tithes forgotten'.[379]Earlier in 1475, Agnes Ryngland also left money for tithes forgotten - 10s to the high altar of St Giles, Northampton.[380] Although both women were widows, Agnes Ryngland appears to be the more prosperous of the two.[381]Money was often left to the 'mother church'. Elizabeth Munke left 2d. to the mother church of Lincoln in June 1523.[382] Agnes Johnson also left money to the mother church of Lincoln – 4d. in 1521.Not

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[377] Houlsbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, p. 87.

[378] Furnivall, *Fifty Earliest English Wills*, p. 47.

[379] Edwards, *Early Northampton Wills,* p. 86.

[380] Ibid p. 75.

[381] Agnes Ryngland was involved in several land transfers indicating a level of wealth.

[382] Bell, *Bedfordshire Wills,* p. 12. In some diocese it was routine to leave money to the mother church, Lincoln being one. Edwards, *Early Northampton Wills,* p. 113.

all testatrixes left money for tithes, however. Elizabeth Boteler, in 1495, left several bequests to fraternities but nothing to the parish church of All Saints, Northampton.[383]Dame Jane Barre, of Newland in the Forest of Dean, left £3. to the cathedral church of Hereford for 'works'.[384] In addition, she left 20s. toward the building of the college of vicars of the choir. Edmund Westcote left 3s. 4d. to the mother church of Worcester.[385]One will, that of Margaret Collecott in 1305,left nothing to the church, neither tithes nor goods.[386] She was married and left the bulk of her property to her husband. In 1295, Rosamund Kymmyng left money and property to the Church. [387]From Rosamund's will it can be deduced that she was married, therefore marriage need not always be a bar to leaving items to the Church.

Money was left to provide prayers for the testatrixes' soul. This could take the form of annual obits, mind days and bede-rolls (see Chapter 4). Priests were paid to provide masses. John Chelmswyk of Shropshire, in 1418, left £10 to the friars minor of Bridgenorth to sing a (St Gregory) Trental for 'for my soule, and for the soules of my fader and moder, Thomas my sone, Elyanore late my wyf [...] and for alle christian soules'.[388]He also left £70 to find two priests to sing God's service for his soul and the 'soules aforesayde' for the seven years following his death, and this was to be done in the chantry of the church of St Leonard in Bridgenorth.[389] Anne Neville, duchess of Buckingham, left numerous bequests to the clergy to pray for her soul, that of her 'best, beloved husband, Humphrey' and her children. These bequests included 20d to all the priests in Syon, the Charterhouse of London and Charterhouse of Sheen for prayers. The anchorite in the wall beside Bishopsgate was to have 6s. 8d for the same.[390] The very wealthy founded

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[383] Edwards, *Early Northampton Wills,* p. 204.

[384] Boatwright, *Logge Register*, II p. 30.

[385] Ibid p. 88.

[386] Lepine, *Death and Memory,* p.154.

[387] Ibid pp. 148-9.

[388] Furnivall, *Fifty Earliest English Wills*, p. 31.

[389] Ibid.

[390] Boatwright, *Logge Register*, v I, p. 59.

chantry chapels and collegiate chantries where priests prayed for the souls of the founder and his/her family.[391]This guaranteed remembrance, masses and prayer. Those less wealthy left money to the church so that their names could be added to the bede-roll.[392] This allowed them to be remembered by the congregation, as their names were spoken (annually) in church, linked to obits and requiem masses. This remembrance through prayer was necessary to minimise time spent in purgatory. Agnes Butt left 4d. for her name to be added to the roll in Elnestow, Bedfordshire, in 1524.[393]Whether the laity paid to have their name added to the bede-roll or to have a chantry chapel built, it ensured that regular prayers would be given for their souls.

The wills normally continued with bequests of a religious nature. Money and goods was left to specified churches, fraternities, altars, statues, lights and the rood. Good works came under the umbrella of religious giving. Testatrixes left gifts explicitly to be given to the poor or to support public works. These bequests given to aspects of religious practice indicate religious preferences. Both men and women left money in this way. Many female testatrixes, however, also itemised jewellery and garments that were to be given to the church. They further specified how and where these items were to be used: few men did. Isabelle, countess of Warwick, left multiple garments to the Church.[394] A crown was to be made out of a gold chain (worth £25.) and other gold articles, and given to Our Lady of Caversham.[395] Her gown of green and cloth of gold with wide sleeves was also to be given to Our Lady of Caversham. She gave her wedding gown to the house of Tewkesbury. Leaving personal items could be explained by women's lack of property rights: wives had only goods to leave. Livestock was also left to the church. Alice Hunt of Withersfield (Suffolk) in 1463 left a cow to the parish

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[391] A. J. Pollard, *Late Medieval England 1399 – 1509,* (Harlow, 2000) p. 217.

[392] Edwards, *Early Northampton Wills,* p. 113. The bede-roll was a list of the deceased of the parish and the names were read out annually. A position on the bede-roll had to be purchased.

[393] Bell, *Bedfordshire Wills,* p. 26.

[394] Isabelle Despenser (daughter of Thomas Despenser, briefly earl of Gloucester) was the second wife of Richard Beauchamp, 5th earl of Warwick, whom she married in 1423. Richard was her second husband, her first being his cousin, Richard Beauchamp, earl of Worcester. Her will is dated 1439, the year in which she died.

[395] Furnivall, *Fifty Earliest English Wills*, p. 116.

church, to be administered by the churchwardens. This was to be put out to a farm in order to provide a steady income to support the sepulchre light.[396] The gift was to be in perpetuity.

However, widows also left clothing. Johanne Mudeford of Gloucester left 14d. to the four main lights, a gold ring and a veil to the image of Mary, and a second gold ring to the image of St Katherine. She asked to be buried before the altar of St Erasmus, leaving her best veil for a corporal cloth to that altar. Another veil was left to make a canopy over the Host.[397] Men did leave money to purchase gifts. John Assh left 11 marks to buy a 'sute of vestmentes' for the chapel of Yeldhall (or Theldhall), London, in 1485.[398]Alice Rymour, in 1407, left her best veil and wedding ring to the fabric of the church of blessed Mary de Stalle, Bath.[399]In 1411, Margaret de Courtenay left all the 'vessels' which she had not already mentioned to be changed into chalices and other church ornaments. These were to be distributed among many, 'diver', churches. The recipients were bound to pray for her soul and that of Sir John Lo, her late husband.[400] She was a widow: there is no mention of a husband, other than the late John Lo. Therefore, her goods were her own to leave.

Personal articles left to clothe images or cover items were thought to absorb piety from the image/item.[401] This would be transferred to the giver, to decrease the time spent in purgatory. The giving of intimate items may also have been an aspect of the increasing personalisation of religious practice. While a priest was still needed to link a parishioner and God, the laity was broadening their religious

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[396]Northeast, *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury,* p. 97. Alice specified that the wardens 'shall see that the farmers of the said cow shall produce and wean a calf from the said cow, so there is always a cow'.

[397] Boatwright, *Logge Register*, I p. 327.

[398] Ibid II p. 119.

[399] Weaver, *Somerset Medieval Wills,* p. 31.

[400] Ibid p. 51.

[401]E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional religion in England, 1400 – 1580*, (New Haven, 1992), p. 334.

practice through a closer personal relationship with Jesus.[402]Leaving an item of clothing to cover an image was a nurturing act, part of the expected female role in society. Men did not make use of this method of giving. Women gave personal items, as often that was all they had. While men could have left such items, they did not follow that path (*Table 3. 3*).

Table 3.3

Items referenced in wills

		Male Wills				Female Wills			
	Dates	Books	Rosary	Clothing		Books	Rosary	Clothing	
				Secular*	Sacred**			Secular	Sacred
Death and Memory in Medieval Exeter	1244 - 1349	0	0	7	0	0	0	5	0
50 Earliest Wills in English	1387 – 1454	3	3	13	0	3	2	5	1
Logge Register v1	1479 - 1486	16	4	41	1	5	4	17	4
Northampton Wills	1474 - 1503	5	3	3	0	2	6	18	0
Total items left		24	10	64	1	10	12	45	5

* Personal clothing left to relations and friends
** Clothing left to the Church

Testatrixes left money and goods to specific aspects of religious practice. This ranged from relatively small sums to fraternities to larger amounts to roods and images. Money was also left for specific purposes, indicating that the testatrixes were aware of their parish church and its practical requirements. Alice Hopwood left 12d. to repair the bells of St Peter, Northampton, in 1500.[403] Margery Wytte left 12d. to the bells of Colmorth church, Bedfordshire, in 1529. [404]In 1481, Agnes Carisson left 20d. to the fabric of the church of St Germanicus in Wiggenhall, Norfolk.[405]Good works also appear in the wills. Agnes Chambre left 2s from the rent of a tenement to the almshouse of St Thomas the Martyr in 1480.[406]In 1500, Joan Jacob left 3s. 4d. to the 'most needy' in Cotton, Northamptonshire, to be

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[402] Duffy, 'Religious Belief', pp. 319 – 321.

[403] Edwards, *Early Northampton Wills,* p. 217.

[404] Bell, *Bedfordshire Wills,* p. 155.

[405] Boatwright, *Logge Register*, II, p. 405.

[406] Edwards, *Early Northampton Wills* p. 88.

distributed in bread and money.[407] In 1529 Margaret Darlynge left a cow: this was to be sold and the money shared between five poor people from Stevinton, Bedfordshire.[408] Joan Devyn, in 1483, left alms to be distributed between the 'most needy' in the town of Henley-on-Thames, half at Christmas and half at the Purification of the Virgin 2 February).[409]

Following on from the legacies for religious destinations, testatrixes turned to secular recipients. Gifts were left to the extended family: both men and women left chattels to their relations and friends.[410] These bequests varied from small personal items to buildings. More importantly, they also included religious articles. Rosaries, often noted as beads, were left in the wills. These were normally identified in considerable detail through the materials used to make the item. Mass books and primers also appear, as do objects used in religious services. In 1475, Ricardina Mose left a rosary of jet and a pater noster of silver and gilt to her daughter, Joan Dye.[411]Ellen Fuller from Walsham le Willows, Suffolk, gave a pair of beads to her niece, Elizabeth Fuller, in 1469.[412]Lady Alice West, in 1395, left a 'piere of bedes' to her son Thomas.[413] She also left him a ring with which she was 'yspoused to god' (possibly a vow taken when she was widowed) and a pair of matin books.[414]Lady Alice left a mass book to 'Iohane my doughter, my sone-is wyf' and all the other books she (lady Alice) possessed in Latin, English and French, other than the books left to her son.[415] Further, she left the vestments of her chapel, with other appurtenances for the altar, to

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[407] Ibid p. 221.

[408] Bell, *Bedfordshire Wills,* p. 156.

[409] Boatwright, *Logge Register*, I p. 268.

[410] Under the ecclesiastical definition, godchildren and godparents were considered within the prescribed family.

[411] Edwards, *Early Northampton Wills,* p. 51.

[412]Northeast, *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury,* p. 227.

[413] Furnivall, *Fifty Earliest English Wills*, p. 5.

[414] Ibid. Widows who took vows of chastity made it more difficult to be coerced into another marriage, leaving them in control of their own money, goods and property, Pollard, *Late Medieval England,* p. 193.

[415] Furnivall, *Fifty Earliest English Wills,* p. 5.

Johane.[416]While lady Alice left personal items and other chattels to her daughter, she did not leave any books or articles of religious significance. It could indicate that her daughter-in-law was literate whereas her daughter was not. Alternatively, Thomas and Johane may have lived in the same house as Lady Alice, so goods left to Johane would have stayed in situ. Lady Peryne Clanbowe, in 1422, left her mass book, a vestment of red cloth of gold and a chalice to her brother, sir Robert of Whitney, a priest.[417] Women left personal items to both male and female beneficiaries. Rosaries, often costly articles, were a gender neutral gift, as both sexes used beads.

Table 3.4

Percentage of Items left in wills

	Male Wills				Female Wills				Total Male wills	Total female wills
	Books	Rosary	Clothing		Books	Rosary	Clothing			
			Secular	Sacred			Secular	Sacred		
Total items left	24	10	64	1	10	12	45	5	333	62
%of items	7.2	3.0	19.2	0.3	16.1	19.3	72.5	8.0		

Analysis of the items left by testatrixes indicates that secular clothing was the most frequently given item by both sexes (*Table 3. 4*). Women, however, left almost four times more secular clothing than men. Several wills describe who should receive best tunics, favoured dresses, furred hoods and belts. Most of these items were left to friends and family. Occasionally the church was the beneficiary. These numbers are very small, but it can be seen that women left more such items to the church than did men–eight percent against 0.3 of one percent. Women were aware of the financial benefit of such gifts. The wealthy left garments made from costly materials. Embroidery enhanced the gift: a labour intensive art, embroidery was expensive. Even quotidian garments had intrinsic value. Books were also left in wills and here, again, women left far more than men. Books were costly items, requiring a large disposable income and so, arguably, more likely to be the possessions of men. However, proportionally,

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[416] Ibid. The items left included altar towels and frontels, a chalice, pax bread, holy water pot, silver basin for the altar and a 'scarynge belle'.

[417] Furnivall, *Fifty Earliest English Wills,* p. 49.

more women leave books. Except for the very wealthy who were able to commission their own manuscripts, this may indicate expensive items being passed down through the generations. It is suggestive of treasured religious possessions being handed on to daughters. Another popular bequest among female wills is the rosary / beads. Nearly twenty percent of women left these in their will, compared to three percent of men. Again this indicates a religious aspect of giving by women. The item the testatrix used to communicate with God was given to another so they could continue the act, remembering the giver as they did so. While, however, rosaries are seen in the wills, they do not appear as often as perhaps anticipated. In this religious society, it could be expected that most parishioners would own a rosary. The rosary was recited by the laity regularly but it is probable that they did not need the prompt of the rosary beads. This was an oral society, who learned to remember rather than needing a physical reminder, such as a book or bead. Again, it may have been that the deceased expected to be buried with his/her rosary.

Saints, the laity and lay wills

Veneration of the saints was an increasingly important aspect of religious practice from the earliest days of the Church.[418] There was a marked tendency to appropriate particular saints by both individuals and families.[419] Saints' names were given to bells, buildings and boats, among other items, to invoke the protection of the named saint.[420]   Canon law stated that all children were to be named after saints. It was not until the later Middle Ages that the Church came close to enforcing this, but never quite succeeded. The practice did not become general.[421] The laity preferred to name their children after godparents. Despite this, throughout the period the laity showed an increasing interest in the saints. To gain an understanding of this religious practice, a subset of the wills consulted

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[418] S. Wilson, 'Introduction' in *Saints and Their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*, ed. S. Wilson (Cambridge, 1983), p.3.

[419] C. Carpenter 'Religion' in *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, eds. R. Radulescu, A. Truelove (Manchester, 2005), p.139.

[420] Ibid p. 14.

[421] Ibid p. 15.

earlier was interrogated for information regarding choice of saints. For the purpose of this work the saints were separated into three groups: those which are definitely gendered, seen by the masculine and feminine given names. Gender neutral is the term used for the group which includes the Rood (in various aspects), Jesus Christ, All Saints, Corpus Christi and Holy Trinity.

Each will was considered and the number of saints' names cited was counted. As this work is undertaken to understand to whom the laity looked for help, only a single mention of a saint's name is required to indicate preference. Where a saint's name appeared more than once (an altar to the same saint in two different churches), it has been counted as one. Invocations to the Trinity, Virgin or other saint in the initial paragraph have been ignored: these were customary sentences and did not reflect the specific affiliation of the testatrix. It was decided not to use this portion of the will when considering preferred saints.

To ensure a wide range of experience, the wills chosen represent the early and late portions of the later Middle Ages. The geographical span allows any variations in local preferences to be captured. The earlier part of the period under discussion can be seen in the wills transcribed in *Death and Memory in Exeter* and *The Fifty Earliest Wills.*[422] Wills from Northampton gave an overview of preferences within a localised area, while the Logge register, from the same period, gave a survey of a wider geographical area (*Tables3. 5a and 3.5b*).[423]

Table 3.5a

Saints referenced in medieval wills - fraternities, altars and images

		Male Wills			Female Wills			
	Dates	Masculine name saints	Feminine name saints	Gender neutral saints	Masculine name saints	Feminine name saints	Gender neutral saints	No. wills consulted
Exeter Wills	1244 - 1349	2	3	0	1	1	0	18
50 Earliest Wills in English	1387 – 1454	9	4	0	2	3	1	50
Logge Register 1	1479 - 1486	68	49	41	15	13	8	178

[422] Lepine, *Death and Memory*; Furnivall; *The Fifty Earliest English Wills*.

[423] Edwards, *Early Northampton Wills*; Boatwright, *The Logge Register*, I.

Northampton Wills	1474 - 1503	116	95	105	27	24	29	149
Total		195	151	146	45	41	38	395

*taken from *Death and Memory in Exeter*

Tables 3.5a and 3.5b suggest that the earlier testatrixes rarely invoked the saints. Although the numbers are small, due to the small number of surviving early wills, less than 40% of testatrixes reference saints. Women referenced saints more frequently than men. The early wills also indicate a female preference for female saints.[424] In the later wills, the number noting saints is considerably higher. The number of references is greater than the total number of wills, as many testatrixes invoked more than one saint. This was particularly noticeable in the Northampton wills where 100% of women referenced saints. This increasing interest in the saints may have been due to the increase in hagiographic works during the high Middle Ages.[425] Various texts were produced through the medieval period. For the clergy, these included *The Golden Legend*, written to provide homilies to the laity. The laity were provided with the *Legends of Holy Women*.[426] However, the *Golden Legend* was cited in several of the lay wills, indicating a laity which owned clerical texts. They showed an interest in the lives of the saints over and above the expectation of the clergy.

Table 3.5 b

Percentage of saints referenced by gender

		Male Wills			Female Wills			No. of wills	
	Dates	Masculine name saints	Feminine name saints	Gender neutral saints	Masculine name saints	Feminine name saints	Gender neutral saints	Male	Female
Exeter Wills*	1244 – 1349	14%	21%	0%	25%	25%	0%	14	4
50 Earliest Wills in English	1387 – 1454	20%	9%	0%	28%	42%	14%	43	7
Logge Register v1	1479 – 1486	43%	31%	26%	65%	56%	34%	155	23
Northampton Wills	1474 – 1503	95%	78%	86%	96%	85%	100%	121	28

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[424]It is arguable that the small numbers make this statistically insignificant.

[425]Farmer, *Dictionary of Saints*, pp. xii-xv.

[426] E. Duffy, 'Introduction' in *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, ed. W. Granger Ryan (Princeton, 2012); *A Legend of Holy Women: a translation of Osborn Bokenham's Legends of Holy Women*, ed. S. Delaney (London, 1992).

Within the wills, the choice of an altar dedicated to a specific saint or an image of a saint is an indication of religious preference. The more prosperous members of the laity were able to add images, altars or even chapels to the fabric of their parish church. These are firm signals of pious preferences and will be discussed in Chapter 4. Those without financial resources left gifts to the existing altars and images in the church. The wills cannot show total preferences. In poorer parishes, it is probable that there was a limited choice of images. Less disposable income meant fewer donations to the church for the purchase of images. The specific saint of most importance to the testatrix may not have been in the church: this unseen worship remains concealed. An image, however, was not necessary to petition a saint, prayers could be made at any time. Despite this, the choices made regarding images and altars allow the available religious preferences to be visualised.

The most popular saint seen in the wills was the Virgin Mary. Although venerated from early Christian times, her cult increased throughout the medieval period.[427] She was frequently cited within the body of the wills, in addition to the invocation in the initial paragraph. Her altars and images were the most frequently referenced among the gendered saints. The next most cited saints were the Holy Trinity and aspects of the Cross (*Table 3. 5*). The saints most closely linked to Jesus were those most referenced. The Virgin Mary was more popular with women than men, but was still cited by nearly a quarter of male testators. The Rood often had a group of figures below it, prominently Mary. The mother figure may have resonated with women. The Holy Trinity was equally popular with both sexes, while the Rood was preferred by more women than men. The Northampton wills show the most consistent selections of saints, due to the circumscribed choice within the town. The laity was provided with a limited number of altars within the various churches. The *Logge Register*, with its wide geographic spread, allows a greater number of saints to appear. However, the Virgin and gender neutral saints were still the most numerous.

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[427] T. Head, 'Introduction' in *Medieval Hagiography, an Anthology*, ed. T. Head (London, 2001), p.xxi; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion*, p. 111; D. Hay, *Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,* (Harlow, Essex, 1989) p. 326.

Research into the wills also demonstrated a gendered difference in the number of saints referenced. From table 3.5b it can be seen that men, proportionally, invoked saints less frequently than women. Saints appear in the wills when the testatrixes leave money or goods to the various images. While women had less disposable income than men, they still supported the saints. The more affluent women left money to saints in the same way as men. Women did not invoke female saints over male saints. Table 5b illustrates this. The percentages of saints referenced by women (whether male, female or gender neutral) is similar, with a slight bias to male saints. While the overall numbers are smaller, it is apparent that women showed no female bias. Elizabeth Rede, a widow of Boston, left multiple bequests in 1485.[428] While she was wealthier than many women seen in the records, her pattern of giving is typical of female gifts. When added together, the various totals make it apparent that she did not favour female over male recipients. Even without an anomalous figure of 137s. paid for an ornament for St Peter, Elizabeth Rede shows the female bias towards male saints. Overall, men showed a definite bias towards male saints. This holds for all four sets of wills examined, although is most evident in those from Northampton.

The Northampton wills form a small case study. They reflect the general trend. The saints with multiple citations in the wills were John the Baptist, St George, St Michael, the Virgin Mary and St Katherine. Of the male saints, both sexes preferred John the Baptist: the proportions are statistically similar. An intercession by John the Baptist was believed to lead to the coming of Christ within the soul of the testatrix.[429] This was important for the laity, especially at the point of death. Christ's mercy was needed to lessen time spent in purgatory. Among men, St George was the second most favoured saint. St George was a patron of husbandmen, soldiers and associated crafts.[430] This selection of benefactions may explain why men preferred St George as patron of male occupations. However, St Sithe, patron saint of domesticity, was not a favoured

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[428] Boatwright, *Logge Register*, II p. 405.

[429] Farmer, *Dictionary of Saints,* p. 258.

[430] Ibid p. 198.

saint of women.[431] Women did not need heavenly patronage to validate their role, while men apparently referenced the masculine aspects of St George.[432] For the female laity, St Michael was second in preference. St Michael was invoked for the care of the sick, a female province. However, perhaps more pertinent to those facing death, he also weighed souls. His image often appeared in Doom paintings holding scales.[433] The Blessed Virgin Mary was chosen by both men and women, although only women preferred her above the other saints. Women cited Mary more often than men. Mary the mother was a female choice. She was thought to intercede with Christ, and provided hope when the dead faced God.[434] She was also invoked through her aspect of Our Lady of Pity.[435] Both sexes also heavily referenced St Katherine. This may be an anomaly. In other wills examined, Mary was the favourite female saint. The popularity of St Katherine in Northampton may have been due to the new chapel in the churchyard of All Saints. This was dedicated to her and was frequently referenced. Civic pride may have influenced the choice.

Regardless of chosen saints, women left money to the altars and images in their wills. All the sets of wills examined reveal female participation in this aspect of religious practice. Margery Lynde, in 1484, left 3s. 4d. to the high altar of the church of All Hallows in Chelsea. She also willed 4d. to each of the other altars and 12d. to the Rood light.[436] Alice Hopwood left money to provide cloths for four altars in St Peter's church, Northampton, in 1496. She gave 12d. to each of the altars - Our Lady, St John, St Nicholas and St Katherine.[437] In addition to positive choices, the decision to ignore possible images and altars also indicates

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[431] There was an altar to St Sithe in All Saint's church.

[432] St Sithe or Cithe was a corruption of the Italian saint St Zita, who died in 1272. She became a popular, albeit unofficial, saint in England. Sithe was the patron saint of maids, domestic servants and lost keys. www.catholic.org/saints/saint accessed 7 October 2013.

[433] Farmer, *Dictionary of Saints,* p. 339.

[434] Ibid p. 328.

[435] Ibid.

[436] Boatwright, *Logge Register*, I   p. 290.

[437] Edwards, *Early Northampton Wills,* p.217.

preference. Funds may have been limited, only sufficient to support a few saints. Alternatively, the testatrix was uninterested in the other saints.

At All Hallows church, Alice Wynge, wife of William Wynge (weaver) made such a choice. She left 2s. to each of six fraternities in the church – Blessed Trinity, Corpus Christi, Our Lady, the Rood, St George and St John the Baptist.[438] She also left 2s. to the fraternity of St Katherine, based in the chapel in the new churchyard.[439] She specifically chose these fraternities. From the will of Margaret Brafeld in 1487, it can be seen that All Saints also housed fraternities for St George the Martyr and St Cithe (or Sithe).[440] Alice Wynge made a deliberate choice not to support these last two saints. Her choice of the three aspects of God and the Blessed Virgin Mary were conventional, as discussed above. Three of the fraternities chosen in the wills were those supporting aspects of God and those saints close to God, such as the Virgin and St John the Baptist. Her choice of St George was possibly in his role of a defender of Christianity.[441] Alice Wynge deliberately chose St George (moving away from the general female choice), possibly because she desired a champion to prove her cause in heaven.   St Katherine was believed to provide exceptionally effective protection. It is this aspect that may have been the reason for her selection, rather than a civic

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[438] Alice Wynge had two previous husbands. She asked to be buried next to William Manning, 'sometime my husband' and she left her great mazer to William Daffron, son of her husband Richard Daffron.

[439] Edwards, *Early Northampton Wills,* p. 200. St Katherine's was a chapel in the church yard of All Saint's, next to the College of All Saint's. Ibid p. 92. The names All Saint's and All Hallow's were interchangeable throughout the Northampton wills. The College of All Saint's was founded in 1460; a union of priests, called the Wardens and Fellows of the College of All Saint's, who held property in common. There were sixteen priests in total. The Vicar of All Saint's, the fraternity priests for Blessed Trinity, Corpus Christi, Our Lady, the Rood, St George, St John the Baptist, St George the Martyr, St Cithe and St Katherine. The others were priests from the church. *VCH: A History of Northamptonshire*, eds. R. M. Sergeantson, W. Ryland, D. Adkins , 5 vols, II (1906), p. 180. The Rood fraternity was also called Holy Cross. Edwards, *Early Northampton Wills,* p. 142.   The chapel of St Katherine, with its attendant fraternity, was situated in the new cemetery next to the church of All Hallow's. This cemetery was noted as new in the twelfth century, so the title of the cemetery was habitual rather than a description of its age. The fraternity was inaugurated to bury the dead from plague www.British_History.ac.uk, accessed 12 March 2014.

[440] Edwards, *Early Northampton Wills,* p. 142. Paintings of St George often portrayed him trampling a serpent beneath his feet, signifying the defeat of Satan.

[441] J. Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, (London, 1996), p.136.

choice.[442] Alice did not specifically choose female saints over male, she chose two male and two female saints (one being the blessed Virgin). As she was married, her capital was restricted so her choices were deliberate. She needed to maximise her investment.

<u>Findings</u>

Relics and pilgrimages were important to the female laity. Women understood the importance of journeys to visit shrines and relics. Margaret Paston was willing to travel around Norfolk for the sake of her husband's health, despite the familial knowledge of the hazards of such journeys. Margery Kempe travelled widely, as far as Jerusalem, in her search for God. Women were willing to risk travel in support of their religious practice.

The wills indicate the ways in which the laity prepared for life after death. Wills were subject to the conventions of the time, regardless of the gender of the testator. Both genders were aware of the doctrine of purgatory and the concomitant need to minimise the time spent there. The clergy stressed that once the soul had been purged of its sins, it moved to heaven: here, it lived in eternal bliss with the Holy Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the host of heaven. From the introductions to the wills it can be seen that the laity understood this tenet and were anxious to join the sublime host. With this awareness, both genders wanted a quick passage through purgatory: not only to minimise the expected pain but to speed the soul's journey to the raptures of heaven. To facilitate this, the laity made provision in their wills for their own souls and those of others. While the phrase 'and all Christian people' occurs frequently with the testatrixes' requests for obits and masses, it is not necessarily a stock expression. During life, regard for the souls of others came under the title of good works. Priests exhorted congregations to pray for the dead.[443]The names on bede-rolls were read out annually. This concern carried over into death, with masses spoken for the testatrix shared with other, albeit often close relations, Christian dead. It is noticeable that the dead are always Christian. Money was

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[442] Lewis, *St Katherine,* p.2.

[443] Tarlow, *Ritual, Belief and the Dead,* p 23.

allocated in wills for the obits and masses. Wealthy individuals left money to pay priests to pray for them. Both male and female testators had an understanding of the cost of the services as a time limit was often given. One or five years were a popular time frame. Where a longer duration was anticipated, the money was frequently found from the rent of a tenement. The elite of both sexes supported chantries, where priests prayed daily for the soul of the deceased and their relatives. Both men and women set up chantries for their spouses and parents.

Women were willing to travel on pilgrimage for the sake of their own and others soul. They understood the importance of prayer to speed their souls through purgatory. By leaving gifts to the church, and specific images, women could ensure that their souls were supported by the saints. Almost twenty percent of women left their rosaries in their wills: again indicating their awareness of the need for religious practice in the salvation of the soul. To aid their own souls, women left personal items, such as veils, jewellery and gowns, to adorn their preferred images. These were the items that women had available to bequeath. Wealthy widows left precious metals to be made into decorations for the image. Even a wealthy widow, who could have left money, gave her personal jewellery and clothes to dress the images. Men did not leave this type of gift. Women's choice to adorn the images and statues in a church with personal articles is a female decision. By giving their prized garments to the images, women demonstrated a desire for a closer relationship with religious practice. The images specified were not necessarily saints. Women left clothing to cover the altars of the Rood, the Blessed Trinity and Corpus Christi. This wide range of objects of worship again indicates a female laity who understood the various aspects of religion. Leaving such gifts to the church is indicative of an awareness of the importance of religious paraphernalia. Overall, women left more cloths and clothing to the Church than men. Women had an appreciation of the intrinsic value of these articles as they produced garments and embroideries. Female giving was practical. Women were cognisant of the need to promote the spiritual health of their relations and friends through the gifts given in their wills. Female gifts included primers, mass books and beads/rosaries, all of which reinforced religious practice. Women showed an understanding of religious practice and a willingness to participate in the praxis of the day.

Throughout the Middle Ages there was a general anxiety concerning the immediate destination of the soul after death, hell or purgatory. This was a consistent theme in medieval wills. While the medieval parishioner feared hell, living a good life was thought to decrease the likelihood of that destination after death. Purgatory was far more certain, particularly in the later Middle Ages when the doctrine of purgatory had been finalised.[444] This was not a staging post between heaven and hell, but where a Christian's debt to God was purged: the debt incurred for 'unremitted and unexpunged sin'.[445] While the time spent in heaven or hell was eternal, that passed in purgatory was mutable.[446] Thus, as the laity expected their souls to spend time in purgatory, methods to minimise the period there were employed. It was believed that the prayers of the living had a beneficial effect in reducing the time spent in purgatory.[447] This lay responsibility of prayer began immediately after the requiem mass for the deceased.[448] To safeguard this support, various methods were employed by both men and women to ensure remembrance by family, friends and fellow parishioners. Those strategies used by women will be examined in this chapter.

In its most basic form a chantry was an arrangement to provide for a chaplain or priest to celebrate a single mass for the soul of the deceased.[449] One description of a chantry is a 'mass recited at an altar for the well-being and good estate of the founder during his lifetime and for the repose of his soul after death'.[450] However, the term chantry has two interchangeable meanings. The first encompasses all the strategies discussed below, from the foundation of religious

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[444] E. Duffy, T*he Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400 – 1580*, (New Haven and London, 1992) p. 341.

[445] R.N. Swanson, 'The Pre-Reformation Church' in *The Reformation World*, ed. A. Pettigree (London, 2000) p. 22.

[446] D. MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490 – 1700*, (London, 2003) p. 12.

[447] D. Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe, c. 1300- c. 1500*, (Manchester, 2006) p. 197-98.

[448] Ibid. The ideal interment began on the night before burial. The coffin was placed in the chancel, surrounded by candles. The Office of the Dead would be performed. For this, priests would say vespers over the deceased on the evening prior to interment. On the day of the burial, matins and lauds were sung, followed by the requiem mass. At the end of the process, absolution was given and the body taken for burial.

[449] R. Britnell, 'Town life' in *A Social History of England 1250 – 1500,* eds. R. Horrox, W. M. Ormrod *(*Cambridge, 2006) p. 171.

[450] G. H. Cook, *Medieval Chantries and Chantry Chapels*, (London, 1947) p. 7.

houses and other prestigious buildings to masses at existing altars, obits and bede-rolls. Secondly, it describes a specific form of remembrance for individuals, that of a set of masses supported by money provided by a testator. For the purpose of this work, the term chantry is used for the overarching forms of remembrance. Specific forms are described as chantry masses. A chantry mass was often sung at an existing altar, as specified by the testator.[451] For instance, John Chelmswyk (from Shropshire) requested seven years of masses in the chantry chapel of the church of St Leonard in Bridgenorth.[452] Whether a chantry was a single mass or a continuing commitment, it had to be supported by money or land, either deeded in life or specified in the testator's will. A chantry mass could be time limited or in perpetuity. However, even a semi-permanent chantry mass at an existing altar was out of the economic range of most of the population: obits, a celebration of the anniversary of death, were a more frugal method of remembrance. A discrete sum of money provided time-limited masses.[453] Instructions for annual obits are detailed in several wills.[454] For many, joining a religious guild or fraternity allowed men and women to obtain the benefits of a chantry by spreading the cost over all the members.[455] The final method of remembrance was having one's name added to the parish bede-roll, also called certain, mortuary roll and martilage (martyrology).[456] This ensured that the parishioner's name was read out before the congregation at regular intervals.[457] By this method, the deceased was brought to mind and into the prayers of the living.

The records under consideration for this chapter are wills and chantry certificates. The wills employed are those previously consulted. They have been chosen to include the maximum range of experience, both chronologically and geographically. These offer a route into religious remembrance. Many testators made highly specific requests to their executors, regarding money for

[451] Ibid.

[452] *The Fifty Earliest English Wills in the Court of Probate, London, A.D. 1387 – 1439; with a priest's of 1454*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS, Original Series, 78 (1882) p. 30.

[453] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, p. 12.

[454] Ibid.

[455] M. Kowaleski, 'A Consumer Economy' in *A Social History of England 1250 – 1500,* eds. R. Horrox, W. M. Ormrod (Cambridge, 2006)p. 255.

[456] R. Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480 – 1750*, (Oxford, 1998) p. 113.

[457] *Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury, 1439 – 1474: Wills from the Register of 'Baldwyne', Part II: 1461 – 1474*, eds. P. Northeast, H. Falvey, Suffolk Record Society, 53 (2010) p. xxii. This was also known as sangred. A certain of masses was the weekly celebration of mass for one year; Ibid.

remembrance through prayers, masses and chantries. The final request in many of the testaments stated that residual monies, left after the main articles in a will had been fulfilled, were to be expended in alms and works of charity. This was for the good of the testatrix's soul. Recipients of the charity were expected, indeed obliged, to pray for their benefactor. Agnes Cattisson, in 1481, requested of her executors -

> the residue of all my goods not bequeathed nor mentioned specifically above I assign and commit to the disposition of John Laurence, Robert Smyth and William Grouger [...] executors of this my testament and last will, that they [...] dispose whatever has not been specifically bequeathed nor mentioned, as shall seem best to them to please God and profit my soul. [458]

A further route into methods employed by the laity to support a chantry is through the chantry certificates of 1548.[459] These also cover hospitals, colleges of priests and other religious foundations, excluding monastic foundations. While these were a retrospective snapshot and cannot be exhaustive – some chantries, even perpetual, did disappear between their inauguration and 1546 – the certificates do provide a window into the provision of chantries, including a few dating from the fourteenth century.[460] The certificates record many chantries licensed under the Statute of Mortmain (1279) and others that were never licensed. Due to the differences in the recorded information in the contemporaneous certificates, there is a diversity of intelligence exhibited: not all chantry certificates even give the name of the founder. Where complete, a county certificate records individual chantries and obits, their founders, goods and services.[461] In the records consulted, many do not specify whether the obit or chantry was to be perpetual. For this reason the records have been divided into 'obits/ chantry masses' and 'Perpetual obits/ chantry masses'. Those certificates have been selected which cover the variety of English counties, providing a

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[458] *The Logge Register of PCC Wills, 1479 to 1486*, eds. L. Boatwright, M. Habberjam, P. Hammond, 2 vols, Richard III Society, 1 (2008) p. 407 .

[459] The certificates were sent to the Court of Augmentation in 1546 and 1548, part of the dissolution of the chantries. The financial resources that supported chantries and obits were taken under crown control. Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars,* p. 455.

[460] Changes in the value of land and currency led to chantries becoming unviable and so lost.

[461] S. Roffey, *The Medieval Chantry: an Archaeology*, (Woodbridge, 2007) p. 33.

coverage of a wide geographic area. The Yorkshire records contain a mix of rural and urban records and are divided into several areas. London was selected as it was the most unique urbanised area. Other records, from Somerset, Kent and Middlesex, span several different regions, urban and rural, and the full variety of chantry foundations. Since all known types of foundations fall within these parameters, they offer a national overview of the use of chantries as a method of remembrance. The wide range of records selected also gives a greater opportunity to discover female choices.

Most medieval foundations dated before 1300 but, later, women did found examples of all types of institution. It was principally widowed heiresses as they were able to alienate land forever. This chapter starts with those women who were able to found prestigious establishments, such as religious houses and academic colleges. This provides a demonstration of female piety by women who had a higher level of control over their financial, social and religious choices. It will then go on to consider those women who were more restricted in their preferences. This latter aspect combines information from wills and chantry records.

Chantries, Obits, Minds, Trentals and the Bede-roll

The cheaper, and so more accessible, chantries will be explored through wills and chantry certificates. These show the methods used by those less financially secure: predominantly fixed-term chantries and obits, minds and masses but with a substantial subsection of perpetual memorials.[462] All those attending were expected to pray for the departed.[463] Another form of remembrance was the recitation of the bede-roll. This recalled those parishioners who had given gifts or money to the parish and reminded their parochial heirs to pray for their benefactor. The fraternities also provided a route to remembrance. A joint endeavour allowed the poorer parishioners access to chantries and prayers.[464]

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[462] Many wills specified a dole to encourage the parishioners to attend the various services. This benefited the testatrix through the prayers of the poor and by fulfilling the good work of feeding the destitute. The poor benefited physically through the food and spiritually by praying for the soul of the benefactor.

[463] A. Kreider, *English Chantries: the Road to Dissolution*, (Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 12.

[464] Discussed in Chapter 3.

Dame Margaret Matthew gave tenements and land to support a perpetual anniversary for herself at St Martin, Ongar.[465] The number of obits requested by men greatly outnumbers those from women although, proportionally, more women request memorials. The *Logge Register* shows over a third of testators chose, as a minimum, a single mass. Most requested multiple services over months or years. The *Earliest English Wills* show a similar percentage. A difference in practice is seen in the *Northampton Wills*. The laity appeared uninterested in the temporary memorials of masses and obits. This may be a regional custom.

Nevertheless, a chantry was a popular form of anamnesis, and remained so well into the 1540s. Many without ostensible support were continued by the parishioners, who donated money and rents to the foundation. This indicates two important facets of lay religion: firstly, an altruistic attitude to the memory of the Christian dead by remembering them through the chantry prayers. Secondly, and more importantly, it reveals a lay understanding regarding the importance of this remembrance. This is typified in Leeds parish church, hosting two chantries which were founded and supported by the parishioners.[466] This continued over the period under investigation. As late as 1541, Agnes Fenne, of St Mary Colechurch, requested that a priest pray for her for twenty years.[467] In 1543, Alice Baillie, a parishioner of St Michael le Querne, London, left sufficient money to provide obits for eighteen years.[468] Women, despite the changes made by the early Henrician reformation, continued to believe in the efficacy of prayers to reduce time spent in purgatory.

Chantries were founded during the lifetime of an individual, as this guaranteed its inauguration. Thomas and Joan Halleway began the preparations for their joint chantry prior to Thomas' death in 1453.[469] Many chantries, however, were founded after the death of the testatrix. There was an element of trust involved,

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[465] *London and Middlesex Chantry Certificates 1548*, ed. C. J. Kitching, LRS, 16 (1980) p. 22.

[466] *The Certificates of the Commission Appointed to Survey the Chantries, Guilds, Hospitals etc. in the County of York*, ed. W. Page, The Surtees Society, 2 vols, 91-92 (1894-5).

[467] Kitching, *London Chantries*, p. 45.

[468] Ibid p. 46.

[469] *The Pre-Reformation Records of All Saints' Church, Bristol: the Churchwardens' Accounts,* ed. C. Burgess, BRS, (1995) p. 72.

that the chantry would be instituted. Family members and friends were given responsibility, in wills, to set up these post-mortem chantries. Both women and men were expected to participate in the foundation of a chantry. Chantries were inaugurated by both sexes. Women are seen in the records as founding chantries, although not in the same numbers as men (*Tables 4.1 and 4.2*). Women did so with their husbands, with other women or by themselves. William Baker and his wife, Agnes, founded a chantry for St Nicholas in the parish church of Todcaster, Yorkshire.[470] Margaret Norforde, William Berghe and Christine Vaughn together gave lands and tenements for obits and a perpetual chantry at St Andrew's Holborn, London.[471] Alice Fry supported the chantry chapel called the Frith Chantry in the parish church in Halifax.[472] In 1314, a licence was granted to Ellen, wife of Nicholas Sexdecim Vallibus of York, for a chantry in the church of St Martin Congestreet.[473] This was to provide a priest to pray for Ellen, her husband and their two children. Elizabeth Easy founded a chantry in the parish church of Oldby, Yorkshire. It was licensed in 1333.[474] Women also left money to others to arrange their chantry. Margaret Reynolds gave £223 6s. 8d. to the Mercers to maintain a priest and chantry for her soul at St Pancras, West Cheap.[475] While wives often fulfilled their spouse's wishes, or incorporated them into their own mnemonics, they did not necessarily remember husbands within their chantry. Alice, the widow of John Columbers, founded a chantry in 1328 in Speldhurst, Kent. The chaplain was to hold daily prayers for Alice and her ancestors. There is no reference to her late husband and no record of John Columbers having an individual obit or chantry.[476] Marie de St Pol supported a chantry in a hermitage at St James in the wall, Cripplegate, London. [477] The anchorite was the chantry priest.[478] This was inaugurated for the soul of her late husband, Aylmer de Valance, late earl of Pembroke. It was maintained by the abbott and convent of

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[470] Page, C*ertificates in the County of York*, p. 23.

[471] Kitching, *London*, p. 40.

[472] Page, C*ertificates in the County of York*, p. 92.

[473] Ibid p. 352.

[474] Ibid p. 224.

[475] Kitching, *London Chantries*, p. 18.

[476] *Kent Chantry Records*, ed. A. Hussey, Kent Archaeological Society, XII, Part 1   (1936) p. 211.

[477] Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries*, p.116; Cook, *Medieval Chantries,* p. 35.

[478] Cook, *Medieval Chantries,* p. 35.

Garendon, Leicestershire.[479] Marie de St Pol gave two tenements to support the chantry in 1347.[480]

Table 4.1

Long term memorials referenced in Chantry Certificates

	Men				Women				
	Chantry Altar	Chantry Altar Perpetual	Chantry Chapel	Chantry Priests	Chantry Altar	Chantry Altar Perpetual	Chantry Chapel	Chantry Priests	Totals
London Chantry Certificates	8	5	1	13	0	0	0	0	27
% of total	29%	18.5%	4%	48%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Middlesex Chantry Certificates	1	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	5
% of total	20%	0%	20%	60%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
York Chantry Certificates	155	?*	1	0	8	?*	0	0	168
% of total	92%	0%	0.5%	0%	4.7%	0%	0%	0%	
Somerset Chantries	24	7	0	8	0	0	0	0	39
% of total	61.5%	17.9%	0%	20.5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Kent Chantry Certificates**	38	23	2	0	1	1	1	1	67
% of total	56.7%	34%	3%	0%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	

? indicates where there are certificates which cannot be defined as perpetual or time limited. These have been added to the non-perpetual column.
** Kent certificates included many for Canterbury Cathedral.*

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[479] Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries*, p. 116.
[480] Ibid.

Table 4.2

Obits referenced in Chantry Certificates

	Gender unknown / Parish	Men		Women				
	Obits	Obits	Perpetual obits	Obits	Perpetual obits	Male	Female	Overall Total
London Chantry Certificates	2	79	96	8	8	175	16	183
Middlesex Chantry Certificates	0	38	3	5	0	41	5	46
York Chantry Certificates (York)	58	5	29	0	0	34	0	92
Somerset Chantries	49	2	0	2	0	2	2	51
Kent Chantry Certificates	5*	2**	3	0	0	5	0	10

*includes one known perpetual chantry
**includes one husband and wife

The wills demonstrate several methods of support for the temporary memorials. The testatrix could leave a specific sum of money for a defined length of time. Peryne Clanbowe, in 1422, left money for two priests to pray for her soul and that of her late husband for one year.[481] The amount was not specified but was to be agreed by her executors. Maude Underwood, in 1481, left ten marks per annum for a priest to 'sing for [her] by the space of three years after her decease'.[482] Elizabeth Denys (London, 1485) divided her estate into two. One portion was allocated for the good of her soul. From this, she asked her executors to pay a priest to sing for her and her husbands – William Abell and Henry Denys – and all Christian souls for two years.[483] Some testatrixes chose to be remembered for less than a year. Margaret Counsell of Linton, Kent, left 33s. 6d. for masses for a quarter of a year (three months) for herself and her relations.[484] At Bearsted,

[481] Furnivall, *The Fifty Earliest English Wills*, p. 50.

[482] Boatwright, *Logge Register*, I p. 194.

[483] *The Logge Register of PCC Wills, 1479 to 1486*, ed. L. Boatwright, M. Habberjam, P. Hammond, Richard III Society, II (2008), p. 59.

[484] Ibid p. 5.

Kent, the chantry certificates note that the wills of Crystyan Berd, Mable Gardyner, Cabely Otrissh and Agnes Roxacre together provided a stipendiary priest for one quarter.[485] Women joined together for the good of their souls. Thomas Badbye of St Margaret, Bridge Street, London, requested perpetual obits but every two years instead of annually.[486]

Money or lands were left to fraternities, churchwardens, monasteries and friaries to oversee and provide obits, masses and prayers. Lady Alice West, in 1395, asked for perpetual prayers in the convent of St Helen's, London.[487] John Watts, a member of the Guild of the Trinity in St Cuthbert's church, asked to be put on the guild bede-roll.[488] The friars' houses were a frequent choice in urban areas, with money left to each of the house of friars in a town, to be remembered in the friars' prayers.[489] Anne Neville, duchess of Buckingham, requested in her will that all four orders of friars in London pray for her.[490] She made the same request of the houses of Syon, Charterhouse of London and Charterhouse of Sheen and included the anchorite in the walls next to Bishopsgate, London.[491] All were to pray for her soul.[492] The laity was aware that the chosen provider of an obit may not continue the practice, while still accepting the fee. Roger Butler of Northampton specified rent from a garden, left to the Fraternity of the Blessed Rood, to provide funds for his obit. He noted that the money should revert to his wife, Alice, if the obit was missed for two years.[493] Testatrixes left instructions for the foundation of other people's chantries. Margaret Leynham of Finchley, acted as executrix for her mother, seen in her own will of 1482. In it, she required that her mother's chantry be founded, complete with priest, 'according to the charge that I have taken upon me'.[494] In some cases, the will left the money and land in

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[485] Hussey, *Kent Chantry Records*, p. 13.

[486] Kitching, *London Chantries,* p. 25.

[487] Furnivall, *The Fifty Earliest English Wills*, p. 4.

[488] *The Survey and Rental of the Chantries, Colleges and Free Chapels in the County of Somerset*, Somerset Record Society, II (London, 1888) p. 390.

[489] Rosenthal also noted this preference in *Purchase of Paradise,* p. 84.

[490] Boatwright, *Logge Register*, 1 p. 59.

[491] Syon was a Bridgettine house. Margaret, duchess of Clarence lived near the abbey for the good of her soul. Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 144.

[492] Boatwright, *Logge Register,* 1 p. 59.

[493] Edwards, *Early Northampton Wills*, p 208.

[494] Boatwright, *Logge Register,* 1 p. 170.

the control of the churchwardens.[495] Another method of payment was reliant on family and friends. Money or goods left to specified feoffees had the stipulation that they made a defined payment at designated intervals for a chantry or obit.[496]

Obits were the most popular type of memorial. There were various strategies for ensuring an obit was held. A husband could leave money and lands to his widow on the understanding that the wife would fulfil the husband's wishes. Thomas Huntley, of St Mary Bothaw, London, left land to his wife Katherine for her life, on condition that she supported his obit.[497] In the parish of St Dunstan, Canterbury, John Roper left his wife a life interest in his lands and tenements providing she held his annual obits, with a mass on the following day.[498] Lady Laye gave 10s per annum for an obit for her late husband, William Kynge.[499] Women joined together to provide religious support after their deaths. Joan Makens and Alice Lynne left money for a priest to sing at the Jesus altar and provide obits in the parish church of St Dunstan in the East, London.[500] More prosperous women could set up their own obits. Dame Alice Bucknell gave lands towards a priest and obit in St Peter's, Cornhill, London.[501] Margaret Osborne left 10s. for her obit in the parish church at Frome, Somerset.[502] Jennet Franklyn requested an obit be set up in the parish church of Mickelgate, York. In Twickenham, Isabel Walker desired an obit.[503] Men set up obits for women. George Kempe gave eleven cattle for an obit for his mother Margaret in the church at Hampstead.[504] Money was not always required for an obit; goods could take the place of coins. In a rural area such as Hampstead, livestock were an adequate substitute.[505] Land could be used to provide the money for an obit. Anne Gasconne left £2. to buy land to provide her

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[495] Britnell, 'Town Life' p. 172.

[496] K. L. Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain*, (Cambridge, 1965) p.40.

[497] Kitching, *London Chantries*, p. 21.

[498] Hussey , *Kent Chantry Records*, p.2 57.

[499] Ibid p. 40.

[500] Ibid p. 13.

[501] Ibid p.21.

[502] *Somerset Chantries,* p. 104.

[503] Kitching, *London Chantries*, p. 77.

[504] Ibid p. 61.

[505] Stock was left in the care of the churchwardens, to be sold or bred from as appropriate. The sale of offspring or milk products formed the support for the obit. The money raised from these transactions was unlikely to support anything more than an obit. Similar payments of livestock were made at South Mimms. Kitching, *London Chantries*, p. 60. Chantries still required monetary input.

obit in the church of St Thomas the Apostle, London.[506] This was a recognised form of support. Anne Gasconne did not specify the way in which the land was to support the obit. The presumption is that the churchwardens were experienced in this type of obit. Short term memorials preferences are seen in *Table 4.3*.

The final methods of remembrance were trentals and the bede-roll. Joan Sheldon of Sheldon, Bedfordshire, in 1506-7, left 10s. to the monastery of Blessed Mary of Warden for a trental to be celebrated within a month of her death. She left the same to both the friars of Bedford and the church of the Virgin in Baldock for a trental within one month.[507] In 1483 Alice Warner (wife) requested a trental of masses for herself and her first husband, allowing 6s. 4d. to each priest involved, in the parish church of All Saints, Bread Street, London.[508] Elizabeth Rede (widow) from Boston, Lincolnshire, requested that all the houses of Friars in the town say a whole trental of masses for her soul and all souls. She allowed 10s. per order to do this.[509]

For many parishioners, the bede-roll was the remembrance of choice. For a small annual payment or an unusually ample gift, the giver's name was added to the bede-roll. This ensured that the testatrix was named at least once a year in the parish church. Through this, he/she was remembered in the prayers of the parishioners.[510] The bede-roll allowed both the testatrix and the parishioners to gain credit. The soul of the deceased was given aid in purgatory through the prayers of the living. The living accrued merit by supporting the dead. Agnes Butt of Elnestow, Bedfordshire requested a place on the bede-roll. She left 4d. to allow four named adults and children to be added to the bede-roll.[511] These may reflect a desire to have one's name read out to the congregation: to recall the testatrix to the memory of the prayer givers.

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[506] Kitching, *London Chantries*, p. 46.

[507] *Bedfordshire Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury*, ed. M. MacGregor, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 58 (1979) p. 85.

[508] Boatwright, *Logge Register*, II p. 252.

[509] Ibid p. 405.

[510] Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion,* p.113.

[511] Bedfordshire *Wills, 1484 - 1533*, ed. P. L. Bell, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 76 (1977) p.26.

Table 4.3

Short term memorials referenced in wills

	Male Wills				Female Wills				Total wills	
	Obits	Masses	Minds	Nil	Obits	Masses	Minds	Nil	Male	Female
Exeter Wills 1244 – 1349	3	1	0	10	2[i]	0	0	2	14	4
Percentage of total requests	21%	7%	0%	71%	50%	0%	0%	50%	■	■
50 Earliest Wills in English 1387 – 1454	4	16	0	23	0	3	0	4	43	7
Percentage of total requests	9%	37%	0%	53%	0%	41%	0%	59%	■	■
Logge Register v1 1479 – 1486	28[ii]	55[ii]	24	48	6[ii]	9	4	4	155	23
Percentage of total requests	18%	35%	15%	30%	26%	39%	17%	17%	■	■
Northampton Wills 1474 – 1503	6	13	1	101	3[ii]	3	0	22	121	28
Percentage of total requests	5%	10%	0.8%	83%	10%	10%	0%	78%	■	■

*includes one known perpetual chantry
**includes one husband and wife

New Foundations

Many parish churches housed colleges of priests, established by men. However, for the purpose of this thesis the foundations examined are those inaugurated by women. These comprise religious houses, schools, academic colleges and hospitals. Women founded institutions at all these levels: even the most prestigious method of remembrance, the foundation of religious houses, was possible to aristocratic women. Monastic foundations provided the soul of the benefactor with the prayers of monks, friars, canons or nuns; those who had renounced the world and whose prayers were particularly sanctified. Lesser types of foundations relied on the devotions of the lay inhabitants who gave prayers of thanks for the soul of their benefactor. Both men and women were able to inaugurate this type of foundation; the only criterion required was wealth. Most foundations in England were founded in the early centuries of the medieval period. Rosenthal found that the aristocracy founded sixteen new foundations

between c 1320 to c 1475.[512] While male founders were greatly in the majority, this section will concentrate on those foundations established by women. Due to the costs of these projects, all those who founded the institutions were from the elite.

Most women were financially disadvantaged with regard to foundations: the majority did not own land that they could alienate in perpetuity. However, women from the elite and gentry did participate in foundations through regular visits to convents.[513]   Of the sixteen new houses, only two were founded by women – Marie de St Pol, countess of Pembroke, and Elizabeth de Burgh (lady Clare).[514] Both women chose to found Franciscan houses; Marie de St Pol founded one of only four Franciscan nunneries in England.[515] Both women were widows who controlled their own estates: Elizabeth de Burgh held land in her own right (as a great heiress) while Marie de St Pol used land granted to her by the king.[516] They fulfilled the criterion of wealth. Marie de St Pol founded the Minoresses (Poor Clares or Franciscan nuns) at Denny (Cambridgeshire) and Elizabeth de Burgh the Franciscan friars at Walsingham (Norfolk).[517]   Marie de St Pol's decision to endow a convent required her to alienate more land than Elizabeth de Burgh. While a convent was traditionally given less support than a

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[512] J. Rosenthal, *The Purchase of Paradise: the Social Function of Aristocratic Benevolence 1307 - 1485*, (London, 1972) p. 54.

[513] M. Oliva, *The Convent and Community in Late Medieval England: Female Monasteries in the Diocese of Norwich, 1350 - 1540*, (Wildbridge, 1998) p. 117-18. These could be for a few days or longer term. Phillipa, daughter of the countess of Suffolk, boarded intermittently at the female Benedictine priory at Bungay (Suffolk), in the years 1416-7. She was accompanied by her maid. She also stayed in the Franciscan nunnery of Bruisyard, as did the countess of Suffolk's goddaughter.

[514] Marie de St Pol, countess of Pembroke was widowed at a young age and did not remarry. Elizabeth de Burgh (nee Elizabeth de Clare) was also a widow. Both were wealthy.

[515] Oliva, *Convent and Community*, pp. 285-6. There was a fifth Franciscan female house but this was short-lived, existing only between 1252 and 1272 in Northampton. Three other foundations were proposed but did not come to fruition. These were at Kingston-upon-Hull (1365), Newcastle (1286) and Clovelly (1393). There was only one female Dominican foundation, in Dartford.

[516] *Calendar of Patent Rolls: Edward III, A.D. 1327-1330*, (1891) p. 37. Marie de St Pol was granted four estates by the king for services rendered. Of these estates, three were for her lifetime only. The estates were promised to others after her death. Marie de St Pol lived until her early eighties. *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, p. 248. She effectively purchased the fourth estate, Denny, for the sum of £250. J. C. Ward, *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages*, (New York, 1992) p. 167. These services included serving as a lady to Queen Phillipa (1328), the guardianship to Phillipa's daughter Joan (1338) and acting for Edward III overseas
(c 1331).

[517] Unlike the male Franciscans friars who had permission to move away from their friaries, the female houses were enclosed.

male monastery, the nuns nevertheless had to be supported from endowments, while friars were able to solicit alms to support themselves and their foundation.[518] Convents were usually endowed with small, local properties on their inauguration, which brought it within the financial range of female founders.[519] Elizabeth de Burgh's choice of a friary rather than a monastery may have been for financial reasons, being comparable with a large hospital or house of canons.[520] Friars did not need the economic support that monks and nuns required. The large female Franciscan abbey at Bruisyard, Suffolk, was founded by a man - Lionel, duke of Clarence, husband of the lady of Clare's granddaughter.

Marie de St Pol was a long term supporter of the Minoresses. Initially supporting the Minoress convent of St Mary of Pity and St Clare at Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire, she then inaugurated the convent at nearby Denny.[521] In 1342, she merged the two foundations on the Denny site.[522] Marie de St Pol's preference towards the Franciscans may have been influenced by familial connections. Marie de St Pol was related to both the French and English royal families (as was Elizabeth de Burgh), who were supporters of the Franciscans. The latter's choice of a Franciscan house in 1347 in Walsingham may have been influenced by Marie de St Pol. The two women were friends as well as relations.[523] Elizabeth de Burgh was already a supporter of the shrine at Walsingham through

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[518]Oliva, *Convent and the Community*, p. 13. Despite the Franciscans being a mendicant order, the nuns were enclosed. Due to this they were dependant on gifts to provide an income, as they were unable to beg. From the fourteenth century, founders had to allow sufficient land to provide support to the foundation. J Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from its Origins to the Year 1517*, (Oxford, 1968) p. 408.

[519] Oliva, *Convent and the Community*, p. 13.

[520] Rosenthal, *Purchase of Paradise*, p. 65.

[521] VCH: *A History of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely*, ed. L.F. Salzman, , 10 vols, II (Oxford, 1948) pp. 259 and 292. Denise de Muntcherry was the wife of 1. Walter, brother of archbishop Stephen Langton and 2. Warin de Muntcherry. Widowed for the second time in 1255, she was granted permission to found a house of Franciscan Religious or friars in 1281. This was then altered to a house of Minoresses. It was not until 1293-4 that the nuns arrived in Waterbeach (at the same time the house in London was occupied). Denny was the site of a religious foundation in the mid twelfth century. A very short lived Benedictine house was founded on the larger island at Denny but was closed in 1159. In 1169, the Bishop of Ely transferred the lands to the Knights Templar, adding Waterbeach in 1174. The Denny site became a hospital for sick and elderly knights until 1308 and the confiscation of Templar property. The manor of Denny was granted to Marie de St Pol in 1327.

[522] E. Power, *Medieval English Nunneries, c. 1275 – 1535*, (Cambridge, 1922) pp. 685-692. The nuns of the convent of Waterbeach were unwilling to move to Denny. A site visit suggested that the Waterbeach convent was in or near a village while Denny Abbey was in isolated position.

[523] M. K. Jones, M. G. Underwood, *The King's Mother, lady Margaret Beaufort, countess of Derby* , (Cambridge University Press, 1992) p. 202: Rosenthal, *Purchase of Paradise*, p. 66.

her donations to the resident Austin canons. She had the opportunity to continue this support of the canons. However, she preferred to inaugurate a second foundation, that of Franciscan friars. Her request for a licence for a Franciscan friary was granted, despite opposition from the canons.[524]

Marie de St Pol had an affinity for the Franciscan religious practice. This is seen in her favouring the Franciscans beyond the founding of the abbey.[525] She retained rooms in Denny for her own use: she frequently stayed in the abbey. Marie de St Pol commissioned a breviary or an illuminated prayer book containing the summer and autumn offices of the Franciscan Use. It is not proved that it was commissioned for use in the Franciscan Denny Abbey: it may have been made as a support for her personal religious practice. A similar (possibly the same) book was left in her will to Emma Beauchamp, abbess of the Franciscan nunnery at Bruisyard, Suffolk.[526] Marie de St Pol's preference for the Franciscans is also seen in her choice of grave site. She was not interred next to her husband, Aymer de Valence.[527] He was buried in a prestigious site on the north side of the high altar of Westminster Abbey, where Marie de St Pol had commissioned a sumptuous tomb to be built for her husband.[528] She herself preferred to be buried in the convent of Denny, a strong indication of her religious practice. She was dressed in the habit of a Minoress for her interment and her grave was before the high altar.[529] Marie de St Pol was buried in a relatively poor foundation, compared to her husband's grave site: having commissioned her husband's tomb, she could have made provision for her own interment in the monument.[530] While it could be argued that after a widowhood of fifty years her loyalty to her husband had waned, she did select a relatively modest site, one where there were no religious

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[524] British History on-line, accessed 18 October 2014.

[525] See above.

[526] Cudl.lib/cam-uc.uk/views/MS-DD00005-00005/1 accessed 30 September 2014.

[527] Marie de St Pol had been widowed for decades, so this choice of burial may be less surprising. However, she did choose a convent in Cambridgeshire rather than the prestigious site in London. Westminster Abbey could provide many priests to pray for her soul and perform masses for the same. The nuns were only able to pray.

[528] www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/people. accessed 30 September 2014.

[529] VCH: *A History of Cambridge*, II p. 292.

[530] Ibid. The clerical poll tax record of 1377/78 gives the names of the nuns in Denny. These are women from the local gentry and burgess families, and include Benyte, Hunt and de Welle. It also indicates the catchment area for the convent. Thomasine Philpott was the daughter of John Philpott, fishmonger and mayor of London. The inhabitants of other convents were from more local areas around the foundation they joined.

men to provide daily multiple masses. In a female house there was only the priest(s) to say mass. Denny sheltered 41 nuns in 1379 while the four Benedictine convents in the diocese had only 42 nuns in total.[531] Denny was relatively prosperous, but only compared to other convents. Unlike Marie de St Pol, Elizabeth de Burgh chose to be buried in London, rather than in the friary she founded at Walsingham or the convent at Denny. She did choose a Franciscan convent, but the Minories without Aldgate.[532] Both women selected Franciscan nunneries as their final resting place, further confirming the importance of the Franciscan influence on their religious ideas.

A religious house provided prayers for the soul of the founder and his/her family: prayers of the religious were considered to be particularly effective. However, other, less costly, foundations provided prayers and so were like chantries too.[533] Hospitals, including alms-houses, bede-houses, lazer houses and asylums were relatively inexpensive types of foundation.[534] Although an endowment was required to support any institution permanently, where there was no endowment it was not necessary to pay fines to the crown.[535] If the foundation was not an established religious house the Church was not, overtly, involved so ecclesiastical permission was not required. It was, therefore, easier and less costly to found a hospital or maison dieu than a monastic foundation. A large number of hospitals had been founded centuries earlier and so had no named founders: where founders were identified, most of them were men (religious or lay). The medieval hospital was also a place of religion, usually dedicated to a saint; there was often a staff of clergy.[536] Some hospitals concentrated on worship, preparing the patient for a good death; others nursed their inmates. Those without funds designated a room in their home, or an unwanted building, as a hospital or maison dieu. This expedient brought them within the financial reach of those who were unable to provide an endowment. Irrespective of the type of the

[531] Ibid p. 295. In 1535, Denny was still one of the larger convents in England, with between twenty and thirty nuns (the Minories in London was also in this group). Out of the approximately one hundred and eleven female English houses, ninety-nine had fewer than twenty inhabitants. Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, p. 3.

[532] VCH: *A History of Cambridge*, II p. 120.

[533] R.M. Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England*,(London, 1909) pp. 278 – 336.

[534] G. H. Cook, *Medieval Chantries and Chantry Chapels*, (London, 1947) p. 32.

[535] N. Orme, M. Webster, *The English Hospital 1070 – 1570*, (London, 1995) p. 37.

[536] Ibid p. 35.

foundation, the prayers of the inmates, and the good work behind the gesture, provided the support to the founder's soul.

Women were involved in hospital foundations. Agnes Bottonham in 1379, gave a hospital to Harnham, Salisbury.[537] She specified exactly what it was to provide to the local population. There were to be thirty beds to sustain the poor and infirm. It was expected to feed the hungry, provide water for the thirsty, clothe the naked, comfort the sick, bury the dead, keep the mad safe, nourish widows and orphans and, finally, support women who were lying-in until they had delivered, recovered and been churched.[538] Nationally, however, few women inaugurated hospitals. Two triple foundations of chantry, school and alms-house were completed by women, having been inaugurated by men. Margaret, lady Hungerford, took on the support of the hospital at Heytesbury, initiated by her father-in-law Walter Lord Hungerford before 1449, by alienating three manors in 1472.[539] Alice Chaucer, duchess of Suffolk, was a co-founder of the Ewelme hospital with her husband, William de la Pole, in 1437.[540] She was buried in the associated tomb.[541] Lady Joan Huddlestone left money in her will to support the alms-house at Winchcombe (Gloucestershire).[542] Women also supported lazar hospitals.[543] They founded alms-houses.[544] Margaret, lady Hungerford, was involved with Heytesbury and lady Constance Knolles at Pontefract.[545] The inhabitants of all these foundations were expected to pray for the soul of their benefactor. Some, such as Ford Hospital, Coventry, provided a priest to say mass twice a week for the founder and their family.[546]

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[537] Clay, *Medieval Hospitals*, pp. 89-90.
[538] Ibid.
[539] Ibid p. 72.
[540] Ibid p. 71.
[541] Rosenthal, *Purchase of Paradise*, p. 70.
[542] N. Orme, *Education in the West of England, 1066-1540,* (Exeter, 1976), p. 188.
[543] C. Phythian-Adams, 'Ritual Construction of Society' in *A Social History of England 1250 – 1500,* eds. R. Horrox, W. M. Ormrod *(*Cambridge, 2006), p. 375.
[544] Orme, *English Hospitals*, p. 138.
[545] Ibid p. 141.
[546] Clay, *Medieval Hospitals*, pp. 278-336.

<u>Colleges and schools</u>

Colleges and schools served as chantries. The Church required a level of education, principally through that provided by grammar schools, to train priests to guide the laity. The university colleges provided the postgraduate study to advanced degrees. Education, according to Pope Nicholas IV, illuminated the hearts of men, moving them away from vice, ignorance and error and towards godliness.[547] Thus the provision of a seat of learning to provide religious instruction to the clergy was a good work. The statutes of Clare College, Cambridge, expressly declared that the foundation was to increase divine service for the public benefit.[548] While a few members of the lay elite inaugurated universities, this was not a popular form of remembrance. Many of the colleges were founded by bishops (Appendix 2). The provision of a college was a complex and time consuming task, which may explain the lack of elite support. Out of the twenty-five colleges founded in Oxford and Cambridge between 1249 and 1515, only seven were endowed by the laity. Of these seven, women were involved in the foundation of four and supported their husbands in two further colleges. [549] One woman, Marie de St Pol, was the sole founder of a college.

Of the lay foundations, women were involved, either individually or collaboratively, in the founding of 85 percent of the colleges. This is a high percentage when compared with other types of chantry, where women typically provided less than 10 percent of the specified chantries. It suggests that women had a greater interest in their children's education than did men. Where young children were given an education it was initiated by women. Both boys and girls were taught by their mother (or another woman of the house) until they were eight or nine. The education consisted of religious instruction, manners and basic

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[547] R. N. Swanson, 'Godliness and Good Learning: Ideals and Imagination in Medieval Universities and College Foundations' in *Pragmatic Utopia's: Ideals and Communities*, eds. R. Horrox, S. Rees Jones (Cambridge, 2001) p. 43.

[548] Ibid p. 45.

[549] Margaret Beaufort, countess of Richmond and Derby was wealthy through several widowhoods and a final marriage to Lord Stanley. Margaret, lady Hungerford (Margaret de Botreaux) had less wealth through part of her life following the payment of a large ransom for her son. Notwithstanding, she also provided monetary support. Dervorguilla of Galloway, wife of John Balliol, continued her husband's support for Balliol College after his death. In 1273 she founded the abbey, later known as Sweetheart Abbey, Dumfries, Scotland, in memory of her husband. His heart was buried in the abbey.

reading, when books were available.[550] This interest in the early education of their children is possibly another reason behind female support for colleges and schools. University colleges provided educational opportunities for priests and those intending to join the priesthood.[551] They gave the founder the prayers of the students and masters, and provided additional clergy to support the laity. Later (post c 1400), the curriculum expanded to include advanced grammar and the liberal arts for undergraduates, increasing the educational impact of the college.[552] All such colleges functioned as chantries and supported religious and secular learning. It can be seen that women showed a desire to support the Church and learning through their decision to found the colleges.

Marie de St Pol was responsible for the foundation of Pembroke College, Cambridge, obtaining a licence which allowed her to establish a house of thirty or more scholars under the control of a warden. Other women either supported existing colleges or were joint founders. A very early foundation was inaugurated by John Balliol and completed by his wife, Dervoguilla, after his death.[553] Robert Badew founded a college at Cambridge in 1338. Two years later he surrendered his right to Elizabeth de Burgh, lady Clare.[554] This college became Clare College. In 1341, Robert Eglesfield, chaplain to Queen Philippa, and Phillippa herself, founded Queen's College in Oxford.[555] Andrew Dockett, in 1446, founded a college in Cambridge. Margaret of Anjou petitioned her husband, Henry VI, to re-found the college; it became Queens' college, and was licensed by letters patent in 1448. The patronage of the college was taken over by Elizabeth, wife of Edward IV and, later still, by Anne, wife of Richard III. In 1506, Margaret Beaufort re-founded the hospital of Gods House as Christ's College with her confessor, John Fisher, bishop of Rochester. She was also involved in the conversion of St John's hospital into a college. This process started in 1505 but was not completed at her death in 1511. While Margaret Beaufort left no provision for the new college in her will, John Fisher carried through her plans for the new foundation. Women were interested

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[550] N. Orme, 'Education and Recreation' in *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England,* eds. R. Radulescu, A. Truelove, (Manchester, 2005).

[551] Orme, *Education and Society*, p. 166.

[552] Ibid. In 1282 Dervorguilla of Galloway provided a charter outlining the governance of the college, indicating that she took a practical interest in the foundation.

[553] VCH: A History of *Oxfordshire*, ed. H. E. Salter, M. D. Lobel, , 17 vols, III (1954) p.82.

[554] VCH: *History of Cambridge*, II, p. 340.

[555] VHC, *Oxford*, III.

in educational matters. While more lay women than men founded colleges, they did so in conjunction with men. This may have been due to financial constraints. As discussed above, wives did not hold land or money and widows were often limited by their husband's wills and so unable to make endowments. Marie de St Pol was unusual in her decision and capacity to found a college without masculine financial help.

Once the colleges had been inaugurated, testatrixes' left money in their wills to support the scholars. Margaret Leynham, a widow of Finchley, left the residue of her goods to the support of 'poor scholars' at Oxford in 1482.[556] Dame Margaret Choke, widow of Somerset, left six marks annually for four years to John Langley, to support him at Oxford as he worked towards the priesthood.[557] Isabelle Hyet, from the Forest of Dean, left 10s per annum to support poor scholars at Newlands.[558] A further method of providing educational opportunities, less costly than colleges and so more accessible, was through the provision of grammar and free schools. While many towns had grammar schools for the sons of the local gentry and merchants, endowed schools opened up basic education for the less wealthy.[559] A school served as another type of chantry. Katherine, lady Berkeley, founded the first free grammar school at Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucester, in 1384.[560] The schoolmaster was to be a priest; part of his duties was the singing of a daily mass for the soul of Katherine and those of her family.[561] The foundation was for one master and two poor scholars. The master was expected to teach anyone who came to the school, without payment. This became a template for later free schools.[562] Katherine, lady Berkeley, replicated on a smaller scale William of Wykeham's foundation at Winchester.[563] However, the expense incurred by the bishop put this type of school out of the reach of all but the

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[556] Boatwright, *Logge Register*, I p.175.

[557] Ibid p. 304.

[558] Orme, *English Schools*, p. 207.

[559] N. Orme, 'Education and Recreation' in *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, eds. R. Radulescu, A. Truelove (Manchester, 2005) p. 72.

[560] klbschool.org.uk accessed 18/11/2014. Katherine, lady Berkeley, had been widowed twenty years previously. Wootton was her dower property, where she resided.

[561] Orme, *English Schools*, pp. 188/90.

[562] N. Orme, *Medieval Schools from Roman Briton to Renaissance England*, (London, 2006) p. 137.

[563] D. Knowles, R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses in England and Wales*, (Harlow, 1971) p. 455. Winchester was first founded in 1373 and then re-founded in 1382 and 1387, before it was placed on a secure financial base.

wealthiest.[564] Katherine, lady Berkeley, devised a method of schooling that became affordable for the non-elite. Many later schools were founded that resembled that at Wootton, where the schoolmaster was often a chantry priest.[565] Margaret Beaufort, countess of Derby, founded a chantry or free school within the college of Wimborne.[566] Despite beginning the process in 1497, it was still not completed at her death in 1509: her will stipulated that the priest of the chantry that she founded for her parents should act as schoolmaster.[567] Less elite women also provided schools. Joan Greyndour, widow of Robert Greyndour, founded a school at Newland, Somerset, in 1445. This was not a free school but the fees were low.[568] In 1506, Thomasine Week founded a free school in Week St. Mary (Cornwall). It functioned as a chantry; the priest was to say mass daily for Thomasine Week and her family.[569] Women provided schools for their local areas.

Women's interest in the founding of grammar schools continued the educational trend seen in the college founders. Women understood the importance of learning. The local grammar schools prepared boys to continue their education in the colleges and Inns, providing future priests and lawyers: lawyers were needed to support the increasing need for educated bureaucrats.[570] Boys had to be educated prior to attending the colleges and inns. This was most easily done through the grammar schools, which also allowed a larger cross-section of society to attend college: that grammar schools could also provide a chantry was a religious bonus. Education was a good work. The provision of a school provided a secular and religious return and was within the financial gift of women.

Findings

The later medieval world firmly believed in heaven, hell and purgatory. The laity knew that the latter destination was their immediate stopping place after death. Wall paintings, books and homilies all expanded on the torments to be expected

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[564] Orme, *English Schools*, p. 187. The consecutive re-founding of Winchester indicates the costs involved.

[565] Cook, *Medieval Chantries*, p. 24.

[566] *Somerset Chantries,* p. 11.

[567] Jones, *The King's Mother*, p. 234.

[568] Orme, *English Schools*, p. 203.

[569] Orme, *Education in the West of England*, p. 176.

[570] Orme, 'Education and Recreation', p. 74.

there.[571] The gender of the deceased was immaterial. It was, therefore, the ambition of all Christians to minimise the time spent in purgatory, through good works, right living and prayer. After death, the deceased relied on the good offices of others. For this to happen, the living needed to be reminded of the dead, particularly by their names. Personal remembrance was thought to be most efficacious. In life, the deceased made provision for this memory through gifts to the church and to society.[572] Gifts to the church also included money, cattle and land. This normally allowed their names to be added to the bede-roll. Gifts to society, such as religious foundations and colleges were the province of the elite or, at the least, the wealthy gentry and merchants. These were given during the donors' lifetime. After death, money and land left in wills allowed for post-mortem remembrances.

Women were aware of the need to protect their souls after death. Their financial means were dependant on dowers, husbands and inheritance. This financial status as wives and widows meant that women did not own the property required for large endowments. Therefore their foundations were less lavish than those founded by men. The less prestigious foundations, such as alms-houses, maison dieu and hospitals, were within the gift of the non-elite women. Through the provision of these foundations, women provided practical help for the old and ill within their parish. The provision of these foundations had a twofold blessing. The inhabitants of the various foundations were expected to pray for the soul of the founder and her family. Women were aware of the need for prayers to hasten the passage through purgatory. The ill and poor were supported, a good work which was in itself a blessing, which fulfilled the societal female role of nurturer and mother.

The chantry records, churchwarden accounts and wills all reveal female requests for obits and chantries. The widowed elite alienated land to support chantries and chantry chapels. Non-elite women gave money and goods for masses and obits after their death. Women ensured that their names were added to the

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[571] Doom paintings adorned the chancel arch of many churches, showing the dead being divided between heaven and hell.
[572] Items such as chalices and patens could carry the name of the donor, keeping them in the minds of the parishioners.

bede-roll so that the living parishioners prayed for them by name. This insistence on remembrance and prayer indicates a female laity that understood the importance of prayers of the living with regard to the soul of the deceased. That is, that the soul in purgatory needed the prayers of the living to progress towards heaven.

Where they could, elite women did found religious houses; Franciscan friars and Minoresses. The less wealthy supported existing houses of monks, friars, canons and nuns. Women understood the necessity of prayer with regard to their souls, and the added value provided by the prayers of the religious community. Women also provided educational facilities. Bishops and women both founded scholastic colleges in Oxford and Cambridge to continue the education of the priesthood: lay men did not. Women showed an appreciation of the need to train priests to support the laity. They also commissioned the grammar schools and free schools needed to educate the students that fed into the colleges. The female founder of the first free school provided the template for later founders to copy. Women understood the need for an educated priesthood to lead the laity towards salvation. Colleges and schools had an additional benefit; that of continuing the education mothers gave to their younger children within the private sphere: a female nurturing role.

The important outcome, however, was that these outwardly less imposing foundations performed the same function as those inaugurated by their male counterparts. Foundations provided support for the founder's soul. Women may have been constrained by their financial situation with regard to post-mortem remembrance but they understood what support was needed after death. Women used their available monies and possessions to create the various foundations that provided such support. Through the provision of these hospitals and alms-houses, religious foundations, colleges and schools, women supported their local communities, a good work. Women provided practical foundations that profited the community, in addition to their own souls: useful piety. Women understood the importance of the prayers of the living for their souls in purgatory, and they provided for their souls by supporting their church and parish.

Conclusion

Recently, historians have re-evaluated the position of women in medieval society. While many considered female roles in the secular world, very little research was undertaken into women's participation in religious practice: so preventing the possibility of a female religious praxis to be uncovered. This thesis was devised to fill this gap by exploring women and their religious practice in the later Middle Ages. Due to the minimal source material available a methodology was selected that allowed the widest range of religious experience to be sampled. The long chronological period and considerable geographical area ensured the most complete understanding of societal religious practice was available. The official documents and the less formal wills were all mined for information regarding female praxis. These records indicated that women were visible in the medieval church. Indeed, not only present but participants; and, on occasion formulators.

The formal documents investigated in Chapter 2 reveal a female laity which was involved in the parish and church. Women, while being constrained with regard to gifts of money, are visible within the records. As discussed in Chapter 2, the proofs of age, churchwarden accounts, fraternity records and bishops registers all reveal female participation within the Church. Women had specific roles in the baptismal service and the religious education of children. The churching service was a universal practice endlessly repeated that focused on the celebration of childbirth and the purification of women. The churchwarden accounts reveal female participation. Here they are seen undertaking work for the parish and giving gifts to support the church or a specific aspect of religious practice. In the later records, women are seen to act as churchwardens; indeed, one female churchwarden was re-elected. Women were involved in the financial life of the church through their monetary support and physical labour. The church relied on active female participation to support the parish. These demonstrable interventions by women reveal a church that was reliant on female participation. Married couples purchased and shared seats, widows rented seats for themselves. The formal religious fraternity (or guild) records also show female

participation in religious practice. These groups, which were controlled by the laity, included women. Maidens groups raised money for their parish church. Women participated in religious practice through the fraternities, utilising their own money and skills.

Chapter 3 considered female religious preferences through the choice of saints and gifts given to the church. Women were aware, as were men, of the importance of saints and their influence. The cult of saints allowed women to travel away from the private sphere of the home into the public one of the world. Women did brave the dangers involved in travel for the sake of their (and others) souls. This female participation in religious expeditions reinforces our understanding of the importance of religious practice to medieval women. Wills and testaments also reveal female participation in religious practice. Women did leave money and goods to the church, specifying where it was to be spent, and allowing an insight into their religious preferences. Where a choice existed, women selected their preferred saints. They also made personal choices about the position of their grave. Women left very personal items to clothe the images – jewellery and clothes. Noticeably, more women than men left the tools to participate in religious practice in their wills.   Women left their mass books and primers to their extended female family. They understood the importance of prayer to the individual and so they gave the means of religious support to their heirs.

In Chapter 4, post-mortem remembrance was investigated, through chantries and foundations. Many female wills stated the testatrixes' wishes for prayers after their death. Women left money and goods to support chantries, in all their varieties. Elite women were able to alienate the funds for (normally) perpetual chantries, such as religious and educational foundations and hospitals. They founded friaries and convents. The less wealthy founded time-limited chantries and obits. Others left money and goods for masses and the bede-roll. All these strategies incorporated the prayers of the living to support the soul of the deceased in purgatory. Women were as cognisant as men of the necessity for this advocacy.

Female religious practice in the later Middle Ages is seen in the documents of record. Midwives could and did baptise babies. Churching had a woman at its centre, and women understood the necessity of participation for the sake of their souls. Godmother(s) had the triple responsibility for ensuring that the mother was churched, supporting a child's religious upbringing and ensuring it was confirmed. Wives gave gifts but were circumscribed by their husbands' wishes. Rich widows gave gifts and money to the parish and church, seen in the Bristol All Saints church records, both before and after death. Spinster groups, such as the Maidens at Croscombe, raised money for the church. Female religious gift giving is seen in the wills. Women supported religious foundations, chantries and schools.

A female religious culture has been demonstrated. While their practice did reflect their societal role of nurture, women turned it into a close personal relationship with religion. A variation between male and female praxis is visible. It is subtle, partly due to gendered societal expectations; men lived in the public sphere and women resided in the home. Women did participate in the general public religious practice, by engaging with parish works, fraternities and the cult of saints. The Church allowed a modicum of freedom to participate in religious practice through the roles of midwife and godmother. While the female role was constrained, women did utilise such freedoms as they were allowed. They understood that their practice was necessary to minimise the time they were to spend in purgatory, speeding their journey to the heavenly family, revealing a female laity which understood the importance of religious practice.

Where female practice varies from that of men, becomes a female praxis, is in their relationship with Jesus and the saints. Women gave personal gifts to the images, which reflected earthly family social interactions. Female giving mimicked the gifts left for family and friends; leaving favourite garments and jewellery to the saints. Women treated the images, and so the saints, as family; a practice which demonstrated a belief in the familial aspects of the Trinity and saints: it has not been seen among lay men. Female religious practice in the later Middle Ages can be seen as embodying a close, personal (even familial) relationship with Jesus and the saints. Women had a definite interest in education: seen in the

foundation of schools and colleges: the initial introduction of children to religious practice: the provision of priests for their fellow Christians. They understood the background to their religious practice and endeavoured to disseminate it to others. Women were unable to proselytise openly but their influence was present.

The religious practice of the individual women in the records is not confined to one parish or decade. Close examination of a comprehensive range of records has revealed that this practice was spread over a wide variety of parishes and counties. Chronologically, it became more popular over time. It fulfils a premise discussed at the beginning of this work – a countrywide lay female religious practice.

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Appendix 1[573]

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[573] Extract taken from J. D. C. Fisher *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West,* Alcuin Club Collections, No. XLVII (1965), pp. 160-63

Comparison of gender specific prayers in baptismal service

After the salt has been given, let the priest say over a male or female: The Lord be with you *and* Let us pray

Prayer

O God of our fathers, God who has established every creature, we thy suppliants beseech thee that thou wouldest vouchsafe to look favourable upon this thy servant / thine handmaid *N. ,* and suffer him/her that tastes this first morsel of salt to hunger only until he is filled with heavenly food: wherefore may he be always, O Lord, fervent in spirit, rejoicing in hope, serving thy name; and lead him/her to the laver of new regeneration, so that with thy faithful people he/she may be found meet to receive the eternal rewards of thy promises. Through our Lord.

Let this prayer follow over a male child only, without The Lord be with you *but with* Let us pray.	*Let this prayer follow over a female child only, without* The Lord be with you and *without* Let us pray.
God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, God who didst appear to thy servant Moses on mount Sinai, and didst lead thy children Israel out of the land of Egypt, appointing for them the angel of thy mercy, who should guard them by day and by night, we beseech thee, Lord, that thou wouldest vouchsafe to send thy holy angel from heaven, that he might likewise guard this thy servant *N*. and lead him to the grace of thy baptism. *Without* Through Christ	God of heaven, God of earth, God of angels, God of Archangels, God of patriarchs, God of prophets, God of apostles, God of martyrs, God of confessors, God of virgins, God of all that live good lives, God of whom every tongue confesses and before whom every knee bows, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, I invoke thee, Lord, upon this handmaid *(look upon her) N*. that thou mightiest vouchsafe to lead her to the grace of thy baptism.
Adjuration over a male without The Lord be with you, *and without* Let us pray, *the priest saying thus*	*Let this adjuration follow over a female*
Therefore, accursed devil, hearken to thy sentence, and give honour to the living and true god: give honour to Jesus Christ his son and the Holy Spirit, and depart from this servant of God *N*. because our God and Lord	Therefore, accursed devil, hearken to thy sentence, and give honour to the living and true god: give honour to Jesus Christ his son and the Holy Spirit, and depart from this handmaid of God *N*. because

Jesus Christ has vouchsafed to call him to himself by the gift of the Holy Spirit to his holy grace and blessing and to the fount of baptism*(Here let the priest make the sign of the cross on the forehead of the infant with his thumb, saying thus:*) which we place upon his forehead , do thou, accursed devil, never dare to violate. Through him who is to come to judge the quick and the dead and the world by fire.

R. Amen

The following prayer is said over a male without The Lord be with you, *and without* Let us pray

O God, the immortal defence of all that beg, the deliverer of those that beseech, the peace of those that ask, the life of those that believe, the resurrection of the dead, I invoke thee upon this servant *N.* who, seeking the gift of thy baptism, desires to obtain eternal race by spiritual regeneration. Receive him, Lord: and because thou hast vouchsafed to say, Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you, grant a reward to him that asks, and open the door to him that knocks, so that having obtained the eternal blessing of the heavenly washing, he may receive the promised kingdom of thy bounty, who livest and reignest with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, throughout all ages.

R. Amen

Adjuration over a male without The Lord be with you, *and without* Let us

our God and Lord Jesus Christ has vouchsafed to call her to himself by the gift of the Holy Spirit to his holy grace and blessing and to the fount of baptism. And this sign of the holy cross, *(Here let the priest make the sign of the cross on the forehead of the infant with his thumb, saying)* which we place upon his forehead, do thou, accursed devil, never dare to violate. Through him who is to come to judge the quick and the dead and the world by fire.

R. Amen

Let this prayer follow over a female child only, without The Lord be with you and *without* Let us pray.

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, God who didst set free the tribes of Israel from bondage in Egypt and through Moses thy servant didst admonish them in the desert to keep thy commandments, and didst free Susanna from a false accusation, I humbly beseech thee, O Lord, that thou wouldest also set free this thine handmaid *N. (look at her)* and vouchsafe to lead her to the grace of thy baptism.

pray, th*us:* Hearken, accursed Satan, adjured by the name of the eternal God and our Saviour his Son: with thy envy thou hast been conquered: trembling and groaning depart: let there be nothing common to thee and to this servant of God N*.* who now ponders upon heavenly things, who is about to renounce thee and thy world, who is about to live in blessed immortality. Give honour therefore to the Holy Spirit as he draws near, who descending from the highest arch of heaven, having confounded thy deceits, will make his breast cleansed in the divine fount and sanctified into a temple and dwelling place for God, so that, inwardly set free from all the hurts of his past sins, this servant of God may ever give thanks to the everlasting God, and bless his holy name throughout all ages. Amen	
Let this adjuration follow.	*Let this adjuration follow*
Therefore, accursed devil, hearken to thy sentence, and give honour to the living and true god: give honour to Jesus Christ his son and the Holy Spirit, and depart from this servant of God *N*. because our God and Lord Jesus Christ has vouchsafed to call him to himself by the gift of the Holy Spirit to his holy grace and blessing and to the fount of baptism*(Here let the priest make the sign of the cross on the forehead of the infant with his thumb, saying thus:*) which we place upon his forehead , do thou, accursed devil, never dare to violate. Through him who is to come to judge the quick and the dead and the world by fire.	Therefore, accursed devil, hearken to thy sentence, and give honour to the living and true god: give honour to Jesus Christ his son and the Holy Spirit, and depart from this servant of God *N*. because our God and Lord Jesus Christ has vouchsafed to call him to himself by the gift of the Holy Spirit to his holy grace and blessing and to the fount of baptism*(Here let the priest make the sign of the cross on the forehead of the infant with his thumb, saying thus:*) which we place upon his forehead , do thou, accursed devil, never dare to violate. Through him who is to come to judge the quick and the dead and the world by fire.
R. Amen	*R*. Amen
	Exorcism over a female only, without The Lord be with you*, and*

| | *without* Let us pray.

I exorcise thee, unclean spirit, by the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, that thou come out and depart from this handmaid of god, *(look upon her) N.* for he himself commands thee, accursed one, damned and to be damned, who opened the eyes of the man that was born blind, and on the fourth day raised from the tomb.

Let this adjuration follow

Therefore, accursed devil, hearken to thy sentence, and give honour to the living and true god: give honour to Jesus Christ his son and the Holy Spirit, and depart from this handmaid of God *N.* because our God and Lord Jesus Christ has vouchsafed to call her to himself by the gift of the Holy Spirit to his holy grace and blessing and to the fount of baptism. And this sign of the holy cross, *(Here let the priest make the sign of the cross on the forehead of the infant with his thumb, saying)* which we place upon his forehead, do thou, accursed devil, never dare to violate. Through him who is to come to judge the quick and the dead and the world by fire. |
|---|---|
| *Then over both males and females let the following prayers be said, without T*he Lord be with you *and without,* Let us pray | |

Appendix 2
Educational Colleges with founders and dates

Date	Founder	City	Gender	Religious / lay	College / Hostel
1249	William of Durham	Oxford	M	Religious	University College
Pre 1266	John Balliol	Oxford	M	Layman*	Balliol
1266	Walter de Merton	Oxford	M	Lay	Merton
1280	Hugh de Belsham	Cambridge	M	Religious	Peterhouse

1314	Walter Stapleton, bishop of Exeter	Oxford	M	Religious	Exeter
1324	Alan de Brome	Oxford	M	Religious	Oriel
1326	Richard de Badew / Elizabeth de Burgh	Cambridge	M	Lay	Clare
1341	Robert of Eglesfield, clerk/ Phillipa of Hainault	Oxford	M / F	Religious / Lay	Queen's
1347	Marie de St Pol	Cambridge	F	Lay	Pembroke
1347	Edmund Gonville, clerk	Cambridge	M	Religious	Gonville & Caius
1350	William Bateman, bp of Norwich	Cambridge	M	Religious	Trinity Hall
1352	Gild of Corpus Christi and Blessed Virgin Mary	Cambridge	N/A	Guild	Corpus Christi and the college of the BVM
1379	William of Wykeham, bp of Winchester	Oxford	M	Religious	New College
1427	Richard Fleming, bp of Lincoln	Oxford	M	Religious	Lincoln College
1438	Henry Chichele, archbishop of Canterbury	Oxford	M	Religious	All Souls
1441	Henry VI	Cambridge	M	Lay	King's
1446 / 1448	Andrew Dockett, clerk / Margaret of Anjou	Cambridge	M	Religious	Queens'
1448	William Waynflete, bp of Winchester	Oxford	M	Religious	Magdalen
1473	Robert Wodelarke, clerk	Cambridge	M	Lay	St Catherine's
1496	John Alcock, bp of Ely	Cambridge	M	Religious	Jesus
1506	Margaret Beaufort / Henry VII (refounded)	Cambridge	F	Lay	Christ's College
1511	John Fisher, bp of Rochester / Margaret Beaufort	Cambridge	M /F	Religious/ Lay	College of St John the Evangelist
1512	William Smyth bs / Richard Sutton	Oxford	M	Religious	Brasenose
1513 / 1517	Bishop Fox	Oxford	M	Religious	Corpus Christi
1515	John Layland, clerk, bp of Lincoln	Oxford	M	Religious	Christ Church

*The founding of the college was a penance imposed by the Church.