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LAY PIETY IN THE BOROUGH OF COLCHESTER, 1485-1558

The University of Michigan

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LAY PIETY IN THE BOROUGH
OF COLCHESTER, 1485-1558

by
Laquita Mae Alexander Higgs

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(History)
in The University of Michigan
1983

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Marvin B. Becker, Chairman
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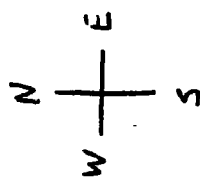
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>B.I.H.R.</u>	<u>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, London</u>
<u>Borth.P.</u>	<u>Borthwick Papers (York; described as St. Anthony's Hall Publications to no. xxvi)</u>
Colch.C.R.	Colchester Court Rolls. (The unpublished Benham translation was used in this study.)
<u>Econ.H.R.</u>	<u>Economic History Review</u>
<u>E.E.T.S.</u>	<u>Early English Text Society</u>
<u>E.H.R.</u>	<u>English Historical Review</u>
<u>E.R.</u>	<u>Essex Review</u>
<u>E.R.O.</u>	<u>Essex Record Office, Chelmsford</u>
<u>J.B.S.</u>	<u>Journal of British Studies</u>
<u>J.Eccl.H.</u>	<u>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</u>
<u>J.I.H.</u>	<u>Journal of Interdisciplinary History</u>
<u>J.P.</u>	<u>Justice of the Peace</u>
<u>L.P.</u>	<u>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</u>
<u>M.P.</u>	<u>Member of Parliament</u>
<u>O.B.</u>	<u>The Oath Book or Red Parchment Book of Colchester</u>
<u>P.C.C.</u>	<u>Prerogative Court of Canterbury</u>
<u>P.P.</u>	<u>Past and Present</u>
<u>P.R.O.</u>	<u>Public Record Office, London</u>
<u>R.C.H.M. Essex</u>	<u>Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Essex</u>
<u>R.P.B.</u>	<u>Red Paper Book of Colchester</u>
<u>S.C.H.</u>	<u>Studies in Church History</u>
<u>T.E.A.S.</u>	<u>Transactions of the Essex Archeological Society</u>
<u>T.R.H.S.</u>	<u>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</u>
<u>V.C.H.</u>	<u>Victoria History of the Counties of England</u>

Map 1
Some Leading Towns in Tudor England



Map 2
Tudor Colchester



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Part One: Introduction to This Study

First, I bequeath and recommend my soul to almighty God, my maker and savior, and to our blessed lady St. Mary, his glorious mother, and to all the holy hallows in heaven.

--Will of John Barker, Colchester smith, 1507

To bequeath one's soul to God was a commonplace in medieval wills for most people in that time were keenly aware of God's existence and of their own place in his church. To use R. W. Southern's analogy, medieval men and women were born into the church in much the same way as we moderns are born into the compulsory society of the state.¹ To believe in God and to be within the church, however, was not necessarily to be pious, for though the church played an important role in the life of every medieval person, especially at crucial times such as birth and death, yet there were then, as now, those who believed and practiced their Christianity in greater depth than others. In the early medieval period, those who were more devout would, if possible, withdraw from the world and enter a monastery; in fact, even in the late 11th century the two terms religio and vita religiosa were synonymous with monastic orders and monastic life, and the lay person, outside the clerical orders, was thought incapable of a higher spirituality.² In the later medieval period, however, it became increasingly acceptable for the pious to remain in the world as laymen, and this phenomenon of late medieval lay piety,³ of the attempt to live devoutly

though in the world, is the subject of this study, and in particular lay piety as manifested in Colchester, a leading provincial borough in southeastern England, in the county of Essex.

Colchester, with a population of 5,000 or more in late medieval times, was not a wealthy town compared to London, yet Colchester was twelfth in riches among the towns in England, as revealed by the lay subsidy of 1523-1525.⁴ The manufacture of woolen cloth had an early start in Colchester, but there was a diversity of occupation which must have added to the town's resilience through the years. Commerce was important, thanks to Colchester's use of the Ipswich port and its own port on the River Colne, as well as its overland proximity to London, fifty-one miles away. Colchester was the leading market town for northeastern Essex, though it was not the county town nor was it a cathedral city.

The borough of Colchester had a strong sense of its independence, subject only to the king. Its ancient charters allowed self-governance, the right to collect its own taxes (with an annual payment to the king), the right to hold its own courts, and the right to regulate its market, its port, and its long-famous oyster fishery. There were no local gentry families which were overly dominant, and, although some Colchester merchants gained riches, none were exceptionally wealthy. Unhampered by dominant local lords, the borough structure flourished and provided a favorable setting for lay piety to grow among rather ordinary people.

Colchester's sense of history had a place in its religious development. Already Tudor Colchester had a long and proud history pre-dating the coming of the Romans, and a cursory reading of the Colchester Oath Book and the Red Paper Book,⁵ both compiled by the medieval

borough to be kept as permanent records, shows the makers of the books to be very aware of their past. They readily mixed history and legend, and as a borough they proudly cited their link to early Christianity: Coel (remember that "merry old soul" and "his fiddlers three"?), rebellious governor of the district, gave his daughter Helen as concubine to the Roman general who was besieging Colchester, thereby causing the siege to be raised. Helen's son who came of the union was later adopted by his Roman father after marriage to Helen, and that son was to become the great Constantine, first Emperor of Rome to become a Christian. Through Helen, then, according to the Colchester story, Colchester had a palpable tie to early Christendom, and that connection helped give the borough a sense of identity. In late medieval Colchester the leading religious guild, which was guided by the town fathers, was named after St. Helen. Even today, overlooking Colchester's High Street, is a statue of Helen, facing Jerusalem and with scepter and cross in hand, standing impressively atop the bell tower of the Victorian town hall, and today's borough arms show the True Cross which was revealed to Helen in a vision.⁶

Medieval Colchester was large enough--and pious enough--to support sixteen parish churches, eight within the walls and eight in the larger area of the borough (about 12,000 acres) outside of the town walls. Colchester also sustained four religious houses representing four different orders: Benedictine, Augustinian, Franciscan, and the Crossed Friars. Yet late medieval Colchester was probably no more religious than most towns in England; however, James Oxley, ecclesiastical historian of Tudor Essex, believes that many people in Essex were passionately devoted to religion. Certainly Colchester had long had a

religious reputation--of sorts. Sir Anthony Browne, Queen Mary's subaltern, is said to have remarked that Colchester "is a harbourer of heretics and ever was." As early as 1429 a Lollard was burned in Colchester, and in the early Tudor period Colchester Lollards kept the Bishop of London's Vicar-General busy investigating their supposed heresy. The Colchester of Mary's reign also had its fair share of Protestant martyrs to die in the flames--at least eleven men and women between 1555 and 1558. Such nonconformity was rather more individualistic than was orthodox piety, but even so the Lollards and the Protestant martyrs had a strong sense of solidarity and community among themselves, and they too played a role in the communal borough setting. Some of the martyrs came from families which were surprisingly high up in the borough structure, e.g. the son of a former Colchester bailiff died in the flames in Oxford in 1538.⁷ Heresy is indeed a kind of lay piety, and it adds color and excitement to the picture, but more important in the town was conventional lay devotion, and though we shall certainly be compelled to investigate nonconformity, our emphasis will be on orthodox lay spirituality.

Section 1:

Historical Background of Lay Piety in England

The roots of English lay piety went back at least as far as the late 11th century when the writings of Archbishop Anselm provided a major impetus toward a change in the image of Christ, from the figure of Christ in judgment toward the conception of the loving Jesus with whom one could identify. Anselm's theology taught that the atonement of man grew out of Divine Goodness and that the voluntary and com-

passionate assumption of human nature by the Son of God demanded the highest response from the redeemed. As important as Anselm's theology was, however, it was his written prayers, with their emotional outpourings tempered by clear, concise thinking, which answered a need for the educated laity. Adelaide, the daughter of William the Conqueror, was the recipient of Anselm's first prayers in 1104, but it was not until the 14th century that the seeds planted by Anselm produced a substantial growth among laymen in England, possibly because so much spiritual vitality was centered on the reform of the church in the 12th century and on the development of church doctrine and theology in the 13th century. Also, the 13th century was a time of comparative peace and economic expansion, a confident period in contrast to the turbulent century which succeeded it. In the 14th century, troubled by war, rebellion, and the Black Death, Anselm's writings were popular, and many anonymous authors in England wrote under his name; the intense interest in that century in the life and passion of Jesus, which was sparked by Anselm, was highly developed by the English mystics, particularly by Richard Rolle, and even a layman, Henry, Duke of Lancaster, wrote a religious work, the Livre de seyntz medicines, rated by W. A. Pantin as one of the most remarkable religious works of the period.⁸

Most of the early known examples of lay piety were from the nobility, but in 14th century literature Chaucer, in his Canterbury Tales, depicted three ideal types in medieval society: the righteous cleric (Chaucer's clerk of Oxenford as well as his village priest); the chivalrous knight just returned from a crusade where he had "foughten for oure feith"; and the simple, rural workman. As well as being representatives of the 3 classes in society, they were all ideal

examples of lay piety; in fact, Chaucer rather outdid himself in describing the devotion of the simple workman. After getting past the fact that the plowman "hadde ylad of dong ful many a fother [load]," Chaucer commented:

A trewe swynkere [worker] and a good was he,
 Lyvyng in pees and parfit charitee,
 God loved he best with al his hoole herte
 At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,
 And thanne his neighebor right as hymselfe.
 He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
 For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,
 Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.
 His tithes payde he ful faire and wel,
 Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel.⁹

Though quite modern in his depiction of the psychology of his characters, Chaucer, being a poet of the court, was hardly interested in restructuring society, and he looked to the past when he made the few ideal characters in the Canterbury Tales to be the perfect representatives of the three traditional social divisions: priests, warriors, and workers. For Chaucer merchants and townsmen were not worthy of much consideration--certainly they were not, in his eyes, the holder of the ideals to which society could aspire.

It was, however, those very merchants and townsmen who in Chaucer's own time, had already acquired some riches from commerce and some of the learning--and inner spirituality--of the cleric. A new ideal was slowly developing in England: that of the deeply pious layman involved in the active life of the world, even in the acquisition of money. The new level of lay piety which emerged in late medieval England and which is the object of this study, was the working out of the changing ideal in society which would gradually confuse and partly overturn the neat divisions of society so charmingly illustrated by Chaucer's pilgrims.

Changes were afoot in the 14th century; coming together were several impulses toward an inward religion of the lay person, involving a deeper, more spiritual relationship with God, something more than perfunctory observance of ritual. The preaching friars of the 13th century had prepared the way (the Franciscans established themselves in Colchester sometime before 1279),¹⁰ and then the terror of the Black Death in the mid-14th century provided an atmosphere conducive to the reception by the people of a more intimate approach to God. The wars and the diseases of the time produced an uncertainty of spirit which was manifested in the preoccupation with death evident in the art of the period--in the reproduction of the dance of death and worm-eaten skeletons. People were reaching out for the certainty of God, and some were emboldened to attempt direct contact with God. The mystical, highly emotional and individualistic approach to God had been strictly the province of clerics and the few who might have access to their writings, but Richard Rolle did much to bring it to the people of England.

Rolle's writings were the culmination of the English devotional tradition with its affective piety centered on Jesus, a type of devotion which can be traced back in England as far as Anselm in the late 11th century. Rolle's great concern for his "even-Christians" inspired him to write some works in English in his mature years in the 1340's. He was not writing in response to the Black Death, since he himself died in mid-century, probably from the plague, but his writings found a ready audience among the people after the plague. His writing in the vernacular was of first importance; Latin, still the language for communication with the learned, was used by Rolle when writing his most

explicit mystical treatises, probably for clerics. Had Rolle been writing for the English nobility, he would have written in French, still their language at that time, but he wisely wrote in the language that the people could understand.¹¹

In Rolle's first English writing, a Psalter, incidentally a work of import in the history of English prose, Rolle emphasized an individual, interior religion of feeling: "Grete habundans of gastly confort and ioy in God comes in þe hertes of þaime þat says or synges devoutly þe psalmes in lovyng of Jhesu Crist."¹² Rolle's English Psalter was translated into all the dialects of England, and it seems to have been the orthodox English Psalter up to the time of the Reformation, according to Rolle scholar Hope Emily Allen. Rolle's Psalter was the only Biblical book in 15th century English which the laity might use without license, prohibitions against lay Bible reading having been enjoined in 1408 as a measure against heresies, so it comes as no surprise when Margaret Deanesly, from her reading of late medieval wills, reports that of books in the vernacular Rolle's appears to be the most frequently owned.¹³

Certainly by the 14th century more lay people were literate than had formerly been the case, and lay literacy was not confined to the nobility. The country gentry, merchants, and craftsmen could often read, and according to A. R. Myers there is "much evidence that they possessed and read mystical and devotional works." Sylvia Thrupp found that in London in the reign of Edward IV, 40% of the lay male Londoners could read Latin, a figure that tallies with a smaller group of men in 1373. Thrupp speculated that some 50% of the 15th century male Londoners could read English, and among the merchant class all the men

read English and most of them had facility in Latin. Furthermore, most of the women from the merchant class had found ways of learning to read and write English. Even in 15th century Colchester literacy was a "common accomplishment among most merchants who had more than parochial interests," affirms Geoffrey Martin. The English language had gained much wider currency in the second half of the 14th century; in 1362 English was made the language of the law courts, and the next year, for the first time, Parliament was opened in English. The earliest known will in English dates from 1387, and Henry of Lancaster spoke in English when he formally claimed the throne in 1399.¹⁴

Another factor at work in the late 14th century was the disaffection from the established church. Anti-papalism was manifested in the Statute of Provisors, first passed in 1351, and in the Statute of Praemunire (1353), and the Papacy itself was hardly an example of church unity, especially after the Great Schism began in 1378. Anti-clericalism abounded; one does not have to read far in either Chaucer or Langland to find examples of the depraved churchman worthy only of ridicule and laughter. Also, the period of strain which followed on the renewal of the Hundred Years' War in 1369 and the ineffectual government in the dotage of Edward III and the minority of Richard II facilitated the rise of extremism. John Wyclif's opinions on disendowment of the clergy and the necessity of reform of the church by the state found ready listeners and strong political backing, giving Wyclif for a brief time a powerful platform. England's first native heresy was born.

Wyclif's political influence was short-lived but his influence on one stream of nonconforming lay piety, the Lollards, endured well into

the 16th century. Whereas the mystical tradition stressed prayerful communion with Jesus, the "Word which was made flesh," Wyclif's followers emphasized the written Word in the Bible. Inspired by Wyclif's teaching, English translations of the Bible were made which were to have lasting significance among the Lollards. A 1527 visitation revealed that some Colchester Lollards had owned parts of the English New Testament for some years, and some illiterate Lollards had memorized parts of it.¹⁵ Their contact with the Scriptures and other Wyclifite writings led them to conclude that images of saints, pilgrimages, purgatory, and transubstantiation were false practices and beliefs. Far removed from orthodox piety, Lollard beliefs took away some of the primary reasons for the existence of the church and its priests, and Lollards exerted influence through their strong sense of lay responsibility in religious matters. As Janet Coleman has recently commented, "Wyclif and his followers were giving laymen a new freedom with increased individual responsibility."¹⁶ The very fact of Lollardy's continued existence indicated a need, among some at least, for something beyond that which was offered by the church. Also, Lollardy probably played a part in making even the orthodox layman think about his own role as a Christian, so that he found confidence in new means of expressing his devotion to God. It is however the more conventional stream of lay piety that is of greater significance in English history, and in Colchester history, than was the unorthodox Lollardy.

Some of the first articulation of the more conventional lay piety came from another 14th century mystic, Walter Hilton. Writing later in the century than Rolle, after heresy had become a matter of concern, Hilton gave a more balanced, church-oriented statement of interior

religion than did the iconoclastic Rolle, and Hilton's English writings, after Rolle's, were the most popular in the 15th century. Hilton's Mixed Life, known to have been owned and read by laymen of the merchant class,¹⁷ stated a case for the layman's devout living in the world. He wrote that the mixed life (mixing the active and the contemplative) belonged to certain prelates and curates who had the cure of men's souls, but it also belonged "generally to some temporal men, the which have sovereignty with much wealth of worldly goods, and have also as it were lordship over other men for to govern and sustain them. . . . For, if these men . . . will leave utterly the business of the world . . . and wholly give them to contemplative life, they do not well, for they keep not the order of charity. For charity, as thou knowest well, lieth both in love of God and of thine even-Christians."¹⁸

Hilton's statement, important as it is, spoke primarily to lords or to those who already had much wealth, but other segments of society were also being addressed. Wyclifite writings were speaking to the lesser folk; for example an undated but early Wyclifite text asserts in a prayer, "and so me thinketh, Lord, that praying of long prayers is not the service that thou desirest, but keeping of thy behests; and that a lewed [unlearned or lay] man may serve God, as well as a man of religion. And so, Lord, our hope is, that thou will as soon hear a plowman's prayer, if he keep thy behests, as thou wilt do a man's of religion."¹⁹

A slightly earlier use of the image of the simple, devout plowman comes in William Langland's Piers the Plowman in which Piers becomes an image even for Christ himself. Though an advocate for the poor and very much against avaricious merchants, Langland surprisingly

states a case for the acquisition of money so that one might perform deeds of charity. Addressing another level of society are the words, in a modern prose translation, in a section in which Truth is sending Piers and all his helpers a pardon for their sins:

In the margin of the Bull, the merchants too had many years' indulgence, but none from guilt as well as punishment--the Pope would never grant them that, for they will not keep Holy Days as the Church requires, and they swear 'By my soul!' and 'God help me!' against their conscience, in order to sell their wares.

But Truth sent the merchants a letter under His secret seal, telling them to buy up boldly all the best goods they could get, then sell them again, and use the profits to repair the hospitals and to help folk in trouble--to get the bad roads mended quickly and rebuild the broken bridges--to enable poor girls to marry or to enter nunneries--to feed the poor and the men in prisons--to send boys to school or apprentice them to a trade, and to assist Religious Orders and give them better endowments.--'And if you will do these things,' said Truth, 'I myself will send you St. Michael my Archangel when you die, so that no devil shall harm your souls or make you afraid; and he will ward off despair, and lead your souls in safety to meet my saints in Heaven.'

The merchants were pleased with this, and many of them wept for joy, praising Piers for gaining them such an indulgence.

Thus, even the acquisition of money might be sanctified, through the ideal of charity.²⁰

The 14th century was indeed a seminal period in the change of Christian ideals away from the ideal of poverty and withdrawal from the world, toward the ideal of charity to the world and in the world. The uncertainty produced by war, disease, and the failures of the church--coupled with the positive effect of increasing literacy--made the people ripe for a renewal of their faith. In another metaphor, the people were fallow soil, too little cultivated by the church and eager for the proper seed to be planted within them. Strangely enough, mysticism, usually so esoteric and remote, played a crucial role through Rolle's and Hilton's concern for their "even-Christians," their implement being their use of the vernacular, and the seed, their encouragement to those

engaged in worldly pursuits to cultivate a personal devotion to God which would result in the fruits of charity. Others, such as Wyclif and Langland, were giving similar messages to differing ranks of the laity, and we find in the 15th century that there had developed a popular religious yearning and an appetite for the divine which was not being entirely satisfied by the church. The church, continuing to set clerical ideals before the laity, probably did too little to help the laity develop its ideal of piety in the world, yet the church did provide a context for its development. Bernd Moeller, who views the late 15th century as one of the most devout periods of the Middle Ages and also one of the most churchly-minded, nevertheless sees a "certain subjectivism" and a "tender individualism" in the devotion of the people.²¹ The laity was gaining a new confidence, creating its own ideal for life in the world and in the process finding new roles in society.

Section 2: Lay Piety in the Town

Even in the 14th century, and certainly beyond, the traditional categories of society were far less neat and tidy than in Chaucer's idealized literary depictions. The cleric was becoming less and less the sole repository of education, governance, or of piety; the layman was gradually gaining power in the administration of estates and in political governance. No better example can be found than one produced by Colchester: Thomas Audley, a lawyer who began his career as town clerk of Colchester in 1514 and was sent to the 1523 Parliament as a representative of the Colchester burgesses, where he apparently attracted notice. Ten years later, Audley, a non-cleric, was Lord

Chancellor of England, following the demotion of Sir Thomas More.²²

According to Greta Hort, the gap that had separated priest from people was being filled up, "not by dragging the priests down to the ignorance of the laity, but by raising the laity to the standard of the better among the priests." The middle ranks of society were acquiring a sound education, enabling them to compete. Schools had multiplied during the 15th century, and many of those schools were a product of lay devotion, since the endowment of schools had become a popular form of charity. Lay piety and education were closely bound together; a primary motive for gaining an education (though certainly not the only reason) was to permit the pious to read devotional works. Conversely, lay piety required a certain amount of learning, or at least access to learning. For example, Margery Kempe, devout laywoman living in Lynn in the early 15th century, was familiar with several books, among them books by Rolle, Hilton, and Bonaventure. Because Kempe was illiterate, the Bible and other books had been read to her by a friendly priest.²³

With the close connection between lay piety and learning, it is no surprise that lay piety should flourish in the urban setting among the more prosperous townsmen, those who in a later time would be labelled as "middle class," such as merchants, professional men and independent craftsmen, all of whom would need a certain amount of learning for their occupations. Although lay piety was not wholly an urban experience, the towns certainly contributed to the growth of spirituality, for life definitely had its uncertainties in the towns. The crowding meant that diseases could spread rapidly, resulting in a very high mortality rate; fire was a peril and all one's possessions could be destroyed in a moment. Then too most people in the towns were

engaged in the acquisition of money, an endeavor not looked upon favorably by the church or by their betters in society. The insecurity of such a life must have moved many to think more deeply about one's soul, and in a town people had more opportunities for spiritual development. Preaching was more accessible and there was a great variety of worship services from which to choose. The towns, especially the more independent ones such as Colchester, were a training ground for self-governance; in a like manner, the towns provided a freer atmosphere for the laity to develop a sense of responsibility in the process of salvation. In the towns the pious laymen established religious guilds and schools, sponsored mystery plays, built and renovated churches, all of which will be described in detail in chapter two.

As a community of believers, the devout had religious processions through their streets and sponsored masses for the welfare of their town. Colchester established just such an annual mass in 1516, in the same year that Thomas Audley became a free burgess. Lay piety in Colchester, then, was not only a matter of one's individual devotion to God, though it certainly included that, but it was often manifested communally. Of course, the natural expression of lay piety was in the communal religious institutions, especially in the parish churches and guilds which we shall examine closely, but beyond those usual religious outlets we shall find that the acts of the pious layman in Colchester had a definite effect on what we moderns would consider the secular affairs of the town: lay devotion had an economic and even a political influence in the borough, and it affected (and was affected by) the social groupings in the town, such as families, friendship networks, and the governing oligarchy. Furthermore, laic

spirituality helped develop a sense of community in Colchester, a spirit sometimes hard to obtain in a setting where new people were continually coming in.²⁴

The relationship of lay Christian devotion to the urban setting has received only scant attention from historians of late medieval England, but if we are to know more about the thinking and motivation of the ordinary person, about the medieval town, and about Christianity in that period, we need studies of all three together, for all are connected in a vital way. If there is life in an institution or a society--or in a town--ways will be found for periodic renewal, and at a time when monastic and clerical ideals were declining, the burgeoning devotion of the layman became the most dynamic element of late medieval Christianity. The town had provided an environment for that lay devotion to develop; moreover, the town was given a large measure of its life--its identity, its confidence, and its spirit--by its Christianity, and not just its institutional Christianity, but through the spirituality of the lay men and women who lived in the towns. Lay devotion and the towns fed on each other, not to consume, but to enrich. Their symbiotic relationship meant that each provided, in its own distinct way, a means of renewal for the other. Renewal, it should be noted, is not the same as the modern idea of progress, which implies that the new is good and that the old is no longer of great value. Renewal builds on the past in a positive way, making it new and vital again. The spirituality of the layman brought renewal to medieval Christianity, building on the ancient ideal of charity given by Christ himself.

Likewise, before renewal can come to a society, or to a town, the town must have a spirit of faith in ideals that are bigger than

itself. The supernatural, of course, can be a source of such confident faith. Accompanying the faith in ideals is usually a sense of destiny for the future, a future built on their past and toward which their past has been directing them. Florence had that sense of destiny, partly developed by its historians,²⁵ and Colchester, in its own modest way, also had a sense of destiny. Colchester had not the sophistication, learning, wealth, or independence of the Florentines, but Colchester did have its own ideals and faith, though inadequately articulated. Colchester, as we have noted, was proud of its past, of its longevity, of its link with early Christendom through St. Helen, of its laws and customs that had developed from "time out of mind," a frequent phrase in the borough court records. Colchester's Christianity was most vitally manifested among the laity and was a cohesive and crucial ingredient in Colchester's make-up; early Tudor Colchester's Christianity was a part of its past, present, and in the town's own eyes, no small part of its future. At the same time that Colchester laymen were renewing themselves individually and contributing to radical changes in the institutional church, their acts of piety were also helping to give life and vitality to their urban setting.²⁶

Section 3: This Study of Lay Piety in Colchester

The period covered by our study of laic devotion in Colchester will begin in 1485, in the first year of the reign of Henry VII; unfortunately we cannot begin in an earlier period since there are only a few scattered Colchester wills preceeding 1485. Testamentary records, supplemented by borough court records, lay subsidy rolls, and other assorted documents will be our principal resources. The end of Mary's

reign in 1558 is a suitable ending period as that date permits us to escape the complicating issue of Puritanism but allows ample investigation of the changes occasioned by the Reformation. Late medieval lay piety is a legitimate study on its own, however, and it need not be, nor should it be, viewed as merely a forerunner of the Reformation. The Reformation, however, brought the beginnings of vast changes in the medieval life and do, therefore, furnish a moving picture which, by its contrast, provides possibilities for a clearer picture of what came before. Even at best, though, our picture of Colchester lay piety will be somewhat dim, for even complete documents, which ours are not, cannot see into the heart from whence piety comes.

Definite hazards are encountered in any attempt to measure that which cannot be measured, i.e. inner experience,²⁷ but we can perhaps measure more accurately those who at least valued the ideal of piety, those who took religion seriously and used their money for religious or charitable purposes. Some of those were probably more desirous of the appearance of piety than they were inwardly pious; nevertheless, even the holding of the ideal of piety had value in the life of the town. This study will of necessity look more at the acts of piety, charting the legacies to the church and for prayers and charitable works. Those acts of piety are outward works, yet external works can reflect the spirituality of the heart, especially within the context of a "works salvation," such as that which prevailed in late medieval Christianity. No doubt some persons gave money for pious works only for the show of it, or out of fear of judgment, but we shall take the legacies at face value, not attempting the impossible task of ascertaining all the motives behind the pious deeds. Nevertheless, we shall certainly catch

glimpses of deep devotion among the Colchester testators.

On the premise that lay spirituality affected all of the society around it, all of chapter two will be devoted to a description of the secular and religious structure of Colchester in order to provide a context for our look at the Colchester wills and their manifestation of lay piety in chapter three and then the changes of the Reformation years in chapter four. We shall find that the spirituality of the laity gave vitality to medieval Christianity and helped confirm and validate the way of life in the town. Godly devotion gave townsmen confidence in an insecure world, for it put them in touch with power--the power of God. It was a move away from outward, casual conformity to the spiritual, from holy things to holy people. Certainly it included tendencies toward individualism, but more often those inclinations were submerged in the communal social structure, e.g. money left by dying men for masses were not just for their own souls but for the souls of friends and all Christians. Yet the individualism that was a part of lay piety was bound to create tensions at times within the corporate approach to God in the church; orthodox lay piety might not directly defy the priesthood (as did Lollardy), but it spiritually transcended the priesthood, thereby in practice minimizing it. The world was changing and the laity was coming into its own.

Was lay piety, then, a "movement"? It had no rules, special leaders, or places of abode for its adherents, and so it is a difficult subject for study, but it was nevertheless a fairly widespread way of living, an attempt--no doubt often imperfect--to live devoutly though in the world. In that way it was a movement, because, like leaven, it quietly worked, bringing renewal but also planting a seed for change.

Part Two: Historiography

Section 1: Early Studies of Lay Christianity

Before proceeding to draw a picture of Colchester laic devotion, a look at the state of historical research on the subject of lay Christianity will be helpful. For too long historians of religion have been concerned primarily with the history of religious institutions and their clergy, which is understandable, given the fact that early records were written almost entirely from the cleric's point of view. Only in the last 25 years and especially beginning in the 1970's has significant attention been given to the religion of the people. Certainly the religion of the clergy and the religion of the people are not two religions but one, and it is proper that the religion of the people be considered as well.

A survey of pre-World War II studies about England reveals two important forerunners of the study of England's lay Christianity; the first, Bernard Lord Manning's The People's Faith in the Time of Wyclif was published in 1919 and reissued in 1975 as a part of the current revival of interest in the subject. Manning's work continues to be valuable for its examination of the ways that religion was taught to the people in the 14th century, what the average person knew about Christianity and what part it played in his everyday life. The second book is H. Maynard Smith's Pre-Reformation England, published in 1938 and reprinted in 1963, which remains the best general work on the state of religion in the early Tudor period. Although Smith included chapters on political and economic conditions, his emphasis was on religion, and not just that of the institutional church; his chapters on popular religion in England broke ground for future historians.²⁸

Valuable as were the contributions of Manning and Smith, they were not influential in the mainstream of European historical study, which in its most innovative form was led in the period between the two world wars by two French historians, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre. Rejecting the positivists' approach to history based on facts and the relationship of facts to each other, Febvre and Bloch, viewing man as the protagonist of history, studied the mentality, aspirations, and problems of men, but at the same time related them to political and economic history. Looking at the period after World War II, we find Étienne Delaruelle reflecting the work of Bloch and Febvre in the rather rigid field of ecclesiastical history, according to Raoul Manselli and André Vauchez, the writers of an introduction to a 1975 collection of Delaruelle's essays (which had been written from 1955 onwards). Delaruelle, wrote Vauchez, broke down the barriers which had viewed the laity either as mere objects of pastoral solicitude by the clerics, or as entranced survivals of paganism. Confidently believing that the church is comprised of all baptized believers who are guided, not just by the hierarchy, but by the Holy Spirit, Canon Delaruelle gave dignity to the people he studied and dignity to the study of "la piété populaire au Moyen Age."²⁹

Following in the same vein, other French historians were to write a new kind of church history, and in 1961 La spiritualité du Moyen Age was published. The first part, covering the years from Gregory the Great to Bernard of Clairvaux, was written by Jean LeClercq, and he was unusually careful to include the role of the laity, often beginning his chapters with an account of the laic condition. The second part of the book, which was written by François

Vandenbroucke, had almost a third of the text devoted to lay religion, which revealed not only the increasing role of the laity in the later Middle Ages, but also gave them an importance in the writing of history which had been missing earlier. Looking briefly into the 1970's, we find that André Vauchez, in his La spiritualité du Moyen Age Occidental VIII^e - XII^e siècles,³⁰ even more successfully fused lay spirituality into a general Christian history. Rejecting the idea that spirituality is a mark only of religious orders, Vauchez found in the literature and art of the medieval period the possibility of the interior life of spirituality for any Christian. He marked the 12th century as a period of transformation which saw the beginnings of a lay spirituality with the appearance of the Crusades and especially of the third orders.

Coming into play among historians, then, was not only a new historical concern for studying ordinary people, but along with that a broader concept of what constitutes the church. If the church is comprised of all baptized believers, then it follows that an ecclesiastical history will relate the story of the people as well as of the institutional structure. A sign of the alteration in perspective was a change in terminology when the French historians began using the word "spirituality" in a broader sense, to include lay as well as clerical devotion, whereas previously the word had been used to refer primarily to a certain kind of affective, often mystical, devotion, and that almost entirely among clerics.³¹

While some French historians were producing general histories of spirituality, another group was led by Gabriel LeBras to investigate "des mentalités collectives." LeBras had suggested the study of

religion in more detail in particular areas rather than relying on generalizations of the past, and Jacques Toussaert did that in his 1963 book on maritime Flanders in the 14th, 15th, and early 16th centuries. Toussaert went beyond a mere reporting of religious behavior and included a section on the indirect indices of religious commitment, such as morality in business, violence, and observation of church discipline. He found that people in Flanders were committed to certain formal religious events, but evidenced little enthusiasm for religion in everyday affairs. The people of Flanders were committed to the main religious events, such as baptism and a funeral, but they showed little concern for the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist. In fact, Toussaert discovered that a number of people did not enter the confessional for years on end.³²

After World War II, historians in other European countries, with a few outstanding exceptions, were slower in taking up the study of the role of the laity in Christianity. In the tradition of B. L. Manning and Maynard Smith, W. A. Pantin in 1955 published The English Church in the Fourteenth Century in which he included valuable work on treatises written in the vernacular for the laity and unlearned priests. About the same time, Paul O. Kristeller was finding connections between Florentine Platonism and lay religious traditions, contending that the lay religious associations, the confraternities, along with the lay sermon and the spiritual letter, had a formative influence on Ficino and his Platonic Academy. Kristeller, by the way, was among the first to use the term "lay piety," a term which has come to be used most frequently by American historians.³³

A few years later, in Germany in the early 1960's, Bernd

Moeller, a Reformation scholar, was beginning to study the piety of the layman in pre-Reformation Germany, particularly in the towns. Stressing the compatibility of the town and Christianity, Moeller concluded that the German towns perceived themselves as sovereign sacral communities and, as such, were conscious of being clearly distinct from the world about them. In Moeller's view the failure of the church to adapt to the urban situation forced urban laymen into a greater religious role within the town. Though Moeller sees a failure of the church in the town, he nevertheless labels the late 15th century in Germany as "one of the most churchly-minded and devout periods of the Middle Ages."³⁴

A seminal work was published in 1970 by Richard W. Southern, Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages, which had been commissioned as a volume in a conventional series on the history of the church. As Southern wrote the book, however, he tells us that "the relations between ecclesiastical development and social change took so strong a hold on the work that the plan had to be altered." Southern ended with a nonconventional history of the church, now much quoted, which took into account the broader view of the church as the whole of that society and also used Southern's own stress, from his earlier studies, on the new emphasis on the inner life which began in the late 11th century.³⁵ Southern's mixing of ecclesiastical and social history presaged the direction which was to be taken by the most significant research into lay piety in the 1970's.

Section 2:

Research Beginning in the 1970's,
Especially on the 11th-12th Centuries

The study of the religion of the layman began to mushroom in the early 1970's. Conferences produced some outstanding collections of studies on the pursuit of holiness, to use the title of one of those collections.³⁶ Festschrifts also added to the published material,³⁷ but an on-going publication, Studies in Church History, though slow-starting, has become a catalyst in the study of lay religion. To read through the Table of Contents of the annual volumes of Studies in Church History is instructive, for there one can see recent trends in ecclesiastical history. First published in 1964, the early volumes are predictably filled with matters relating to the institutional church, with occasional articles about heresies or lay political intervention in the church. Not until 1972 when volume 8, Popular Belief and Practice, was published did the broader view of the composition of the church come into the mainstream of ecclesiastical history in England, and that outlook, with the encouragement of S.C.H. editor, Derek Baker, has continued in later volumes such as Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and the World (volume 10, 1973) and The Church in Town and Countryside (volume 16, 1979).

The short studies, such as those in Studies in Church History, significant though they are, indicate the sometimes confusing diversity, even fragmentation, of topics which has characterized work on the laity by scholars in the 1970's and early 1980's. I shall now attempt to classify those more recent specialized studies. One could sort them in various ways: by centuries studied, by countries, or by particular

topics which have been fruitful. I shall do a bit of all, hoping to bring coherence by working roughly chronologically, from the early Middle Ages up to the Reformation, but concentrating on various countries or topics which in particular periods of time have engendered most of the recent studies of European lay Christianity.

Work on the earlier Middle Ages is more sparse, of course, because of the dearth of documentation from the period; nevertheless, some innovative work by Patrick J. Geary has been appearing. In an essay given at the Princeton seminar on popular religion in 1973-74, Geary reasoned that the popular devotion to saintly personalities combined with Roman-Frankish politics to allow the relic trade to flourish from Rome to France, thus encouraging the role of relics and saints in popular devotion. In 1978 Geary published a book treating examples of the literary genre which long ago developed around the theft of relics. Finding nearly 100 accounts of relic thefts written between 800 and 1100, Geary studied the mentality which attempted in those writings to give symbolic value to relics. He concluded that relics were perceived as being alive (just as the Eucharist was perceived as living bread), and therefore relics had a role to play in the affairs of communities in which they were located.³⁸

The cults of saints and their relics have been approached from varying angles. Jonathan Sumption published in 1975 a comprehensive look at pilgrimages between 1050 and 1250, concentrating on France and the cultural world of which France was the center. Sumption competently traced the needs which begot pilgrimages in each generation of believers, from the period of the crusades and through the developing doctrine of purgatory. Sumption concluded that a principal

characteristic of medieval religion was a profound pessimism which bred a resort to rituals with the object of expiating sin. Reporting on England, Ronald Finucane studied 3,000 cases of miracles of healing reported by the guardian monks at the tombs of certain English and French saints in the 12th and 13th centuries, and he drew from the reports much valuable information about the people involved, particularly about their social levels.³⁹

By far the most stimulating and wide-ranging study of holy shrines, however, has been produced by Lionel Rothkrug, who has linked differing religious expressions with cultural variations and even with intellectual developments. Rothkrug, mapping 1,036 pilgrimage sites in Germany before the Reformation, found them to show marked regional differences, with numerous shrines in the southern part of Germany but few in the north. The later acceptance or rejection of Luther's teaching, according to Rothkrug, proceeded out of the religious practices developed centuries before, resulting in a corporate patriotic and imperial religiosity in the south and a personal, almost private piety in the north. Rothkrug sees a later effect in the nationalization of the French church and in the French monarchy's "monopolization of power to perform miracles in the exercise of public authority," causing people "to confound God's will with the persistence in time of a collective or national purpose." On the other hand, the Germans had excluded religious practices from their thoughts about public life so that the leading German thinkers of the 17th and 18th centuries concluded that "preoccupation with civil society was an activity alien to the more noble pursuits of the human spirit," leading ultimately "to the fateful and persistent tendency . . . to sunder 'state' from

'society' in the same way they had divorced 'religion' from 'society' in the past."⁴⁰ Never before has anyone found quite so much in the study of shrines as has Rothkrug!

Various scholars have noted the 11th and/or 12th centuries as a period of transformation in which there emerged new forms of religious life and the beginnings of a lay spirituality. The idea of the vita apostolica, first applied to traditional cenobitic life, gradually changed to stress the preaching activities of the apostles, thereby bringing the laity in contact with the vita apostolica. Slowly the lay person came to regard himself as an active agent for the construction of the kingdom of God in this world. The ideal of poverty, taken from the gospel injunction for the poverty of the disciples, represented in M. -D. Chenu's words, "both a rejection of the avarice and vanity of the new world and a liberation from the temporal security of the old regime."⁴¹

Masterfully relating lay piety to secular history in the same period is Marvin B. Becker who delves into the psychology of the layman in his recent book on medieval Italy. Seeing lay piety as a fundamental ingredient in the development of the northern Italian cities, Professor Becker traces its development from the 11th century religious reformers who assaulted the traditional nexus between salvation and wealth which characterized their system, which had been based upon the gift and literal exchange. As the Gregorian reform developed, writes Becker, cooperation among the social orders was basic, and in the Gregorian movement can be observed the first substantial participation of laity in spiritual life, not with the traditional goal of imitating the monk, but with new ideals of spirituality though living in the

world. The active laity established a common life with clergy in confraternities and third-order movements, further breaking down the old separation of orders and helping to shape cultural life over the next two centuries. The new associative life gradually brought individuals to the consciousness that one might trust abstract ties. At work, too, was another change in inner awareness; last wills and testaments of laymen of the period show an extension of human feeling and concern. The same documents reveal an increasing emphasis on a positive inner relationship to God; as Becker observed, "Fear as a motive for pious actions was in decline and love of God on the rise."⁴²

The new awareness and activity of the laity had its unorthodox results in new heresies, and as we survey historical writings we find that scholars have been much quicker to study heresy than orthodox patterns of religious behavior. Some heresies emerged from learned circles,⁴³ but others were primarily lay movements, so the student of lay religion must take into account the popular heretical manifestations. For that purpose, the single best study of heresies is Malcolm Lambert's Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from Bogomil to Hus, which reflects the concern of recent historians with the laity. Lambert's perceptive approach to heresy throws much light on lay orthodox behavior; for example, in his study of the early 11th century heretical outbreaks, he concludes that the Western lay world was in a sense experiencing a conversion. Lambert writes: "As so often, heresy in the 11th century runs parallel to orthodoxy, reflecting and distorting the more widespread movements of opinion within the Church."⁴⁴ Lambert finds that in the later 11th century, the Gregorian movement at first worked with popular lay movements (thus explaining the relative

absence of heresy in that period), calling on the laity to take action against unworthy clergy and thereby officially involving the laity in the most vital part of the church. The recrudescence of heresy in the 12th century, Lambert believes, lay largely in the expectations aroused by the Gregorian reform and its failure to fulfil those expectations.

Several lay movements emerged in the wake of the Gregorian reform, and often the dividing line between orthodoxy and heresy was fuzzy, the Waldensians being a classic example. Also suspected of heresy were the Beguines, a spontaneous movement of women, usually grouped in communal houses, who supported themselves by manual work and who led lives of chastity and prayer, but without any fixed rule of organization. The outgrowth of the Waldensians and the Beguines illustrate the need for a deeper life of devotion felt by lay persons who did not fit into the usual modes of the religious life. As Lambert noted, Waldensianism was above all the religion of the small man, the peasants and artisans, which were the groups of men least likely to be welcomed into formal religious life.⁴⁵

Women were also an "outside" group, and Brenda Bolton produced in 1973 a short but excellent overview of the plight of pious women in the early 13th century. With the church's belief that the only possible religious role for women was one of attachment to existing male religious orders, and since the orders had exhibited a strong reaction against the large numbers of women who wished to join them, there was no alternative except for the women to develop their own modes of lay piety.⁴⁶

Even the church by the beginning of the 13th century had come to realize that the laymen could not be silenced or suppressed, and so had

to be directed. Brenda Bolton and Lester K. Little have both remarked on the wisdom of Pope Innocent III in setting up three distinct orders for the movement in Italy called the humiliati: the first, priestly; the second, for continent laymen living in separate convents for men and women; and a third order for married lay persons continuing to lead their secular familial lives. An extraordinary concession by the Pope was his approval for lay preaching among the humiliati, so long as they did not presume to preach on doctrinal matters.⁴⁷ Whether it came through heresy or orthodox reform and innovation, the laity's spirituality had been awakened and would not be held back.

Section 3: Recent Research--Italy

Bursting into life in early 13th century Italy were the mendicant friars, the Franciscans and a few years later the Dominicans. Though they were papally approved as religious orders, their story quickly became intertwined with the history of lay religion since the mission of the friars was to go out into the world, exemplifying that withdrawal from the world was no longer the only accepted ideal for the religious.

Central to the ministry and preaching of the friars was the encouragement of the inner spirituality of their hearers. Lester K. Little has aptly connected the development of mendicant orders to the urban society which was just coming into full blossom at that time in Italy. Little believes that the friars, in confronting the crisis of the new monetary economy and urban society, gave legitimacy and direction to the formation of an urban lay spirituality while at the same time the monks and hermits were avoiding the whole problem. The friars,

the pauperes Christi, were paradoxically the primary makers of an "urban ideology" by preaching and teaching a moral ethic favorable to the competitive economy and by encouraging new forms of worship, charitable donations, and lay spiritual associations.⁴⁸

Marvin Becker has also noted some early effects of the preaching of the friars. In Florence, which was the first Italian town in which the companions of Francis preached and which became the first center for lay monasticism with the establishment there of the Third Order of Franciscans, the early presence of the mendicant friars was a definite factor in the "democratization" of Florentine spiritual life which proceeded, Becker tells us, for the next century and a half "with an intensity difficult to match in any part of Europe."⁴⁹

The "democratization" of piety was already beginning to be studied by some ecclesiastical historians, but Becker issued a call for a look at lay religious emotion within the context of secular history, thus removing it from the narrow realm of ecclesiastical history. As he stated in a paper first presented in 1970: "A problem for any interpreter of late medieval or early renaissance Italy is the current imbalance in historical scholarship with its passion for economic and social history. . . . interpreters of the past must employ a psychology--no matter how informal or loosely held--when seeking for an appropriate context in which to place data. Few significant historical problems can be properly delineated without a full appreciation for the role of human emotion."⁵⁰ Attempting to find some of that psychology of the past, Professor Becker found in the quickening lay spirituality of 13th century Florence a catalyst for the prompting of new dimensions in historical writing. The chroniclers and the poets provided a

rationale for living the mixed life of spirituality within the world and thereby found a legitimacy in Christian ideals for the development of civic pride.

Further expanding his ideas on the effects of lay piety in Florence, Becker found that it had a marked effect on family life in that it provided support for the elevation of "the values of domesticity," raising family life "to the status of a cultural ideal." Lay piety also had economic effects; by 1427 "the aggregate income for spiritual purposes . . . was around thirty-five percent of the income of the citizenry." Becker believes that a vital factor in the development of lay piety was the many religious confraternities which flourished in Florence; by the Quattrocento nearly all the citizens of Florence were members of confraternities, and the confraternities were providing a model for community. The robustly expanding Florentine city-state was needing new models, and in their search for models of piety, Becker found a close connection between Florentine humanism and laic spirituality. Challenging the concept of voluntary poverty, the humanists justified wealth in terms of its social and political benefits and found spiritual benefits in wealth if it was given in benefactions which spring from caritas. Thus, Becker writes, "The burgher world of spirituality had achieved parity with that of curia and court."⁵¹

Finding many of his questions about Renaissance Florence still unanswered, Becker, as noted above, began studying the early beginnings of lay piety in northern Italy, drawing some significant conclusions about the relationship of religion and the exchange system. He found that documents of the 8th and 9th centuries convey a sense of a

material conception of salvation, with the idea of making a literal exchange, through gifts, with the deity. As the laity came to develop an inner, more abstract relationship with God, thought and perception came to rely less on the palpable and more on the abstract. This new trust in the abstract was also manifested in human relationships; the proliferation of evangelical and heterodox groups united men of different social origins and status and their sense of mutuality engendered a trust in abstract ties. According to Becker, then, the confidence in abstract ties and relationships was at the base of the economic renaissance of northern Italy, making possible the extension of credit and the increased use of the contract. The merchant was now willing to take chances. Becker sees lay piety as a fundamental ingredient of Renaissance culture and thus relates medieval religion and economics in a manner heretofore handled only by historians of Protestantism.⁵²

As we can observe from the scholarly inspiration given by the city of Florence to Professor Becker, Florence has been one of the richest mines for the study of the laity, and Richard C. Trexler also began studies in the early 1970's of Florentine lay religion. Suggesting that a closer look at the religious behavior of the general population was needed, Trexler contended that we have focused too much in the past on religious beliefs rather than behavior, and he illustrated by looking at the Florentine's use of images. Another study by Trexler related religion to the family structure in an innovative way, seeing the many youth confraternities which grew up in early 15th century Florence as having developed as a result of crisis in the Florentine family structure. Gradually, Trexler believes, the youth in the confraternities became a societal ritual object, one whose correct manipu-

lation could result in the preservation and even salvation of the natural and civic order.⁵³

Trexler's study of Florence has culminated in a recent book in which Trexler again emphasized religious behavior rather than belief, contending that ritual was at the core of Florence's identity. A principal task of his book, Trexler says, "is to explain how ritual life created and resuscitated urban life, order and values." Trexler has some valuable and thought-provoking observations on the relationship of ritual to the political and social spheres of Florence, but it is difficult to understand how ritual, which Trexler describes as "rigidification and formalization of behavior," can create life. Overstating his case for the primacy of religious behavior and ritual, Trexler negates the potential in zealous and devout belief in God for acting as a catalyst for deep and lasting cultural change.⁵⁴

While commenting on some of Trexler's early work (and not entirely agreeing with him), Donald Weinstein praised Trexler for his presentation of a picture of civic religion as a collective, public thing, noting that this is a "necessary counterweight to the still dominant impulse of scholars to concentrate upon the individual, private and reflective aspects of religion." Believing that "there was a specifically, characteristically civic set of religious modalities arising out of the special experience of Italian communal life" which can be viewed as a special case of the medieval urban experience in general, Weinstein gives the main aspects of this religious phenomenon as he sees it: 1) laicization, the replacement of clerics by laymen as educators and transmitters of religious values and culture generally; 2) the emergence of the young; 3) secularization, the effort to

sanctify the secular; and 4) the attribution of holiness to the city itself. Weinstein quarrels, however, with Trexler's focus on the magical elements of urban religion, arguing that lay piety was much more complex.⁵⁵

As Becker suggested, a vital part in Florentine spirituality was played by the humanists, and here we get into some of that complexity to which Weinstein alludes. In the foreword of his masterful study of Renaissance philosophy, Charles Trinkaus asserted that the Italian humanists provided a leadership in a general search for a new vision of man, "a vision that would do justice to the enlarged sense of human achievement of this vastly secularized age and at the same time bring this new spiritual élan into acceptable relationship to the prevailing values of the Church and of religion." The humanists thought of themselves "as exceptionally well-fitted to become the spokesmen of a new layman's view of religion. . . . They regarded the growing this-worldly involvements and achievements and the human needs and relations of the men of their time with seriousness, and thus they saw them as occurring within the broader purview of God's providence, and as manifesting His creation of man in His image and likeness." The Italian Renaissance, then, according to Professor Trinkaus, was not a pagan-inspired movement, but was a plea "for a renewal of a theology of grace" as being the only force "capable of restructuring the naturally egotistical motivations of mankind towards higher ethical and religious goals."⁵⁶

The contrast between Trexler's look at Florentine religious behavior as it related to images and confraternities, and Trinkaus' study of humanist thinking is striking; the two historians seem almost to be talking about two different worlds, but as Professor Trinkaus cogently

commented: "I would certainly stress the importance of documenting and analyzing what Professor Trexler calls 'religious behavior,' whether popular, elitist, lay or clerical, illiterate or erudite, and I would certainly expect there to be important divergences. But in the final analysis, thinkers and writers remain members of their culture however much their critical and articulate self-consciousness seems to place them above or aside it."⁵⁷

Section 4:

Recent Research--The Rest of Continental Europe

Leaving the fertile field of Florentine studies and proceeding to the rest of continental Europe, one finds that the colder, northern regions have generated scholarly fruit, most of it connected with the Reformation; unfortunately, the yield of works studying earlier periods has been rather sparse. Toussaert's 1963 study of maritime Flanders has already been mentioned, and an even earlier specialized study was that of Ernest McDonnell on the Beguines, written in 1954. Inevitably noted in the discussions of northern spirituality is the devotio moderna, the religious movement of the Low Countries which grew out of the troubled and schismatic late 14th century. The most extensive study of the devotio moderna by R. R. Post in 1968 concluded, however, that the communities of the Brethren of the Common Life had even fewer laymen than had been supposed. Their practice of the inner devotion, though, did bring a necessary renewal to a wide area, especially with the publication of the movement's masterpiece, the Imitation of Christ.⁵⁸

It is the Reformation which has prompted most studies of the

laity of northern Europe, with scholars wondering why the laity seemed to be so ready for the movement led by Martin Luther. Bernd Moeller, an early leader in such studies, first published Reichstadt und Reformation in 1962 in which he charted the reception of the Reformation in the 85 "free and imperial cities," a study which subsequently led him to examine the state of the religion of the people just before the Reformation. Moeller asserted that the late 15th century in Germany was one of the most churchly-minded and devout periods of the Middle Ages, and he remarked: "To be sure, men did not primarily seek the Church as such but rather the salvation which it possessed. In their intense and largely, it appears, subjectivistic concern for salvation, men grasped the forms of religious life and the possibilities for devout exercises which the Church offered with a new and independent zeal, and to a certain extent they gave those forms new content." A more recent study by Moeller on the town and the church concludes that the medieval church had great difficulty in creating forms of pastoral care appropriate to the social structure of the town. Reformation teaching was well received in towns, partly because Luther's belief in the priesthood of all believers offered "a new and apparently decisive argument in support of the old efforts to integrate the urban community and to do away with the clergy's privileged position."⁵⁹

To gain a perspective on Reformation studies, one should read the essay on trends in Reformation research in Steven Ozment's The Reformation in the Cities. When Ozment discusses lay religious attitudes on the eve of the Reformation, he refers first to Moeller's conclusions about the presence of piety in pre-Reformation Germany, a stance which Ozment traces back to a 19th century "romantic" picture

of the late Middle Ages. Ozment then reports on the 20th century refutation of this view, led by Joseph Lortz, who found "abuse" to be the outstanding characteristic of the 15th century. Lortz thought that the general predisposition to abuse was anchored deep within the medieval church, taking the form of a centrifugal, un-Catholic "individualism" and "egoism" among bishops and laity alike. In between Lortz and the "romantic" position, says Ozment, were the views of Toussaert, who concluded that there was an external, conformist religion but with a certain anguish underneath. Ozment believes that all of the evidence compiled, even reports of fetishism and iconoclasm, indicates that there was a surge of lay piety on the eve of the Reformation, although it was a "flawed, unsatisfying piety." Ozment notes that each scholar who has studied the subject "finally sees a monolithic, bureaucratic church failing to satisfy interior needs, with a resulting lay reaction of individualism." Possibly, Ozment writes, modern scholars may have misread the problem; for example, Abbé Toussaert believes that the basic error of the late medieval church was that of a permissive, overindulgent mother, but Ozment concludes that "the basic problem of late medieval religion was not too much freedom but too little, not too few opportunities to develop the inner life but the absence of an institutionally viable lay piety." Luther's appeal lay in his "better answer" to what religion should be, and in his accommodation to and direction of lay values, rather than attempting to measure the laity by the clerical values of the medieval church.⁶⁰

Taking another view by looking at the social context is Lionel Rothkrug, who sees the predisposition for Luther's teachings as a cultural development traceable to feminine influence and the urban confraternity.

ternities. Rothkrug writes: "Thus the Beguines and the spiritual brotherhoods, complementary communities reflecting the confederate, merchant-dominated structure of the Hanse 'republic,' expressed a lay piety that extended beyond the cities of their origin to bind urban and rural folk in common forms of devotion. . . . Lay religious endeavor was as specific to the social and constitutional structures of Germany above the Benrather line as clerical monopoly of spiritual leadership was to southern lands dominated by a long-established lower nobility."⁶¹ Rothkrug contends that the cultural differences between north and south go back a long way, even to the Anglo-Saxon mission, when Anglo-Saxon nuns became important in northern Germany.

In Ozment's assessment of directions in Reformation research, he notes that the more recent trend is a concentration on the social history of particular cities or regions, and one of the scholars mentioned is Natalie Davis, who has worked so tirelessly on the reception of the Reformation in the city of Lyon in the last quarter of the 16th century. More pertinent for us, however, are her observations concerning the study of popular religion. Davis has cautioned that we should not evaluate laic spirituality primarily in terms of its deviation from one historical norm or religious ideal, but that it is to be studied on its own terms. It must be realized, Davis warns, that the laity are not just passive receptacles, but that they were "sometimes active, indeed innovative, in sacred matters, whether it was in establishing new shrines, elaborating religious drama, striking out in religious violence, ordering and illustrating religious material in new ways in printed books, setting up new arrangements for charitable giving, or thinking up 'heretical' ideas."⁶² Furthermore, historians must be

careful, says Davis, not to put their own value judgments on certain practices, for example, sorting the functions of religion and magic into those which are "rational" and those which are not.⁶³

Another scholar studying 16th century France is A. N. Galpern, who concentrates on Campagne. Galpern believes that the 16th century is a particularly good time to study the laity in France because of the lack of clerical leadership at the time; he finds an "Indian summer" of lay piety at the beginning of the century evidenced by especially strong confraternities but sees a lessening of solidarity by the early 1530's.⁶⁴

Providing a valuable counterpoint to Galpern's descriptions of bloody religious massacres in France is a fascinating study of central Spain in 1575-1580, in a recent book by anthropologist William A. Christian, who used some remarkable documents for his study. Christian's book is based on the responses to a printed questionnaire sent to the towns and villages of New Castile by Philip II's chroniclers; 530 communities replied to the questionnaire, and Christian used the responses to two of the questions about the notable relics possessed by the churches and towns, the well-known chapels and oratories in its territory and the miracles that have taken place there, and the holy days and fast days still celebrated. Christian found central Spain to have a religion in which the local saints and relics were of primary significance, with a "second layer" of Marian devotion, and added to that, images of specialist saints for particular needs. Just gaining popularity was a fourth element: miraculous images of Christ, especially crucifixes, indicating that Spain was late in developing some of the devotional practices so common in the rest of Europe. Just

their being "behind," however, gives us a fascinating insight into the thinking of those who still gave credence to relics and images and is therefore helpful to the student of late medieval religion. That part of Spain was studded with monasteries, with heavy Franciscan influence, so it was no backwater of neopagan religiosity but a genuine expression of Catholic lay spirituality.⁶⁵

Although Christian's book is a study of rural religiosity, he is quick to point out that the same kind of religion was shared by most of the people of Madrid and Toledo, and Christian therefore questions the idea of "popular religion" as distinct from some other kind. Probably Christian's belief that such distinctions should not be made is valid for a study of Spain, whose cities were administrative centers for agricultural regions, but would not be valid for countries and regions where cities and towns were engaged in industry and commerce so that the accompanying acquisition of learning, and of money, was constantly rearranging social levels. It seems that a growing commercial climate often grew alongside a more intense awareness of the need for a closer fellowship with God. The religion of the greater part of the people might involve conformity, even exuberant conformity, to liturgical acts or good works, or it might degenerate into mechanistic superstition, but the lay piety of this study involves a deeper relationship with the supernatural. Lay piety obviously developed at different speeds in different countries, e.g. it apparently emerged much later in England than it did in northern Italy.⁶⁶

Section 5: Post World War II Research--England

Crossing the channel to look at England, we find that, as on the Continent, scholars were attracted early to the study of nonconformity. With the late development of lay piety in England, heresy was also slow in developing, but when it came with Wyclif in the last quarter of the 14th century, it was to endure through Wyclif's followers, the Lollards. Certainly Lollardy was a significant movement among the laity, first among a few in the upper levels of society, then continuing among a lower stratum until the Reformation. Lollards received attention in the early part of this century when James Gairdner published a four-volume work on Lollardy and Margaret Deanesly wrote an excellent study of the Lollard Bible. Two general works appeared after World War II: K. B. McFarlane studied Wyclif and early Lollardy, and J. A. F. Thomson took up the story where McFarlane left off. One of the most perceptive looks at Lollardy has been a specialized study of Yorkshire Lollards by A. G. Dickens, which dispels the old Gairdner notion that Lollardy was too feeble by the 16th century to further the cause of Protestantism.⁶⁷ In the 1970's several articles on Lollards have appeared, with the most prolific writers being Margaret Aston and Anne Hudson,⁶⁸ but more studies are needed of Lollardy in particular regions of England.

Nonconformity has had at least one virtue in historical studies: it has prompted scholars to look at the orthodox setting out of which the heterodoxy grew, and such was the case with the two pre-World War II studies of the English laity mentioned earlier. Just the titles of Manning's and Smith's books--The People's Faith in the Time of Wyclif and Pre-Reformation England--quickly reveal the catalyst for their studies of the "norm."

On the other hand, some studies have been prompted by specialized social concerns; Wilbur K. Jordan published in 1959 a pioneering study of charity, Philanthropy in England, 1480-1660.⁶⁹ Jordan charted (from wills) every gift and bequest made to charities in 10 counties during his time period, tendentiously emphasizing the secularization which grew out of the Reformation. Jordan was primarily concerned with changes coming from the Reformation, so his work is a rather backdoor, negative look at medieval lay piety; nevertheless, it has proved to be useful, not least in its fostering of other studies on the subject.

In J. A. F. Thomson's "Piety and Charity in Late Medieval London," Thomson kindly but firmly disagreed with Jordan, yet used much of Jordan's method in reporting on pre-Reformation wills. Thomson made the point that the fluctuations in benefactions which are evident in the late medieval period could not have been prompted by changes in religious attitudes, which then leaves suspect Jordan's conclusions that changes in benefactions after the Reformation had to have been prompted by changed religious attitudes, rather than by changes in social needs.⁷⁰

In 1972 Joel T. Rosenthal published a study of the English aristocracy and their gift giving as revealed in their wills. Rosenthal's work is a helpful summation of aristocratic giving, but he obliquely failed to view the religious and charitable giving on the same terms as did the medieval donor. Rosenthal therefore faulted the aristocracy for missing their chance to use their charity for manipulative purposes rather than for the traditional end of advancing one's own spiritual welfare. Challenging Rosenthal's conclusion that the main function of aristocratic charitable giving should have been to apply social

control was a 1976 study by M. G. A. Vale, "Piety, Charity and Literacy among the Yorkshire Gentry, 1370-1480." Vale, assuming that the Yorkshire gentry would have had the same values as the English nobility, found the Yorkshire gentry to be conventionally pious and engaging in charitable giving purely and simply to achieve salvation of their souls, and certainly not for "social control."⁷¹

Reflecting our own decade's concern with feminism has been some new work on pious laywomen, such as Roland Bainton's study of the four daughters of Anthony Cooke and their strong influence in Protestant circles. Other particular manifestations of English lay devotion have been studied, such as chantry foundations, religious drama, parish guilds, and pilgrimages.⁷² A look at those specialized studies shows them to be mainly concerned with the institutional aspects of the chantries and guilds, or with the literary qualities of the religious drama, with little or no attention given to these as reflections of lay medieval devotion. Only in the recent book by Finucane on pilgrimages, discussed above, was a genuine attempt made to relate the institution or behavior to the actual thinking or needs of the people.

Finucane's work reflects the influence of a 1971 book which has set the tone for research on the English laity in the 1970's, directing study toward "popular" religion which verges on magic or superstition. Keith Thomas' Religion and the Decline of Magic,⁷³ charting the changing boundaries between magic and religion in the 16th and 17th centuries, piles up example after example of popular religious and magical practices. Believing that Protestantism took the magic out of religion by eliminating theatricality from church ritual and decoration and by taking the holy qualities away from material things and places, Thomas

says that by the end of the 17th century religion had triumphed over magic, though it was certainly a different kind of religion by that time. The magic of witchcraft, cunning men, and astrology had grown and flourished particularly well in those decades when the "magic" was first taken out of religion by Protestantism so that an alternate means was needed of avoiding misfortune or of explaining calamity when it did come. The natural magic which emerged, Thomas believes, was largely a corrupt derivative of medieval Catholic formulae and ritual, and of the large undergrowth of semi-Christian charms already existing among the people. Gradually Protestantism brought a new conception of religion, with emphasis upon the sovereignty of God and his purposive control over earthly events so that there was a direct linkage between man's moral behavior and his fortune in this world. Furthermore, Thomas contends, this conception of an orderly and rational universe in which effect follows cause in a predictable manner was necessary for the subsequent development of natural science.

Although Thomas' work is very helpful in describing and explaining the attention given to magic and witchcraft in the early modern period, it manifests too little understanding of the nature of medieval religion, seeing it only as external and ritualistic, even superstitious. Thomas therefore comes up short in his conclusion in which he admits his dilemma: "But the ultimate origins of this faith in unaided human capacity remain mysterious. We do not know how the Lollards were able to find the self-reliance necessary to make the break with the Church magic of the past. The most plausible explanation seems to be that their spirit of sturdy self-help reflected that of their occupations."⁷⁴ Thomas would have done well to take into account the deeper

internal, yet intelligent, religion which was so important to many in the late medieval period; nevertheless, Thomas' work has been of immense value and has proved to be a watershed in religious studies.

Thomas' work (like that of his mentor, Christopher Hill) is based on the premise that the pre-Reformation rural parish was a unified community broken up by the Reformation and by economic individualism, a position which John Bossy brilliantly challenged in a 1973 article in Studies in Church History.⁷⁵ Looking at two of the Christian rites of passage, marriage and baptism, Bossy finds that kin relationships were primary in medieval society and that such relationships amounted to constituent cells of the Christian community as a whole. Along with blood relationships, the kin relationships also included spiritual kin, such as godparents or religious fraternity brothers. The parish, then, according to Bossy, was a collection of hostile units among whom the priest was to keep the peace.

Responding also to Thomas was Imogen Luxton who, not convinced of the validity of using anthropological or sociological evidence as Thomas had done, went back to what she called "literary evidence" in studying popular culture and its relationship to the Reformation. As it turns out, Luxton was very influenced by Thomas, retaining his mistaken condescension toward the "magic" of the medieval church. Luxton's "literary evidence" was primarily wills, from which she gleans information on book ownership to conclude that the Reformation brought an increase in book ownership, showing that the emphasis of the west midlands culture "had shifted from the ritualised, visual effects of the pre-Reformation period to the printed word."⁷⁶

In contrast is the work of F. R. H. DuBoulay who, in his book on

late medieval England (which appeared just before Thomas'), used information from wills to draw a succinct but sensitive picture of the "mixture of fear, faith, good works and intercession" which was late medieval religion. Behind all "the superstition, mediocrity and abuse" which elicited criticism from reformers, DuBoulay found a "'growth of religious intention' or, to put it differently, the growth of conscience . . . a genuine elevation of human standards."⁷⁷

Although many of the manifestations of English lay piety which have been studied were often products of the towns, lay religion as it relates to the English urban setting has received surprisingly scant attention, probably reflecting both the past dearth of interest in English urban history as well as a condescension toward religion. A pioneering article was written by Charles Phythian-Adams who studied the ceremony of the communal year at Coventry. Phythian-Adams found the winter half of the ceremonies to be "ritualistic," and the summer half, "secular," with the major public ceremonies in the "ritualistic" moiety. Such ceremonies preserved and enhanced the wholeness of the social order and helped to legitimate authority.⁷⁸

A few other cities have been studied. Norwich has received close attention from Norman P. Tanner, who for his Ph.D. Oxford thesis read Norwich wills dating from 1370 to 1532. Tanner was partially following in the footsteps of Jordan and Thomson in using wills to study charity, but reflecting the influence of Keith Thomas, Tanner's work is broader in that he wants to learn as much as possible about popular religion in Norwich. Tanner is quite innovative and remarkably successful in "milking" evidence from the wills; his interest in lay piety, however, is an attempt to throw more light on the late medieval

institutional church, and he does little to relate it to the economy, social structure, or politics of the community. Colin Platt included an interesting chapter on "The Church in the Boroughs" in his 1976 book, The English Medieval Town, using much of his own research on Southampton; his section on religious fraternities is particularly helpful. Clifford Davidson has studied the spirituality of the city of York by looking at its late medieval art and drama, and he finds that the style of the church windows reflected a very personal and emotional religion, with emphasis on the Passion. Davidson corroborates our impression of late medieval spirituality, but does little to relate it to the urban setting. A helpful description of religion in York is given in D. M. Palliser's recent book on Tudor York, in his chapter entitled "Religion and the Reformation." Palliser finds that, though York was a cathedral city, its parish churches were of greater importance in the lives of the people, with the friaries also being highly esteemed.⁷⁹

England's late medieval urban lay piety has too long been overlooked as a matter for study. Except for the specialized studies on Lollardy, charity, and chantries, most of the historical studies of lay religion have dealt only with the popular religion, and that most often from the vantage point of the Reformation, looking back on the supposed superstitions of the uneducated. The articulate laity is yet to be examined in depth, but the recent interest in English urban history promises to add to our knowledge of the literate, devout lay townspeople who, in the context of the church, developed means for meeting pressures in an uncertain world. A latent force had been tapped in the emergence of lay piety, and it was not an isolated phenomenon but one

which infused the society around it with vigor and purpose. Even the ideal of such complete devotion would have challenged and motivated. Though partly a study of behavior, the study of lay piety is more fundamentally an attempt to study the psychology, or the mind-set, of men and women. Not until we know the ideals of a society can we understand its behavior, whether in the arena of politics or finance. Lay piety, then, so much a part of its environment, should not be studied in isolation. We have noted the stages in which the study of lay piety evolved, from its being ignored, to a recognition that it was a respectable and vital part of western ecclesiastical history, and finally to recent attempts to ascertain its role in secular history. Thus far, only the hem of the garment has been touched, and the history of the people of England will only be enhanced by further study of that religious devotion which was a motivating force for so many ordinary townsmen. Historians of Italian cities have given us a much clearer knowledge of those cities through their delvings into the religious beliefs and practices of the laity, and the historians of England will do well to follow their example.⁸⁰

Since the study of lay piety began to blossom only in the 1970's,⁸¹ many questions remain to be answered. A more careful defining of the subject is needed,⁸² so that its uniqueness beyond the usual external lay religion can be appreciated. Needing to be examined are its special manifestations and its effect on the church, on the family and other relationships, and on society. Some other questions for consideration: did lay piety tend toward community expression or toward individualism? Did it have economic or political implications? What varying effects did it have on different social levels? Did it

encourage the breaking down of social groupings, and did it promote social discontinuity? What were the ideals of the pious layman and laywoman? Did lay piety produce a distinctive ethos, and if so, how did it affect views of history and of the natural world?⁸³

My study of lay piety will attempt to answer some of the above questions as they were worked out in the Essex town of Colchester. To live the devout life though in the world, even while in the business of money-making, was a calling of its own which came to be expressed in a civic piety which preserved and strengthened the social order of the town. Paradoxically, a seed of change was also inherent in lay devotion which would encourage and embrace many of the changes of the Reformation and thus pave the way for deep and lasting cultural transformations, partly manifested by the two ideals of the Elizabethan period, i.e. the Renaissance gentleman and the Godly saint identified with Puritanism. To study medieval lay piety is to study one of those invisible but real forces, an idea, which confirms and motivates life; it is a study of men and women, and their aspirations.

Footnotes to Chapter I

¹ R. W. Southern, Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 1970), pp. 16-18.

² Lionel Rothkrug, "Popular Religion and Holy Shrines," in Religion and the People, 800-1700, ed. James Obelkevich (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1979), p. 77.

³ The best discussion of this change of mentality on the continent, which occurred from the 11th through the 13th centuries, is in Marvin B. Becker, Medieval Italy: Constraints and Creativity (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana Univ. Press, 1981).

The term "lay piety" has come into vogue among historians of recent years, with Paul O. Kristeller being one of the first to use the term, in "Lay Religious Traditions and Florentine Platonism," in Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1956), pp. 99-122. Gordon Rupp, however, believes "spirituality" to be a better word than "piety," which Rupp says has "nineteenth-century overtones," in "Protestant Spirituality in the First Age of the Reformation," S.C.H., 8 (1972), p. 155. I use "spirituality" interchangeably with "piety," although in the past medieval spirituality has most often been used by historians to refer to spirituality among clerics, and even more specifically to mysticism; e.g. in Pierre Pourrat, Christian Spirituality, trans. S. P. Jacques (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1924), vol. 2, which covers the Middle Ages and deals only with four "schools" of mysticism. Perhaps that too suggests that there was little concept of interior religion except among clerics during much of the medieval period.

⁴ William G. Hoskins, Provincial England: Essays in Social and Economic History (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1963), p. 70, compares the riches of English provincial towns, based on the lay subsidy rolls. Actually Colchester was probably 13th in wealth, since Newcastle was exempt from the taxation of 1523-1525; Hoskins estimates that Newcastle would have been 3rd or 4th in the ranking. Alan R. H. Baker, "Changes in the Later Middle Ages," in A New Historical Geography of England, ed. H. C. Darby (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1973), p. 243, places Colchester as 10th in wealth in 1524-25, again with Newcastle having been omitted.

The population figure comes from Geoffrey Martin, The Story of Colchester from Roman Times to the Present Day (Colchester: Benham Newspapers, 1959), p. 36. Martin, p. 122, bases his figure on J. C. Russell's calculations in his British Medieval Population. Charles Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979),

p. 12, charts the largest towns in late medieval England, and he places Colchester among those towns having over 6,000 inhabitants. His chart is based on the work of J. D. Sheail's study of the lay subsidy returns of 1524-5.

Many of the following facts about Colchester can be found in Martin, which is the best general history of Colchester. See also the pioneering 18th century history by Philip Morant, The History and Antiquities of the Most Ancient Town and Borough of Colchester (1748: rpt. Wakefield: S. R. Publishers, 1970).

⁵ Both books have been published in translation by W. Gurney Benham, ed. and trans. (Colchester: "Essex County Standard" Office, 1902, 1907). See p. 27 of the Oath Book for the legend of Helen.

⁶ Geoffrey H. Martin, Colchester: Official Guide, 4th ed. (Colchester: Benham & Co., 1973), pp. 81-2.

⁷ J. E. Oxley, The Reformation in Essex to the Death of Mary (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 1, 197; T. W. Davids, Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in the County of Essex (London: Jackson, Walford, and Hodder, 1863), pp. 18-19.

⁸ R. W. Southern, Saint Anselm and His Biographer (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 35, 37-45; Sandro Sticca, "Drama and Spirituality in the Middle Ages," Medievalia et Humanistica, n.s., 4 (1973), 79-83; W. A. Pantin, The English Church in the Fourteenth Century (Notre Dame, Indiana: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1962), p. 231.

⁹ Geoffrey Chaucer, "General Prologue," The Canterbury Tales, in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957, I. 62 (p. 17), II. 530-40 (p. 22)).

¹⁰ V.C.H. Essex, II, 180.

¹¹ Evelyn Underhill, The Mystics of the Church (N.Y.: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 110. For an excellent discussion of the literature of affective piety, see Douglas Gray, Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 18-33; also Giles Constable, "The Popularity of Twelfth-Century Spiritual Writers in the Late Middle Ages," in Renaissance Studies in Honor of Hans Baron, eds. Anthony Molho and John A. Tedeschi (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 3-28.

¹² Richard Rolle, The English Psalter, in English Writings of Richard Rolle, ed. Hope Emily Allen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), p. 4; R. W. Chambers, On the Continuity of English Prose from Alfred to More and His School (London: E.E.T.S., 1932), p. ci.

¹³ Hope Emily Allen, "The English Psalter," in English Writings of Richard Rolle, ed. Allen, p. 3; Margaret Deanesly, "Vernacular Books in England in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," Modern Language Review, 15 (1920), 349-58, and The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions (1920; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 392-8. Several wills read by Deanesly mentioned the possession of

"an English psalter"; only five can be said to refer definitely to Rolle's psalter, out of the 32 English devotional books mentioned in the wills.

¹⁴ A. R. Myers, England in the Late Middle Ages (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1952), pp. 71, 80; Sylvia L. Thrupp, The Merchant Class of Medieval London (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The Univ. of Michigan Press, 1962), pp. 156, 158, 161; Martin, Story of Colchester, p. 39.

¹⁵ John Pykas of Colchester was given St. Paul's epistles in English five years before by his mother, according to Oxley, pp. 8-9. This predates Tyndale's New Testament, the first printed version in English, which was first imported into England in 1526. Thomas Hills of Steeple Bumpstead, who had close connections with Colchester Lollards, had memorized the first 2 chapters of James; see Oxley, pp. 10-13.

¹⁶ Janet Coleman, English Literature in History, 1350-1400 (London: Hutchinson, 1981), pp. 223-4.

¹⁷ Deanesly, "Vernacular Books," 355; Dorothy Jones, "Introduction," in Minor Works of Walter Hilton, ed. Dorothy Jones (N.Y.: Benziger Brothers, 1929), p. xi.

¹⁸ Walter Hilton, Mixed Life, in Minor Works of Walter Hilton, ed. Jones, pp. 16-17. Another 14th century mystic, St. Catherine of Siena, placed an emphasis on the spiritual value of the lay experience; see Judith Hook, "St. Catherine of Siena," History Today, 30 (1980), 28-32.

¹⁹ The Praier and Complaynte of the Plowman unto Christe, in Harleian Miscellany (London, 1810), VI, 101.

²⁰ William Langland, Piers the Ploughman, trans. J. F. Goodridge (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1959), B-Text, VII, 11. 18-38 (p. 92).

Lester K. Little Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 175-96, believes that on the Continent some Scholastics and friars developed a moral theology which gave spiritual guidance to the new profit economy, thus paving the way for lay piety to grow.

R. H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism (N.Y.: Mentor Book, 1963), p. 54, comments that the official position of the church was not favorable toward business: "But, however lawyers might distinguish and refine, the essential facts were simple. The Church sees buying and selling, lending and borrowing, as a simple case of neighborly or unneighborly conduct. Though a rationalist like Bishop Pecock may insist that the rich, as such, are not hateful to God, it has a traditional prejudice against the arts by which men--or at least laymen--acquire riches, and is apt to lump them together under the ugly name of avarice."

²¹ Bernd Moeller, "Piety in Germany around 1500," in The Reformation in Medieval Perspective, ed. Steven E. Ozment (Chicago:

Quadrangle Books, 1971), pp. 54, 59-62.

²² Stanford E. Lehmberg, "Sir Thomas Audley: A Soul as Black as Marble?" in Tudor Men and Institutions, ed. Arthur J. Slavin (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 3-31.

²³ Greta Hort, Piers Plowman and Contemporary Religious Thought (N.Y.: Macmillan, n.d.), p. 158; Denys Hay, "England and the Humanities in the Fifteenth Century," in Itinerarium Italicum, eds. Heiko A. Oberman and Thomas A. Brady (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), pp. 335-43; Margery Kempe, The Book of Margery Kempe, ed. Sanford Brown Meech (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1940), pp. 39, 143, 154.

²⁴ W. Gurney Benham, "A Solemn Mass for the Prosperity of Colchester," E.R., 46 (1937), 85. The Colchester Oath Book shows the frequent creation of new free burgesses, most of them having been born in surrounding Essex and Suffolk, but a number came from farther afield, such as Yorkshire and Somerset.

²⁵ See Marvin B. Becker, "Towards a Renaissance Historiography in Florence," in Renaissance Studies in Honor of Hans Baron, eds. Molho and Tedeschi, pp. 141-71.

²⁶ My comments about the connection between renewal and faith in ideals are directly opposed, it seems, to Richard Trexler's statement that "ritual life created and resuscitated urban life, order, and values." Trexler describes ritual as "rigidification and formalization of behavior," and, I ask, how can rigidification create life? Ritual might help sustain life, but not generate life. See Trexler's Public Life in Renaissance Florence (N.Y.: Academic Press, 1980), pp. xix, xxi, 43, 47.

I label Colchester as "urban," subscribing to Gilbert Rozman's definition of urban in the premodern country. Colchester falls into Rozman's lowest possibilities for the urban category, i.e. having a population between 3,000-9,000 and being one of the lowest administrative centers. Colchester had around 5,000 people and was an archdeaconry in the Diocese of London. See Rozman's "Urban Networks and Historical Stages," J.I.H., 9 (1978), 65-91, especially 68-71.

²⁷ Some sociologists have attempted to find ways to measure the depth of one's religion; see Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, Religion and Society in Tension (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1965), pp. 18-21, and Gary M. Maranell, Responses to Religion (Lawrence, Kansas: Univ. Press of Kansas, 1974). Though interesting to the historian, the sociologists above are dealing with people of the present. For an excellent survey of the sociologist's functionalist approach to religion, see Thomas F. O'Dea, The Sociology of Religion (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966).

²⁸ Bernard Lord Manning, The People's Faith in the Time of Wyclif, 2nd ed. (Hassocks, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1975); H. Maynard Smith, Pre-Reformation England (1938; rpt. N.Y.: Russell & Russell, 1963). Smith's work was partially based on the solid research of Edward L. Cutts, Parish Priests and Their People in the Middle Ages

in England (London: S.P.C.K., 1914).

Earlier, Francis Aidan Gasquet, in The Eve of the Reformation (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent and Co., 1900), had partially tried to gauge the mental attitude of Englishmen towards the ecclesiastical system, but Gasquet's work is marred by his condescension towards some of the popular practices. See also Gasquet, Parish Life in Mediaeval England (London: Methuen, 1906).

A brief glance at histories of the English church written during the first half of our century confirms that little space was given to the laity. W. M. Capes, The English Church in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries (London: Macmillan, 1900), wrote 17 chapters, with only one, "The Influence of the Church on Social Life," relating to the laity.

First publishing her history in 1925, Margaret Deanesly, A History of the Medieval Church, 590-1500, 8th ed. (London: Methuen, 1954), included only a brief account of the work of the parish priest in teaching the people, and her only other look at the laity was in its heretical manifestations.

Kathleen L. Wood-Legh, Studies in Church Life in England under Edward III (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1934), related the church to political governance and only in some brief comments about chantry foundations did she touch on the religious role of the laity. Her interest in chantries was to expand into a later book.

John R. H. Moorman, Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century (1945; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1955), wrote 26 chapters, with only 4 dealing with the laity and then somewhat peripherally. Moorman's A History of the Church in England (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1953) has only a few pages on lay religious practices.

A welcome contrast is John C. Dickinson's recent ecclesiastical history of England, The Later Middle Ages (N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1979), in which he expressly attempts to include social and economic factors (pp. vii, 3). A large section of his book is therefore devoted to "Church and Society," pp. 345-467.

29 André Vauchez, "Introduction - II," in La Piété populaire au Moyen Age, by Étienne Delaruelle (Torino: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1975), pp. XV-XVI.

30 Jean LeClercq and François Vandenbroucke, La Spiritualité du Moyen Age (Paris: Aubier, 1961); this was volume 2 of L'Histoire de la spiritualité Chrétienne, and it was translated into English by the Benedictines of Holmes Eden Abbey, Carlisle (London: Burns & Oates, 1968); André Vauchez, La Spiritualité du Moyen Age Occidental, VIII^e - XII^e siècles (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975).

31 As in Pourrat, vol. 2, which deals only with mysticism coming out of religious orders.

For the use of the word "spirituality" in Christian history, see Jean LeClercq, "Spiritualitas," Studi Medievali, Serie 3, 3 (1962), 279-95, and LeClercq's "Introduction" in The Spirituality of Western Christendom, ed. E. Rozanne Elder (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1976), pp. xxix-xxx. LeClercq says that the word was rescued from oblivion by some French scholars who, in the first third of the

20th century, founded the Dictionnaire de la spiritualité. Owen Chadwick, "Indifference and Morality," in Christian Spirituality, ed. Peter Brooks (London: SCM Press, 1975), p. 206, believes that "spirituality" first gained "its special association with mystical or ascetical devotion as a term of reproach against the Quietist writers of the later seventeenth century." Felix Vernet, in La Spiritualité Médiévale (Bloud et Gay, 1929), used spirituality to refer mainly to the devotion of the religious orders, and that more traditional use of "spirituality" was still in use in 1965 in England, when James Walsh wrote that the term "English spirituality" had become synonymous with 14th century English mysticism. In the book he was editing, Pre-Reformation English Spirituality (N.Y.: Fordham Univ. Press, 1965), Walsh was widening the term to include contemplatives in other periods of English life, so in effect Walsh was making "spirituality" synonymous with the contemplative life.

The use of the term among English scholars seems to have broadened since Walsh. Gordon Rupp wrote an article in 1972 entitled "Protestant Spirituality in the First Age of the Reformation," S.C.H., 8 (1972), pp. 155-70, in which he commented, "Spirituality is a catholic word, beginning to dissolve into ecumenese, but it is much better than 'piety' with its nineteenth-century overtones, or the rather better eighteenth-century phrase 'inward religion.' And it suggests . . . some of the continuities between medieval and protestant religion" (p. 155). Rupp went on to write of the prayer and devotional life of the Reformation leaders, so he was still using the term to refer to the clergy, albeit Protestant.

Since then, however, the term "spirituality" has been used in English writings to refer to lay spirituality as the French are doing; e.g. Clifford Davidson wrote of laymen in "Northern Spirituality and the Late Medieval Drama of York," in The Spirituality of Western Christendom, ed. Elder, pp. 125-51.

³² Jacques Toussaert, Le Sentiment religieux en Flandre à la fin du Moyen-Age (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1963), pp. 122, 341, 489-90, 595; Gabriel LeBras, Études de Sociologie Religieuse, 2 vols. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955-56). For a brief discussion of the LeBras school, see Hugh McLeod, "Religion in the City," in Urban History Yearbook (1978), pp. 7-8.

³³ Pantin, pp. 220-43; Pantin was originally published in 1955. Kristeller, "Lay Religious," pp. 99-122; Emma Mason, "The Role of the English Parishioner, 1100-1500," J.Eccl.H., 27 (1976), 17-18, reflects on the difficulty of studying the laity.

³⁴ Moeller, "Piety," p. 60, which was first given as a lecture in 1963. See also "Imperial Cities and the Reformation," in Imperial Cities and the Reformation, eds. and trans. H. C. Erik Midelfort and Mark U. Edwards, Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), pp. 41-115, which was first published in 1962; and "The Town in Church History," S.C.H., 16 (1979), pp. 257-68. Moeller's notes include a listing of German writings on piety which preceded Moeller.

³⁵ Southern, Western Society, p. 11, which was originally published as volume 2 of the Pelican History of the Church; Southern, The

Making of the Middle Ages (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953).

36 Reports from the first international colloquium on popular religion held in Quebec in 1970 are given in Les Religions populaires (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1972).

A seminal conference bringing together outstanding scholars from six academic disciplines in April, 1972, at the University of Michigan resulted in The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion, ed. Charles Trinkaus with Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974). Commenting on the second part of the book, on lay piety and the cult of youth, Professor Trinkaus wrote in his foreword: "Because studies of this type are only beginning, the papers contributed here are of a pioneering and experimental character. . . ." (p. xiii).

The Davis Seminar at Princeton University, which fosters work on topics of relatively recent scholarly concern, chose as its theme for 1973-74 the history of popular religion. The yield was a collection of essays edited by James Obelkevich, Religion and the People, 800-1700. In his introductory remarks, Obelkevich wrote, "The authors have broken with the related discipline of ecclesiastical history and have abandoned its confines and conventions" (p. 3).

Rather more conventional was a 1975 conference sponsored by the Institute for Cistercian Studies and the Medieval Institute at Western Michigan University, which produced a collection of essays edited by Elder, The Spirituality of Western Christendom. All but one of the essays confine themselves to spirituality among clerics.

37 For example, Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Gordon Rupp, ed. Brooks.

38 Patrick J. Geary, "The Ninth-Century Relic Trade: A Response to Popular Piety?" in Religion and the People, ed. Obelkevich; Geary, Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 152-4.

39 Jonathan Sumption, Pilgrimage: An Image of Mediaeval Religion (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 21; Ronald C. Finucane, Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977). We must not forget the pioneering work in the 1960's of Etienne Delaruelle on the pilgrimage, including his study of the interior pilgrimage of the 15th century; see La Piété populaire.

40 Rothkrug's initial statement, "Popular Religion and Holy Shrines," in Religion and the People, ed. Obelkevich, pp. 20-86, is followed by a fuller treatment in Religious Practices and Collective Perceptions: Hidden Homologies in the Renaissance and Reformation, published in Historical Reflections, 7 (Spring, 1980); quotations from pp. 56, 179 of the latter.

41 Vauchez, Spiritualité, chapter 3; very influential in 12th century thought has been M. -D. Chenu, Nature, Man, and Society in the 12th Century, eds. and trans. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), which is a translation of

part of La Théologie au douzième siècle, published in 1957. See especially "Monks, Canons, and Laymen in Search of the Apostolic Life," pp. 223, 227, 235.

The concept of voluntary poverty has fostered various works, the most complete being Études sur l'histoire de la pauvreté, ed. Michel Mollat, 2 vols. (Paris: Sorbonne, 1974). Volume 1 deals with poverty and charity as spiritual values, and volume 2, with the development of pauperism and the organization of assistance to the poor. Showing the influence of both the Sorbonne research and of Chenu is Brenda M. Bolton, "Paupertas Christi: Old Wealth and New Poverty in the Twelfth Century," S.C.H., 14 (1977), 95-103.

⁴² Becker, Medieval Italy, pp. 29-30, 41, 46-7, 77. For a brief look at the developing idea of the layman living piously in the world, see Giles Constable, "Twelfth-Century Spirituality and the Late Middle Ages," in Religious Life and Thought, 11th-12th Centuries (London: Variorum Reprints, Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1971), pp. 27-60. On the changing ideals of piety on the Continent, see Ellen Allard Macek, "Fifteenth-Century Lay Piety," Fifteenth Century Studies, 1 (1978), 169-72.

⁴³ For intellectual heresies, see Gordon Leff, Heresy in the Later Middle Ages, 2 vols. (N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1967). For a survey of heresies and their historiography, see the first section of Walter L. Wakefield, Heresies of the High Middle Ages (N.Y.: Columbia Univ. Press, 1969).

⁴⁴ Malcolm Lambert, Medieval Heresy (N.Y.: Holmes & Meier, 1977), pp. 30, 41.

⁴⁵ Lambert, p. 156. Lambert perceptively traces the vicissitudes of the followers of Peter Valdes as their belief that they must preach led them into heresy, pp. 67-70. On the Beguines, Ernest McDonnell produced in 1954 a comprehensive work on them (and on the Beghards, their male counterparts), which he says is a case study in the vita apostolica as a program and an ideal, The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture (1954; rpt. N.Y.: Octagon Books, 1969), p. 71.

⁴⁶ Brenda Bolton, "Mulieres Sanctae," S.C.H., 10 (1973), 77-95.

⁴⁷ Bolton, "Innocent III's Treatment of the Humiliati," S.C.H., 8 (1972), 73-82; Little, pp. 113-17.

⁴⁸ Little, pp. 209, 213. John Henderson, "The Flagellant Movement and Flagellant Confraternities in Central Italy, 1260-1400," S.C.H., 15 (1978), 147-60, has documented the role of the friars in the popular movements in central Italy beginning in 1260 among certain lay people, the majority of whom were tradesmen and artisans, which made flagellation the center of devotion. The Franciscans in particular encouraged their hearers to identify themselves with Christ's suffering on earth. The flagellant movements, Henderson believes, were in turn the inspiration for the foundation of many confraternities in Italy.

For an interesting look at the impiety of 13th century Italy, see Alexander Murray, "Piety and Impiety in Thirteenth-Century Italy,"

S.C.H., 8 (1972), 83-106.

49 Becker, "Historiography," p. 152.

50 First given at the Anglo-American Historical Conference in London in July, 1970; printed as "Individualism in the Early Italian Renaissance: Burden and Blessing," Studies in the Renaissance, 19 (1972), 274. Becker, "Historiography," p. 152.

51 Becker, "Aspects of Lay Piety in Early Renaissance Florence," in The Pursuit of Holiness, ed. Trinkaus, pp. 184, 189-92, 196. Writing some years earlier, Kristeller had noted the importance of the confraternities in shaping Florentine thought, in "Lay Religious Traditions." A look at one lay confraternity in 15th century Florence is by Rab Hatfield, "The Compagnia de' Magi," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 33 (1970), 107-61.

52 Becker, Medieval Italy, pp. 19, 22, 59, 85-6, 150, 165. Pioneers in the study of the relationship of Protestantism and economics were, of course, Max Weber, writing in 1904-5, and R. H. Tawney, in 1926: Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons (N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958); Tawney, op. cit.

53 Richard C. Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience: The Sacred Image," Studies in the Renaissance, 19 (1972), 7, 9; "Ritual in Florence: Adolescence and Salvation in the Renaissance," in Pursuit of Holiness, ed. Trinkaus, p. 245.

54 Trexler, Public Life in Renaissance Florence, pp. xix, 7. Trexler admits, p. 45, that the Florentines themselves would have given primacy to belief.

55 Donald Weinstein, "Critical Issues in the Study of Civic Religion in Renaissance Florence," in Pursuit of Holiness, ed. Trinkaus, pp. 265-70.

56 Charles Trinkaus, In Our Image and Likeness (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970, I, xvii-xx. These remarks apply primarily to the early humanists; the later Neo-Platonists came close to apotheosizing man and had little concern about man's role in practical human affairs.

57 Trinkaus, "The Religious Thought of the Italian Humanists and the Reformers: Anticipation or Autonomy?" in Pursuit of Holiness, p. 342, note 1. For some interesting observations on the humanists by Trexler, see "Florentine Religious Experience," 35-41.

58 R. R. Post, The Modern Devotion (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), pp. 216, 344, 364, 680. At first the sisters of the Common Life were all laywomen, under the loose supervision of the Brethren, but gradually in the 15th century they took up the Rule of St. Augustine, which made them monastic, pp. 262, 493, 678.

The influence of the Imitation of Christ did not extend into England, except into the Carthusians, according to Roger Lovatt, "The

Imitation of Christ in late Medieval England," T.R.H.S., ser. 5, 18 (1968), 97-121.

⁵⁹ Moeller, "Imperial Cities"; "Piety," p. 60; "Town," 267.

⁶⁰ Steven E. Ozment, The Reformation in the Cities (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 21-2, 44-6. See also Ozment, The Age of Reform, 1250-1550 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 190-222, for a discussion of lay attitudes just prior to the Reformation.

⁶¹ Rothkrug, "Popular Religion," pp. 72-3, 77; William J. Bouwsma, "Early Modern Europe," in The Past before Us, ed. Michael Kammen (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1980), p. 87, believes that the mainstream of Reformation scholarship in America seems "to be flowing increasingly toward investigation of the social context of religious movements." For example, see Social Groups and Religious Ideas in the Sixteenth Century, ed. Miriam U. Chrisman and Otto Grundler (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan Univ. Press, 1978).

⁶² Ozment, Reformation, p. 1; Natalie Zemon Davis, "Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion," in Pursuit of Holiness, ed. Trinkaus, p. 309.

⁶³ Davis takes Keith Thomas to task for doing just that, pp. 311-12. In a more recent work by Davis, "The Sacred and the Body Social in Sixteenth-Century Lyon," P.P., 90 (1981), 40-70, she takes up the question of the role of religion in giving expression to urban values and mentality in the Reformation period, particularly in relation to economics. She found that Calvinists and Catholics had distinctive views of urban space, time and social alliance, with the Catholics adapting their magic and ceremony to the varying character and risks of commercial and banking life in Lyon yet being hampered by their ambivalence towards the foreigner. The Calvinists, Davis writes, cleared space and time for multiple uses and marshalled human energy and attention for steady, productive work, yet were hampered by its commitment to consecrated ends for all activity.

In "Anthropology and History in the 1980's: The Possibilities of the Past," J.I.H., 12 (1981), 267-75, Davis notes that anthropology can help the student of religious history to see the significance in that which might appear insignificant.

⁶⁴ A. N. Galpern, The Religions of the People in Sixteenth Century Champagne (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976). Unfortunately, the last part of Galpern's book is marred by his detailed descriptions of the religious wars later in the century, so that he seems to lose sight of his purpose.

⁶⁵ William A. Christian, Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981).

⁶⁶ Christian, p. 8. James Obelkevich, in his introduction to Religion and the People defines popular religion too broadly, I think, as "taking in magic, superstition, pagan beliefs, and private and group heterodoxies," p. 4. C. S. L. Davies, Peace, Print and Protestantism,

1450-1558 (St. Albans: Paladin, 1977), p. 144, makes some useful distinctions in the various levels of popular religion.

67 James Gairdner, Lollardy and the Reformation in England, 4 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1908-1913); Deanesly, *op. cit.*; K. B. McFarlane, John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity (London: The English Universities Press, 1952). See also his Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), in which McFarlane reappraises some of his earlier thinking. John A. F. Thomson, The Later Lollards, 1414-1520 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965); A. G. Dickens, Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York, 1509-1558 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959); see also his "Heresy and the Origins of English Protestantism," in Britain and the Netherlands, vol. 2, eds. J. S. Bromley and E. H. Kossman (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1964), pp. 47-66.

68 Margaret Aston, "Lollardy and Literacy," History, 62 (1977), 347-71; "Lollard Women Priests?" J.Eccl.H., 31 (1980), 441-61. Anne Hudson deals mainly with Wycliffite texts: "Some Aspects of Lollard Book Production," S.C.H., 9 (1972), 147-57; "A Lollard Compilation and the Dissemination of Wycliffite Thought," Journal of Theological Studies, n.s., 23 (1972), 65-81; "The Examination of Lollards," B.I.H.R., 46 (1973), 145-59; "A Neglected Wycliffite Text," J.Eccl.H., 29 (1978), 257-79.

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75 John Bossy, "Blood and Baptism: Kinship, Community and Christianity in Western Europe from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries," S.C.H., 10 (1973), 129-43. Bossy came to his conclusions through his study of post-Reformation Catholicism. Bossy's "The Counter Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe," P.P., 47 (1970), 51-70, is despite its title a thought-provoking assessment of popular medieval religion.

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77 F. R. H. DuBoulay, An Age of Ambition (N.Y.: The Viking Press, 1970), pp. 147, 157.

78 Charles Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the Citizen: the Communal Year at Coventry, 1450-1550," in Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700, eds. Peter Clark and Paul Slack (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1972), pp. 57-85. Unfortunately, Phythian-Adams did little to continue his work on urban religion in his book on Coventry, Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979).

79 Norman P. Tanner, "Popular Religion in Norwich, with Special Reference to the Evidence of Wills, 1370-1532," Diss. Oxford, 1973; Colin Platt, The English Medieval Town (London: Book Club Associates, 1976), pp. 148-74; Clifford Davidson, "Northern Spirituality and the Late Medieval Drama of York," in The Spirituality of Western

Christendom, ed. Elder, pp. 125-51; David M. Palliser, Tudor York (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 226-59. One other book on England should be mentioned: Claire Cross, Church and People, 1450-1660 (Fontana, 1976), has a title which promises much but delivers only a discussion of the political influence of the laity in the English church.

80 It is interesting to note that the study of European lay piety, as opposed to the study of popular religion, has come almost exclusively from American scholars. Too many English historians have failed to take seriously the devotion of the laity and, enamored with the study of the lower levels of society, have resisted the examination of what we would now call the "middle class," the level of society where lay piety was most clearly manifested.

81 See Macek, "Lay Piety," for a discussion of research on the subject. Macek notes three areas of interest which have prompted studies of lay piety: the highly articulate urban culture of Italy, i.e. the humanists; the corporate ritual and charitable activities of the urban Italian laity; and northern European spirituality, especially the devotio moderna in its teaching and dissemination of devotional writings.

82 For some beginning attempts by French and Canadian historians to define popular religion, see LaCroix, Les Religions populaires; "Une enquete sur les 'spiritualites populaires,'" Revue d'histoire de la spiritualite, 49 (1973), 493-504; Raoul Manselli, La Religion populaire au Moyen Age (Montreal, 1975).

83 Some other pertinent questions can be found in Macek, "Lay Piety," 178, and Weinstein, "Critical Issues," p. 270.

CHAPTER II

THE BOROUGH OF COLCHESTER IN THE EARLY TUDOR PERIOD

Any society has many intertwining strands, and though we might think of the medieval society as being more simple than ours, there was yet a tightness of the intertwining which we, in our pervasive dichotomy between the palpable and the intangible, do not always experience. In medieval Colchester, laic spirituality was not separated from the other components of that society, and so in this look at urban lay piety the attempt is being made to view first the whole of the urban society as it was experienced in Colchester, in order to see better the effects of lay piety on that society. This chapter will untangle and examine some of the separate threads of late medieval Colchester, first, in part one, in what is called the secular structure, i.e. the history, governance, economy, and social structure of Colchester, and in part two, the institutional religious structure.¹

Part One: The Secular Structure

Section 1: A Brief History

A modern shopping center in the heart of Colchester draws people from the surrounding countryside for bargains to be found in Marks and Spencer and in the Co-op. They come by motor car on roadbeds first laid out in ancient times. Having traveled over rather flat topography, a rise in the ground as they approach Colchester affords a pleasant

prospect--a lush river valley dominated by a town set on a hill. . In Colchester the past intermingles with the present in a tantalizing way, and Colchester's physical setting is very much a result of its long past. As early as the 7th century B.C. there was a settlement in the green valley, on the River Colne, and at the beginning of the 1st century A.D. the British King Cunobelin (Shakespeare's Cymbeline) ruled over the kingdoms of the southeast from his capital, called Camulodunum after the Celtic war-god Camulos, on the River Colne. Today one can still walk on the earthen ramparts, even yet surprisingly high and steep, which protected the western, vulnerable side of Camulodunum which had the Colne and the Roman River guarding its other boundaries. Archeological excavations have discovered treasures of gold and silver ornaments from the Camulodunum of A.D. 10, revealing evidence of trade with the Continent and of the wealth and power of the tribal kingdom.²

Camulodunum was a natural objective of the Roman army which invaded Britain in A.D. 43, and it was the conquering Romans who moved the settlement to the crest of a high plateau above the river, establishing there in A.D. 50 the first colonia of veteran Roman soldiers to be founded in Britain. There the great temple of the deified Emperor Claudius was built (on the same spot where centuries later William the Conqueror built his castle), but that symbol of Roman dominance was destroyed in A.D. 60 when the Britons rose under Boadicea against their oppressors and massacred the inhabitants of the colonia. Though never again to be a capital, Colchester grew once more, this time surrounded by walls, many of them standing today as impressive monuments of Roman strength, and with a magnificent West Gate opening onto the London road. Several large temples and two theaters were built; none have

endured but the basic Roman street plan remains in Colchester to this day.³

Only a few clues tell us of the town's fate after the Romans left Britain in the early 5th century. Recent archeological excavations seem to indicate that by ca. 450 the Romano-British way of life had broken down in Colchester and that there followed a period of Saxon occupation, for at least two centuries. Saxon immigrants had apparently pushed their way up the River Colne to settle there; villages in the area which are closer to the sea, such as Fingeringhoe and Brightlingsea, still bear the name of their Saxon settlers.⁴

At some later period the Danes established themselves in Colchester, with Colchester and Maldon seemingly being the chief seats of Danish power in Essex, which they had held at least since 879. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle reports that in 920, during the time when Alfred's son, Edward the Elder, was recapturing the Danelaw, "a great force gathered together in the autumn, from Kent, Surrey, and Essex, and from all parts from the nearest fortresses, and marched on Colchester and surrounded the fortress and attacked until they had captured it: they slew all the inhabitants, and seized everything inside, except the men who escaped over the wall." A few weeks later King Edward and his soldiers came to Colchester and had the walls repaired.⁵ No doubt Saxons repopled Colchester at this time.

Edward's concern for the maintenance of Colchester as a fortress shows one of the processes by which Anglo-Saxon kings developed a close association with towns which was to be of mutual benefit. An early 10th century list known as the "Burghal Hidage" reveals a deliberate program of fortification for national defense. Not all of the burhs,

or fortified places, developed as urban communities, but Worcester is an example of a burh which became a town. Built as a burh between 885 and 900 by Ethelred and Ethelfled, Worcester had included within it a market with streets both within and without the burh, but it was the communal manning and maintenance of the fortress which hastened the development of Worcester as a market town. The early history of the borough of Colchester, as of many boroughs, remains clouded in obscurity, but we do know that by the Norman Conquest in 1066 Colchester was already a borough of some importance, having its own court and mint. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to assume that Colchester took its borough status from its role as an Anglo-Saxon fortification under the aegis of the king. Colchester's Roman walls proved to be an asset in the town's development, as was the case at both Exeter and Winchester. The king thus gained a valuable fortification, as well as extra revenue generated by the trade of the town. On the part of the settlement, being a "free" royal borough was to be the best possible situation for a community of burgesses. The two other types of boroughs which developed in England, those under ecclesiastical lords or under secular lords, were to have less freedom and more conflict in their history than did those boroughs such as Colchester which owed their allegiance only to the king. As Mrs. J. R. Green has stated, the royal boroughs regarded themselves as the "very aristocracy among the boroughs," enjoying a "self-conscious dignity."⁶

To say that Colchester's borough status grew out of its role as an Anglo-Saxon fortress (burh) takes nothing away from the impact which its trade, even if only as a market town for the area, would exert in its development as a borough.⁷ We know nothing about Colchester's

trade or economy in the pre-Conquest period, but it is fairly safe to conjecture that Colchester was a market center for the area. We know that Edward the Elder ordered that all buying and selling must be conducted inside "ports" (a trading place, not necessarily for waterborne trade), and Athelstan repeated the provision, connecting it with orders about the repair of boroughs and restricting minting of coins to ports in such a way as to indicate that boroughs and ports were synonymous.⁸ Colchester was in the category of borough or port, as well as a mint, so it is very possible that Colchester was more than a market center, but was also a center for wider trade. Both Colchester's role as a trading center and as a fortress worked together, we can conjecture, to create gradually the solid beginnings of a self-governing borough subject only to the king. Certainly, the report about Colchester in the Domesday Book strengthens those impressions.

Compiled in 1086, twenty years after the Norman invasion, the Domesday Book gives a remarkably long and thorough assessment of Colchester, listing by name 276 burgesses of the king, most of them with names of Old English origin but with some showing Scandinavian or Norman descent. Three descriptive terms are used in the survey for Colchester--hundret, civitas, and burgus. The hundred was originally the hundred fighting men who formed a subdivision of the national fyrd, or militia, but was applied to these men in their civil character of neighboring freeholders who were united by mutual duties and responsibilities into a community which held its regular meetings and had its necessary officials for the handling of its affairs. Certain towns were reckoned for purposes of jurisdiction and taxation as hundreds or half-hundreds. A hundred occupying a country area, such as the

neighboring Tendring Hundred or Lexden Hundred, would cover a much larger area than did the Colchester Hundred which, coterminous with the later chartered borough, included only the 4 neighboring villages of Mile End, Greenstead, Berechurch, and Lexden. Burgus seems to refer to Colchester's walled enclosure (108 acres in area), and civitas, the entire area of the hundred. Maitland noted that civitas in the Domesday Book is applied to towns which lacked cathedral churches.⁹

Evidence from the Domesday Book indicates that the Saxons inhabiting Colchester at the time of the Norman Conquest had formed a free community, probably even farming their own manor, i.e. paying the king, the lord of the manor, certain fixed customs and dues which their own officers gathered. Of the 276 burgesses of the king in Colchester in 1086 the majority had one house and a plot of land of from one to twenty-five acres, although some burgesses possessed more than one house and some had none. They had in all 355 houses and held 1296 acres of arable land and 51 of meadow. The wealthiest of the king's burgesses was a woman, Leofleda, with 3 houses, 25 acres, and a mill. Indicating a nascent municipal corporation is a significant entry which records that held in commune burgensium were 80 acres of land and 8 perches around the walls (the dry ditch and banks surrounding the walls).¹⁰

The Domesday Book records that the king himself held land in Colchester: 102 acres, of which 10 were meadow and on which were 10 bordarii (farm laborers), besides 240 acres partly pasture and partly scrub. The bulk of the desmesne lands lay in one block, partly within and partly without the walls, and it was on this land that the Roman temple of Claudius had been built and on which the castle would be

constructed shortly. Other lords held land in Colchester, too. Two Saxon thegns, Godric and Thurbern, had held manors and judicial courts at the time of the Norman Conquest, but, as was the case with all the Saxon landowners in Essex (except two), their lands had been seized by the Conqueror and either retained by him or given to his followers. Also, the Bishop of London had 14 houses and various lands in Colchester, most exempt from quit rent, as was the case with the former Saxon manors in the Colchester Hundred later owned by Norman lords.

It is remarkable that the burgesses of Colchester were not dispossessed of their lands, as Godric and Thurbern had been. Possibly the explanation lies in the fact that the burgesses before the coming of William had been allowed to make a money composition for military service (sixpence from each house) so that none of the burgesses had appeared in arms against the Conqueror. The sixpence payment was continued by King William as well as the custom, the king's ferm or annual payment which under Edward the Confessor had been a little over £15 a year, but which had been increased to a strangely high figure of £80.¹¹ The burgesses of Colchester also had a mint, one of the privileges of a borough for which they paid an annual sum to the king. The moneyers (probably four of them) received their dies from the Exchequer and worked under the inspection of officers representing the Crown, the custodes cunearum. The jurisdiction of the town was exercised in the hundred court, presided over by the sheriff, but exempt from this jurisdiction were certain tenants on the land belonging to the Bishop of London and on the manors formerly owned by the Saxon thegns, Godric and Thurbern. With the 355 houses owned by the burgesses, the houses on the king's demesne, and the houses in the private jurisdictions,

there were in all 450 houses in the Hundred of Colchester, so that the population in 1086 might be estimated to be 2,000 or more.¹²

Of the Norman lords listed as owning land and houses in Colchester at the time of the Domesday survey, Eudo the Dapifer (the steward) became the great man of the town. Eudo and 3 of his brothers had accompanied William the Conqueror to England, and all shared in the honors and rewards of that venture. Eudo became tenant-in-chief of 64 manors scattered over the eastern counties, of which 25 were in the county of Essex, and to honor him further he was given the hereditary office of Seneschal of Normandy, placing him among the chief personages of the ducal court. Probably Eudo, rather than the king, built the castle in Colchester sometime before the end of the 11th century; it was a grand castle indeed, having the largest keep in England and fitting for the Grand Seneschal of England and of Normandy. It was Eudo who also built in 1097 the first religious foundation in Colchester, the Benedictine St. John's Abbey.¹³

On Eudo's death King Henry I resumed Eudo's English estates, including the castle in Colchester.¹⁴ The castle was strong and it probably did much to preserve the peace which Colchester generally enjoyed. Only once was the castle under siege, during the conflict between King John and the barons, when the castle was held for a few weeks by a baronial garrison against the royal forces. King John, who visited Colchester more than any other sovereign, came to Colchester and raised the siege in March, 1216. The castles in the kingdom were again of political importance during the struggle between Henry III and his barons, and the castle in Colchester was transferred back and forth between the baronial keepers and the king's party, but after that it

ceased to have any military or political importance. Put into the custody of the sheriff of the county of Essex, the castle was used as the county prison, which was still its function in the Tudor period.¹⁵ Today the truncated castle keep is a museum surrounded by a lovely park that was once a part of the Norman royal demesne.

It was the town's prosperity which was to be of more importance to the king than was its castle. Ample taxes were paid during the reigns of Edward I and Edward II, and a different kind of payment reveals that Colchester had a fair amount of river trade, when Edward III in 1347 asked Colchester to supply 5 ships and 170 mariners for his blockade of Calais. When the king returned victoriously, he paid Colchester the compliment of committing some of his French prisoners to the custody of the bailiffs of the town. Shortly after, the plague raged through Colchester; the Oath Book notes that a much larger number of wills than usual were entered on the town rolls in 1348 and again in 1360.¹⁶

Although people of Essex took a prominent part in the insurrection of 1381, apparently those of Colchester did not, even though a number of the rebels tried to persuade the burgesses to espouse their cause. Susan Reynolds has noted that mainly towns under ecclesiastical lords were the ones who figured in the disturbances of 1381.¹⁷ However, one of the leaders of the movement, John Ball, had been a cleric in Colchester at one time. At the end of the 14th century, when Richard II was deposed, Essex was strongly in favor of the dethroned king, and insurrectionary movements, aborted by Henry IV, were fostered in the monasteries around Colchester. In 1450, in the year of Jack Cade's rebellion, the Privy Council directed the bailiffs of Colchester to

permit no public gatherings. In June of that year, Colchester was the recipient of a quarter of the body of one Nicholas Jakes who was executed for high treason, which undoubtedly served as a vivid warning to any sympathizers in Colchester. War did not touch Essex during the Wars of the Roses, but Colchester was apparently Yorkist as indicated by the fact that Henry VI deprived the borough of a valuable privilege, the fishery of the Colne, bestowing it upon a follower of the Lancastrian cause, John de Vere, Earl of Oxford. The fishery was soon restored to Colchester when the Yorkist Edward IV granted to Colchester in 1462 the most generous charter it had ever received.¹⁸

Having traced the history of Colchester almost to the beginning of the Tudor reign in 1485, we have some idea of the historical context in which the inhabitants of late medieval Colchester lived. Next, a look at the development of the governance of Colchester will outline its legal and political structure.

Section 2: Governance

Colchester received its first charter in 1189, although a hundred years earlier, as revealed by the Domesday Book, it already had its own court, mint, and common property, and it more than likely had its own market.¹⁹ For Colchester, as for many towns in England, the 12th and most of the 13th centuries were a period of growth, during which time the towns succeeded in obtaining certain rights to administer themselves. By the 14th century urban liberties were more or less complete, though with some new kinds of privilege yet to come, mainly incorporation and the commission of the peace.²⁰ In this section, the development of the governance of Colchester as revealed by its various

charters will be traced, placing Colchester's growth in the context of general borough development in England. The governance of Colchester in the early Tudor period as revealed by the court records will then be pictured in some detail, thus setting part of the stage for determining whether lay piety had significance in the life of the borough.

During the 12th century the more advanced English towns succeeded in obtaining certain privileges of self-governance; almost 50 royal charters were granted to English towns in Henry II's reign, although Henry would never grant a farm, the right of the town to pay a basic lump sum for the whole town, in perpetuity. Henry granted Colchester during his reign the right to collect customs from the water and the banks and wharves on both sides of the River Colne, and that, with its existing rights, probably gave Colchester as many privileges as most of the newly chartered towns. Apparently Colchester already had the valued privilege of burgage tenure, the free transferability of land.²¹

Henry II had seemingly been determined not to allow the spread of the French sworn commune to his English possessions, but apparently there was a thirst for genuine self-government on the part of the boroughs, evidenced by the flood of municipal charters granted after Henry's death. In addition, Henry's sons had a need for money which must have made them more amenable to the pleas of the towns for the privileges conferred by the charters. Urban historians tell us, however, that often the charters merely confirmed what was already being practiced. Colchester's first charter, issued in the initial year of Richard I's reign, in 1189, empowered the burgesses of Colchester to elect their own chief officers, the two bailiffs, paying annually £40 for the privilege. This right to farm their own borough from the Crown

was an important feature of the charter, since they were therefore free to enjoy any profit that could be made. Among other things, the charter exempted the burgesses of Colchester from toll, lastage, passage, pontage, and all other dues at all times all over England and at the seaports. Also, the Colchester market was not to be hindered by any other market. Obviously, economic liberties were quite as important to the burgesses of Colchester as were constitutional and judicial liberties, and they were not unique in this. Susan Reynolds asserts that "an important motive in the movement towards autonomy was to control trade and protect town traders and consumers against outside competition and extortionate tolls."²²

The royal charters granted to Colchester were confirmed by each new monarch, usually with few changes. In the mid-13th century, the building up of the jurisdiction of the borough court became the chief objective of municipal reformers, and in 1252 Colchester and Canterbury led the way in obtaining charters from Henry III which allowed the return of writs, i.e. the right to execute writs within their area and make return to the king themselves.²³ As we have noted, the first charter of 1189 had empowered the burgesses of Colchester to elect their own chief magistrates, the two bailiffs; before that time an officer of the king would have presided over the borough court. The charter of 1252, then, made the Colchester borough court even more autonomous, permitting them to function without interference from the Sheriff of Essex, who had previously served as an intermediary between the royal chancery and the borough court. The increasing autonomy of the court in Colchester was a vital factor in the development of the borough. The bailiffs were representing the king as lord of the manor

and exercising all the usual rights of manorial lords. Just as the lord of the manor had his curia, so the community of burgesses had its moot hall in which the court met, and the present town hall continues on the site where stood the old moot hall, destroyed in 1843. At its destruction a doorway and arches of Norman work were found, indicating a 12th century date, probably ca. 1160, a date determined by recent studies of archeologists who have also concluded that the lavish decoration of the moot hall, executed by sculptors who also worked on the cathedral at Rochester, "testifies to the wealth and taste of the burgesses of Colchester." Colchester apparently did not have a trade guild association in its early history nor, of course, a guildhall, the absence of which indicated the early strength of the borough organization in Colchester, especially in its court. For some towns, such as Leicester, the trade guild preceded the borough structure and was an important step in the art of self-governance, but in Colchester the trading guild was unnecessary for the process of obtaining liberties and trade protection for the borough. Colchester's court remained the basis for the administration of the borough for several centuries.²⁴

The principal court in Colchester was the Hundred Court which presumably existed before the Conquest. The Hundred Court dealt with actions between burgesses, mostly for the recovery of debts and for trespasses of all sorts, such as assaults, encroachments and petty misdemeanors. Regulation of trade and of consumer products also lay within the purview of the court; for example, Colchester had the assize of bread and ale, with the right to see that the bread baked and the ale brewed were fit for consumption and sold at standard measures and prices. Also handled by the court were some kinds of public business

such as the enrollment of deeds and the enrollment or probate of wills which concerned town property. In 1311, the date of the first surviving court roll, there were extra court sessions held during the week, and these developed in the 14th century into the Thursday Court, or Foreign Court, in which litigants who were not burgesses could bring actions and any other business could be done. Three times a year, at Michaelmas (first Monday after Michaelmas Day, September 29), Hilary-tide (first Monday after January 13), and Hokeday (the Monday after Easter), there was a special session of the Monday Court called a Law-hundred, at which all the freeholders of the town were supposed to appear, during which a special jury made presentments of all manner of public offenses, many of them minor, such as for overstocking the commons or for overcharging for ale or bread.²⁵

A greater precision of governance, and of law, had become important in England in the last part of the 13th century, under Edward I. Basic to the changes were the financial needs of a government in a time when a rising standard of living had made activities of both war and peace more costly. The old system of taxation was not adequate to meet the expenses of the Crown, and in the king's need to obtain the collaboration of his non-feudal subjects to initiate extra methods of taxation, the towns were to be affected. The more important towns had paid fixed lump sums, "farms," which were to continue under the new system of taxation, and they had also paid from time to time occasional taxes ("gifts" or "aids") which had come to be known as tallages. Those tallages, produced by "rough and ready bargaining and assessment," according to Susan Reynolds, had tended to become fixed at customary totals, but from 1275 tallage gave way to new parliamentary taxes which were

paid from 1294 at a higher rate in towns than in rural areas, i.e. normally a tenth instead of a fifteenth. The list of towns paying at the higher rate, as well as the list of boroughs sending representatives to parliament--at first the two lists sometimes varied slightly--became important. The distinction between the town having full borough status and the lesser market town was therefore being drawn more sharply by the royal government as well as by the boroughs themselves.²⁶

The 13th century also engendered a developing sense of community which would eventually lead to the idea of incorporation. Seals, a symbol of the corporate identity, began to be used as early as 1191 in Oxford: Colchester's raven seal, first used by the town's chief officer even before Colchester became a borough in 1198, was very possibly used as a borough seal from an early date. Also, writes G. H. Martin, regular written memoranda "marked an important stage in a community's progress towards corporateness." The burgesses of Colchester began to document their business affairs systematically in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. Colchester's first surviving court roll dates from 1311, although there are traces of earlier ones. Each court roll from the Colchester court, recording the business of one year from Michaelmas (September 29) to Michaelmas, consists of some 20 to 30 closely written membranes, parchment skins each 2 or 3 feet long. In the early 14th century, the borough officials of Colchester also began two books of records which survive today, the Red Paper Book and the Oath Book, also known as the Red Parchment Book. Some of the entries record information going back to the late 13th century. Contained in the two books are lists of officers and of new burgesses, judicial precedents, a chronicle of Colchester's history, some deeds and wills, a

summary of the court rolls, and in the Oath Book the oaths of office to be taken by borough officials. Entries in the Red Paper Book continued through the mid-16th century, and the Oath Book was used up to the 18th century.²⁷

The developing sense of community, illustrated by the concern for documentation as well as the need for a town's more precise definition under the law of the Crown, worked together to help develop the idea of formal incorporation of a town. According to Maitland, the idea of the body corporate came through the canonists who developed the theory that the body corporate is a fictitious person and owes its personality to some act of sovereign power. The early budding of the idea can be seen in the summons of Edward I of men from shires and boroughs to present themselves at Westminster, bringing with them "full and sufficient power [plenam et sufficientem potestatem] from their communities" so that the business at hand--the development of a new tax system--might not be held up through lack of such power. Edward I wanted members in the parliament who would be able to bind the communities from which they had come to whatever the general counsel of king and realm decided.²⁸ Later, the idea of the body corporate bore its legal harvest in the incorporation which came eventually through the royal charter, or at least the royal charter gave formal expression to what had developed in practice long before in some towns, Colchester among them.²⁹ For example, the corporate capacity of London was so taken for granted that London did not achieve formal incorporation until 1608. For most towns, however, formal incorporation was more necessary, and the 15th century became the "classic" age of incorporation; by the 16th and 17th centuries it was common form. Though for a long

time having been in essence a body corporate, Colchester came to formal incorporation in a charter granted by Edward IV in 1462 which stated "that the bailiffs and burgesses . . . should for the future forever be one perpetual body and commonalty in name and in deed, and have perpetual succession . . . capable of purchasing lands and tenements, to hold to them and their successors forever."³⁰ The annual rents paid by tenants on corporately owned property were a significant source of income for the borough.

As well as formal incorporation, one other important liberty had come to Colchester in its charters of the 15th century. An increase in its judicial jurisdiction came with the charter granted by Henry VI in 1447, when Colchester was granted a permanent commission of the peace to be held by its bailiffs and four other men, with as full power and authority as the justices had in any other county or place in England. The system of the justices of the peace had developed on the county level, so having their own commission of the peace was to Colchester another mark of their status as an independent subject of the king. Upon receiving the permanent commission of the peace in 1447, the town decided that the four J.P.'s, like the bailiffs, would be chosen only from the ranks of the aldermen, thus strengthening the power of the governing oligarchy in Colchester.³¹ When speaking of the jurisdiction of the borough court or of the justices of the peace in Colchester, however, we must bear in mind that the jurisdiction of the corporation extended only over the inhabitants of the borough and its liberties who had no other lord; some independent jurisdictions remained, such as that which the abbot of St. John's monastery had over tenants of the abbey lands. Also, the ecclesiastical court of the

Bishop of London and his archdeacon exercised certain authority, though it was sometimes challenged by the burgesses, who were ready and eager to maintain their autonomy within their jurisdiction. Not even an alderman was allowed to infringe on the right of the borough court; in 1511 Alderman William Benet was fined a hefty sum, £5, for bringing into the town a scriptum sealed with the privy seal of the Lord King, so that he might implead a certain fellow burgess "outside the Lord King's court of the town, in derogation of the whole liberty and contrary to the laudable customs of the same town."³²

To be a free burgess of Colchester meant, then, that one had the judicial right--and duty!--not to plead outside the bounds of the borough court (though ecclesiastical and royal power put some limits on this right). Attaining the freedom of the borough brought other benefits, especially economic privileges. We moderns are attuned to talking of political rights when we speak of freedom, but as Susan Reynolds has pointed out, the medieval townsmen probably saw burgess-ship less in terms of political rights than of privileges in trade and law to be enjoyed by the members of the privileged body. In Colchester, there were 3 ways by which one became a free burgess: 1) by a seven years apprenticeship with a free burgess, at the end paying a set fee to the town; 2) by being a son or a grandson of a free burgess; 3) by paying a sum of money to the borough.³³ An oath was taken upon admission to the freedom of the borough, with the promise to be faithful to the king and to maintain and promote the interest of the borough. In return the burgess became part of the corporate freedom from external interference, such as that which magnates or the sheriff of the county might try to impose; he had certain trading privileges and freedom from many custom

payments, as well as the important right of free transferability of land in the borough. He had the right to pasture animals on the common lands and probably had some say in the initial stages of the electoral process for the selection of town officials, as well as having the judicial rights already mentioned.³⁴ Many "unfree" inhabitants, however, achieved effective freedom at common law just by living in the town, though not having the status and privileges defined in the freedom of the borough, but it is possible that Colchester had an unusually high proportion of inhabitants who had the freedom of the borough.³⁵

Town liberties were no defense against interference from the king, however, for their liberties were by the grace and favor of the king, and the town's execution of a number of duties on the king's behalf were expected. As well as paying the traditional dues of the "borough farm" set at £35,³⁶ some of the larger towns became involved in the assessment and collection of royal taxes, which was the situation in Colchester in 1524-25. Towns were to provide duly attested information of various kinds to the central government on demand, and they were to suppress any rioting or disorder within the town, as well as help the king produce an army when the enemy threatened (or when the king wanted to threaten an enemy!). For example, in King Henry's alliance with the Emperor against France, he asked the bailiffs of Colchester in 1544 to furnish and supply 15 able foot soldiers, three of them to be archers. Too, the boroughs were to send members to parliament whenever one was called, though the role of the burgess members was for a long time only a subordinate one in parliament.³⁷ Sometimes a town had to entertain royalty, as Colchester did in 1515 when Catherine of Aragon stopped for a night's stay in Colchester while

making a pilgrimage to Walsingham; upon her departure the officers of the borough gave the queen a purse containing £10. When Edward VI died in 1553, the town declared for Mary, in opposition to Lady Jane Grey, sending to Mary some provisions at Framlingham and then receiving her as a guest in Colchester when she was making her way to London, presenting her with £20 in gold and a cup of silver.³⁸

Not only was the town's fulfillment of its responsibilities to the royal government costly, but internal expenses were multiplying in the later Middle Ages as municipal offices increased in number and as civic responsibilities mounted. A few of the officers of the town, such as the recorder and the town clerk, had come to be salaried, though comparatively few borough officers were paid a full wage. Their jobs were not without some compensation, however; in the 14th century each bailiff received £3 a year and a 30s. robe, and in 1524 the Red Paper Book notes that each bailiff was to receive £4 10s. Borough expenses had also increased as paving and proper drainage of the streets came to be a concern and as more public buildings and places had to be maintained, such as, in Colchester, the moot hall, wharves, the market area, bridges, and town walls. Also, Colchester's channel to the sea, the River Colne, had to be kept free of obstruction and decaying banks repaired, a matter requiring a special levy in 1548. Ceremony increased as well, and consequently, expenses also; as Susan Reynolds points out, the Corpus Christi and other plays at Chester, Coventry, York, and elsewhere attest to the rich ceremonial life which had developed in many medieval towns.³⁹ In Colchester, a 1559 presentment at a law inquest hints at the continuing expectation of ceremony, with the proposed fining of the bailiffs and aldermen who did not wear their

scarlet gowns and velvet tippets at Michaelmas or on fair days as had been accustomed.⁴⁰

To pay the expenses of the borough, Colchester received into its coffers the profits of justice, fines from the market, tolls on "foreigners" for the right to sell in the Colchester market, and the custom tolls paid at the town gates and the town harbor. Of course the bailiffs and commonalty, according to their charter, also had sovereignty over the gathering of taxes within the borough. Too, the corporation had long held common property, dating at least from the Domesday period, and they were continuing to acquire more in the 16th century, when Henry VIII granted to Colchester a large wood and heath for £100. W. G. Hoskins found that in Leicester about one-half of the town's revenue came from rents of property owned by the borough, and a large proportion of Colchester's income undoubtedly came from its rents. Some other miscellaneous sources of revenue were entry dues paid by outsiders who wanted to become freemen, fines collected from those wanting exemption from public office, and profits from the Colne fishery, esteemed for its fine oysters as far back as the Roman occupation.⁴¹

Building on this brief survey of the liberties of Colchester and the development of its corporate structure, let us turn to the records of early Tudor Colchester for an analysis of the governing body at that time, a necessary prelude to our later examination of the effect of lay piety within the borough. Unfortunately all of the Colchester court rolls from Henry VII's reign have been lost, but the bulk of the court rolls from the later Tudor reigns are extant, so our analysis of

the governing structure will primarily begin with Henry VIII's reign. Each of the court rolls begins with a list of the officers of the borough, and the first complete court roll from Henry VIII's reign, in 1510-11, lists the following officers: 2 bailiffs, a recorder or legis peritus, 4 justices of the peace, 10 aldermen, a chamberlain, 2 coroners, 4 clavers (key bearers), a clerk of the town, and 4 serjeants-at-mace (see Appendix 1). Not so many people are involved as first appears, however; the bailiffs, J.P.'s, coroners, and two of the clavers were all aldermen, giving each of the 10 aldermen a second title. A little is known about the development of some of those offices, thanks to the Oath Book which records a scheme for reform in 1372. In that year it was decided that abuses by the two bailiffs were to be checked by the institution of separate receivers, later called chamberlains, and a board of eight auditors, whose names changed to aldermen sometimes before 1443.⁴²

Aldermen in the early Tudor period (see Appendix 2) often served for lengthy periods, usually until they died or were close to death. Of the 48 aldermen who served during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary, the position of alderman was held for an average of 13 years, with 4 of them serving as long as 33 and 34 years each.⁴³ Obviously, the turnover was not rapid. Of the 26 aldermen (out of the 48) whose death dates we know, 13 died in office and 9 retired only a year or two before death, suggesting illness or infirmity. Some unusual circumstances surrounded the retirement of two of the four who left the aldermanic office several years before their death. John Cristmas, the younger son of a wealthy alderman, retired, due apparently to reduced financial circumstances revealed by the lay subsidy of

1524-25, and Cristmas became a member of the Second Council, remaining on it for the 7 years until his death and causing that body suddenly to gain unaccustomed importance, since he was still a Cristmas, the most powerful family in Colchester at that time. Another of the early retirees, William Debenham, refused the office after 3 years of service. The court record gives details of his "cruel and seditious words" spoken in the council chamber against a fellow alderman whom he accused of having heretical relatives. For those words and for not coming before the bailiffs when commanded, Debenham was fined £5 and was imprisoned for a time.⁴⁴

In looking at the tax rolls of Colchester which emerged from the lay subsidy of 1524-25, we find that the aldermen of that period (see Table 1) were all listed as having at least £40 in movable goods, and most of them had more. By far the wealthiest alderman--and the wealthiest burgess--was John Cristmas, Esq. (nephew of the John Cristmas whose reduced finances seemingly forced his retirement that year), with £600 in 1524;⁴⁵ the next wealthiest had £140. Not all who had £40 could be aldermen, since there were only 10 aldermanic places, but certainly every one of the wealthier burgesses in town, i.e. those with £100 or more, was an alderman.⁴⁶ Wealth spoke loudly and clearly, and being a part of the wealthiest family meant that, as an alderman, one served only in the more prestigious offices of bailiff or justice of the peace, and not in the lesser roles of coroner or clavier. Only once, in 1515-16, do we have record of a Cristmas serving in the lesser offices, and that was during the first year on the job of John Cristmas, Esq., the son of Alderman Thomas Cristmas. With the death during the year of 1547-48 of the same John Cristmas, the Cristmas family removed

Table 1
Wealth of Aldermen, 1524-1525¹

	<u>1524</u>	<u>1525</u>
Bradman, John	£80	80 marks
Clere, John	120	£80
Coksale, John	44	40
Colle, John	40	80
Cristmas, John, Sr.	18	18
Cristmas, John, Esq.	600	400
Flyngaunt, Thomas	140	80
Hamond, Christopher, Gent.	-	40
Jopson, William	100	deceased
Lowthe, Ambrose	40	40
Mayken, John	80	80 marks
Neve, John	40	£40
Northern, Robert	66	40

¹ Based on the lay subsidy rolls, P.R.O. E179/108/162; E179/108/169.

itself from aldermanic affairs, having moved socially upward into the gentry (with some of them representing Colchester in parliament). We then witness another family, the Sayers, gradually taking the dominant role in borough affairs. By 1552 George Sayer was clearly a leading alderman, and for the next 20 years he did not serve in the lesser aldermanic offices, although he had done so frequently in his first 13 years as alderman. Just the order of the listing of the aldermen was significant: the Cristmases were almost always listed first, and the same later became true of George Sayer. Obviously there was definite ranking among the aldermen, even though the top office of bailiff

changed every year. On the average the aldermen served as bailiff every 5th year, with the wealthier generally serving more frequently.⁴⁷ Noticeable, too, is that the wealthier aldermen in 1524 and 1525 all came from the parish of St. James in the East Ward, where the manufacture of clothing was centered.

The bailiffs and justices of the peace were the more important aldermanic officers because they were the magistrates of the borough, with the bailiffs presiding over the borough court and the justices serving with the bailiffs as part of the commission of the peace to enforce the statutes of the Crown. The bailiffs, by virtue of their office, ranked with esquires, but their tasks were not just honorary. Besides presiding over courts, they must have spent a lot of time supervising trade, or at least seeing that someone else was doing the supervising properly. There were markets and fairs to oversee and standards of quality to maintain. The regulation of weights and measures was even noted in the charter from the king, and some of the most common features of the court records were the assizes of bread and ale, in which bakers and brewers were fined regularly. The Red Paper Book records ordinances regulating the weaving and fulling trades, as well as apprenticeships, matters that trade or merchant guilds handled in many other towns but which in Colchester fell within the purview of the officers of the borough. Also, in times of scarcity, supplies of goods and food had to be assured.⁴⁸ The job of bailiff had its dangerous side, too; in December, 1516, Bailiff John Mayken, walking about the town at night with a sergeant-at-mace in order to apprehend vagrants, arrested 2 men and was then assaulted by 5 workmen who exclaimed, "Down with the bailie, down with him."⁴⁹

The lesser aldermanic office of coroner had in an earlier period a more important judicial function than it held by the end of the 15th century. The coroner's earlier function was to record serious crimes pending the arrival of the royal justices, and his decline came partly because the peace commissioners were able to hold and determine crown pleas, whereas the coroner had merely recorded them.⁵⁰ Every year two aldermen also served in the "lesser" office of clavier, or key-bearer, along with two other men who were usually from the Common Council. More than half the time the non-aldermanic claviers went on to become aldermen, sometimes serving as clavier for 3 or 4 non-successive years before rising to be an alderman. However, sons from aldermanic families, who rose more quickly to the office of alderman, usually bypassed this step. The claviers held the keys of the treasure chest of the borough, and the court records of 1524-25 give us a sketchy picture of the claviers. Each of the four claviers held a key, with the last named man (a non-alderman) holding "Master Coksall's key." Coksall was one of the bailiffs for that year.⁵¹

Several historians have noted that local town government was seemingly always led by the wealthier citizens; Julian Cornwall's study of market towns using the assessment figures from the 1524-25 lay subsidy has shown, for example, that government was definitely by the more substantial citizens, with the top circle of governance tending to be a self-perpetuating oligarchy. G. H. Martin has remarked that the English borough was governed by something like a private club; certainly it was to the advantage of the wealthier merchants to direct the affairs of the town, and many of them no doubt enjoyed the prestige of their office. Furthermore, their funds might be needed to subsidize

town administration, so it was no job for the poorer burgesses. The system of urban oligarchy was strongly encouraged by the Tudor rulers, it seems, since a subservient oligarchy gave the Crown indirect control. We must not think, however, that oligarchy necessarily implies a firmly closed system, with governance by only a few families over a long period of time. Although Colchester was ruled by an oligarchy and had families, such as the Cristmases, Cleres, and Sayers, whose sons and grandsons continued to help govern, other aldermen seemingly had no family or marriage connections to help them--their money was enough, it seems. Carl I. Hammer has concluded that in Oxford the structure of government was moving toward a more accessible, "porous" oligarchy, and in Colchester there was a rough attempt to encourage a more "porous" oligarchy, resulting in a riot at the election held on September 11, 1514. About 40 persons, most of them from areas of the borough outside of the town walls, "tumultuously and riotously . . . made assault against the bailiffs and other trustworthy men of the Lord King . . . and offered the Bailiffs divers opprobrious and contumacious words and . . . impeded the . . . election of officers." The one-sided description of the incident comes from the leaders of the town in a Session of the Peace, so the wealthier burgesses easily retained power, though no doubt with some scary moments for the bailiffs when their attempt to arrest a certain John Dowe met with a riotous assault on the bailiffs themselves.⁵²

The election of the town's officers occurred every year in the harvest season at Michaelmas, which was also the beginning of the official borough year. In the words of the borough leaders in 1514, the elections were held "according to custom . . . used and approved from

time beyond the memory of man."⁵³ The electoral process began by the choosing by the commonalty of four men who had never been aldermen, one from each of the four wards in the borough. Those four men in turn each chose five additional men from each ward, none of them an ex-bailiff, to make up a body of 24, who then elected the bailiffs, recorder, J.P.'s, aldermen and chamberlain. Another body of 24 men, presumably chosen in the same manner, elected the remaining town officers: the coroners, clavers, clerk of the town, and serjeants. A number of the same men served on both electoral bodies. In certain periods (especially 1510-20, 1537-48, 1553-55) the court record is very careful to list the names of every elector.

To assist in governance, the aldermen selected a body of 16 men, the First Council, and then a Second Council of 16 men was selected by the aldermen and the First Council. The Second Council was instituted by the charter of 1462, completing the basic arrangement which endured until the 17th century. The councils and aldermen were to meet together four times a year, and if any of the burgesses had something to propose, they were to deliver it to the bailiffs in writing, to which they would receive an answer at the next assembly. As described by the charter of King Edward IV in 1462, the two councils were to make "reasonable ordinances and constitutions for the advantage and government of the borough and put them in execution; and likewise alter and revoke them whenever they should think it for the better. Also, that they might assess reasonable taxes, or tallages, upon the goods, rents, trades, and merchandises, of all persons" dwelling within the borough, "compelling such as refused to pay (if need be) by arrest and imprisonment without any obstruction from the King or his officers."⁵⁴ In

practice there were deviations from the charter; for example, the charter stipulated that there were to be four men from each ward on each of the councils, but a close analysis shows a numerical dominance on the councils from the richer East and Head Wards, just as men from those same wards dominated the aldermanic group. Also, there seemed to be varying periods of importance of the councils, if we can judge by the inclusion in the court records of membership lists. The First Council was always listed, with the curious exception of a decade, the 1540's, whereas the Second Council seemed to be non-existent for several years, suddenly gaining importance in 1526 when Alderman John Cristmas retired as alderman and took a place on the Second Council, giving that council prominence for the next nine years.⁵⁵ Normally councils were seemingly the training ground for future aldermen, at least for those who were "on the rise;" if one came from an aldermanic family, his tenure on the councils was usually of shorter duration. Compared with councils in towns such as York and Oxford, Colchester's council seems to have been more dominated by the aldermen and therefore more elitist and less democratic. The occupational spread of councilmen was certainly more restricted than in York or Oxford, where butchers, bakers, and tailors had sizable representation.⁵⁶

The office of chamberlain also served as a possible stepping stone to aldermanic office, with almost half of those serving as chamberlains during the years from 1510 to 1558 going on to become aldermen. Almost all aldermen, then, had at one time served as chamberlains, although there were some exceptions, such as those who were sons of aldermen or those who had served as non-aldermanic clavers more than once. Apparently the office of chamberlain was costly, for a number

were willing to pay a 40s. fine (which rose to £3 6s. 8d. in 1542) to avoid office. To refuse, however, meant that one had no ambition, or resources perhaps, for higher office in the borough. However, the unusually large number of refusals during Mary's reign were seemingly less of a liability than usual for future office holders.⁵⁷ Again indicating the heavy expenses incumbent upon the chamberlain, the office was the only one in the borough which was held for only one year in one's lifetime. The once-in-a-lifetime nature of the office possibly helped to regulate corruption, since the chamberlain was the chief financial officer of the borough. According to Maitland, the chamberlain probably received the greater part of the corporation's revenues, although the bailiffs would still be responsible for receiving part of the revenue and out of it making the fee-farm rent of the town. The chamberlain was apparently responsible for spending some of the revenues on civic business, which entailed supervision of public works and maintenance of the property belonging to the borough; indicating the complexity of the job, some towns such as York and Worcester split the duties of chamberlain among several men.⁵⁸ A touchy point in Colchester was the repair of bridges, and the chamberlains were repeatedly cited for failing to handle that duty.

A different financial situation obtained for the recorder and the town clerk, both professional lawyers, who probably drew a regular fee for their services to the borough, although they would have had other sources of income. The chief legal officer of the borough, the recorder or legis peritus, was one of the seven J.P.'s of the borough and was, according to Edward IV's charter, always supposed to be present at a session of the peace. In 1514, the recorder was also

described as a justice for gaol delivery. At the beginning of Henry VIII's reign, the office was held by a knight, Sir James Hoberd, and it continued to be held in later years by influential members of the gentry, some even of national importance such as Richard Ryché who became Colchester's recorder in 1532, serving in that office until 1544, during which time he was knighted and appointed Solicitor General, prosecuting in the treason trials of Bishop John Fisher and Sir Thomas More. An active assistant of Thomas Cromwell in carrying out the dissolution of the monasteries, Ryché was appointed Lord Chancellor of England in 1547. Eminent recorders of Colchester in the later Tudor period were Sir Francis Walsingham, another ardent supporter of Protestantism, and Sir Robert Cecil (later Earl of Salisbury), to whom a bailiff described Colchester's recorder as being a "patron or rather parent of this society."⁵⁹

The clerk of the town also supplied the corporation with legal advice and, unlike the recorder, was resident in the borough, therefore playing a much larger role in the everyday affairs of the town. His job was to keep the court records, but he was no ordinary clerk, always being one of the local gentry or at least having connections with the leading burgess family. For example, William Teye, Gent., who was town clerk from 1510 to 1514 and from a local gentry family, had married Anastace Cristmas, the daughter of the leading burgess in Colchester. Teye's successor, Thomas Audley, Gent., was a cousin of the Cristmas family, and it was Audley who became famous as successor to Sir Thomas More as Lord Chancellor of England in 1533, one year after resigning his post as town clerk of Colchester. Mrs. J. R. Green asserts that the town clerk in the late medieval period was to the local government

what two centuries earlier the trained lay lawyers had been to the central administration. "From mere superiority of education, as a scholar and linguist, an accomplished lawyer, something of a historian and an antiquary, a skilled accountant, a scribe trained to finer penmanship and more exact views of spelling than the ordinary councillor, or even than the mayor himself, the clerk must have exercised an easy intellectual supremacy. Responsible only to the mayor, holding his post year after year in perfect security, he remained among the changing officers about him a permanent force, a municipal chancellor in whom was embodied a continuous tradition of administration and a fixed jurisprudence."⁶⁰

The workings of the law contributed to the development of a salaried bureaucracy in the town, not only in the hiring of the town lawyers and record keepers, but in the payment of 20s. a year and livery having a value of 10s. to the four serjeants-at-mace, whose duty was to assist the magistrates and their courts with the execution of summonses and arrests and with the empanelling of juries.⁶¹

An occasional office requiring payment was that of burgess member of parliament whenever a parliament was called. The Red Paper Book gives a fascinating glimpse of methods of payment to the Colchester burgesses who were members of three of Henry VII's early parliaments. The burgesses were paid the standard wage of 2s. a day, which could mount up to a sizable sum. For the parliament which opened on January 15, 1489, Alderman Thomas Cristmas was owed £17 16s., with his fellow M.P., Alderman Thomas Jopson, having for some reason a lesser sum, £13, owed him. An agreement for the payments was made whereby Cristmas was released from half of the annual rent owed to the Corporation for

the corn and fulling mills which Cristmas had built on corporation property, with the other half of the rent going to pay fellow M.P. Jopson, each receiving 26s. 8d. annually so that they would be paid over a period of several years. Also recorded in the Colchester Red Paper Book is a unique account of the 1485 Parliament by the two burgesses from Colchester, Thomas Cristmas and John Vertue. Their account, published again in 1980, is the earliest account to be written by members of the Commons, and also the earliest one written in the English language. Their account mentions one of their duties while at Westminster, i.e. paying Colchester's fee farm to the Exchequer. The Red Paper Book also gives one example of an election of M.P.'s. In 1523 the bailiffs called the aldermen, burgesses, and common council to the moot hall, at which assembly an alderman, Ambrose Lowthe, and the town clerk, Thomas Audley, were elected as M.P.'s. We have no indication as to how democratic the election actually was. In the next parliament of 1529, which was to become the famous Reformation Parliament whose speaker was Colchester Town Clerk Thomas Audley, we find an example of interference from the great man nearest Colchester, the Earl of Oxford. The court rolls of 1529-30 note the admission of two men to the freedom of the borough so that they might serve as M.P.'s from Colchester. However, one of them, Richard Antony, Gent., who was born in Devonshire, resigned his office as M.P. "at the special request" of the Earl of Oxford so that Richard Rychie, Gent., "one of the council of the aforesaid Earl of Oxford" might become the representative from Colchester.⁶²

Representation in the House of Commons had become fixed at two members for every county and two for every city and borough, but with an increase in the number of towns represented, the number of burgess

members of parliament likewise increased; Henry VIII's first parliament had 224 borough members whereas Elizabeth's first parliament had 308 borough members. The increasing numerical strength of the burgesses in parliament was not realized in practice, however, for the landed gentry had "captured" the boroughs and with them the House of Commons. Most towns owed some allegiance to a great man or house, and the town oligarchy often found it advantageous to place one or both of their borough seats at their "patron's" disposal. Doing so meant that the town probably did not have to pay the statutory wages of 2s. a day to the gentleman-member, and as well as gaining the good will of their patron, they obtained a representative who probably had more influence than one of their own burgesses would have had. The Earl of Oxford, from the enduring DeVere family of Norman descent, owned extensive properties in the Lexden and Tendring Hundreds which adjoined Colchester, and although we see little effect of the Earl of Oxford on the internal governance of Colchester, George Rickword has noted the heavy influence of the 16th Earl on the selection of Colchester M.P.'s from 1547 and into the 1570's, when many "gentlemen" members represented Colchester. Some of the M.P.'s were from the gentry around Colchester; others lived farther afield. For example, M.P. Francis Jobson, Knight (grandson of Alderman Thomas Jopson, who was M.P. in 1489 and 1491), who first served in the 1553 parliament, lived within the liberty of Colchester at Monkwick Hall, whereas M.P. Henry Golding, Esquire, who had the unique qualification of having a half-sister who was the second wife of the 16th Earl of Oxford, was from another part of Essex.⁶³

This then is a description of the governance of the borough, the development of centuries of community life in Colchester and in England.

The borough structure may seem far removed from the subject of lay piety, but two gifts of land made by the corporation in 1515-16 remind us of the interweaving of the borough and religion. A grant of land was made to St. Anne's Hospital "for the better prosperity of the town," and another grant of land to the Holy Cross Priory, provided that the Prior of Holy Cross should celebrate yearly "de skala celi" on Monday after Hokeday (an important day in the borough courts), "pro salutari prosperitate ville." Economic prosperity, for which they prayed, was often a vital factor in the manifestation of the deeper lay religious spirit, and so the economy of Colchester will next be considered.

Section 3: Economy

Since medieval religion pervaded all areas of life, a look at the financial base of Colchester will help in understanding another sphere of the influence of the acts of lay piety on the townsmen of Colchester. To speak of the economy of a town is to get to the very reason for the existence of most towns. Though Colchester had been an administrative and military center under the Britons and the Romans, its medieval role was primarily that of a regional market center. Most towns in England had developed to serve the needs of an agrarian economy seeking outlets for its surpluses, and Colchester's location on the ancient road to London made it remarkably well situated to serve as a market center for northeast Essex, supplying countrymen with goods and services which they were unable to provide for themselves and linking them to wider regional and national markets.

The privilege of having markets and fairs was jealously guarded

by townsmen. Colchester's market, in existence long before the town's written history began, was first mentioned in the 12th century when it was confirmed by the Itinerant Justices in the time of Henry II and later by the charter of Richard I. There seem to have been 3 weekly market days in Colchester, when the country people brought in their produce to sell in the marketplace and when the manufacturers and shopkeepers of the town displayed their wares with both townspeople and country people doing the greater part of their buying and selling on those days. The corporation regulated the market; for example, in 1529 the vegetable market was limited to a certain section of the High Street. The borough was also careful to check on the quantity and quality of goods offered for sale.⁶⁴

Bringing people from farther afield were the 3 fairs held yearly in Colchester. Again, fairs were by a special grant as they usually brought a harvest of money to a town. The first fair of the year in Colchester, which had been granted in the late 11th century to the abbot and monks of St. John's monastery, lasted for 4 days, beginning on the eve of the festival of St. John the Baptist, June 23. That fair was held on St. John's Green just in front of the abbey gate. The second fair of the year, granted by Richard I to the Hospital of St. Mary Magdalen, lasted 2 days, July 21-22, on Magdalen Green adjoining the hospital. The third fair, owned by the borough under a charter from Edward II in 1318, lasted for a week beginning on the eve of St. Denis' Day, October 8. It was held in the marketplace and the adjoining main streets of the town, with a cattle market on the first day in a certain open field within the walls. A perambulation by the bailiffs and aldermen proclaimed and opened the fair.⁶⁵

Another type of trade was made possible through Colchester's port facilities. Though Colchester was 8 or 9 miles distant from the nearest sea shore, a tidal channel made by the River Colne permitted vessels of about 90 ton to come with ease to the "New Hythe," the "Old Hythe" having been neglected sometime before 1276. G. V. Scammell has found that about 86% of all the vessels owned on the eastern coast of England were under 100 ton, so the Colchester port was not so limited as one might suppose when looking at it today. Colchester was not a major port, however, being a dependent port of Ipswich under the national customs system, so that Colchester merchants traded coastwise, or overseas from Ipswich or London. We have very little knowledge about Colchester's overseas trade, but one scrap of information is that a Colchester ship was used by the Celys, the London merchants, to ship wool from London to Calais in 1480. Much later, in Elizabeth's time, a calendar of the London Port Book for 1567/8 mentions 2 Colchester ships carrying freight from Gascony and Danzig to London. Also, an official of the Archdeacon of Colchester's court, William Harrison, mentioned in his Description of England in 1576 that a ship could go to the West Indies from Colchester and back home again in 12 or 13 weeks. Apparently some Colchester ships had long been accustomed to sail to foreign lands.⁶⁶

The coastal trade, however, was more important in the Colchester port, but again little is known about it. There are a few entries in the Red Paper Book from 1495 which show Colchester to be receiving grain and some malt from the Norfolk coast. Nothing is known about what those ships were carrying out of Colchester; one reasonable guess would be woolen cloth to be taken to London or Ipswich for shipment

overseas. One of the 1495 entries shows a Colchester boat to be destined for Flamborough, on the Yorkshire coast, with a load of equipment and iron, but we do not know that its cargo originated in Colchester; much iron was brought from the Baltic in that period. The same entries also reveal that a number of Colchester burgesses had an interest in the coastal trade, either as proprietors of ships or as merchants shipping their wares out of Colchester. A will from that period, of mariner John Leveson, shows him to own at death in 1492 all of the Giles and the Nicholas and one-half of the Leonard. Interestingly, all are named after Colchester churches. It was quite common to own just a part of ships, and Leveson divided his ships among his wife and three children, with a quarter of the Giles to be sold to pay his debts. Apparently Leveson's ships had carried goods for some London merchants, as a certain John Mervyn of London owed Leveson a substantial sum (which Leveson seemed doubtful of ever collecting). In the early 16th century, Scammell has noted that there was a big increase in native shipping on the east coast, and in his research Scammell found that the Colchester port in 1550 had a fleet of 23 vessels (840 ton). A 1565 document reports that Colchester had 35 vessels, 39 masters and owners, and 182 mariners and fishermen. Two years later another register reveals that over half of Colchester's boats were in the 20 to 50 ton category. Unfortunately, we have no count of vessels from earlier years. Some of the ships based in Colchester were apparently used for fishing, as well as for the transport of goods. Mariner John Honyngton, in his will of 1485, bequeathed some boats, "with all the net and apparel thereto belonging," and in 1528 Colchester had boats in the fleet which was fishing in Iceland as well as in the North Sea fishery, where

herring was caught. Fish, of course, was a staple of the medieval diet.⁶⁷

With its busy markets and fairs, its boats and port facilities, and its location on the London road, Colchester would seem to be quite prosperous in the early Tudor period. A debate has been flourishing over the question of the economic health of the late medieval town with Charles Phythian-Adams persuasively charting the desolation of Coventry and A. R. Bridbury brilliantly arguing that, though towns were poorer because of fewer inhabitants, many citizens were not poor, that towns and individuals were spending freely, and that taxable urban wealth had risen from the 14th century.⁶⁸ Colchester's records are not so complete as those of some towns, so that it is not possible to make a detailed assessment such as those made by Phythian-Adams and David Palliser, who found Coventry and York in decline, yet it seems that Colchester was one of the exceptions to a general urban decline in the period. All agree that there were some growth centers, mostly triggered by the rising cloth industry in areas such as Wiltshire and Suffolk, and that a few of the older prosperous towns, such as Salisbury, Newcastle, and Colchester, remained prosperous. Too, Robert Gottfried has recently argued that Bury St. Edmunds, a market for the Stour valley cloth trade, burgeoned in the late Middle Ages.⁶⁹ In any case, it would be a mistake to see all of the 15th century as gloom and doom. John Hatcher, in his thorough study of population and economy, contends that, though there was a substantial long-term population decline in the late Middle Ages in England, it was accompanied by a general rise in living standards as shown by the rise in real wage rates. Also on the positive side J. L. Bolton notes that the building industry

was flourishing in the 15th century and that generally the people were better fed and better educated in the later Middle Ages than they had been previously.⁷⁰

Colchester had undoubtedly grown in wealth since the 14th century; A. R. Bridbury, comparing taxes paid in 1334 and 1524, has charted urban change in England in that period, and he found Colchester's wealth in 1524 to be 8 times that of 1334. Certainly there are a number of indications of prosperity in the last years of the 15th century, foremost being the spending of money by the pious. Three chantries were established around the beginning of the Tudor reign. One having its home in St. Peter's Church was instituted by Richard Heynes, Gent., who was an alderman and M.P. for Colchester in 1489 and 1491. The other two chantries, in St. Leonard's Church, were created by Peter Barwick and Edmund Harmanson, with the latter being a wealthy beer-brewer who married a Barwick, probably the daughter of Peter. More indicative of general prosperity in Colchester around 1500 was the unusually large number of rebuildings or additions to the parish churches. The detailed survey of historical monuments made by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in 1922 reveals that 10 Colchester parish churches had work, some of it extensive, dating from the late 15th or early 16th century, and by 1922 some of the churches from the Tudor period had already been torn down and so were not, of course, included in the survey. The wealthiest Colchester parish, St. James', rebuilt the entire east end of its church, adding chapels and a vestry, and today it has much the same handsome appearance that it took at that time. Large for a parish church, though not so grand as those built, for example, in Long Melford or Norwich, St. James' has on an exterior

wall which was built in the early 16th century some initials, probably referring to those whose money rebuilt the church, and one of those initials was "T.C.," no doubt for the richest man in the parish at that time, Thomas Cristmas. At St. Leonard's, north and south chapels were added or rebuilt, a clock put on the tower, and a clerestory and an outstanding hammerbeam roof added. The list goes on, giving a clear picture of a prosperous community and of devotion to God.⁷¹

Certainly some burgesses had surplus money to spend on improvements; in 1473 some leading citizens built a bridge of brick over the River Colne, just above the port, with the bridge to be maintained by the citizens and for the use of all, and in 1489 Aldermen Thomas Cristmas and Richard Barker rebuilt a fulling mill and a corn mill at the hythe. Domestic architecture also reveals some wealth, as the Royal Commission of 1922 found a number of houses which had work dating around 1500. However, the prosperity from the manufacture of bay and say cloth in the late 16th and early 17th centuries in Colchester resulted in a great deal of domestic rebuilding which covered up much of the work of the early 16th century. One interesting example remains, however, in the parish of St. Peter, in an early 16th century building, known today as the Marquis of Granby Inn, in which is a central ceiling beam with a shield and the initials "H.M." or "H.W." The latter reading of "H.W." is the most probable one for that time and place, matching a certain Henry Webbe, clothmaker of St. Peter's parish, who died in 1547 and who was assessed in 1524 and again in 1525 as having £40 of movable goods. Though not among the wealthiest in the town, Webbe obviously had enough to have a fine home.⁷²

The key to Colchester's growth and continued prosperity in the

late Middle Ages was the manufacture of cloth. As early as the 13th century Colchester was known for making a cheap cloth, for in 1249, 1252, and 1254 the King bought "russet of Colchester" as alms for the poor. Colchester records show that the making of cloth continued to be important in the 14th century, and a document from the first half of the 15th century indicates that Colchester russet was still well known, as it was a part of the ceremonies attendant upon the making of the Knights of Bath, for, after leaving the bath, the knight was to dress himself "in hermit's array of Colchester russet." There may have been some diminution in clothmaking in Colchester during the period of the civil wars; our hint for that comes in a 1489 statement in the Red Paper Book referring to 2 mills, one for fulling of cloth, having been broken down for some time past, but the mills were rebuilt and were operational some years later, as the Colchester Oath Book of 1515-16 records the leasing of the mills to 2 other aldermen, seemingly in partial payment for their services as M.P.'s, which was also the case in 1489. The family of one of the aldermen who rebuilt the mills in 1489, the Cristmas family, was by far the wealthiest in the borough in 1524 and had held the position of leading aldermanic family for some time. Thomas Cristmas' will of 1520 (see Appendix 6) shows him to be employing a number of weavers, fullers, and shearmen, indicating a healthy cloth industry in Colchester. Also around this time, a fullers' guild seems to have developed, though the exact date is uncertain.⁷³

The 15th century and early 16th century, which found so many older towns in decline, continued to be seemingly a growth period for Colchester, but such growth could never have been sustained just within its own borough. The development of the clothmaking industry in the

Stour valley, called the "most vigorous and advanced cloth-manufacturing region in Britain" by W. G. Hoskins, was a part of what historians have seen as a move by industry away from the restrictions of the older urban centers to the freedom of rural areas. The manufacture of cloth in the Stour valley, on the Suffolk-Essex border, produced some incredibly rich families--the Springs of Lavenham being the ever-noted example--and some very prosperous small towns and semi-rural centers, such as Coggeshall, Dedham, and Long Melford. The enormous churches in those clothmaking centers remain a monument to 15th century prosperity and piety. Without doubt, Colchester benefitted from the vitality of the Stour valley industry; Alan Baker's map of the cloth industry circa 1500 shows Colchester to be at the edge of that important area which was producing medium woolens. Some of the Suffolk towns, such as Lavenham, Long Melford, and Sudbury, would have sent their woolens directly to London or Ipswich, but woolens from towns in the lower Stour valley such as Dedham, Nayland, and Stratford St. Mary would have gone through Colchester on their way to London. A lot of the unfinished woolens would have stopped in Colchester for finishing by the fullers, shearmen, and dyers. A will by a Colchester dyer in 1438 mentions having an employee in Nayland, who was an agent for collecting unfinished cloth to be sent to the Colchester dyer for finishing. Ipswich, too, was benefitting from the Stour valley industry, at least some of the time: cloth exports from Ipswich reached their highest peak in the period from 1435 to 1450, with a decline for the rest of the 15th century. There was a sharp resurgence in Ipswich cloth exports in 1505-10, followed by a reversal and then another peak in 1540-5. The fortunes of the port of Ipswich are not necessarily a good measurement of the

Stour valley cloth industry, however, as most of the Suffolk cloth went out through London, according to Hoskins, which would have been to Colchester's advantage since some Colchester carts and ships would have aided in transportation. Also, some of the cloth for domestic consumption would have gone out through the Colchester market and fair.⁷⁴

Colchester's fortunes probably received a check during the national crisis in the cloth industry in the 1520's, occasioned by the disruption in foreign trade resulting from dearth and war on the continent. Henry's endeavor to engage France in war meant extra taxation for England, and Wolsey's attempt at an "Amicable Grant" in 1525, coming on top of heavy taxation in 1523-24, resulted in a rebellion in Suffolk and Essex which was especially strong in the clothing districts.⁷⁵ There are only hints of the state of Colchester's economy in the succeeding years of Henry VIII's reign; in 1534 a Session of the Peace in Colchester charged 4 leading men, one of them Alderman John Neve, of delivering 5 pounds of wool to their spinners under the pretense that they were delivering 4 pounds, an offense which was "to the common and serious damage and pauperization of the king's people spinning this kind of wool and against the laudable customs of the town." In 1539 weavers from Colchester, Dedham, and the neighboring parts of Suffolk complained in a petition to the Lord Privy Seal that the rich clothiers had their looms and weavers and also their fullers daily working within their own houses while they, the weavers working at home, were many times "destitute of work." Moreover, they were badly underpaid for their work, thanks to an agreement of the rich clothiers to keep wages down. The weavers spoke of a better time in the past when they had "kept good households," but they were now being forced to

expend their substance to live. Obviously, not all were prosperous. In 1541 an Act for the Re-edifying of Towns declared that in Colchester and Maldon some houses were very feeble and ready to fall down. Susan Reynolds warns us that such language might simply mean that those houses were in need of repair; still, it does seem to indicate that Colchester was not a boom town in those middle years of the 16th century, though perhaps it was still holding its own. Nationally, the cloth export trade was near ruin in the early 1550's, caused by shoddy standards, over-production, and a devaluation of the coinage, and several acts were passed in the 1550's to regulate standards and to attempt to confine clothmaking to the towns. Government regulations alone cannot revive an industry, however, and for Colchester, rejuvenation came with the arrival of Flemish refugees driven from the Low Countries by the persecutions of the Duke of Alva. By 1571 there were nearly 200 of them in Colchester, and they introduced the manufacture of lighter woolens which came to be called bay and say. Those "new draperies" brought Colchester to its all-time peak of prosperity in the early 17th century, when Colchester was the chief seat in England of the manufacture of bay and say.⁷⁶

The vicissitudes of the cloth industry in Tudor England, however, were not so disastrous for Colchester as they might have been, thanks to its broadly based economy as a long-established market town. A look at Appendix 3 shows that there were at least 93 different occupations, with various craftsmen working in leather, wood, and metal as well as the making of tiles for the roofs of buildings, to supply the needs of the surrounding countryside. The percentage of people engaged in the various trades unfortunately cannot be determined in Colchester, as the

Colchester list of freeman admissions seldom gives occupations. The list of 93 Colchester occupations was garnered mainly from wills and court records, but those sources are too spotty regarding occupations to provide a systematic record of the number of people in a trade at any given time. W. G. Hoskins first used the register of admissions to the freedom of a town to work out the occupational structure of Leicestershire, and he found that about a third were engaged in the clothing and textile trade, with less than 20% in the food and drink trade, and just over 10% in the leather trade. Other trades and services accounted for the other third of the occupations. Subsequent investigations of other towns have generally found a similar spread of trades, with the basic victualling, clothing, and building trades looming large in every town. Most towns, however, leaned toward some specialization, usually in textiles, with towns such as Coventry and Norwich having at least a third (and in Worcester, 40%) of their workers in the clothing industry. A few towns had some other specialty such as the leather trade in Northampton and Chester. Only in the Stour valley were towns highly specialized--Lavenham had some 60% directly engaged in the cloth industry--but most of the towns which continued growing were those with broader bases, such as that which Colchester seems to have had.⁷⁷

Carl Hammer has found, in his study of Oxford, that the occupational structure of the Oxford Council seemed to mirror the Oxford economy as a whole; of the 63 identifiable members of the Oxford Council in 1524-25, twenty different trades were practiced. As Hammer has noted, however, Oxford was moving somewhat away from oligarchy, and a comparison with Colchester shows Colchester to be rather more elitist. In a longer period, 1520-1530, Colchester had fewer men, only 49,

Table 2

Occupations of Aldermen and Councilmen, 1520-1530

Of 49 different men who served from 1520 through 1530, the occupations of 39 are known:

		Aldermen	On First Council	On Second Council	Total
Clothing & Textile Manufacture	Clothier	8	7	-	15
	Capper	1	-	1	2
Distributive Trades	Mercer	-	1	2	3
	Merchant	2	-	-	2
	Grocer	1	1	-	2
Food & Drink	Innkeeper	1	1	1	3
	Fishmonger	-	1	1	2
Transportation	Shipowner	-	2	-	2
Building Trade	Tilemaker	-	1	-	1
Professional	Attorney	-	1	-	1
	Surgeon	-	-	1	1
Metal Trade	Brasier	-	-	1	1
Leather Trade	Glover	-	-	1	1
	Tanner	-	-	1	1
Miscellaneous	*Gentleman	1	-	-	1
	*Esquire	1	-	-	1
					<hr/> 39

* Indicates social status rather than occupation.

serving either as aldermen or on the councils. Of the 39 men whose occupations we know, 17 were in the manufacture of textiles or clothing, 7 in the distributive trades, and 5 in the victualling trade, with the rest scattered among the various other occupations (see Table 2). The occupations of Colchester's borough leaders do not, then, mirror the broad spectrum of occupations in Colchester, but they do reveal where

Table 3

Occupations of Aldermen, 1485-1558

Out of 63 aldermen between 1485 and 1558, the occupations of 44 are known:

Clothing & Textile Manufacture	Clothier	18
	Capper	1
Distributive Trades	Mercer	2
	Merchant	6
	Grocer	2
	Haberdasher	1
Food & Drink	Innkeeper	2
	Brewer	1
	Butcher	1
Transportation	Shipowner	2
Building Trade	Tilemaker	1
Metal Work	Ironmonger	1
	Pewterer	1
Miscellaneous	*Gentlemen	4
	*Esquire	1
		<hr/> 44

* Indicates social status rather than occupation.

the wealth was centered--in textiles and clothing and their distribution. A look at the occupations of aldermen over a longer period (1485-1558), in Table 3, gives an even clearer picture of the source of wealth in Colchester, since wealth was definitely a prerequisite for aldermanic office. Of the 44 aldermen whose occupations we know, 19 were in the manufacture of textiles and clothing, with another 9 labeled as merchants, mercers, or haberdasher, who would have been dealing at least partly in textiles. Almost two-thirds of the wealth in Colchester, then, came directly from the cloth trade.⁷⁸

A fairly good measure of the distribution of wealth among the people of Colchester can be obtained from that fruitful source of Tudor economic history, the lay subsidy of 1524-25. Earlier taxation, from 1334 up to 1489 had been based on the fifteenth and the tenth, the fifteenth applying to rural areas and the tenth to the boroughs, and the Crown negotiated with each taxable unit for a collective payment based on a valuation of 1334. Need for more money prompted the Tudors to begin a revision of taxation, and Henry VII initiated the process in 1489 with new assessments. The new system of taxation, usually known as the Tudor "subsidy," indicating that it was not fixed to a certain sum, was largely developed, however, in a series of statutes between 1512 and 1515, resulting in a tax yield in 1515 which proved to have been worth the effort of revision. In the 1523 Parliament Wolsey asked for a subsidy of 4s. in the pound, which was rejected, but a Subsidy Act was finally passed which spread the tax over 4 years and taxed the wealthy more heavily than others, with 1s. in the pound on the capital value of goods worth £20 and upwards, and 6d. in the pound on goods worth from £1 to £20. As well as on movable goods, taxes were also levied on the annual value of landed income and on wages, but no one paid in more than one category, assessors being instructed to charge each taxpayer on whichever class of assets gave the Exchequer the larger yield.⁷⁹

The analysis in Table 4 of the distribution of wealth in Colchester, as shown by the 1525 lay subsidy, reveals that of those taxed, about two-thirds, both wage earners and holders of goods, were assessed at the lowest rate of £2 or under, but owned only about 15% of the total wealth. Moreover, experts agree that there would have been a number of people who were too poor to be taxed and were therefore

Table 4

Distribution of Wealth in Colchester, 1525¹

Tax Group	No. of People in the Group	% of Total Taxpayers	Actual Wealth of Group (to nearest £1)	% of Total Wealth
Wage Earners	319	40.3%	£333	7.4%
In Goods				
£2 or under	177	22.3	352	7.9
£3 - £14	204	25.8	1226	27.4
£15 - £39	41	5.2	851	19.0
£40 & over ²	28	3.5	1666	37.2
	450			
Income from Land ³	10	1.3	46	1.0
Incomplete Listings	13	1.6	-	-
	792 ⁴		£4474	

¹ Tables 4 and 5 are based on the Lay Subsidy Rolls, P.R.O. E179/108/147; E179/108/162; E179/108/169, with the latter being the one from which these figures were obtained. The E.R.O. has a transcript of the original: E.R.O. T/A427/1.

² The wealthier had even higher assessments in 1523-24, so the total wealth of the richer given here is probably very conservative. For example, the wealthiest man in Colchester, John Cristmas, Esq., was assessed at £600 in 1524 and at only £400 in 1525.

³ Land paid 5% of its annual value, according to Bridbury, "Provincial Towns," 19.

⁴ A rough estimate of population can be calculated from the total number of taxpayers. Using J. F. Pound's method for Norwich, "Norwich," 129, we first assume that one-third of the population was too poor to pay taxes. Using a multiplier of six on the resulting figure of 1188, the estimated population for Colchester would be 7,128.

Table 5

Distribution of Wealth in Movable Goods in Colchester, 1525

Level of Wealth	No. of People	% at Each Level	Wealth of Group (to Nearest £)	% of Total Wealth in Movable Goods
£2 or under	177	39.3%	£352	8.6%
£3 - £14	204	45.3	1226	29.9
£15 - £39	41	9.1	851	20.8
£40 & over	28	6.2	1666	40.7
	<u>450</u>		<u>£4095</u>	

economically below the poorest taxpayers. Several have noted the pyramid quality of the wealth structure, which was essentially the social structure as well, with a broad base of the large numbers of poorer people, rising to a sharp peak of the wealthy few. At the peak in Colchester, less than one-twentieth of the taxpayers possessed nearly two-fifths of the wealth. If we look only at the category of wealth in movable goods in Table 5, we find at the lower end that 40% of the owners of goods had only 8.6% of the wealth, whereas the wealthy 6.2% owned over 40% of the goods. Historians have found that the same unequal distribution of wealth prevailed generally in other towns of the period, although the much larger Norwich had even more extremes of wealth and poverty.⁸⁰

Colchester, then, as a fairly prosperous town in the later Middle Ages, was one of the exceptions in England to the urban decline found in so many towns of the period. Colchester seems to have generally continued its good fortune at least until the middle 1530's, when the declining cloth trade combined with the effects of the dissolution

of the Colchester religious houses to produce some disruption in the economy. Colchester's prosperity permitted the visible manifestations of piety and was an ingredient in the development of a civic piety in late medieval Colchester. Whether prosperous or poor, though, the economic levels in Colchester were of import in the social relationships within the borough, as will be discussed in the next section.

Section 4: Social Structure

Society in a borough was, in many ways, an anomaly. From the larger society it attracted the rejects as well as the ambitious and talented. They came to the town in hopes of acquiring money and even status, yet a return to the country was often the aspiration of those who prospered, for the town was to a large degree the "outsider" in a society where status was based on birth and land ownership. The towns in England did not create urban loyalties and identities so much as did the Italian cities--the values of the landed English society were too dominant--nevertheless, the late medieval English town developed its own type of culture, its own hierarchy and its own methods of assigning places in that hierarchy. Its own kinds of deference and of social tensions resulted, along with ways of dealing with those tensions. We shall later note the immense importance of religion in tying the disparate elements of the urban community together and in helping to shape urban culture and values, but first a description of the social order and its stresses--largely based on wealth--is in order.

One social distinction so obvious that it might be overlooked was that between men and women. Men, of course, held legal power over

women in the late medieval period. One example of that power was in Coventry where a single woman under 40 was forbidden to set up house by herself, so unless a woman remained in a relative's house, marriage or servanthood were the only alternatives for most urban women. In early Tudor Colchester, there is only one example of a single woman being in business: Margery Sheldrake, who died in 1509, brewed ale and did enough business to have a male apprentice. A widow, on the other hand, did have legal status, and in Coventry a widow could continue her husband's business, at least until her sons (if she had them) could complete their apprenticeship. After that, if her husband had made no provision for her or if she did not remarry, she might sink rapidly into poverty. Widows in York, however, seemed to be less restricted, with the right to continue the family business as long as they did not remarry; a few even had the freedom of the city.⁸¹ A number of Colchester widows wrote wills, but not one of them indicated that she was in business except for some brewing of ale, a method long used by married women and widows to supplement income from the home.⁸² Women in Colchester seem to have had little overt power, either economically or politically, yet some later observations will show them to have substantial influence through their religious devotion. No doubt many women were very active in their husband's business and found other ways to circumvent their powerlessness before the law. Certainly at will-making time, many husbands obviously respected the competence of their wives, making them executors of the estate more often than not.

Another of the more obvious dichotomies in social standing in the town was that between the employed and the employer. A look at Table 4 reveals that 40.3% of the Colchester taxpayers were wage

earners, yet there was not the complete separation between the two groups that one might expect. The employer and his employee tended to work in close proximity to each other, and sometimes they even lived in the same large household. Some employees, most of them not taxpayers but living with their employer, would be apprentices and live-in domestic servants. Phythian-Adams has found that in Coventry in 1523 about a quarter of all people in the city were fed and accommodated as in-servants in the households, and many Colchester wills mention such servants. Furthermore, tax rolls reveal that wage-earning taxpayers were fairly equally distributed, proportionately, among all the parishes in Colchester, although there was possibly some segregation of households by streets, if Colchester was like some towns of the period, with the richer living on the main streets.⁸³ Certainly in the richest parish, St. James', the wealthier lived on East Street, yet within each parish there was community, with employer and employee, rich and poor, worshipping together in the same parish church, a healthy intermingling of varying economic levels. The community feeling within the parishes is evidenced by the will-makers' remembrance of the poor of one's own parish before the other poor of the town. The proximity of employer and employee, at work, in households and in church, lessened the separation between the two groups, and perhaps the power of the employer over the worker was muted by their common experiences. On the other hand, their very closeness probably exacerbated some problems.

In some towns, especially those with strong craft guilds such as Coventry and York, occupations were open marks of one's status, with those in occupations of lower regard not being permitted to have a part in the governance of the town. In York, for example, a new alderman in

1504 was commanded to leave his keeping of a hostelry, showing both the restrictions imposed as well as the way those restrictions had a way of being changed. After all, the innkeeper did become an alderman. We have no record of such restrictions in Colchester, yet Table 2 shows that no craftsmen such as shoemakers or joiners were councilmen at that time.⁸⁴

Another distinction in every borough was that between the freemen and the "foreigners" or "strangers," i.e. those who had the freedom of the borough and those who did not. Certainly the freemen were dominant, both politically and economically, as those without the freedom were not part of the "commonalty" and therefore had no part in governance, nor could they trade freely within the borough. In Colchester, one could acquire freedom of the borough in 3 ways; by patrimony, apprenticeship, or purchase. Colchester's register of the admission of freemen, both in its Oath Book and court rolls, almost entirely includes only those adults purchasing the privilege. A small but fairly steady number of men, an average of seven per year in the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII, some born as far away as Somerset and Northumberland, paid 23s. 4d., which went down to 20s. 6d. in 1514, for freedom of the borough. Though the fee was not a huge amount, it was yet high enough to keep laborers and poorer tradesmen and craftsmen from the freedom, unless they entered it through patrimony or apprenticeship, which was not very likely. Colchester was probably not too unlike York, where Palliser has estimated that at least half of the adult males were freemen.⁸⁵

In broad terms, then, many social relationships in the medieval borough can be categorized in terms of power: men over women, employer

over worker, certain prestigious occupations over lesser ones, and freemen over "foreigners." All categories, however, with the exception of sex, were tied to one vital ingredient--money. Wealth, or lack of it, was the single most important determinant of status, hierarchy, and power in the borough.

In the earlier discussion of the economy of Colchester, the wealth structure was said to have a pyramid quality, with a broad base of poorer people and a sharp peak of the wealthy few, and with status in the borough so much tied to wealth, the pyramid limns the social structure as well. The charting of the 1525 Colchester lay subsidy assessments in Table 4 shows that two-thirds of the taxpayers were in the poorer category, but even below them on the broad base of our pyramid were the nil assessments. Records do not indicate how many were so poor as to be disregarded by the tax collectors, but W. G. Hoskins has estimated that the destitute poor comprised at least a third of the population of any town in that period, and Hoskins also believes that the wage earners and the poorest level of those assessed by movable goods were below or very near the poverty line. If Hoskins' assertions are correct, then almost 75% of the inhabitants of Colchester were close to or below the poverty line, an incredibly large number. Most historians have unquestioningly followed Hoskins, but Charles Phythian-Adams has concluded that the pessimistic view espoused by Hoskins is incorrect, even in economically declining Coventry. Phythian-Adams shows that many households in Coventry given a nil assessment were not so destitute, having live-in servants, or living in houses with rentals well above that paid for the poorest cottages. Many in that situation in Coventry were widows, it seems. Phythian-Adams puts the number of

untaxed households at 20% of the total, certainly down from Hoskins' figure of one-third. Furthermore, regarding wage earners, Phythian-Adams has found that in Coventry laborers would have earned close to £3 annually rather than the lower figures given in the assessment (in Colchester most wage earners were assessed at 20s.) and that they could live on that larger amount, perhaps not in great comfort, but at least above the subsistence level where Hoskins placed them.⁸⁶ This is not to say that there were no poor people in the late medieval English town; certainly the bequests made to the poor in Colchester wills confirm the existence of many needy people. On the other hand, we must not exaggerate by saying that 75% of the inhabitants were living in abject poverty and misery. Such conditions would hardly have drawn the numbers of people that the towns did attract. Conditions changed later in the Tudor period, however, as prices rose without an accompanying rise in wages, and it is in the Elizabethan period that the poor became a severe problem in all of England.⁸⁷

Going on up the pyramid of wealth, still based on the lay subsidy rolls of 1524-25, we see that the large number of people above £2 and below £40 in movable goods could be labelled a "middle class," to use a modern term (with a "lower middle class" being composed of those having less than £10); this middle level in Colchester comprised 31% of the taxable population. Though they were not wealthy enough to be aldermen, a number of them served on the borough councils, and most of the churchwardens in Colchester were taken from this group. They were solid and respected citizens. The upper group, those having over £40 in movable goods, was a relatively small number of 28 persons, or 3.5% of the taxable population. Of that 28, only 6 men, all of them alder-

men, had £100 or over, and only one of them, John Cristmas with £600 in 1524, stood well above the others in wealth, making our hypothetical pyramid rise to a sharp point indeed.

In borough governance, status and power were clearly related to wealth, as all of the aldermen were taken from the upper range of those having at least £40 in movable goods; furthermore, every man having over £60 was an alderman. Even among the aldermen, greater wealth meant greater status, e.g. any listing of Colchester aldermen which included a member of the Cristmas family always put the Cristmas name first, and in later years the same became true of the Sayers. The same kind of dominance of the wealthier aldermen obtained in Exeter, according to MacCaffrey's findings.⁸⁸ Moreover, if an aldermanic family stayed wealthy and healthy, living long enough to produce male heirs, then the family name began to mean something in the town. Again, referring to the Cristmas family in Colchester, John Cristmas was found in the 1524 subsidy to have only £18 of movable goods. Borough affairs had for years been dominated by John's father and then his brother, both named Thomas, so that John's being a member of the Cristmas family was enough to keep him in borough affairs, though not as an alderman. John was demoted to the Second Council, but there he was always listed first and his presence caused that Council to gain a new importance.

In town governance where status was largely obtained by wealth, ascent (and descent) could be rapid, and jealousy must have been a problem at times. The trappings of authority helped, it seems, to gain the cooperation, if not the respect, of their underlings in the commonalty. Certain gowns were worn in special processions and ceremonies, and special seats were reserved for aldermen in the parish churches,

all to impress upon the people the importance of their leaders. Occasionally in the Colchester records, aldermen were referred to as "master," the designation of a gentleman or an esquire, and David Palliser has found the same to be true in York from the 1490's. Such preoccupation with the outward signs of authority were often a source of amusement to outsiders, but it seemed necessary to the aldermen themselves, who were keenly concerned to maintain the ancient customs which gave them their power. An incident in 1520 illustrates the seriousness with which they viewed the role of alderman. On Michaelmas Day, when the aldermen were installed for the borough year, Alderman William Debynham was not present, and according to the court roll, the other aldermen discussed the situation because the absence of any outgoing bailiffs on Michaelmas "was hitherto never seen" and also because Debynham had been elected anew and "ought to have been here to have the oath administered." A meeting with Debynham a few days later resulted in sharp words and an accusation by Debynham that Alderman Colle had heretical kinsmen. Then, "Colle said, Many a good man hath had a lewd kinsman, but he said to the same William look to thine oath; for as I have heard, thou and other hath commonly jested behind our backs of this Town; and . . . William said, Thou lyest falsely in thy head." Debynham angrily departed, refusing the office of alderman, and he was given a stiff fine of £5 and held as prisoner for a time. Debynham not only had the tactlessness to refer to "lewd" or unlearned origins, but he had thumbed his nose at tradition, an act which in the eyes of the other aldermen was inexcusable. Certainly the task of keeping order in the urban setting, with its instability stemming from a high rate of immigration, among other things, was no easy task. Riots occasionally

erupted, as at election time in 1514, but the authority of the leaders never broke down. Their high code of social responsibility, even if it was partially self-serving, was admirable. On the other hand, it is refreshing to see that the lesser burgesses were not overly intimidated by the aldermen; more than a few times the aldermen's names were presented at the Law Hundred, the borough court leet, for minor offenses. For example, Thomas Cristmas was cited in 1513 because he had not made his quay by the common channel, "to the grievous injury of his neighbors," and in 1515, for obstructing the watercourse from its ancient path.⁸⁹

Though the urban setting had its own hierarchy and its own way of achieving status through commercial success, there was not the strict dichotomy between urban and rural society which a look at urban society might at first suggest. Although they do not fit neatly into the urban society already described, yet there they were--local gentry with very close ties to Colchester, some of them even living in the town. For example, the Teye family, who had been prominent in the area for many years, having held the advowson of St. Runwald's Church in Colchester since 1364, had three brothers with connections to Colchester in the early years of the 16th century. The eldest and the knight of the family, Sir Henry Teye, was buried inside the Benedictine Abbey of St. John in Colchester, according to the 1517 will of his widow, Dame Margaret, who had a home in Colchester and who asked to be buried beside her knightly husband. A younger brother, William Teye, Gent., was the town clerk in Colchester from 1510 to 1513, and at his death early in 1514, he left substantial property to his wife, Anastace, daughter of the leading burgess, Thomas Cristmas. William also wanted

to be buried at St. John's, as did the third brother (John, who died in 1534),⁹⁰ pointing up one difference between the burgesses and gentry in Colchester: the gentry almost always asked to be buried in St. John's Monastery, whereas the burgesses, except for the Cristmases, rarely mentioned St. John's in their wills, preferring their own parish church or one of the orders of friars or canons in Colchester. The gentle-born Teyes, though often living in town and taking part in Colchester affairs, were yet above the usual marks of status in the urban setting; their worth and standing stemmed from their role as large landowners. They might even, like William, be a town official, but his particular job of town clerk required training in the law, which was an "up and coming" mark of status and an opportunity for an upward rise, even for younger sons of the gentry.⁹¹

Certainly Colchester drew upon the surrounding countryside for numerical growth. High mortality and low rates of reproduction meant a decrease in population in the towns unless supplemented by newcomers. Sylvia Thrupp tells us that without a "fairly steady stream of immigration" to 14th century London, the population would have dwindled rapidly, and Robert Gottfried has found the same to be true of late medieval Bury St. Edmunds. Peter Clark maintains that the majority of inhabitants in any provincial town would almost certainly not have been born there, and this was probably one of the most striking characteristics of the medieval town. No doubt such a high rate of immigration placed unusual stresses on the society of a town, but the constant influx of new blood would also have contributed to the vigor of urban life compared with the countryside, and it gave the immigrant a channel for advancement.⁹²

A. R. Bridbury has pointed out that the steady inflow of new burgesses as revealed by the registers of freemen in various towns indicates the vitality of urban life in the late medieval period. Certainly Colchester seems to have had something to offer, for, like York, Colchester attracted a greater proportion of long-distance migrants than did the smaller towns; in fact, Colchester even had a fair number of alien immigrants paying taxes in 1525. The parish of St. Leonard, with 23, had the highest number of alien immigrants, and St. Nicholas had nineteen. Earlier, in a 1521 listing of men sworn in the tithing, fifty men were listed as aliaunts. Nevertheless, the greater number of immigrants into Colchester came from the surrounding Essex and Suffolk countryside. We cannot ascertain what proportion of Colchester freemen were natives since we do not have records of those gaining freedom by patrimony or apprenticeship, but Palliser has found that in York a large proportion of new burgesses, 71.5%, were not native inhabitants. Those coming as apprentices or as adults to purchase freedom of the city constituted, in Peter Clark's term, "betterment" migration; theirs would have been a deliberate and planned move in search of economic and social opportunities.⁹³ Apprentices, one of the most important sources for the recruitment of urban population, are a good example. After serving a term of apprenticeship, often 7 years in length but sometimes longer, the apprentice in Colchester, upon payment of 3s. 4d., became a freeman of the borough. The adults who came with some talent, experience, and capital to be a part of the commonalty of Colchester could rise quickly and would have a far better chance of becoming a part of the governing group than would the immigrant or even the native-born poorer sort of person. Alan Dyer has concluded that perhaps as many as

half of the ruling class in Worcester were of fairly recent origin in the town, so opportunities for a rapid rise must have drawn many. The poorer people who would not be expecting to become burgesses would also be attracted to Colchester in what Clark calls "subsistence" migration, for Colchester afforded opportunities for the poorer sort of people since its cloth manufacturing required a large number of laborers. However, as Lawrence Stone has described it, the social mobility of the poor was more horizontal than vertical; they could better themselves within their group, and many did, but it was not easy for them to rise up into the next level of prosperity.⁹⁴

Not only did poor workers, craftsmen, and small tradesmen come to Colchester to better themselves, but the records show that several gentlemen actively pursued trade in Colchester and even became involved in borough affairs. One Christopher Hamond, Gent., born in Naylond, Suffolk, and son of a gentleman, purchased freedom of the borough of Colchester in 1509-10, and in 1515 he was fined with the taverners for selling in short measure, indicating that he was in the business of making money. In 1525 he was assessed as having £40 of movable goods, so he was therefore not living off of rents from lands; in the autumn of 1525 he was elected alderman.⁹⁵

Another gentleman, John Breton from Layer Breton, illustrates one avenue of "betterment." Admitted as a burgess to Colchester in 1486-7, Breton married the wealthy widow of a leading burgess and became an alderman. As William Harrison in 1576 so aptly described the situation, merchants "often change estate with gentlemen, as gentlemen do with them, by a mutual conversion of the one into the other." Marriage, as in the case of Breton, was often one of the intermediate

steps in the social changes described by Harrison; a younger son of gentle birth who had little money but some talent, both at trade and at attracting the daughters or widows of leading citizens, could quickly acquire opportunity and wealth in the urban setting. Such marriages, however, were probably even more advantageous to the burgesses, smoothing the way for a possible rise into the landed gentry. Such a rise was apparently a goal, since England had not the tradition of urban loyalty that some Continental cities had. To be truly accepted in the higher circles in England meant that one was landed. Not many burgesses managed to enter the ranks of the county gentry; both in York and London only 10% of the merchants attained that goal, and the percentage in Colchester would possibly not even be that high. The will of Thomas Cristmas (1520), whose daughter married a younger son of the gentle-born Teyes, shows Cristmas owning quite a lot of property outside of Colchester and indicates a deferential familiarity with several of the local gentry, whom he named as supervisors of his will, paying them handsomely for that service. He was to be buried in St. John's Monastery among the local gentry, all of which indicates that he was well along in the process for the rise of his sons into the gentry as described by Sylvia Thrupp in her study of the London merchants.⁹⁶ Moreover, the Cristmases were taking on titles normally held only by those in landed society; the last Cristmas who was an alderman was known as "Esquire," even in his first year as alderman. The greater merchants, who might even be richer than the local gentry, had a certain insecurity of status, having no real place in the larger society so long as they remained townsmen.⁹⁷

The rise into the gentry of a few of the richer merchants did

not involve many townsmen, yet it illustrates the dominance of the values of the landed society and it also helps account for the fact that the town continued to be a place of opportunity. Few families remained at the top levels of urban society for more than 3 or 4 generations, so there was not an entrenched oligarchy, such as one would find in some Continental cities. Either the top urban families would become wealthy enough to live off their land, a process which usually took about 3 generations to accomplish, or they would suffer financial reverses, or they would fail to reproduce themselves. Child mortality was high, and Professor Thrupp has found that in medieval London merchants on the average left only one male heir. A number of aldermen died without male heirs, and it is easy to find examples in Colchester; the fortune of Alderman Coksale, who died childless, eventually went to his brother-in-law, Robert Browne, who then became an alderman. Furthermore, the sons who were left often did not follow in their father's footsteps. One extreme example was the only son of Alderman Robert Cowbridge, who was later burned as a heretic in Oxford, but several more conventional reasons account for the failure of sons to succeed their father in his wealth and status.⁹⁸ For one thing, inheritance patterns in the town meant that a man's wealth might be divided up, even though a loose form of primogeniture prevailed. Alderman John Colle's will is a good example; at his death Colle left four under-age sons, and we do not know how many reached maturity, but the distribution of his goods is revealing. The oldest son was to inherit the family dwelling after the mother's death, which probably meant that he was also taking over the family business of clothmaking. The other 3 sons each inherited a house, but all 4 sons received the same amount of

money, £100. Perhaps the oldest son had already received some money with which to operate the business, yet he would not have the capital that his father had had. Even with a substantial inheritance, then, each generation was to build up its own wealth; but such flexible inheritance patterns were good for the economy and for the spreading around of opportunity in the town.⁹⁹ Too, surviving sons might decide to move on to greener pastures in London or another town, to take up a profession, or to go into a trade different from that of their father, sometimes even into a less socially acceptable trade. Palliser found all of these situations among the York aldermen's sons, where even so, a fair number followed their fathers' trades, but did not follow their fathers as aldermen.¹⁰⁰

Counteracting some of the loss of power among the upper groups in a town was marriage between aldermanic families, a common occurrence in that group which helped to consolidate their power. Such intermarriages have been charted in several towns, and in Colchester some of the best examples were the marriages into other aldermanic families of the children of Alderman Nicholas Clere. Those connections were to be important in Colchester governance for much of the 16th century, for four of Nicholas Clere's grandchildren became aldermen.¹⁰¹

Marriage could be quite important in the social rise of those in the middle and lower groups, too; certainly the marriage of an apprentice to the master's daughter, or to the widow, would be most helpful. Among the gentry and the richer urban families, the choice of a marriage partner was probably somewhat restricted, because large amounts of property were often involved, but for most of the urban population marriage was probably most important to them in establishing

close ties in an environment of so much fluidity. Having to wait until the man's apprenticeship was completed and some money accumulated to set up a household, marriage came relatively late for most townspeople, with men often in their mid or late twenties and with women usually 2 or 3 years younger. Each new conjugal family unit set up its own household, and the wills from Colchester portray a concern for wife and children,¹⁰² with only occasional mentions of parents, sisters, nephews, nieces, or cousins of the testators. By far the most commonly named executors were wives, sometimes with a brother of the testator or some of the family members to assist her. When the relationship of other executors or supervisors of wills is unclear but can be traced in other sources, they are often found to be brothers-in-law or fathers-in-law. The immediate family was apparently a very powerful social unit, within which close ties of mutuality were established. Peter Clark speculates that family ties may have become more important than ever before to the migrants in the towns.¹⁰³

Wrightson and Levine, in their study of the small Essex village of Terling in the late Tudor and Stuart period, found the same concentration on very close kin, with little interest in the broader range of kin relationships. Beyond the most important relationship of the nuclear family, however, neighbors and personal friends in Terling "seem to have played the supporting role that in other societies might be played by the wider kin group."¹⁰⁴ If this was true in the village of Terling, it seems to have been just as valid in Colchester, and probably more so since the greater number of people, many of them migrants, would have created even more social pressures and therefore a greater need for the soothing oils to heal social strife. Marriage was often

such an oil, providing new networks of relationships or maintaining old networks, and serving as a possible channel for upward economic and social rise. Neighbors, both those immediately around one and those within the parish, also provided a community of support in both good and bad times; the many parish guilds in Colchester existed just for such upholding of others, both in this world and in the world to come. Fellow workers, too, would have often established a sense of solidarity and community of feeling.

As helpful and supportive as networks of family and friends might be, however, they do not alone resolve social tensions; sometimes a higher authority is needed. Vastly important in holding together the medieval society were two authorities, the law of God and secular law, and in Colchester there were representatives of both. The church and its priests, and the lawyers and magistrates, were keepers and executors of the knowledge of God and of English law. It was a knowledge not available to all, and therefore the priests and the representatives of the law were set somewhat apart from the usual society, even though a vital ingredient in it. Both, if they were doing their job well--and many of them were--upheld the framework of society so that it did not collapse when the troubled winds of strife, jealousies, and mayhem threatened to tear it apart. Priests, lawyers, and magistrates alone could not uphold the authority of God and the law, however, and it was in the town where the common person had the opportunity to have a part in creating a new kind of framework unlike that of the mainly rural English society around them. Making money was the business of the townsmen, the only way they could rise, and so their society was based on wealth, but they had to find ways to make it acceptable, if not to

landed English society, at least to God and to themselves. In the town, ordinary people learned to govern themselves, and ordinary people partly created their own relationship to God. Neither lay governance nor lay piety would be stopped, for both were vital constituents of the English town.

Part Two

The Religious Structure in Colchester

The church and its clergy in late medieval Colchester, being keepers of transcendental mysteries and under the rule of an outside bishop and an even more foreign Pope, were set apart from the usual society. Yet the church was to a large degree the very essence of medieval society, a society which was essentially religious. The church's parish system gave shape to the community, not only geographically but the church helped to form a sense of community among the people. More basically the church was a connecting link with God, and in this part of chapter two we shall look at the institutional church in Colchester in its function as a link in society and with God. We must remember, however, that the church was not just an organization or a building with a priest in it--it was also the people, and by the late medieval period the English church had been partly formed by the laity, not so much in its organization and administration as in its practices and even in some of its beliefs. That ability to absorb movements and even to allow itself partly to be shaped by the culture around it has been one of the strengths of the church throughout the centuries. We shall find genuine loyalty to the parish church, a loyalty not imposed solely by ecclesiastics; many of the people were loyal because the church belonged to God, they were a part of his body, and they had a spiritual and material investment in it. For this study, a look at the parish church is essential, as it was the church which provided the context in

which lay piety grew. Although this will be primarily a description of the institutional church, it is also a record of the practices of pious people, for more important than the institution were the people within it.

Section 1: The History of the Parish

Archeologists, who have found in Colchester a treasure-trove for their excavations, tell us that Colchester was a religious center in Roman times, first with the temple of Claudius and then later as a recipient of Christianity by at least the third century. Our knowledge of religion in Anglo-Saxon Colchester is dim, but the first written record which mentions churches, the Domesday Book of the late 11th century, listed three churches in the borough, St. Peter's, St. Mary's within the walls, and the village church of Greenstead. However, the survey concerned itself only with churches whose endowments made them sources of revenue; St. Peter's Church was undoubtedly worthy of mention as it had the largest amount of glebe land in all of the county, the equivalent of a rural manor, all of which went into Norman hands following the Conquest.¹⁰⁵ Seven priests were listed in the Domesday survey, and other evidence verifies the existence of other churches within the walls of Colchester. Certainly Holy Trinity Church, with its famous 10th century Saxon tower and door still standing today, was a pre-Conquest church, and church archeologist Warwick Rodwell tells us that the nave is even older than the tower. The origin of St. Helen's Chapel is something of a mystery; old Colchester records say that when the Norman lord Eudo Dapifer built Colchester castle, he also restored the Chapel of St. Helen, which tradition says had been erected

by Helen.¹⁰⁶ St. Runwald's Church, demolished in 1878, was dedicated to an obscure Saxon saint which tells us that the church was quite early; if not of pre-Conquest foundation, it at least had its dedication when the town was still Anglo-Saxon in its sympathies. Archeologist Philip Crummy's recent work on parish layout has brought him to the conclusion that St. Runwald's was probably the earliest church in the town. Indicating another early church is a second dedication to a Saxon saint, Botolph, adopted by the Augustinians who came to Colchester in the late 11th century to establish their first foundation in England and who are thought to have regularized a pre-existing Anglo-Saxon monastic institution. Too, an archeological discovery in 1972 confirms the existence of another small church outside the walls which, according to the chronicle of the Benedictine St. John's Abbey, had a miraculous reputation which attracted the founder of the monastery, Eudo Dapifer, to build the monastery on that site. It seems that there was a priest, Sigeric by name, who had there a house and a wooden church consecrated to St. John the Evangelist where various miracles occurred.¹⁰⁷

Many of the pre-Conquest churches were built by local lords; in fact in 10th century England, ownership of the manorial church was a badge of thegnly status, and in the 11th century it was a condition for promotion. Churches proliferated, and apparently the pace quickened even more under Norman rule. Whether many church buildings signify great piety is uncertain, but the early lay ownership of churches was, nevertheless, part of the long tradition of lay participation in religion in England. The church reforms of the late 11th and 12th centuries, however, were to bring many of the lay dominated churches under

the aegis of the institutional church, either under the bishop or in the hands of monastic foundations. The many churches also indicate prosperity; Geoffrey Martin reminds us that multiple churches in an old town usually indicate that wealth was spread fairly evenly in the town even before the 12th century.¹⁰⁸ Table 6 shows that all of the eight churches within the walls of the borough of Colchester were in existence by around 1200, and the same was quite possibly true of the eight churches outside the town walls.

With the church reforms, however, the climate of opinion was turning against lay ownership of churches, and in Colchester the right of presentation to the benefice, the advowson, had passed largely to the two religious houses. Only two churches were still under private patronage in the early Tudor period. The Benedictine St. John's Abbey held the advowson of 7 churches, and the Augustinian St. Botolph's Priory, of 6 churches, and that situation had prevailed since at least the early 14th century and probably much sooner. Records tell us that Eudo, the founder of St. John's, and his neighbors granted lands and churches to St. John's at the time of its founding around the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries; the transference of churches to St. Botolph's, founded about the same time, is even less clear.¹⁰⁹

Also uncertain is the development of the parish system in England, particularly in the towns, but it helps to remember that most Saxon churches were built by a landowner so that the church was both territorial and proprietary, serving the needs of an individual estate. Such was the case of Godric, the Saxon lord of the manor and of the church of Greenstead in the borough of Colchester, whose property was seized when the Normans came to Colchester. By the time of the writing

Table 6

The Sixteen Parish Churches in Colchester

Parish Churches	Period of Origin	Patron
<u>Within the Walls:</u>		
1. All Saints	<u>ca.</u> 12th century	St. Botolph's
2. Holy Trinity	Anglo-Saxon	St. John's
3. St. James	<u>ca.</u> 1200	St. Botolph's
4. St. Martin	<u>ca.</u> 12th century	St. Botolph's
5. St. Mary-at-Wall	<u>ca.</u> 11th century	Bishop of London
6. St. Nicholas	<u>ca.</u> 12th century	St. John's
7. St. Peter	Anglo-Saxon	St. Botolph's
8. St. Runwald	possibly Saxon	Teye Family, 1364-1525
<u>Outside the Walls:</u>		
9. St. Botolph (probably in the north aisle of the priory church)	<u>ca.</u> 11th century	St. Botolph's
10. St. Giles	<u>ca.</u> 12th century	St. John's
11. St. Leonard	<u>ca.</u> 12th century	St. John's
12. St. Mary Magdalen (connected with a hospital)	early 12th century	St. John's
<u>Village churches:</u>		
13. Berechurch, St. Michael (West Donyland)	Early chapel of ease to Holy Trinity	St. John's
14. Greenstead, St. Andrew	Anglo-Saxon	St. John's
15. Lexden, St. Leonard	In existence by 13th century	Radcliff Family
16. Milend, St. Michael	In existence by 13th century	St. Botolph's

of the Domesday Book the principle of the parish as the ecclesiastical unit with its resident priest was already recognized, and for the most part the parochial geography of England finished taking shape in the next century. It is believed that the payment of tithes, which became obligatory in the 10th century, had much to do with the establishment of parish boundaries, but the parish was not simply an ecclesiastical unit. Political decisions probably entered in to the formation of parishes, and the latest thinking of archeologists studying Colchester is that there was a replanning of the town imposed by royal authority after the Danes were ousted, at which time some of the parish boundaries were set. Town planning or not, many accidental property limits seem to have played a part in setting Colchester parish boundaries; eight parishes were described as being within the walls because their churches were within the walls, but none of those eight parishes were completely intramural. All had outlying bits of land in various directions; nevertheless, it was the church which remained the center of the parish.¹¹⁰

Section 2: The Parish Church and Its Functions

The church was the parish focus in numerous ways, but its primary functions may be classified as a triad of links: 1) tying together the great variety of people in the parish; 2) connecting the present with the past; and 3) providing contact between man and the Supernatural. To some extent, these three types of linkages obtained in the church in all of medieval society, but in the urban setting with its many discrete elements, the parish church as nexus became all the more significant. These three basic linking functions of the church

will now be examined separately, and it will be seen that through these three areas the urban church helped develop a unique religious cultural setting, one which helped to meet the need for a sense of community, for aid and fellowship, and for certitude in an uncertain world.

In serving to tie the people together, the parish church was first a linkage in its control of the most important events in individual lives, events which connected the people to each other and to the community. Only in the parish church could one normally be baptized and married. There he paid his tithes and there he was buried when he died. Baptism, performed as soon as possible after birth, often on the same day, brought the child into the society in an official way. The supervision of the child was not left solely to the parents; the community, through godparents, aided in the spiritual oversight of the child, with the godparents being charged to teach the Paternoster and the Creed to their godchildren. The godparent-godchild relationship created not only a spiritual relationship but also, as John Bossy has concluded, "a formal state of friendship." Too little is known about the role played by godparents in the life of the child, but the testamentary bequests to godchildren in Colchester indicate that the relationship, though not a primary one, was not taken lightly either. The bequests to godchildren were rarely large, most often from three to twelve pence, and were usually mentioned almost in passing, "to every godchild"; but it is interesting to see that in every case where the godparent-testator had no surviving children of his or her own, the relationship took on greater import, for such wills were almost the only ones which listed the names of the godchildren.¹¹¹

A more primary bond between individuals was created by marriage,

which had come increasingly under the aegis of the church. A legal contract as well as a sacrament, marriage took place in two parts. First, the actual marriage was performed at the church door, then the couple went into the church for a nuptial mass, after which a maser containing wine was passed among the couple and their guests. The matrimonial bond was not merely between individuals; it also established a strong tie between their families. In Colchester, aldermanic families frequently intermarried, reinforcing their power, and for men or families on the way up marriage could be a helpful boost. Aside from assistance given to ambition, though, marriage fixed new bonds of kinship and aid. For example, when Thomas Northen died in 1517, he named his son-in-law, Thomas Flyngaunt, to supervise his wife's execution of his will, and when two of his adult sons died the next year, they in turn named Flyngaunt, their brother-in-law, to the same role.¹¹²

A third major event in an individual's life over which the church presided was the last rites and burial, an event also providing an opportunity for bonding within the community. Small processions heralded extreme illness and death; the parish priest was to be ready at all times to go at once to the extremely ill person, and he was to go vested in surplice and stole. Carrying the Eucharist in both hands, the priest was to be preceded by the parish clerk carrying a lantern and ringing a hand bell to give notice to the people that the sacred bread was in their midst so that they might kneel. Processions bearing the body to the church in Colchester were mentioned in the wills of Elizabeth Harmanson and Alice Haynes, but the ringing of the church bell would have been an even more obvious reminder to the living that one of their fellow parishioners had died. Small payments to the

sexton or to the parish clerk were given in wills to ensure the ringing of the bell both at the funeral mass and at the monthly or yearly anniversary of the death. More than that, William Wheler left money so that the bell-man of the town could go about the town with his bell to cause the people to pray for his soul every year at the same time that the church bells were commemorating his death. Also bringing the community into the events surrounding a death was the distribution of food or money. William Breton, Gent., left money in 1499 to be spent on bread and ale, seemingly for the refreshment of every one who came to his burial and commemorative services in St. Giles' Church just outside the borough walls. William Wheler in 1493 bequeathed 3s. 8d. to buy bread and ale every year at his obit, the yearly anniversary of his death, at the village church of Ardleigh, which was near Colchester, "to cause all the parish to drink there to have the more remembrance to pray for my soul." Such general distribution of food and drink for all at the burial or at obit time was never mentioned by those wanting burial within the walls of Colchester; instead, bread or small gifts of money were given to the poor. For example, Peter Borow in 1512 stipulated that bread to the value of 20s. was to be distributed to poor people on the day of his burial. Also, the many provisions for obits and for putting names on the beadroll, the list of the dead for whose souls prayers were regularly said, must have been continual reminders to the living of their bonds to the dead. Edith Algood, in her will of 1504, was careful to instruct her parish priest "to rehearse" the names of her two dead husbands and of herself every Sunday for 10 years, "when he biddeth the bodies in the beadroll."¹¹³

Events in the lives of individuals, then, provided new bonds

with other persons and even with the whole community, but a more obvious way in which the parish church linked people together was simply in its provision for the parishioners to be brought together in one place. First of all, the laity were required to attend mass on Sunday mornings and on holy days; matins and evensong were also said on Sundays but with fewer in attendance, it seems. Phythian-Adams has concluded that the parish churches in Coventry were quite crowded for the Sunday mass; on the other hand, Keith Thomas believes that church-going was quite lax, noting that some parish churches were too small for all parishioners to attend and that few of the poorer people attended, as evidenced by the many complaints in Elizabethan times about their negligence. Examples of non-attendance can certainly be found in the Colchester court records; two men in 1513 allowed others in their garden, seemingly for games, during the time of divine service, but such charges were more commonly in the province of the ecclesiastical courts. Unfortunately, archdeaconry records are unavailable for the earlier Tudor period, but a fragmentary visitation of the Colchester Archdeaconry in 1540-2 reports that not half of the communicants, or houseling people, of St. Giles' parish went to church on Sundays and holy days. However, St. Giles' was in the cure of the Benedictines from St. John's Abbey, which had just been dissolved in 1539, and the poor church attendance probably reflected the upheaval following the execution of the abbot and the disbursement of the monks and property. On the other hand, the fact that such infringements were so notable indicates that probably a high proportion of people did attend church in Colchester on Sundays and holy days.¹¹⁴

On other days, there were many church services available to the

people, for mass was to be said daily by the parish priest so that if a lay person chose, his day might start with early mass at 6 a.m. With its many priests, churches, chantries, guilds, and special masses for the dead, the town afforded many opportunities during the week for church attendance by the more devout, and it was probably the town that the Venetian, Trevisan, was describing in 1497 when he wrote the following about the English people:

Although they all attend Mass every day, and say many Paternosters in public, (the women carrying long rosaries in their hands, and any who can read taking the office of our Lady with them, and with some companion reciting it in the church verse by verse, in a low voice, after the manner of churchmen,) they always hear mass on Sunday in their parish church, and give liberal alms¹¹⁵

Regular church attendance, then, brought the people together, imposing on them discipline and a sense of duty, but there were other occasions such as the processions outside the church which were a time of parish solidarity. On Palm Sunday, Ascension Day, and Corpus Christi the procession paraded the churchyard, but on the Rogation Days and St. Mark's Day it went into the streets and open countryside. The cross and the priest in his cope, with perhaps a shrine, headed the procession of parishioners, who were walking for religious purposes but who often managed to have a bit of fun on those occasions. Phythian-Adams, who has written on the importance of ceremony in the life of the medieval town, believes that the processions which proceeded around the churchyard center symbolized the centrality of the church in the creation of the oneness of the parish. Going further, Mervyn James believes that the concept of body provided by the Corpus Christi procession provided the urban society with a rite and ideology which promoted its social integration.¹¹⁶

Parishioners also came together at church to have fun. Many church ales, which seem to have been the main social activity as well as a principal fund-raiser for the parish church, have been recorded. Sports, dancing, and other festivities accompanied the church ale, with the churchyard, then free of gravestones, often the site of the festivities. Also, religious plays, performed either in the church or in the churchyard, were popular for amusement, for teaching, and for profit, and plays were produced in towns and villages all over Essex in the first half of the 16th century. The churchwardens' accounts, which tell so much about plays in the Essex towns of Braintree and Dunmow, are unfortunately non-existent in Colchester, but one tantalizing allusion in the Colchester court roll of 1526-27 records the payment of a fine from two men "for gathering of corn for St. Martin's play."¹¹⁷

The parish church also provided a place and an occasion for parishioners to act together as a body. Maynard Smith believes that the pre-Reformation church was much more a popular institution than later, and that the people took pride in their parish church, with parish councils very active in supervising fund raising activities for maintenance and church repair and in overseeing the work of the churchwardens. Colchester records show the churchwardens of St. Botolph's parish church selling a house in 1515 "by the unanimous assent, consent and permission of the whole body of the parishioners of the parish." The court records also document the selling of a house which had been bequeathed to St. James' Church; the house was sold, in the language of the deed, "at the special request" of the two churchwardens and eleven other men, all listed by name, "and of all other trustworthy parishioners [fide dignorum] dwelling within the parish of St. James." The

names given from St. James' may have been a kind of church council, or vestry as it later came to be called. St. Peter's Church seems to have had a council of parishioners, for they built a large room, now called the vestry, in the early 16th century, a room large enough for about 20 people to sit comfortably, indicating the value placed on such meetings.¹¹⁸

The parish church, then, brought people together for worship, social occasions, or business meetings of the parish, but it also linked people together by helping the law to provide order and peace in the parish. Though the parish was primarily a unit of church government, the corporation also found the parishes useful as civil units, especially in the collection of taxes. At the time of the national tax collection in 1524-25, called the lay subsidy, subcollectors were appointed for each parish, and the collection was by parish. Later, under Queen Elizabeth, the parishes were used even more as administrative units when legislation increasingly charged parish officers such as churchwardens and constables with poor relief, road making, and policing. Perhaps the medieval use of the parish for tax collection goes back to the tithing which helped to establish parish boundaries in the first place. In any case, parish boundaries were marked and recalled each year at a church procession during Rogation week, the week in which Ascension Day occurred, with the beating of the bounds being followed by a church feast. Boys were taken along on the walk around the parish limits to ensure that witnesses to the boundaries should survive as long as possible; the church was therefore helpful in assisting the remembrance of proper legal boundaries so essential to peace and order.¹¹⁹

John Bossy also believes that the church and its priests played an important part in maintaining peace in a society marked, according to Bossy, by formal hostility, "what one may loosely describe as feud." Bossy cites the ritual of the peace before communion as an example of the work of the church in inculcating the ideal of peace with one's neighbor. Dating from around 1000, the peace ritual in the late Middle Ages in England had evolved into the passing around of a pax or pax-board for people to kiss it in turn.¹²⁰ Certainly reminders of peace were needed; a reading of any year's court roll will verify the existence of many disputes and much enmity. Yet, to say as Bossy does that all of society was in a state of formal hostility is too extreme a description. Perhaps the hostility of kin groups was an important factor in rural relationships, but in the English town kin groups were generally not long enduring nor large enough to maintain continuing feuds. Yet Bossy is indeed correct in noting that the church promoted peace among parishioners.

The church also served as a link between parishioners in reinforcing the hierarchy of the medieval community, thereby helping to establish and maintain the order which was valued by society. Whether for good or ill, the society was hierarchical, and the seating which was installed in many parish churches in the 15th century put the wealthiest men in front, the women at one side, and the servants in the rear. The dignity of civic leaders was upheld in the church, where Colchester aldermen wore their robes of office, scarlet gowns and velvet tippets on certain occasions. In Coventry the mayor publicly demonstrated his official dedication by "twice-daily processional attendances at St. Michael's for matins and evensong on workdays, Sundays and

holidays." Furthermore, Phythian-Adams writes, "The structure of organised religion conspicuously under-pinned the stratification of society. Even in the parish church after Mass every Sunday, the 'Holy Cake' (as opposed to the consecrated bread) was distributed by the deacons 'a-quordyng for every man's degre'."¹²¹

Although degrees of wealth and social standing were recognized and even encouraged by the church, yet all the people were one, as symbolized by the distribution to the people every Sunday of the holy cake, or holy loaf as it was more commonly called. Provided by some of the laity every Sunday--in Colchester there was an endowment for the provision of the holy loaf at St. Mary Magdalen's--the bread was at the end of the mass censed and blessed before being cut into small pieces and distributed. Some even took it home to sick friends. Although not sacramental as was the Holy Eucharist, the people valued the custom of the eating of the holy loaf, and in 1540 amidst radical changes the custom was commended by the Rationale of Ceremony as worthy of continuation, "as a godly ceremony . . . to put us in mind that all Christian men be one mystical body of Christ."¹²²

A sense of oneness, then, was formed in the church, and the parish itself and its church became an object of loyalty to many. By far the greatest number of people making wills requested to be buried in their own parish church or churchyard, and a high proportion of charitable bequests were to their own parish churches or to the poor of the parish. Thus, the church by bringing people together for worship, for fun, or for parish business helped to develop a sense of community among the people. The parish church thus served in the vital capacity of linking together, in what we have labeled as the first of three

kinds of bonds supplied by the church.

A second type of link, in our triad of linking functions, was the church's role as a connector in time. As David Palliser has written, "It was the parochial unit which gave the citizens their strongest sense of continuity with the past, through those intercessions linking the living with the dead which were at the heart of medieval religion." To hear the names of the recent dead solemnly pronounced in the beadroll every Sunday morning must have given the living some sense of oneness with those of the past. Colchester testators such as Edith Algood in 1504 left money for the priest of her parish "to rehearse every name" of her two dead husbands and herself for 10 years, "when he biddeth the bodies in the beadroll." Parishioners would also be aware of the daily intercession for the dead of the chantry priests in their town, but closer to the majority of the people were the obits observing the anniversaries of the deaths of former parishioners. John Bardefield, Colchester alderman, bequeathed in 1506 the profits from a certain field for a yearly obit to be kept for himself, his parents, his 2 wives, and all Christians for 100 years. Bardefield obviously did not want his name to be forgotten. Not only did such intercessions bring a oneness with the past, but they also created a connection with the future, giving the living a desire for following generations in turn to pray for their souls.¹²³

The linkage in time which the church provided obtained in a very practical way in the present as well. Church bells, obviously held in affection by the many who bequeathed money for the ringing or repair of bells, woke the people for work and sent them to bed at curfew time, fulfilling to some degree the function of a clock. Cardinal Gasquet

tells about the Angelus bell, also known in England as the Ave bell or the Gabriel bell, which sounded the first thing in the morning and the last at night. In Bury St. Edmunds the Angelus bell was rung at 4 a.m. and 9 p.m. in summer and at 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. in winter. Church bells were also reminders of duty, calling the faithful to attendance at the services of the church or to other events, both joyous and sad. More than marking the time in each day, though, the parish church was intimately associated with the passage of the year, in its feast days and processions, and especially in the ritual surrounding the anniversaries of the birth, death and resurrection of Christ, in what Charles Phythian-Adams calls the ritualistic half of the year. Even the dating of the borough court rolls conformed to the church calendar; rather than giving the month and day, each session of the court was related to a nearby feast. For example, the two regular courts held in Colchester in the fourth week in January, 1530, were dated as being on the "Monday before the conversion of St. Paul" and on the "Thursday after the conversion of St. Paul."¹²⁴

The church, then, not only linked the people together, but it was a link in time--a practical link in the present to mark the passage of time, but also a transcendent link with the past and the future, making the oneness of God's people exceed the boundaries of time and place. Above all, though, the church in its third and final linking function connected the people with God, and this in itself gave them a sense of community: one church and one people serving one God. The linkage with God through the church was of utmost importance to a society preoccupied with death and judgment. "Dooms" or last judgment scenes on church walls became common in the 15th century, and the soul

needed the protection from judgment afforded by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The reenactment of the sacrifice and the belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Mass were central to the worship. The grand climax of the Mass came when the bread and wine had been consecrated to become the Body and Blood of Christ, and the elements were worshipfully elevated by the celebrant, while a bell rang out, a censer sent clouds of smoke upward, and candles were elevated in homage. Devotion to the Eucharist was evidenced by the growth in popularity of the feast of Corpus Christi, when the sacred host was carried around the parish. Most people actually took communion only once a year, at Easter it seems, the bare minimum of yearly confession and communion decreed by the Fourth Lateran Council having hardened into normal and accepted practice. The culmination of most of the divine services, then, was the communion of the priest, and to see his communion was apparently thought to be efficacious,¹²⁵ so the minimal observance by the laity should not necessarily be viewed as impiety.

The church in its primary role of connecting people to God was charged with instructing the people in their duty to God; the priest was to assist even the illiterate in learning the basis of belief and the rules of Christian conduct. However, there was apparently only a little organized personal instruction by priests, even in the preparation for confession and communion; for the most part religious instruction was supposed to be given by parents and godparents to the young. Even when priests conducted schools, direct religious instruction was slight, though much was probably imparted in a practical way, for example, by using the Paternoster in the teaching of reading.¹²⁶

The deficiency in personal instruction made the rite of

confession all the more important for its instructional value, since the priest could deal intimately with the individual, probing for undeclared sins. Handbooks to aid priests were available, and they show that the priest could also question the penitent about his faith as well as convict him of sinfulness. John Myrc's Instructions for Parish Priests enjoined priests to ascertain whether the penitent could say his Paternoster, Creed, and Ave, and if he could not, to give him such a penance that he would know them before he came again. Confession, which was mandatory before one took communion at least once a year, probably took place at other times, too, making it more frequent than the taking of communion for the average parishioner. Thomas Tentler, in his study of sacramental confession, particularly as practiced in Germany, France, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, has noted that confession was tied to certain seasons, such as the feasts of All Saints or Christmas, and certainly to Lent and Easter. In England, for example, Augustinian Prior John Myrc in his collection of sermons urged his hearers to prepare for Whitsun, the Pentecost celebration, in the following manner:

Cristen men and woymen, Setyrday þat next comyþe, as zo knoweþe well, ys Whytson-euen, ze schull all fast and come toþe chyrche, forto here and se þe seruyce þat ys þat day don yn holy chyrche. þerfor ze schull all make you redy and clene yn soule, þat ze mow be abull þat day to recyue þe Holy Gost þat þe Fadyr of Heuen senduþe among all monkynd. Wherfor I pray you and charche you, yf any of you ys fallen into any greues synne, þat he come to me and clanse hym þerof, er þen Sunday com; and I wyll be redy forto helpe, in all þat lye yn me, forto do wyth good wyll wyth þe grace of God. For takeþe in certeyne: ryzt as non of you woll goo ynto a place þeras stynkyng caren ys, but stoppyþe his nase and hyþe hym þens; ryzt soo þe Holy Gost fleþe from þe soule þat ys combyrd wyth dedly synne. . . . ryzt soo he hyup to þylke þat lyen in clannes of body and soule, and ben yn charite to God and to man. . . .

Also, certain crises, such as dangerous journeys, childbirth, and serious illnesses might also provoke one to seek his priest for

confession. As an instrument for instruction, though, confession had its limitations, with its value restricted by infrequency or by incompetent priests.¹²⁷

Sermons had great instructional value, of course, but it is difficult to determine how often the Sunday churchgoer would have heard sermons. Archbishop Peckham had decreed in 1281 that there must be a sermon in the vernacular in the parish church at least 4 times a year, incorporating teaching on the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the seven works of mercy, the seven virtues, the seven vices, and the seven sacraments. The popular preaching of the friars helped develop a taste for sermons, and it seems that sermons in the vernacular were more common in the parish churches in the late Middle Ages, since pulpits for preaching and pews for the comfort of the listeners became far more common at that time. There are no parish church pulpits dating from earlier than the mid-14th century, and seats were added in many churches in the 15th and the early 16th centuries.¹²⁸

Sermons and personal instruction were often spasmodic and lacking in quality, with much depending on the training and the dedication of the parish priest, and it was the liturgy, especially its visual and dramatic elements, and also the physical surroundings which were so important in teaching many, particularly the illiterate, about their faith. Since the mass was almost entirely in Latin and therefore incomprehensible to most, the visual elements were primary in an understanding of the ceremony. Popular devotion concentrated on gazing at the Host at the elevation, and other elements of the liturgy were marked by ceremony. The reading of the Gospel which culminated the first part of the service had its importance accentuated by the

carrying in procession of the Gospel Book, which might even have a cover of precious metal set with precious stones. Drama was built in to many of the ceremonies, especially those during Holy Week, beginning with the distribution of palms on Palm Sunday, the creeping to the cross on Good Friday, and the restoration of the cross from the Easter sepulchre to its place on the high altar on Easter Day.¹²⁹

Not only in ritual was dogma declared to the illiterate, but as Manning has written, "The church itself, even the humblest, was the poor man's service book." Other popular subjects for painting in the late Middle Ages were the Dance of Death, the Seven Deadly Sins, and the Weighing of Souls, all conveying a strong message to their viewers. Inspiring a sense of awe was, above all, the Great Rood between the nave and the chancel, representing Christ on the cross. The early 15th century writer of Dives and Pauper ably explained the importance of images and paintings in the teaching of the church, when he wrote that they are there "to steryn mannys affeccoun and his herte to deuocioun, for often man is more steryd be syghte þan be heryng or redyngge. Also þey been ordeynyed to been a tokene and a booke to þe lewyd peple, þat þey moun redyn in ymagerye and peynture þat clerkys redyn in boke." Several Colchester testators mentioned images in their parish churches with obvious affection, leaving money for their refurbishing. For example, John Leveson in 1492 left 5 marks "to the new dyghting of St. Paul in St. Leonard's church," and in 1509 Joan Inkley bequeathed 20s. "to the gilding of the rood loft" in the church of St. Nicholas.¹³⁰

The urban parish church, then, so valuable in linking people to each other and to God, both in the present and in the past, added color and beauty to the life of the townsmen, but more significantly it

shaped values, helping to form a sense of the reasonable and of the moral. In the urban society based on commerce, the church reinforced the hierarchy and values of the town, brought cohesion and bonding to an amorphous group of people, and provided a sense of stability and certitude in the life of individuals whose way of life was considered unworthy by the greater part of English society. The church provided a communal context in which it was possible to be pious, even though one was engaged in the acquisition of money.

Section 3: Religious Houses and Foundations

Colchester afforded an even more varied religious environment than the parish churches alone could provide: four religious houses flourished in Colchester, providing a variety of religious experience which must have lent much vitality, color, and diversity to the milieu. Earliest on the scene were the Augustinians and the Benedictines in the late 11th and early 12th centuries, with the Franciscans and Crossed Friars settling in Colchester sometime in the mid-13th century. The early coming of the Augustinians and Benedictines meant that they gained control of most of the parish churches, at least in so far as they had the advowsons. The Benedictine St. John's Abbey had the advowson of 7 parish churches, and the Augustinian St. Botolph's Priory, of 6 parish churches. Just a simple analysis of the pattern of patronage of Colchester churches, using Table 6, says much about the roles of the two orders in Colchester, revealing that the Augustinians had the patronage of four of the churches within the walls, and the Benedictines, only two. Furthermore, the Augustinians had the right of presentation of the 3 most important parish churches within the walls, in

terms of area, wealth, or population, i.e. All Saints', St. James', and St. Peter's. The Benedictine St. John's Abbey, on the other hand, had the advowson of more of the churches outside the walls, no doubt resulting from the Benedictines' original foundation by the Norman lord, Eudo, who was assisted by gifts from his landed friends. From the beginning, then, the ministry of the two orders was different in Colchester, St. John's serving the landed people both within and beyond the borough of Colchester, and St. Botolph's more concerned with the townspeople.¹³¹

The Augustinians had an advantage among the townspeople from their beginning, for they grew out of an already existing company of priests serving a church of St. Botolph. In 1093 a Kentishman called Norman, who had studied at Bec under Anselm and had come to England with the Archbishop, persuaded the company of priests to join a religious order. Norman advised the adoption of the Augustinian rule, and with Archbishop Anselm's help Norman and one of the priests from Colchester went abroad to study the rule, which was then unknown in England. Sometime before 1100 the priory was founded, having as prior Ainulf, who had headed the existing company of priests. The canons were not cloistered, as were the Benedictines, and they were meant to have a ministry among the townsmen though little is known about the nature of their work. St. Botolph's remained relatively small, possibly never exceeding its original number of 13 inmates, that number typifying Christ and his apostles. Neither did it acquire great wealth, having a yearly value of £134 3s. 4d. at its dissolution in 1536.¹³²

Rather wealthier with a yearly value of £523 16s. 1/4d. was St. John's Abbey;¹³³ in 1465 there were 26 monks at St. John's and in 1535,

24 monks. Its abbot was mitred, with a seat in Parliament, none of which helped when the last abbot opposed Henry VIII's ecclesiastical policy and in 1539 was hanged outside the Colchester city gate for high treason. St. John's greater wealth and privilege made conflict with its neighbors inevitable; David Stevenson, in recounting some of the hostile incidents, believes that the enmity was quite severe, remarking that "the special hatred of the townsmen had been reserved for the rich and powerful abbey of St. John." The abbot's legal jurisdiction over the tenants of the sizable abbey lands within the borough and the abbey's right of chartered sanctuary were time and again sources of hostility. Once in 1429 the abbot retaliated by accusing the townsmen of Lollardy; more ordinary were the incidents during the Tudor period, when the people occasionally broke down the fences and put their cattle on the abbey lands, claiming the lands as a part of their common land. Repeatedly in the reign of Henry VIII the Abbot of St. John's, as well as the Prior of St. Botolph's, were engaged in lawsuits against citizens in the borough court, usually on pleas of trespass or debt, no doubt because of their numerous properties in the area.¹³⁴

Even the physical situation of the 2 older houses was revealing. Both were outside the walls, but the Augustinian priory was only a few yards from the wall, whereas the Benedictine St. John's Abbey, though only a few hundred yards farther away, was on a hill almost as high as that on which the town was situated, evoking an aura of separateness and lordly detachment from the town, yet still very visible to the town.

The Benedictines were of course cloistered, but the Augustinian canons were presumably free to do pastoral work in the town if they chose. Each house, however, did have the cure of the parish in which

it was located. The parish church of St. Botolph's seems to have occupied one aisle of the Augustinian priory church, and some of the canon-curates obviously inspired respect from parishioners, with a few testators referring to their curate as "my ghostly father."¹³⁵ On the other hand, the parishioners of St. Giles did not seem to have a great love for St. John's Abbey. St. Giles was the parish in which the Benedictines were located, and a monk from St. John's always had the cure of St. Giles' Church. Parishioners left legacies to St. Giles' Church, but they were often careful to state that it was to be in the hands of churchwardens. Only 7 testators from St. Giles' parish asked for prayers at St. John's in the early Tudor period, and only a few others from the gentry or from the aldermanic ranks made mention of St. John's in their wills. Few people from outside the parishes in which the 2 older houses were located mentioned the older houses in their wills. Neither the Benedictines nor the Augustinians had the overwhelming affection of the townspeople of Colchester, it seems.

Perhaps the most important religious house in Colchester, in terms of its direct effect on the religion of the people, was the Grey Friars, or the Franciscans or Friars Minor as they were variously nominated. The Franciscans came to England in 1224, but their coming to Colchester is clouded in obscurity. There is a record of a grant of a plot of ground to the Friars by the King in 1237, and certainly they were established within the walls of Colchester in 1279 when they received a license to make a water conduit through the town wall. In 1309 a church was built for the Friars by the Lord of the Manor of Lexden, Robert Fitzwalter. The mission of the Friars was to the town from the very beginning, and although they were lampooned in 14th and 15th

century literature for being too greedy and cunning, their popularity in the towns continued right up to their suppression. In York, for example, one in three of those making wills between 1501 and 1538 remembered a friary in their wills, and in Colchester more bequests were made to the Grey Friars (29 out of 203 wills) than to any other religious house, although the percentage was only half that of York. The emphasis of the friars had been not so much on the majesty and sovereignty of God, as on his loving kindness in sending his son to share men's lot. Preached by the friars was a devotion open to rich and poor alike, aimed at the consecration of the whole of life, and in many instances they were enormously successful. They were well trained for preaching, and their sermons must have been a welcome contrast to those in many parish churches.¹³⁶

The fourth religious house in Colchester, the Crossed or Crutched Friars, had a checkered existence. According to David Knowles, the English Crutched Friars derived from a group of cruciferi following the Rule of St. Augustine founded near Huy in Belgium in 1211, whose work was chiefly in hospitals. Records first mention a prior of the Holy Cross in Colchester in 1235, which is earlier than Knowles' date of 1244 for their first arrival into England. The hospital in Colchester was apparently endowed by the Lord of the Manor of Stanway, which is contiguous to the borough of Colchester. In the 14th century, it seems to have become merely a free chapel, but in 1407 the King granted license for the foundation of a Guild of St. Helen in the Chapel of the Holy Cross to maintain 13 poor men and to found a chantry of 5 chaplains. Toward the end of the 15th century, the Crossed Friars reasserted their claim to the site and were readmitted in 1496; they

were subsequently entrusted with the task of daily prayers to fulfill the requirements of some of the chantry foundations which had been housed in their chapel when it was under the Guild of St. Helen. With a house for only 4 Crossed Friars, they had at their dissolution only a yearly value of £7 7s. 8d., and it was their poverty which may partly explain why they had indulgences printed in 1523 which admitted to their confraternity those who gave alms to the priory.¹³⁷

A few other foundations provided variety on the religious scene. The Hospital of St. Mary Magdalen, founded by Eudo as a leper hospital in the early 12th century, was reconstituted in 1423 under the direction of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, and was then declared to be for a master and 5 poor men since leprosy was no longer a problem in England. Under the patronage of the Abbot of St. John's and with its small independent endowment, it was seldom the object of the charity of the townspeople.¹³⁸ Dearer to their hearts was St. Anne's Chapel, where there had been a holy well and hermitage and to which there was a guild attached as early as 1491. A little earlier, John Vertue, who died in 1486, had established there an almshouse and/or a hostel for poor travelers, and throughout the early Tudor period sheets and other bedding were bequeathed by the people to St. Anne's.¹³⁹ Also in Colchester was the ancient St. Helen's Chapel, in which two chantries had been founded in the 14th century, at which time the advowson had been put into the hands of the bailiffs and commonalty. There seems to have been only one chaplain saying daily prayers in St. Helen's Chapel in the early Tudor period, but the chapel, even though under the patronage of the bailiffs, does not seem to have captured the allegiance of the people as it was seldom mentioned in wills of the early Tudor period.¹⁴⁰

With all the various parish churches, religious houses, and free chapels, there must have been a divine service to fit the needs or taste of almost everyone at any time in Colchester, and there was also a diversity of charitable and worthy causes to be the objects of benevolent and tender consciences.

Section 4: Colchester and the Larger Church

Of course the larger church touched Colchester, too; situated in the Diocese of London, Colchester testators almost always gave a small amount to their cathedral Church of St. Paul in London. Only the bishop of the diocese could administer confirmation to the children, ordain a priest or deacon, and consecrate a church or burial yard. Also, in his first year of office and in every third subsequent year a bishop was directed to carry out an official visitation of his diocese; even so, the people probably saw little of their bishop, for he could appoint a suffragan bishop if he chose to be absent or was hampered by age or ill health.

More in contact with the people was the archdeacon. For administrative purposes every diocese had been divided into large districts, each one under an archdeacon, and the Diocese of London had three archdeaconries, Essex, Middlesex, and Colchester. The duties of the archdeacon included the institution of clerics into parochial benefices and the holding of annual visitations (in the years in which the bishop did not visit) to ensure that the church fabric and church property were kept in good repair, that the incumbent carried out his duties, and that both the clergy and laity conformed to good moral standards. The archdeacon was only doing his duty when his visit to Colchester in 1545

revealed that John Case stayed away from church and kept a wench "beside his wife." Such visitations could be costly for those being visited, as the parishes had to pay all the expenses of the visitor and his staff; even the borough officials thought it prudent to help with the refreshment of the archdeacon on his visit to Colchester in the first year of the reign of Henry VIII, when the archdeacon was given 2 gallons of wine by the borough.¹⁴¹

Section 5: Clerics in Colchester

The church touched the lives of the people even more closely through its local representatives, the priests. Edward Cutts, relying on the list of those swearing allegiance to Henry VIII in 1535, counted 80 priests and monks in Colchester at that time, so that with Colchester's population of approximately 5,000, there were about 62 people for every cleric. S. T. Bindoff has estimated that England on the eve of the Reformation had, in some areas, as many as one cleric for every fifty of the adult population and certainly had one cleric for every hundred adults, making Colchester's estimated proportion of 62 to 1 fairly average.¹⁴²

Medieval clerics are assumed to have been generally from the local area and of the same social and economic status of those whom they served. Evidence for the origin of Colchester clerics is scanty, but some at least came from local families. Actual relationships can be established in a few cases, e.g. two parish priests, Richard Caumond and James Forster, had brothers living in Colchester, and there are a few other clerics whose last names were a common family name in Col-

chester in that period. However, Colchester families were seemingly not producing clerics to the extent that Norwich families were doing; Norman Tanner found that 10-11% of the sons mentioned in Norwich wills were clerics, which is a remarkably high figure compared to the few cases in Colchester. Out of the 404 Colchester wills from 1485 to 1558, only 6 clerical sons were named.¹⁴³

It is impossible to determine the financial worth of the Colchester clerics as Alan Dyer did in Worcester, using probate inventories to find that the average worth of clerics at death was about £20 in the 16th century. Some of the Colchester clerics owned and bought property; there are, for example, records of the purchase of property by John Wayne and Richard Caumond, both parish priests. In 1521 Caumond bought a tenement with shops, upper rooms, and tavern annexed to the tenement in the market of Colchester not far from his parish church of St. Peter. Others, such as John Adam and John Ryveley, devised freehold tenements when they died, which would place them somewhere in the middle range economically. Some clerics probably inherited their assets, but some were definitely engaging in business enterprises on the side. For example, Thomas Chanon, A.B., was fined £4 while rector at St. Leonard's Church for not delivering 300 polecat skins to Ambrose Lowth as promised, and Caumond, the Vicar of St. Peter's, was even accused of receiving stolen goods. The borough court rolls also show that clerics were occasionally acting as attorneys.¹⁴⁴

While usually on a social and economic par with many parishioners, the cleric was probably a little above the ordinary person in formal learning. A number of the Colchester parish priests had university degrees; there were at least 74 parish priests in the borough of

Colchester between 1485 and 1536, and at least 20, or 27%, are known to have completed some higher education. Though not a particularly high percentage, 27% is nevertheless respectable compared to the 20% of university graduates in the Diocese of Canterbury (1454-86), or to the 17.6% in the Diocese of Norwich (1503-28). Of course, the Canterbury and Norwich diocese figures include country parishes, so the comparison is not entirely valid. H. Maynard Smith believes that the general education of the clergy at the beginning of the 16th century was probably higher than it was 50 years later, after the upheavals of the Reformation; in the Diocese of Lincoln, Margaret Bowker has found that the education of the ordinand was better in the early 16th century than it had been in the 15th century, "though it was still haphazard."¹⁴⁵

The number of university graduates among the parish clergy in Colchester generally indicates that the income of the Colchester benefices was adequate, for learning and large benefices seemed to go together; conversely, as Peter Clark has written, "Poverty, ignorance and moral degradation were equally famous bedfellows." The income of parish priests was far from uniform, even for those in comparable positions. It has been calculated that around 1500 a parish incumbent needed an income of £15 a year if he employed a chaplain to help him in his work, or of £10 a year if he worked alone in his parish. The Valor Ecclesiasticus, compiled for the government in 1535, indicated that three-fourths of all parish livings were worth less than £15 a year, half of all livings less than £10, and many less than £7 a year. Of the 12 Colchester parish churches listed in the Valor, seven had a yearly living of £10 or above, with three having less than £7 a year and the other two between £7 and £10.¹⁴⁶

The income from a benefice derived mainly from the parson's glebe land, from tithes and oblations contributed by the parishioners and from certain fees for the special services of the priest. The farming of the glebe land, the freehold of the incumbent, was a system perhaps better suited to country parishes, and sometimes even country parsons would have someone else farm their land, but there is indication that Colchester parsons were engaged in some form of husbandry. Vicar Richard Caumond was charged with overstocking the common land with 30 sheep, and Rector Thomas Wilkynson was presented for the careless disposal of the waste from his saffron ground. Paying the tithe, a tenth part of the agricultural produce, to the parson had been made compulsory long before the Norman Conquest, but exactly how it translated into the urban situation where wealth was more difficult to assess is not entirely clear. There was, however, a personal tithe on the produce of labor, notably milling and fishing. Craftsmen, it seems, generally compounded for a sum fixed by custom; servants and hired laborers were not in most places subject to tithes, although they were expected to pay an offering, or oblation, of 1/2d. to the church four times a year. Practices concerning offerings to the parish church varied; in Exeter, incumbents in each parish were to have a penny or half-penny from each separate house, depending on its size, with the penny houses being those with a kitchen, chimney, and hall, and Exeter communicants were also required to pay 2d. yearly. In some areas it was customary to offer an oblation on four feast days--Easter, Christmas, the dedication feast day of the parish church, and on the patronal feast or on All Saints' Day. In 1535 in the city of York, most of the parochial income seems to have come from the customary oblations. No

doubt the tithes and oblations were sources of contention at times between the parson and his flock, and the payment of fees, which varied from place to place, caused irritation as well. Christenings, weddings, and burials might all be occasions for a fee; Edward Cutts has published an interesting list of fees from the city of London in 1534, and that list shows, for example, that the minimum for a wedding was 8d. In Colchester in 1509 there was a lawsuit which finally went all the way to London over a mortuary fee demanded by the parson of St. Leonard's Church. Fees might also be expected for obits, for confession, or for visiting the sick. Some areas also encouraged the Mass penny, to be given by the prosperous whenever they attended a mass.¹⁴⁷

One of the traditional solutions for the poverty of benefices was for a cleric to obtain a license to hold more than one benefice, a practice called pluralism. As in Exeter, there does not appear to have been much pluralism in Colchester, nor absenteeism either. However, the ambitious rector of St. Nicholas' Church, Thomas Wilkynson, took the extraordinary step of obtaining a bull from Pope Leo X in 1514 to unite his parish with that of St. Mary-at-Wall, which was in the patronage of the Bishop of London. By 1531, the two parishes were again separate.¹⁴⁸

The income of the incumbent was not solely for his own support, but he also had to see that the church, particularly the chancel, and the churchyard were kept in good repair and were properly furnished, to insure the proper performance of mass and liturgy and the due observance of Sundays and Holy Days, and to maintain the rudimentary standards of pastoral and catechetical instruction. Also, at every parish church, no matter how small, the priest needed for the proper conduct of the liturgical round some kind of helper, sometimes paid out of the

priest's stipend, sometimes paid by the parishioners. The parish clerk, as the helper was called, might in turn have an assistant if the parish were larger. Even at a parish church such as St. Martin's in Colchester, which was not one of the wealthier parishes, several priests were mentioned by Robert Everard in his will of 1523, where he specified certain amounts to be given at his obit to the parson, the clerk, and "every other priest" of St. Martin's.¹⁴⁹ The names of a number of parish clerks in Colchester are recorded in wills, where the parish clerk was sometimes listed by name as a witness to the will. Colin Platt has an excellent description of the duties of the parish clerk and his assistants, which included tasks as varied as teaching children at the parish school, saying mass in the priest's absence, cleaning the church, and putting out the priest's cope. Such clerical assistants were not highly paid; in Yorkshire in 1525 most of them were making less than £4 a year.¹⁵⁰

Almost all of the Colchester parish churches would also have one or more additional priests celebrating divine service daily in the church, there especially to say prayers for the dead. Such priests fell into two categories: perpetual chantry priests and stipendiary chantry priests. For the most part, the chantry priests were presented by the laity, so in a sense the system of chantry priests had developed as a new form of lay control after the suppression of proprietary churches (those owned and controlled by the laity). The perpetual chantry priest celebrated at a given altar in a given church and was in possession of certain property to be continued to his successors forever, as set up by the founder of the chantry. He was independent of the parochial incumbent, yet many were required to assist the parish

priest in addition to the saying of prayers for the soul of the chantry founder. Such duties were imposed on the chantrists at St. Leonard's Church as revealed by the 1548 chantry certificates; both were "to sing mass . . . and to help to serve the cure there."¹⁵¹ Many have assumed that chantrists also taught a parish school; a number did, of course, but the only two chantrists left in Colchester in 1548 were apparently not teachers as nothing was said of any teaching duties, with both men being described as "of small learning." The livings of the chantry priests varied, from as low as £6 (the Harmanson chantry in St. Leonard's) to £9 a year (the Heynes chantry in St. Peter's).¹⁵² Stipendiary priests, also saying prayers for the dead, were hired for a specific and limited period of time, often for a year. For example, Sir John Longe, himself a chantry priest at St. Mary-at-Wall, instructed in his 1504 will that his executors "find an honest priest to sing for my soul and all my friends' souls in St. Mary's Church for a whole year and he to have for his salary, 10 marks."¹⁵³

Stipulations that "an honest priest" or a man "of honest conversation" be hired indicate that some priests had less than perfect behavior. Colchester, like many towns, had a number of unbeneficed priests who had too little to do. Robert Rodes tells us that occasionally bishops would have to appoint someone to look into the affairs of the stipendiary chaplains and compel them to participate in the liturgy or pastoral work of the parish. A priest certainly did not have to be a stipendiary priest, though, to misbehave; even the aging Vicar of St. Peter's, Richard Caumond, was charged with breaking into the house of Richard Feks and there inciting Joan Feks "to do and have his pleasure and lust with her." Only an ecclesiastical court could punish a priest,

and in that court only could he be deprived of his living, but secular courts could charge clerics with wrongdoing and they even gave their own verdicts, over theoretical canonical objections, on whether the cleric was guilty or not. However, to impose the death penalty, the bishop had to hand a cleric back to the civil authorities. The Colchester borough court obviously felt free to cite clerical misbehavior, and it is easy to find examples, ranging from thievery to being too much the sportsman: the Rector of Holy Trinity Church stole cartloads of wheat and barley from the Rector of St. Nicholas' Church, and the Rector of St. Leonard's was presented for being a common hunter and fisherman, "taking hares, conies, and partridges . . . within the liberty."¹⁵⁴

Less easy to find, but probably of more significance, were examples of piety among the clergy, for clerics were presumably models for the laity. No doubt many priests fulfilled their duties with zeal and quiet compassion, and their work, never noticed in the borough court, is less easy to document. There are 2 ways by which the piety of priests might be determined from this distance in time. One is by reading their wills; the other, to examine indications of the respect accorded them by the people. Few clerics in Colchester left wills, however; of those wills written between 1485 and 1539 in Colchester, only four were written by priests, two of them by chantry priests and two by parish priests. Of those, three can be judged as being wills written by godly men; the fourth is the will of Richard Caumond who was mainly concerned to provide for his brother's family and to set up a marble monument for himself in St. Peter's Church. However, even if Caumond's will had appeared to be pious, the numerous charges brought

against him in the borough court would hardly recommend him as a model of spirituality.¹⁵⁵

The best example of priestly piety in Colchester was John Adam, whose will was written in 1491 after 21 years as Rector of St. James' Church (see Appendix 6). Adam was in a position to exert great influence, as the parish of St. James was the home of the wealthiest and most influential borough leaders. The end of the 15th century seems to have been something of a golden age of possibilities for piety in Colchester, when several godly priests held cures and several families, known for their devotion for years to come, were in power. It was also the period before the inquiries into Lollardy frightened and polarized the community. John Adam appears to be the kind of priest who would have helped bring laic spirituality into being. In his will he left his portuse (breviary) and all his bound books to his parish church so that they could be chained in one of the chapels, by the Bible, thus making them accessible to the people. Having access to the Bible and to other devotional works was of immense importance to the people, and in no other church in Colchester do we have indication of the availability of the Bible to the people in that period. Furthermore, Adam asked to be buried at the feet of Sir John Ball, a former priest in St. James' Church who was possibly the same John Ball who was a leader of the 1381 Peasants' Revolt in East Anglia. If Adam was referring to the rebel, then Adam's request for burial near Ball seems to indicate a remarkable respect for a priestly leader of the people. Adam's will also reveals that he had a good relationship with all of the religious houses in Colchester, and he mentioned being a brother to the 3 houses of friars in Norwich--the grey, the black, and the Augustinian friars,

which would seem to place Adam in a tradition of preaching, learning, and piety in an outreach to the people. Nine years after Adam's death, Nicholas Clere, patriarch of a family which placed a high value on the acts of piety, asked to be buried next to the grave of John Adam, an unusual request which indicated the respect in which Adam was held.¹⁵⁶

Aside from looking at wills, one can also determine in other ways that some priests touched the lives of their parishioners in a positive way. For example, around 1500 two Augustinian canons, both of whom served the cure of souls in the parish of St. Botolph's, had the confidence of their parishioners in times of need. Both witnessed a number of wills, where they were sometimes called "my ghostly father," and both were named to receive small legacies so that they might pray for the donor. Whereas the witnessing of a will, which might also involve the actual writing of the will, was not unusual for a priest, to be a frequent witness might indicate more than ordinary confidence in that person. More significant was the naming of the two canons, Sir Richard White and Sir John Grene, for prayers, as it was not common in Colchester wills to name a specific priest for such prayers. Testators would hardly name someone whom they considered unworthy of their trust.¹⁵⁷

It seems, then, that there were several pious models among Colchester clerics in the early Tudor period, but they were not encouraging the laity to be mere imitations of themselves, but to form, through contact with the Bible and other devotional works, a devotion suitable for the townsman. After 1520, however, evidence does not point to any of the clerics' having any notable piety, but it may be that anticlerical sentiment, stirred up by the focus on Lollardy in the early 16th

century, made parishioners more critical than they were earlier. Nevertheless, it is only fair to note that Margaret Bowker, studying the Diocese of Lincoln, found the resident parish clergy to be generally careful to fulfill their pastoral and liturgical duties, even though some of them did allow the fabric of the church to fall into decay. The ideal remained, best expressed by Geoffrey Chaucer in his Canterbury Tales, of the parson who taught the way to heaven by his own example:

A good man was ther of religioun,
 And was a povre persoun of a toun,
 But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk.
 He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
 That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;
 His parisshe devoutly wolde he teche.

Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.
 This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,
 That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte.
 Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,
 And this figure he added eek therto,
 That if gold ruste, what shal iren do?
 For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
 No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
 And shame it is, if a preest take keep.
 A shiten [foul] shepherde and a clene sheep.
 Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,
 By his clenness, how that his sheep sholde lyve.

And though he hooly were and vertuous,
 He was to synful men nat despitous,
 Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
 But in his techyng discreet and benygne.
 To drawen folk to hevne by fairnesse,
 By good ensample, this was his bisynesse. 158

The way to heaven, however, was too important to the people to be left solely to the bishops and to the parsons, holy though they might be. The people themselves found ways to express their piety, usually within the context of the church, for they were a churchly-minded people searching for salvation. The church and its priests, however, did not

always correspond to the expectations of the faithful, and so the framework of the church was stretched to include the ideals of the devout townspeople who aspired to sanctify his material pursuits through his religious yearning and practices. Such aspirations were the essence of urban lay piety, which will be examined next.

Footnotes to Chapter II

¹ The study of English urban history has had a checkered growth, with the foundations being laid by historians of the medieval borough. For historiographical reviews of their work, see Carl Stephenson, Borough and Town (Cambridge: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1933), pp. 3-21; G. H. Martin, "The English Borough in the Thirteenth Century," T.R.H.S., ser. 5, 13 (1963), 123-44. A leisurely analysis of the field of urban history in the 1960's is by H. J. Dyos, "Agenda for Urban Historians," in The Study of Urban History, ed. Dyos (London: Edward Arnold, 1968), pp. 1-46. More recent essays on the historiography of urban studies: Anthony Sutcliffe, "The Condition of Urban History in England," The Local Historian, 11 (1975), 278-84; Peter Clark, "Introduction," in The Early Modern Town, ed. Clark (London: Longman, 1976), pp. 1-42. A very useful bibliography, which is a revision of the 1897 bibliography by Charles Gross: G. H. Martin and Sylvia McIntyre, eds., A Bibliography of British and Irish Municipal History (Leicester: Leicester Univ. Press, 1972).

² On pre-Roman Colchester, see C. F. C. Hawkes and M. R. Hull, Camulodunum, Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London, No. 14 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1947). For general histories of Colchester: Morant, op. cit., remains useful as Morant had access to some documents that are now lost; Thomas Kitson Cromwell, History and Description of the Ancient Town and Borough of Colchester, 2 vols. (London: Robert Jennings, 1825); Edward L. Cutts, Colchester (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888) is a perceptive history, helpful for the early period; Martin, Story of Colchester, is a popular work but the best over-all history, by a competent historian. David Stephenson, The Book of Colchester (Buckingham: Barracuda Books, 1978) is well done and reflects current archeological research, but is more of a picture-book than a detailed history.

Philip Crummy, In Search of Colchester's Past (Colchester: Colchester Archaeological Trust, 1979), p. 50, believes that recent archeological excavations show the dike system to have been maintained and even enlarged by the Romans.

³ Crummy, In Search, p. 27, tells of the excavations of the 1970's, made possible by the building of the modern shopping center, which discovered some of the charred remains of the massacre, notably a bed with some of the woollen covering intact.

The Roman street plan remains except that the large West Gate (known today as the Balcerne Gate) was blocked at the end of the Roman period so that the center of Colchester became a T-junction at the top of the High Street; see G. H. Martin, "The Town as Palimpsest," in The Study of Urban History, ed. Dyos, p. 160. Philip Crummy, Colchester:

Recent Excavations and Research (Colchester: Colchester Excavation Committee, 1974) discusses the development of the street plan.

On Roman Colchester, see M. R. Hull, Roman Colchester, Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London, No. 20 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958).

⁴ Crummy, In Search, p. 29; Crummy, Aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Colchester (London: The Council for British Archaeology, 1981), pp. 1-24; Cutts, p. 57; Eilert Ekwall, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951). "Colchester" means "the Roman station on the River Colne," according to Ekwall.

⁵ The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, trans. G. N. Garmonsway, rev. ed. (London: J. M. Dent, 1962), pp. 102-3. Most authorities give 921 as the year in which the Danes were driven out of Colchester, but Garmonsway contends that the date should be revised to 920.

⁶ Colin Platt, The English Medieval Town (London: Book Club Associates, 1976), pp. 19-20; Mrs. J. R. Green, Town Life in the Fifteenth Century (London: Macmillan, 1908), I, 227. For the early history of the English borough, see Platt, pp. 15-26; Susan Reynolds, An Introduction to the History of English Medieval Towns (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 1-45. Both Platt and Reynolds rely on the earlier work by James Tait, The Medieval English Borough (Manchester, 1936).

⁷ Reynolds, p. 32, notes that some historians in the past, notably Henri Pirenne, Medieval Cities, trans. Frank D. Halsey (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1925), have argued that only commerce could create towns.

⁸ Reynolds, p. 32. A mint was probably set up in Colchester in the reign of Aethelred II, probably in the 990's, according to Crummy, Aspects, p. 25.

⁹ Cutts, pp. 61-3; V.C.H. Essex, I, 414-15; Crummy, Aspects, pp. 25-6 and Appendix 1. For a history of the hundred, see Helen Cam, The Hundred and the Hundred Rolls (London: Methuen, 1930); Frederic W. Maitland, Township and Borough (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1898), p. 42.

¹⁰ The text of the Domesday report on Colchester is printed in Morant, Appendix to Book I, pp. 32-4. Excellent summaries are given in Cutts, pp. 61-74; V.C.H. Essex, I, 414-24, written by John Horace Round; Morant, I, 44-6.

¹¹ John Horace Round, in V.C.H. Essex, I, 419-20, speculates that William's "fermor" in 1086, by then probably Walchelin Bishop of Winchester rather than the burgesses, was trying to extort the unduly large sum.

¹² Cutts, pp. 69-70; on p. 74 Cutts estimates the population in 1086 to be 2,250. See Reynolds, p. 35, for a map of the boroughs and

mints in England in 1086.

¹³ Cutts, pp. 76-90. Crummy, Aspects, p. 74, believes that the unusually large keep was partly a result of its having been built on the podium of the temple of Claudius.

¹⁴ It had become the policy of the Crown to discourage the holding of great estates in both England and Normandy by the same person; see Cutts, pp. 84-5.

¹⁵ Cutts, pp. 86-8; Martin, Story of Colchester, p. 29.

¹⁶ Morant, I, 46-8; O.B., pp. 20, 32.

¹⁷ As well as the disturbances of the 1260's and 1326-7, Reynolds, p. 116.

¹⁸ V.C.H. Essex, II, 216-17; Cutts, pp. 127-8, 131-2; Brian Bird, A Colchester Rebel: A Short Study of John Ball (Colchester: Moelprint, 1981), pp. 6, 11, writes that Wat Tyler was also from Colchester and that a high proportion of rebels came from Colchester.

¹⁹ Reynolds, p. 97, notes that these are characteristics of most places called boroughs in the Domesday Book, but one should not assume that these characteristics confer legal "borough status."

²⁰ For a good treatment of charters and urban liberties, see Martin Weinbaum, ed., The British Borough Charters, 1307-1660 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1943).

²¹ Reynolds, p. 105; Platt, p. 127; Morant, I, 78. On burgage tenure, see J. L. Bolton, The Medieval English Economy 1150-1500 (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1980), p. 126.

²² Platt, pp. 128-9, 132; Reynolds, pp. 107, 127. The 1189 charter is printed in Morant, Appendix to Book I, 35-6. For discussion of Colchester's charters, see Martin, Story of Colchester, pp. 24-6, 38; Morant, I, 78-82; Cutts, pp. 138-40. Definitions from Morant, I, 78: "lastage": a liberty for men to bring their goods to fairs and markets, or to carry them where they pleased; "passage": money paid for passing to and fro, on persons or goods, in common shores, landing places, etc.; "pontage": toll paid for passage over bridges, with horses or carriages, or under them, with boats and ships.

²³ Platt, p. 135. Reynolds, however, p. 110, believes that the return of writs was just an expensive confirmation or even restriction of an old practice.

²⁴ Martin, Story of Colchester, p. 25; Platt, pp. 128, 133. Crummy, Aspects, p. 67, says that Colchester's town hall was unique as no other 12th century urban secular building with such lavish decoration is recorded as having existed.

²⁵ Martin, Story of Colchester, pp. 25-6; W. Gurney Benham,

"Introduction," Court Rolls of the Borough of Colchester, ed. and trans. Isaac Herbert Jeayes, 4 vols. (Colchester: Colchester Town Council, 1921-41), p. vi.

²⁶ Reynolds, pp. 50-1; Platt, p. 125; John B. Morrall, Political Thought in Medieval Times (1958; rpt. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 60.

²⁷ Platt, pp. 129, 136; Crummy, Aspects, p. 82; Martin, "The English Borough," p. 128. For a discussion of Colchester records, see Martin, Story of Colchester, pp. 25, 38. On the "Colchester chronicle," see Crummy, Aspects, pp. 26-7. The published court rolls contain only rolls from the 14th century.

²⁸ Maitland, p. 18; Morrall, pp. 62-3, sees plena potestas as the "pivotal conception of the representative system evolved by the Middle Ages," with the ground for the representative system having been prepared by the emergence of corporate organizations such as trading guilds, civic corporations, and cathedral and monastic chapters.

²⁹ Reynolds, p. 113. Platt, p. 143, notes that the 1391 mortmain legislation, in effect, recognized the existence of perpetual borough corporations.

³⁰ Morant, I, 81; Platt, p. 142; Reynolds, p. 114.

³¹ For a brief but helpful discussion of the justice of the peace system, see Myers, pp. 37-8, 202-3. The 1447 charter is summarized in Morant, I, 79-80. The 1462 charter added the recorder to the commission of the peace, which was to enforce the observance of certain statutes such as the Statutes of Winchester, Northampton and Winchester, for preserving the peace; the Statute of Cambridge, concerning laborers and travelling men; Statute 2 Henry V, against the Lollards, etc. See Morant, I, 82, note C.

³² Cutts, pp. 148-9; Colch.C.R., 1511-12, m. 16. When uncertain about the day and the month of the court roll entry, I have given the membrane number as an aid in finding the reference.

³³ Reynolds, p. 124; Morant, I, 96-7. About the freedom of apprentices in Colchester, see R.P.B., p. 29, which gives an ordinance of 1523. In practice it seems that the second category was quite liberal, including all who were born and christened in the liberties of Colchester. We have accounts from 1493 and 1511 in which there were questions about the status of certain men, and both presented witnesses to their having been born and christened in the borough whereas nothing was said about the status of their father or grandfather. In his defense in 1511, Thomas Douglas alias Stubber stated that "all those who are born in the town or . . . within the liberty of the town have been accepted and have been as a co-burgess of the town, from time beyond memory of man." See R.P.B., p. 111; Colch.C.R., 1511-12, m. 17. The lists of admissions in the Oath Book and in the court records seem to include only the third category, the foreigners who were admitted on payment of a fee, and are therefore hardly a guide to the complete list

of freemen of the city. A. R. Bridbury, Economic Growth (1962; rpt. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 65, has charted the admissions to Colchester from 1327 to 1530, finding a decline after 1430, but that is probably explained by the fact that, in the later years, records of the admission of sons of burgesses were not recorded.

For an excellent discussion about the use of freemen's registers, see R. B. Dobson, "Admissions to the Freedom of the City of York in the Later Middle Ages," Econ.H.R., ser. 2, 26 (1973), 1-22. On London, see G. D. Ramsay, "The Recruitment and Fortunes of Some London Freemen in the Mid-Sixteenth Century," Econ.H.R., ser. 2, 31 (1978), 526-40.

34 Morant, I, 98-9. Morant, I, 83, notes that foreigners were often subject to fines for trading within the borough without license from the bailiffs. A list of the privileges of freemen of the city of Canterbury (ca. 1430) may be found in A. R. Myers, ed., English Historical Documents 1327-1485 (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 569-70.

35 This would be so if anyone who was born in the borough automatically had freedom of the borough, as Morant believes was the case, I, 98. Carl I. Hammer, "Anatomy of an Oligarchy: the Oxford Town Council in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," J.B.S., 18 (1978), 2, contends that the number of freemen in Oxford was perhaps a third or even a half of the adult male population.

36 Rot. Parl. VI, 300. The M.P.'s from Colchester in 1485 mention paying the "fee farm" in Westminster; see Nicholas Pronay and John Taylor, Parliamentary Texts of the Later Middle Ages (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 187.

37 Reynolds, pp. 111, 126, 129; Helen M. Jewell, English Local Administration in the Middle Ages (N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1972), p. 9; Morant, I, 49. R.P.B., pp. 26, 92-3, also gives examples of the levying of troops by the king, in 1507, 1511-12, and 1523. A recent article by Robert Tittler, "The Emergence of Urban Policy, 1536-58," in The Mid-Tudor Polity c. 1540-1560, ed. Jennifer Loach and Robert Tittler (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 74-93, traces the development by the Crown of an urban policy, particularly by the Marian government which relied heavily upon a strong link with the towns.

38 R.P.B., p. 30; O.B., p. 148; Morant, I, 50.

39 R.P.B., pp. 30, 136-7, 164-6; Platt, p. 147; Reynolds, pp. 128-9, 180; Benham, "Introduction," p. v.

40 In Morant manuscripts, p. 65, E.R.O. D/Y2/2. A. R. Bridbury, "English Provincial Towns in the Later Middle Ages," Econ.H.R., ser 2, 34 (1981), 13, believes that Bristol citizens spent "prodigiously, on feasting and junketing, as well as on liveries and ceremonial processions."

41 Cutts, pp. 142-3, 169-71; William G. Hoskins, "An Elizabethan Provincial Town: Leicester," in Provincial England (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1963), p. 98. For a discussion of town finances, see

James H. Thomas, Town Government in the Sixteenth Century (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1933), pp. 27-33.

42 For a helpful discussion of borough offices, see Sidney and Beatrice Webb, English Local Government: The Manor and the Borough, 3 vols. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1908), II, 318-27.

43 The 48 aldermen were serving when Henry VIII's reign began, plus those who were added during the years through Mary's reign. Some, of course, continued serving beyond the end of Mary's reign (or had served in the last years of Henry VII's rule), and I have taken into consideration all of their years of service. The long-serving aldermen were Thomas Jopson, John Mayken, George Sayer, and Benjamin Clere.

44 Colch.C.R., 1520-21, m. 18 dorse.

45 Almost all of the assessments of the wealthier burgesses were substantially lower in the second year as the assessors became more lenient with the wealthy.

46 The richest man listed who was not or did not become an alderman was Thomas Baker, with £60. All of those, then, having over £60 were aldermen.

47 To compile this average, I looked only at those who had served more than 15 years as alderman. The exact average for service was once in every 4.7 years. John Cristmas, Esq., on the average, served once in every 3.7 years. Hammer, 12, also observed a "definite hierarchy of wealth corresponding to the political hierarchy."

48 Cutts, p. 144; Morant, I, 82; R.P.B., pp. 23-5, 29. Palliser, York, p. 63, describes the responsibilities of the mayor of York in regulating trade. On the regulation of markets, see Alan Everitt on the market town, in The Agrarian History of England and Wales, ed. Joan Thirsk, vol. 4: 1500-1640 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 486-8.

49 Colch.C.R., Dec. 15, 1516.

50 Jewell, p. 157. In the grant of Kingswood Heath to the borough in 1535--actually a sale of land from Henry VIII for £100--the office of coroner was confirmed, Colchester to have "two coroners, as they had anciently used to have." See Morant, I, 83; II, 26.

51 Colch.C.R., 1524-25, m. 1. Not all "new" men, however, served as clavers before becoming aldermen, so it must not be seen as necessarily a mandatory step for the nouveau riche. Hammer, 4-6, has a good discussion of the cursus honorum in Oxford.

52 Julian Cornwall, "English Country Towns in the Fifteen Twenties," Econ.H.R., ser. 2, 15 (1962-63), 56; J. H. Hexter, "The Myth of the Middle Class in Tudor England," in Reappraisals in History (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 110; Palliser, York, pp. 68-9; Peter Clark

and Paul Slack, "Introduction," in Crisis and Order, p. 22; Tittler, pp. 88-9; Hammer, 10-11; Colch.C.R., Oct. 9, 1514, trans. Benham. Green, II, 240-68, has a good discussion of the town oligarchy.

53 Colch.C.R., Oct. 9, 1514.

54 Morant, I, 82, 94. On town councils, see J. H. Thomas, pp. 16-26. Green, II, 269-436, has a lengthy discussion of the make-up of the councils in several towns. For some more specific towns, see Alan Rogers, "Late Medieval Stamford: A Study of the Town Council 1465-1492," in Perspectives in English Urban History, ed. Alan Everitt (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 16-38; Alan D. Dyer, The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century (Leicester: Leicester Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 196-8; Palliser, York, pp. 66-70.

55 The Second Council was re-vitalized again for a few years in the 1550's.

56 Palliser, York, p. 106; Hammer, 14-15; see Table 2, p. 111.

57 Twenty-two of the chamberlains from 1510 to 1558 later became aldermen. Six more from those years became aldermen even though they had refused the office of chamberlain; 4 of those 6 had refused during the reign of Queen Mary.

Out of the 23 refusals from 1510 to 1558, 12 were in Mary's reign. Reynolds, pp. 110-11, discusses reasons for refusal of office; see also J. H. Thomas, pp. 34-5. In a recent article, Jennifer I. Kermode, "Urban Decline? The Flight from Office in Late Medieval York," Econ.H.R., 2nd ser., 35 (1982), 179-98, looks at the relationship of urban decline and the refusal to serve in office in the late Middle Ages, arguing that we cannot take refusals to hold office as necessarily a symptom of urban decline.

58 Maitland, p. 77. The court records in Colchester, 1509-10, m. 13, mention that one of the chamberlain's duties was to collect tolls from laden carts or horses entering the town. In York, from 3 to 10 men handled the duties of chamberlain, according to Palliser, York, p. 70; in Worcester and in Leicester, 2 men each, Dyer, pp. 199-200, and Hoskins, "Leicester," 98.

59 Colch.C.R., 1514-15, m.1; Platt, p. 147; Reynolds, p. 121; John Ernest Neale, The Elizabethan House of Commons (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1950), p. 208. Colchester's recorder was comparable to the High Steward of many boroughs; see Neale, pp. 234-5.

60 Green, II, 260-1. Audley had come to national attention as a representative of Colchester in the Parliament of 1523. See Lehmborg, p. 6. A reference to "my cousin Thomas Audeley the elder" (the Town Clerk's father) is in the will of John Cristmas, enrolled in Colch.C.R., 1535-6, m. 7.

61 Morant, I, 94; R.P.B., p. 30.

62 See R.P.B., pp. 26, 60-4, 124-30, which also gives the names

and methods of payment for the M.P.'s in the 1487 and 1491 parliaments. We know little about the representation from Colchester in the parliaments of Henry VII and Henry VIII. Morant, I, 99-100, gives the names of Colchester M.P.'s for the later Tudor period. Colch.C.R., 1529-30, m. 1 dorse. See Pronay and Taylor, eds., pp. 177-93, for the latest publication of the reports of the Colchester M.P.'s. On borough elections, see K. N. Houghton, "Theory and Practice in Borough Elections to Parliament during the Later Fifteenth Century," B.I.H.R., 39 (1966), 130-40. On the parliaments of Henry VIII see Stanford E. Lehmborg, The Reformation Parliament, 1529-1536 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970) and The Later Parliaments of Henry VIII, 1536-1547 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977).

63 Neale, pp. 146-9, 154-6; George Rickword, "Members of Parliament for Colchester, 1547-1558," E.R., 4 (1895), 110-22; Rickword, "Members of Parliament for Colchester, 1559-1603," E.R., 4 (1895), 235-45; S. T. Bindoff, Tudor England (Baltimore: Penguin, 1950), pp. 215-17. A few boroughs, Bath, Bristol, Ludlow, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and Worcester, remained independent throughout the reign of Elizabeth and did not succumb to the gentry, according to Neale, p. 163. On representation in the Middle Ages, see May McKisack, The Parliamentary Representation of the English Boroughs during the Middle Ages (1932; rpt. London: Frank Cass, 1962).

64 Morant, I, 76; Cutts, pp. 158-9. Morant reports that the market days in his time were on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, and it was probably the same in the late medieval period. The borough court days, on Monday and Thursday, would thus not conflict with the market days. In York, according to Palliser, p. 179, freemen of the town were forbidden to keep market stalls since they could own shops, whereas "foreigners" could buy and sell in the market but could not keep a shop. For good discussions of markets, see Everitt, in Agrarian History, pp. 467-506, and J. H. Thomas, pp. 65-79. For a helpful bibliography on manufacturing and trade in this period, see John Patten, ed., Pre-Industrial England (Folkestone, Kent: William Dawson, 1979), pp. 44-53.

65 Cutts, pp. 158-9; Morant, I, 77. On fairs, see Everitt, in Agrarian History, pp. 532-43, and William Addison, English Fairs and Markets (London: B. T. Batsford, 1953).

66 G. V. Scammell, "English Merchant Shipping at the End of the Middle Ages: Some East Coast Evidence," Econ.H.R., 2nd ser., 13 (1961), 332; Morant, II, 23; Martin, Story of Colchester, p. 28; Alison Hanham, ed., The Cely Letters, 1472-1488, E.E.T.S., no. 273 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), p. 91; R.P.B., p. 74; Brian Dietz, ed., The Port and Trade of Early Elizabethan London Documents, London Record Society Publications, no. 8 (Chatham, Kent: W. J. Mackey, 1972), entries 106 and 747; William Harrison, The Description of England, ed. Georges Edelen (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1968), p. 246.

67 R.P.B., pp. 73-4; P.R.O. 13 Dogett; Scammell, 335, 338; F. G. Emmison, Elizabethan Life: Home, Work and Land (Chelmsford: Essex County Council, 1976), p. 59; P.R.O. 18 Logge; V.C.H. Essex, II, 268.

68 Arguing for the decline of the late medieval town are R. B. Dobson, "Urban Decline in Late Medieval England," T.R.H.S., 5th ser., 27 (1977), 1-22; and Charles Phythian-Adams, "Urban Decay in Late Medieval England," in Towns in Societies, eds. Philip Abrams and E. A. Wrigley (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 159-85. Providing case studies of urban decline are Phythian-Adams, Coventry; Palliser, York; and Anthony Saul, "English Towns in the Late Middle Ages: the Case of Great Yarmouth," Journal of Medieval History, 8 (1982), 75-88. Arguing against such a gloomy picture is Bridbury, Economic Growth, and "Provincial Towns"; Dyer, Worcester; and Robert S. Gottfried, Bury St. Edmunds and the Urban Crisis (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982).

An excellent summary of the arguments can be found in Bolton, pp. 246-59, 286. See also Susan Reynolds, "Decline and Decay in Late Medieval Towns: A Look at Some of the Concepts and Arguments," Urban History Yearbook (1980), 76-8. Kermode has recently cautioned about the use of the evasions of civic office as a reliable indicator of urban decline, in "Urban Decline?", 179-98.

69 Carus-Wilson, Expansion of Exeter, pp. 4-5; Sidney Pollard and David W. Crossley, The Wealth of Britain 1085-1966 (N.Y.: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 80; Clark and Slack, "Introduction," in Crisis, pp. 8, 30-4; John Hatcher, Plague, Population and the English Economy 1348-1530 (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 45; Phythian-Adams, "Urban Decay," 169-70; Gottfried, Bury St. Edmunds, pp. 246-53.

70 Hatcher, pp. 45-51; Bolton, pp. 274, 346-7.

71 Bridbury, Economic Growth, pp. 112-13; Morant, II, 50-1; R.P.B., pp. 124-5; P.R.O. 8 Blamyr; O.B., pp. 134, 142; R.C.H.M. Essex, III, 32-46.

72 Morant, I, 3, and Appendix I; R.P.B., p. 103; R.C.H.M. Essex, III, 61. The Marquis of Granby Inn is near the bottom of North Hill Street.

73 E. M. Carus-Wilson, Medieval Merchant Venturers, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1967), pp. 213-14; V.C.H. Essex, II, 382-4; R.P.B., p. 103; O.B., p. 148; P.R.O. 28 Ayloffe. There was a guild of weavers in 1602, V.C.H. Essex, II, 391.

74 W. G. Hoskins, The Age of Plunder (London: Longman, 1976), p. 180; Alan R. H. Baker, "Changes in the Later Middle Ages," in A New Historical Geography of England, ed. H. C. Darby (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1973), p. 224; Martin, Story of Colchester, p. 23; Scammell, 330, note 3. For export figures from Ipswich, see E. M. Carus-Wilson and Olive Coleman, eds., England's Export Trade 1275-1547 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963). Dyer, pp. 96-104, has a good description of the production of cloth.

75 Hoskins, Age, pp. 154, 183-4; Martin, Story of Colchester, pp. 42-3. These years of crisis in the clothing industry have been overlooked by historians, says Phythian-Adams, Coventry, pp. 61-2, but a local study has now appeared; see Robert L. Wood, Jr.,

"Individuals in the Rioting Crowd: A New Approach," J.I.H., 14 (1983), 1-24.

⁷⁶ Colch.C.R., Oct. 5, 1534, trans. Benham; R. H. Tawney and Eileen Power, eds., Tudor Economic Documents (London: Longmans, 1924), I, 177-8; V.C.H. Essex, II, 329, 385-6; Reynolds, Introduction, p. 145. The Act for the Re-edifying of Towns is reproduced in C. H. Williams, ed., English Historical Documents 1485-1558 (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 954-5.

⁷⁷ Hoskins, "Leicester," 94, which was first published in 1955. On other towns: J. F. Pound, "The Social and Trade Structure of Norwich 1525-1575," in The Early Modern Town, pp. 133-6; Hoskins, Age, pp. 93-5; Palliser, York, pp. 154-9; Phythian-Adams, Coventry, pp. 100-3 and Appendix 3c. Also, Dyer, pp. 81-5, who did not use registers of admissions but had excellent probate inventories. Gottfried, Bury St. Edmunds, pp. 110-15, obtained a list of occupations from wills, but Bury St. Edmunds left an unusually complete testamentary collection. Moreover, the wills from Bury St. Edmunds almost always listed the occupation of the testator, which was not the case in Colchester wills.

On the use of registers of freemen, see note 33 above, and Palliser, York, pp. 176-8. However, John Patten, "Urban Occupations in Pre-Industrial England," Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, n.s., 2 (1977), 296-313, believes that inventories and wills are of equal significance in establishing the trade structure of a town. Ably defending the use of freemen's registers is J. F. Pound, "The Validity of the Freemen's Lists: Some Norwich Evidence," Econ.H.R., 2nd ser., 34 (1981), 48-59.

John Patten, English Towns, 1500-1700 (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1978), pp. 252-66, relates the number of occupations to population. See also Hoskins, Age, p. 92, who found that Northampton and Leicester, with about 3,000 people each in the 1520's, had 63 and 60 different trades respectively. Coventry, twice as large, had 90.

⁷⁸ Hammer, 10, 14-15, Appendices 2 and 3. Stanford, like Oxford, had a wider spread of occupations among its council than did Colchester. See Rogers, "Late Medieval Stanford," 32-3. For a good discussion of the leaders of York, see Palliser, York, pp. 106-7.

⁷⁹ Other provisions: 1s. tax in the pound on annual income from land; 6d. in the pound on the wages of persons aged 16 and upwards in receipt of at least £1 per annum; those assessed at £40 or over were to pay an "Anticipation" a year in advance; in the third year a further shilling in the pound was payable on goods worth £50 and upwards; aliens paid double rates, or if possessed of neither goods nor wages, a poll tax of 8d. Information taken from Margery M. Rowe, "Introduction," in Tudor Exeter: Tax Assessments 1489-1595, ed. Rowe (Torquay: Devonshire Press, 1977), pp. vii-viii, xii-xiii; R. S. Schofield, "The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1334-1649," Econ.H.R., 2nd ser., 18 (1965), 490-1; M. W. Beresford, Lay Subsidies and Poll Taxes (Canterbury: Phillimore, 1963), p. 11. For a recent discussion on the use of the medieval lay subsidies, see J. F. Hadwin, "The Medieval Lay Subsidies and Economic History," Econ.H.R., 2nd ser., 36 (1983), 200-17. On Tudor taxation, see J. D. Alsop, "The Theory and

Practice of Tudor Taxation," E.H.R., 97 (1982), 1-30. Taking issue with Alsop is G. L. Harris, "Theory and Practice in Royal Taxation: Some Observations," E.H.R., 97 (1982), 811-19.

⁸⁰ Hoskins, Age, p. 99; Cornwall, "Country Towns," 62-5; Pound, "Norwich," 129-31; Palliser, York, pp. 135-8; on Canterbury: Peter Clark, English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution (Hassock, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1977), p. 8; Hoskins, "Leicester," 93; Platt, p. 110; Dyer, pp. 174-5; Wallace T. MacCaffrey, Exeter, 1540-1640 (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), p. 249.

⁸¹ Phythian-Adams, Coventry, pp. 87, 91-2; E.R.O. D/ACR1/158; Palliser, York, p. 150.

⁸² In E.R.O. D/ACR4/70, Alice Gardiner in 1539 left brewing vessels to her daughters, and earlier Widow Gardiner was cited for selling her brew in short measure, Colch.C.R., Oct. 2, 1531. Even the wives of aldermen were mentioned occasionally in the assize of ale, e.g. in Colch.C.R., Jan. 14, 1510, the wife of Alderman John John was cited. Poorer women, it seems, supplemented the household income by spinning. J. H. Thomas, pp. 80-6, discusses the "alewife" and the increasing restrictions on her in the 16th century.

⁸³ Dyer, p. 177; Phythian-Adams, Coventry, p. 134; Hoskins, Age, pp. 117-18.

⁸⁴ Palliser, York, p. 107. Eric Kerridge, in V.C.H. Leicestershire, IV, 79-104, has an excellent discussion of various occupations and their relative status in the city of Leicester.

My impression after reading many Colchester documents is that there was a loose pattern of neighborhoods in Colchester according to occupation, with clothmakers mainly in the parishes of St. James and St. Peter, mariners and beerbrewers in St. Leonard's, butchers in St. Martin's, drapers and grocers in St. Runwald's and St. Nicholas', and many craftsmen such as turners, joiners, and shoemakers in St. Botolph's. For a geographical distribution by occupation in Coventry, see Phythian-Adams, Coventry, pp. 159-63.

⁸⁵ R.P.B., p. 29; Palliser, York, p. 148, and see p. 128 about the poor chances of native born non-freemen to become freemen.

⁸⁶ Hoskins, "English Provincial Towns in the Early Sixteenth Century," in Provincial England, pp. 83-4. Interestingly, Coventry was one of the two towns used by Hoskins, the other town being Exeter, to draw his conclusions. Hoskins compared the lay subsidy figures with a preliminary survey made in 1522, and Coventry and Exeter are the only sizable towns for which 1522 figures are available; Phythian-Adams, Coventry, pp. 131-3.

⁸⁷ J. H. Thomas, pp. 114-26, discusses the urban poor; A. L. Beier, "The Social Problems of an Elizabethan Country Town: Warwick, 1580-90," in Country Towns in Pre-Industrial England, ed. Peter Clark (Leicester: Leicester Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 45-85, has a good discussion of social conditions in Warwick in the 1580's and the resulting

attempts to meet the problem.

88 MacCaffrey, p. 252. See pp. 87-9 above.

89 Palliser, York, p. 100; Colch.C.R., 1520-1, m. 18 dorse; Oct. 9, 1514; April 18, 1513; April 30, 1515. It was probably the same irascible Debyham who is mentioned in the recently published Lisle Letters as being a customs searcher in Colchester who obstructed the sending of supplies to Viscount Lisle in Calais in 1533, causing the Viscount to lose £20 in beef. After much trouble to the Viscount, Debyham was finally brought before Thomas Cromwell for the offense, where Debyham typically spoke "slanderous words." Debyham died in 1536. See Muriel St. Clare Byrne, ed., The Lisle Letters (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1981), I, 509-10, 647-9; II, 296-8, 457-60.

90 John S. Appleby and Peter A. Watkinson, The Parish Church of Saint Runwald, Colchester (Colchester: Benham and Co., 1942), p. 6; E.R.O. D/ACR2/98; P.R.O. 22 Fetiplace; 17 Hogen. Livered servants also set the Teyes apart, for Dame Margaret's will requested that "all my servants may have their wages with their livery." Julian Cornwall, "The Early Tudor Gentry," Econ.H.R., ser. 2, 17 (1965), 456-75, has an informative description of the gentry in the 1520's in 5 counties.

91 The office of recorder, or town lawyer, was often held by local gentry also.

92 Thrupp, p. 206; Robert S. Gottfried, "Bury St. Edmunds and the Populations of Late Medieval English Towns, 1270-1530," J.B.S., 20 (1980), 27; Peter Clark, "Introduction: English Country Towns 1500-1800," in Country Towns, p. 4.

93 P.R.O. E179/108/169; Bridbury, Economic, pp. 58-64; R.P.B., p. 87; Palliser, York, p. 128; Peter Clark and Paul Slack, English Towns in Transition 1500-1700 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), p. 92. For a general work on alien immigration, see William Cunningham, Alien Immigrants to England (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1897).

94 R.P.B., p. 29; Dyer, p. 185; Clark, Transition, pp. 119-20; Lawrence Stone, "Social Mobility in England, 1500-1700," P.P., no. 33 (1966), 20-1. Apprentices came from a radius of at least 15 miles away, according to John Patten, "Patterns of Migration and Movement of Labour to Three Pre-Industrial East Anglian Towns," in Pre-Industrial England, ed. Patten, p. 159. Anne Yarbrough, "Apprentices as Adolescents in Sixteenth Century Bristol," Journal of Social History, 13 (1979), 67-81, is an excellent study of apprenticeship in Bristol.

95 Colch.C.R., April 30, 1515; Appendix 2. Even William Teye, Gent., Town Clerk, had loaned money to 2 prosperous clothmakers in Colchester, according to his will, P.R.O. 22 Fetiplace.

96 Harrison, p. 115; Platt, p. 102; Palliser, York, p. 99; Thrupp, p. 282, 284; P.R.O. 28 Ayloff. The court rolls records the purchase by Cristmas of Downham Manor, Bradwell juxta Mare, Colch.C.R., Dec. 11, 1514.

97 Dyer, pp. 186-8, has some interesting examples of Worcester families who established themselves as country gentry. Sir Thomas Smith, De Republica Anglorum, ed. Mary Dewar (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 71-2, in a treatise first published in 1583, has an interesting comment on gentlemen: "For as for gentlemen, they be made good cheape in England. For whosoever studieth the lawes of the realme, who studieth in the universities, who professeth liberall sciences, and to be shorte, who can live idly and without manuell labour, and will beare the port, charge and countenance of a gentleman, he shall be called master, for that is the title which men give to esquires and other gentlemen, and shall be taken for a gentleman." Stone, 18-19, discusses the social inferiority of merchants.

98 Thrupp, pp. 199-200; Rogers, 31; E.R.O. D/ACR2/218. Coksale's fortune was left to his nephew after the decease of Coksale's widow, but apparently the nephew died, so that Coksale's sister and her husband then became heirs. Concerning Cowbridge: P.R.O. 34 Hogen; John Foxe, The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe, ed. Stephen Reed Cattley (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1841), V, 251-3.

99 P.R.O. 34 Hogen. The eldest Colle son was given some extra income from the rents of lands, but we do not know how much that would have been.

100 Palliser, York, p. 98; Thrupp, p. 205.

101 Platt, p. 105, has a chart for London; see also MacCaffrey, pp. 254-5; Phythian-Adams, Coventry, p. 149; Palliser, York, p. 96. Nicholas Clere's son, John Clere, married Maryon, daughter of Alderman Robert Barker; daughter Margaret Clere married Alderman Robert Beste. Nicholas Clere's aldermen grandsons: Nicholas, Benjamin, and (another) Nicholas Clere, and John Beste.

102 Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 500-1800 (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 99, 191. Stone contends that there was little affection within the family. With a contrary view, DuBoulay, p. 151, cites the late medieval attitudes to the Holy Family as being indicative of strong family feeling. Emmison, Home, p. 95, documents the concern for wives found in Essex wills in the Elizabethan period.

103 Clark, Transition, p. 14; see Table 21. A helpful starting place for a study of the family is Lawrence Stone, "Family History in the 1980s: Past Achievements and Future Trends," J.I.H., 12 (1981), 51-87, with its comprehensive footnotes. See also Gerald L. Soliday, ed., History of the Family and Kinship: A Select International Bibliography (Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus International Pub., 1980). Arlene Skolnick, "The Family Revisited: Themes in Recent Social Science Research," J.I.H., 5 (1975), 703-19, looks at the influence of the social sciences on the study of the history of the family. For the study of French family history, see Robert Wheaton and Tamara K. Hareven, eds., Family and Sexuality in French History (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1980). Wheaton's introduction is a good

summary of research in family history. For a history of the family in German-speaking countries, see Michael Mitterauer and Reinhard Sieder, The European Family, trans. Karla Oosterveen and Manfred Hörzinger (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982). Jean-Louis Flandrin, Families in Former Times, trans. Richard Southern (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979) has some excellent material on the family in France and England in the 16th century. A fascinating study of family life, based on the diary of a 17th century Essex clergyman, is Alan McFarlane, The Family Life of Ralph Josselin (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970).

¹⁰⁴ Keith Wrightson and David Levine, Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700 (N.Y.: Academic Press, 1979), pp. 92, 94, 102. McFarlane found the same to be true in Ralph Josselin's 17th century village.

¹⁰⁵ Charles Thomas, Christianity in Roman Britain (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1981), p. 130; V.C.H. Essex, I, 423-4; J. H. Round, "St. Peter's Church, Colchester," T.E.A.S., n.s., 15 (1921), 94. In the Domesday Book, St. Mary's is not mentioned under the survey of Colchester, but it is included among the "soke" of the Bishop of London within the walls of Colchester and is so entered with the Bishop's lands.

¹⁰⁶ Cutts, pp. 70-1; Warwick Rodwell, "Church Archaeology," in A Guide to Essex Churches, ed. Christopher Starr (Saffron Walden: The Essex Churches Support Trust, 1980), pp. 10-11; Crummy, Aspects, p. 47. It has been asserted that St. Helen's was a Roman chapel, but Hull believes that the walls of St. Helen's were once part of a Roman theater, Roman Colchester, p. 106.

¹⁰⁷ Martin, Story of Colchester, p. 30; Cutts, pp. 89-90, 97; Crummy, Aspects, pp. 40-6, 74. Crummy speculates that St. Botolph's was based on a Roman cemetery church. On the history of the mid-7th century saint, Botolph, see Margaret Gallyon, The Early Church in Eastern England (Lavenham, Suffolk: Terence Dalton, 1973), pp. 92-7.

¹⁰⁸ Colin Platt, The Parish Churches of Medieval England (London: Secker and Warburg, 1981), pp. 3-7; G. H. Martin, "Church Life in Medieval Leicester," in The Growth of Leicester, ed. A. E. Brown (Leicester: Leicester Univ. Press, 1970), p. 29. Conversely, an old town such as Boston which has only a single parish is usually a town which made its money after 1100, says Martin. C. N. L. Brooke, "The Missionary at Home: The Church in the Towns, 1000-1250," in S.C.H., 6 (1970), 66, compares England with the situation on the Continent. On proprietary churches in England, see Frank Barlow, The English Church, 1000-1066 (London: Longmans, 1963), pp. 186-7, 193-5, 199-201. For the 11th century church in the borough, see Barlow, pp. 192-3.

¹⁰⁹ V.C.H. Essex, II, 93-4, 148-9; Morant, II, 31-5. The advowson did not necessarily carry with it the right to tithes; for a discussion of monastic appropriations, see Platt, Churches, pp. 9-12.

¹¹⁰ Platt, Town, p. 148; Cutts, pp. 97-9; A. Hamilton Thompson,

Parish History and Records (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1919), p. 7; Alan Rogers, "Parish Boundaries and Urban History," Journal of the British Archaeological Association, 3rd. ser., 35 (1972), 46-7; Crummy, Aspects, pp. 73-4. For history of the parish system, see G. W. O. Addleshaw, "The Beginnings of the Parochial System," Borth.P., 3 (1970); Brooke, 70-3; and John Godfrey, The English Parish 600-1300 (London: S.P.C.K., 1969).

111 John Myrc, Instructions for Parish Priests, ed. Edward Peacock (London: E.E.T.S., 1898), p. 5; Edward Cutts, Parish Priests and Their People in the Middle Ages in England (London: S.P.C.K., 1914), p. 234; J. H. Bettey, Church and Community: The Parish Church in English Life (Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire: Moonraker Press, 1979), pp. 25-6; Brooke, 68; John Bossy, "Blood and Baptism: Kinship, Community and Christianity in Western Europe from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries," S.C.H., 10 (1973), 133. According to Manning, pp. 52-3, a layman could baptize at need and midwives in particular were taught the correct procedures. For some wills which name godchildren, see E.R.O. D/ACR2/19; D/ACR2/63. Philip Niles, "Baptism and the Naming of Children in Late Medieval England," Medieval Prosopography, 3 (1982), 95-107, believes that godparents gave the godchild its Christian name.

112 Bettey, pp. 26-7; John R. H. Moorman, Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1955), pp. 85-6; see p. 128 above; E.R.O. D/ACR2/531; D/ACR2/73; D/ACR2/74.

113 F. A. Gasquet, Parish Life in Mediaeval England, 6th ed. (London: Methuen, 1929), pp. 201-7; Harmanson and Wheeler wills: P.R.O. 1 Adeane and 24 Doggett; Haynes, Borow, and Algood wills: E.R.O. D/ACR1/133; D/ACR1/205; D/ACR1/99.

114 Cutts, Parish Priests, pp. 200-4; Phythian-Adams, Coventry, pp. 168-9; K. Thomas, pp. 159-60; Colch.C.R., April 18, 1513. The Archdeaconry visitation is reported in James E. Oxley, The Reformation in Essex (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1965), p. 145. See F. G. Emmison, Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts (Chelmsford: Essex County Council, 1973), pp. 75-90, for examples of non-attendance at church in the Elizabethan period in Essex.

115 A Relation, or Rather a True Account, of the Island of England, trans. Charlotte Augusta Sneyd (London: Camden Society, 1897), p. 23; Bettey, p. 20; L. F. Salzman, English Life in the Middle Ages (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1926), p. 114; Gasquet, pp. 140-6.

116 Henry Barclay Swete, Church Services and Service-Books before the Reformation, rev. ed. (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1930), pp. 132-3; Bettey, pp. 23, 56; Phythian-Adams, Coventry, p. 168; Mervyn James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," P.P., 98 (1983), 3-29. See Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony," pp. 57-85.

117 Bettey, pp. 50-3; John Christopher Coldewey, "Early Essex Drama," Diss. Colorado 1972, pp. 25-8; Colch.C.R., 1526-7, undated

detached membrane.

118 M. Smith, pp. 122-3. The vestry developed out of the parish council, says Smith; see also W. E. Tate, The Parish Chest, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1951), pp. 12-14, and Emma Mason, "The Role of the English Parishioner, 1100-1500," J.Ecc1.H., 27 (1976), 23-4. The 1515 sale is recorded in Colch.C.R., Aug. 10, 1522, Feb. 15, 1521; R.C.H.M. Essex, III, 41.

119 For many purposes, the corporation had divided the Colchester parishes into 4 wards, and constables and those electing the officers of the borough were selected from each ward; however, an analysis of the lists given in the court rolls show a fairly even distribution of constables and electors from the several Colchester parishes. Palliser, York, pp. 76-7; Frederick Emmison, "Tithes, Perambulations and Sabbath-breach in Elizabethan Essex," in Tribute to an Antiquary, ed. F. G. Emmison and W. D. Stephens (London: Leopard's Head Press, 1976), pp. 183-93; Gibson, Codex juris Ecclesiastici Anglicani (1761), pp. 213-14, cited in "Bounds, Beating the," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1961 ed., III, 964-5.

120 Bossy, "Blood and Baptism," and "The Mass as a Social Institution 1200-1700," P.P., 100 (1983), 54-6. See M. Smith, pp. 96-7, for a discussion of the peace ritual; also Joseph A. Jungmann, The Mass of the Roman Rite, trans. Francis A. Brunner (N.Y.: Benziger, 1951), II, 321-32.

121 M. D. Anderson, History and Imagery in British Churches (London: John Murray, 1971), pp. 142-3; Clark, Provincial Society, p. 24; E.R.O. D/Y2/2, Morant manuscript, p. 65; Pythian-Adams, Coventry, pp. 137-8.

122 Quoted in M. Smith, pp. 97-8; see also Cutts, Parish Priests, pp. 202, 235-6; Gasquet, pp. 157-8.

123 Palliser, York, p. 228; E.R.O. D/ACR1/99; P.R.O. 18 Adeane.

124 Gasquet, p. 162; Dickinson, Later Middle Ages, pp. 443-4, 466-7; Pythian-Adams, "Ceremony," 73; Colch.C.R., Jan. 24, 27, 1530.

125 Platt, Churches, pp. 120-1; Dickinson, p. 455; Bettey, pp. 21-2; M. Smith, p. 96. Bossy, "Mass," 34-5, sees the sacrificial aspects of the mass as symbolizing the discrete elements of society, whereas its sacramental quality "represented and embodied unity and wholeness."

126 Hubert Jedin and John Dolan, eds., Handbook of Church History, trans. Anselm Biggs (Montreal: Palm Publications, n.d.), IV, 578. Cutts, Parish Priests, pp. 216-23, details Archbishop Peckham's manual for teaching the major beliefs, which was set forth in 1281 but was influential up to the Reformation.

127 Myrc, Instructions, pp. 21-53; M. Smith, p. 127; Dickinson, pp. 201-3, 274-5; Gasquet, pp. 197-200; Thomas N. Tentler, Sin and

Confession on the Eve of the Reformation (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), p. 80; John Mirk, Mirk's Festial: A Collection of Homilies, ed. Theodor Erbe, E.E.T.S., no 96, pt. 1 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1905), pp. 155-6.

128 G. R. Owst, Preaching in Medieval England (N.Y.: Russell and Russell, 1965), pp. 145, 165-7; Bettey, pp. 24-5; Anderson, pp. 142-3. On manuals for parish priests, see Pantin, pp. 189-218.

129 Jedin, IV, 571; Dickinson, Later Middle Ages, p. 455; H. S. Bennett, The Pastons and Their England (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968), p. 207.

130 Manning, pp. 12-13; Platt, Churches, pp. 120-35; Priscilla Heath Barnum, ed. Dives and Pauper, E.E.T.S., no. 275 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), I, First Precent, i, 40-44; P.R.O. Dogett; E.R.O. D/ABW21/1. See Anderson, Imagery, for an excellent discussion of the art and imagery in parish churches.

131 On patronage and appropriation, see Dickinson, Later Middle Ages, pp. 170-7; and David Knowles, The Religious Orders in England (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1956), II, 289-94.

132 C. R. Peers, St. Botolph's Priory, Colchester (London: H.M.S.O., 1917), pp. 10-12; V.C.H. Essex, II, 148-50. For a discussion of the Augustinian Rule, see Little, Religious Poverty, pp. 102-9; on the Augustinians, see J. C. Dickinson, The Origins of the Austin Canons and Their Introduction into England (London: S.P.C.K., 1950). Salzman, p. 130, says they did parish work; Dickinson, Later Middle Ages, p. 287, says they did little parish work.

133 The comparative wealth of the 2 older houses is exemplified in the "loan" made by the spirituality in 1522 for the King's expenses in France, when St. John's Abbey paid £200 and St. Botolph's, £66 13s. 4d.; see L.P., iii, 2483.

134 Oxley, pp. 47, 59; Stevenson, Colchester, p. 55; V.C.H. Essex, II, 93-102; Cutts, Colchester, pp. 148-50; R.P.B., pp. 51-2, 54-6; J. L. Fisher, "The Leger Book of St. John's Abbey, Colchester," T.E.A.S., n.s., 24 (1944-9), 114-15. For an excellent description of Benedictine life, see Salzman, pp. 122-8.

135 E.R.O. D/ACR1/123; D/ACR1/112; D/ACR1/170. Bennett, Pastons, p. 213, says that the Austin Canons had to have permission of either the pope or the bishop to undertake parochial work. J. C. Dickinson, Monastic Life in Medieval England (N.Y.: Barnes and Noble, 1962), p. 82, has found that St. Botolph's Priory in Colchester had exemption from the oversight of the bishop.

136 V.C.H. Essex, II, 180-1; Martin, Story of Colchester, p. 34; R. C. Fowler, "The Friars Minor of Colchester," T.E.A.S., n.s., 11 (1911), 367; Palliser, York, p. 227; Platt, Town, p. 162; M. Smith, p. 132; Dickinson, Later Middle Ages, pp. 200-16.

137 Knowles, I, 203; V.C.H. Essex, II, 181-2; Morant, II, 41-3; Morant, III, 8-9; Oxley, p. 61; Gurney Benham, "The Chapel of the Holy Cross in Crouch Street, Colchester," E.R., 45 (1936), 33-5; E.R.O. D/DRg1/226, D/DRg6/8. I have found two references to a lazar house or hospice of St. Katherine, in Colch.C.R., Jan. 14, 1510, and in E.R.O. D/ACR1/106, a will which was written in 1502. St. Katherine's seems to have been near the Priory of the Holy Cross; perhaps the Crossed Friars helped run St. Katherine's. Copies of the 1523 indulgence were discovered around 1900; see F. Fraser, "A Pynson Indulgence of 1523," Sussex Archaeological Collections, 50 (1907), 109-16.

138 V.C.H. Essex, II, 184-6; Fisher, "St. John's," 118-23, has information about the 1423 reconstitution.

139 Morant, II, 44-5; E.R.O. D/Y2/2, p. 65; will of John Vertue, Jan. 28, 1486, enrolled in Colch.C.R., 1541-2, m. 6; will of William Smith, P.R.O. 40 Milles; E.R.O. D/ACR2/16; E.R.O. D/ACR2/98.

140 The court rolls mention a chaplain at St. Helen's in 1510 and 1513; however, a 1535 document indicates that there were 2 chantry priests residing on the premises of St. Helen's at that time. See Morant, II, 45-6; J. H. Round, St. Helen's Chapel, Colchester (London: Elliot Stock, n.d.); Colch.C.R., Jan. 14, 1510, Jan. 17, 1513.

141 H. G. Alexander, Religion in England, 1558-1662 (London: Univ. of London Press, 1968), pp. 17-18; Dickinson, Later Middle Ages, pp. 166-8, 179-82; Richard M. Wunderli, London Church Courts and Society on the Eve of the Reformation (Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1981), pp. 7-23; R. L. Storey, "Diocesan Administration in the Fifteenth Century," Borth.P., no. 16 (1959), p. 7; Robert E. Rodes, Ecclesiastical Administration in Medieval England (Notre Dame: The Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 103; E.R.O. D/Y2/3; Oxley, pp. 18-19, 146, and pp. 38-43, for some biographical details of the Bishops of London and the Archdeacons of Colchester in the early Tudor period. For a detailed description of the visitation process, see John Addy, "The Archdeacon and Ecclesiastical Discipline in Yorkshire," Borth.P., no. 24 (1963), pp. 9-12.

142 The 80 priests and monks do not include the Grey Friars, who for some reason were not listed in 1535. See Cutts, Colchester, p. 102; Bindoff, Tudor England, p. 77. The cathedral city of York predictably had a higher proportion of clergy, with 200 or more religious and the same number of parish clergy in a city of 8,000 people, according to Palliser, York, p. 226.

143 Colchester names such as Fennyng, Barker, Miche, Motte, Nuthak, and Lowth were also the names of some Colchester priests. The Caumond and Forster relationships can be established in the wills of Richard Caumond, P.R.O. 27 Hogan; John Forster, E.R.O. D/ACR1/90; John Bardefeld, P.R.O. 18 Adeane. Tanner, p. 58; see Appendix 4.

144 Dyer, Worcester, pp. 235-6; will of Adam, P.R.O. 7 Vox; Colch.C.R., Oct. 20, 1521, Dec. 1, 1511, Nov. 28, 1510, Jan. 15, 1526.

Bennett, Pastons, p. 216, reports that in Norfolk the parish priest "appears to have been as much a local man of business as a priest." See Felicity Heal, "Economic Problems of the Clergy," in Church and Society in England (London: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 97-118.

145 Richard L. Greaves, Society and Religion in Elizabethan England (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1981), p. 77; Cross, Church and People, p. 46; Maynard Smith, p. 42; Margaret Bowker, The Secular Clergy in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1495-1520 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968), p. 179; Richard Newcourt, Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense (London, 1710), II, 52-3, 160-82, 286-7, 388-9, 419-20.

146 Clark, Provincial, p. 27; Cross, Church and People, p. 43; Valor Ecclesiasticus, I, 443.

147 Colch.C.R., Oct., 1516, Jan. 15, 1526; MacCaffrey, p. 179; Gasquet, p. 87; Cutts, Parish Priests, pp. 496-7, 505; Moorman, pp. 127-9; E.R.O. D/Y2/3. On tithes, see Dickinson, Later Middle Ages, p. 44; M. Smith, pp. 61-3; Platt, Churches, pp. 55-6; Emmison, "Tithes," pp. 178-83; Giles Constable, "Resistance to Tithes in the Middle Ages," J.Eccl.H., 13 (1962), 172-85, cautions that we should not overemphasize resistance to tithes. Although it was on the increase in the 14th and 15th centuries, it was not universal and was far from always being a source of trouble between clergy and laity, says Constable.

148 MacCaffrey, p. 180; Morant, II, 14.

149 Rodes, pp. 126-8; Platt, Churches, pp. 48-9; A. Tindal Hart, The Man in the Pew 1558-1660 (N.Y.: Humanities Press, 1966), pp. 89-102. A summary of Everard's will is in Morant, II, 53-4. St. Martin's did not have a chantry priest.

150 Cross, Church and People, p. 43; Platt, Churches, pp. 61-3. See also Bettey, pp. 33-4; Cutts, Parish Priests, pp. 298-305. Chaucer gave a lively description of a parish clerk in "The Miller's Tale," The Canterbury Tales, in Works, ed. Robinson, II, 3312-42.

151 P.R.O. E301/19. In 1548 the Harmanson chantry in St. Leonard's was vacant. After the chantries were abolished in the Reformation, the laity again developed a system of lay control in the hiring of town preachers, the first one being hired in Colchester in 1564.

152 Valor Ecclesiasticus, I, 443. On chantries, see A. Hamilton Thompson, The English Clergy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), pp. 133-5, 143-5; Wood-Legh, Perpetual Chantries, and Kreider, Chantries.

153 P.R.O. 8 Holgrave. Ten marks equals £6 13s. 4d.

154 Rodes, pp. 120, 138-9; M. Smith, p. 65; Colch.C.R., Jan. 16, 1531; Nov. 8, 1509; Jan. 14, 1516.

155 The four wills made by priests: Richard Caumond (1535), P.R.O. 27 Hogen; John Adam (1491), P.R.O. 7 Vox; John Longe (1504), P.R.O. 8 Holgrave; John Dey (1520), E.R.O. D/ACR2/102.

156 On John Ball, see Charles Oman, The Great Revolt of 1381, new ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 41-4, 87-8; and Bird, A Colchester Rebel. After Ball's execution, his body was quartered and sent to various parts of the country; it may be that a part of his body was buried in St. James' Church. Another possibility is that there had been another priest in Colchester with the same name.

157 Some of the wills which refer to the two Augustinians: Julian Cattes (1488), P.R.O. 20 Milles; John Markys (1503), E.R.O. D/ACR1/70; Richard Mower (1503), E.R.O. D/ACR1/58; Margaret Thorne (1503), E.R.O. D/ACR1/112; Anne Lanham (1506), E.R.O. D/ACR1/123; Harry Hall (1509), E.R.O. D/ACR1/150; Edmund Ive (1510), E.R.O. D/ACR1/170.

158 Bowker, p. 179; Chaucer, "General Prologue," The Canterbury Tales, in Works, ed. Robinson, ll. 477-81, 495-506, 515-20 (pp. 21-2).

CHAPTER III

LAY PIETY IN LATE MEDIEVAL COLCHESTER

By examining the last wills and testaments of Colchester inhabitants, we can gain a perspective on the commitment and the energies devoted to religion in the late medieval urban society. Undoubtedly some of the marks of piety manifested in the wills reflect only conventional ideals of piety rather than the testator's personal commitment to holiness. Nevertheless, whether one gave alms and provided for prayers for his soul out of fear of damnation, or out of love for God, alms and prayers represent an endorsement of accepted standards of piety, such as those embodied in Geoffrey Chaucer's humble plowman:

A trewe swynkere [worker] and a good was he,
Lyvyng in pees and parfit charitee,
God loved he best with al his hoole herte
At all tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte.¹

We shall see the effects of this ideal of piety in the many deeds of charity and provisions for prayers in Colchester wills. It was, after all, an age which stressed certain works for the release of the soul from Purgatory and for the attainment of salvation, and it is relatively simple to chart those works. Those pious deeds were marks of the individual's desire for God and for one's salvation, but we shall also find that the attainment of that salvation through works and prayers was a communal effort, with positive effects for the whole community. Through the lay administration of pious works, the townsmen were developing a reliance on other laymen and finding confidence in themselves.

Part of the strength of lay piety in the late medieval period, however, was that it worked within the accepted framework of the church and therefore had little of the appearance of divergency. Subtly but surely clerical ideals were being changed into an affirmation of the spirituality of the lay person, though within the world, a spirituality which could love God in the marketplace as well as in the sanctuary.

Section 1: Lay Piety and the Church

In our description in chapter two of the institutional church in Colchester, it was impossible to describe the church without depicting the activities of the people within the church, again affirming the fact that the church is not just the clerics or the buildings, but is also the people. It was the people who served as godparents, who paid for the rebuilding of churches and the special prayers of priests, who walked in church processions, and who served as churchwardens and on parish councils. It was also the town leaders who reinforced the importance of the church by their frequent attendance. All of these "works" may very well be marks of piety, or they may not, but the point is that the church provided a context in which urban lay piety could develop. Though Lollardy had a number of adherents in Colchester, it was the more conventional piety, within the church, which had the most significance in the life of the town. Lay piety can be viewed as a contrast to the institutional church--the individual's subjective approach to God versus the institutional approach--but it is also correct to see lay piety as complementary to the institutional church. John Adam, the Rector of St. James' Church, encouraged the piety of the

people by making his devotional works available to the people, alongside the chained Bible in the church. Much depended on the local representative of the church, the priest, as to whether the devotion of the people was encouraged or was considered a threat. During the earliest Tudor years, the piety of the people seems to have been encouraged, whereas it was seen as a threat by some Colchester priests in the Reformation years.

In many ways the medieval church in Colchester was quite effective in its work. Some of the priests were obviously committed to their work, and the education of the clerics was relatively high. Parish loyalty was evident in the frequent bequests to the church, in the requests for burial in one's own parish church or churchyard, and in the bequests to the poor in one's own parish. Yet there were definite indications that Colchester was not so bound up in the institutional church as were some towns. Compared to Norwich, where 10-11% of the sons mentioned in wills were clerics, few families in Colchester were giving their sons to the church. Colchester bequests to religious houses, even to the popular friars, were less than in York, where one-third of the testators between 1501 and 1538 remembered the friars in their wills.² In chapter four we shall find that Colchester eagerly received the acts of church reform, indicating some dissatisfaction with the church of the late medieval period. It has been noted that the late medieval ecclesiastical system had become cumbersome, that many of its representatives were less than ideal models, and that there was a paucity of solid teaching. More than that, however, the thinking urban lay person was no longer content to try to live by an ideal which did not meet his situation, nor was he satisfied with the substitutions

which too often prevailed in the late medieval church--images rather than the real presence of God, ritual rather than spirituality, and superstition rather than intelligent belief. The layman's spirituality and the resultant pious deeds were his attempts to be true to God and to himself, within his situation in the world, but yet in the context of the church.

Section 2:

Wills and Their Use in Analyzing Pious Behavior

As the primary source for this discussion of the traditional piety of late medieval Colchester, all of the extant last wills and testaments from Colchester will be used, occasionally being supplemented by information from other records of the time. Beginning with the reign of Henry VII in 1485 (few Colchester wills--only seven--are extant from before that date), we shall go through 1529, when the Reformation Parliament first met under Henry VIII. Protestant awareness came quickly to Colchester; the town already had a tradition of Lollardy, and the people must have been keenly aware of the issues discussed in the Reformation Parliament since their own town clerk, Thomas Audley, was Speaker of the House for those important sessions which manifested so much anticlericalism. There was a flowering of lay devotion in Colchester in the years just before the Reformation, at a time when there was the prosperity to support the resultant acts of piety that we shall be charting.

Testamentary records are the most personal documents available to historians of late medieval England, and since they were almost always drawn up on the deathbed, wills are as honest a group of documents

as one can expect to find, for they are concerned with what the testator found to be of ultimate importance in his life. Genealogists have long found wills to be valuable, and more recently historians have put them to varied and innovative uses. Demographers and family historians find in them information about population replacement rates, periods of epidemic, age of marriage, number of children, life spans, and family relationships. Other social historians find in wills information about networks of kin and neighbors, literacy, social standing, and patterns of inheritance; historians of the Reformation find in the preambles of wills clues to changes in religious thinking; and a recent use has been to measure the wealth of testators by the amount of tithes left to the high altar of their parish churches. One of the first and most obvious uses of wills by historians has been to connect the charitable bequests in wills with the piety of the testator. In 1959 Wilbur K. Jordan published a study in which he employed hundreds of wills and other documents to chart the course of philanthropy in England from 1480 to 1660, but with primary emphasis on the post-Reformation period since he was eager to trace what he saw as an increasing secularism in society. Jordan's work has spawned several other studies, such as Joel Rosenthal's 1972 book on the voluntary gift giving of the "parliamentary nobility" from 1307 to 1485.³ Understandably, such studies have often charted only the facts and figures to be found in wills; more elusive is the attempt to study the mentality of a people through its wills.

Colchester wills have the potential to be more fruitful in a study of the ideals of the testators than do the wills from some areas, for Colchester wills can perhaps give a truer picture of the wishes of

the testator than can wills from such places as London or the Province of York, where custom decreed that a male testator must leave one-third of his personal goods to his wife and one-third to his children, thus leaving only the remaining one-third for free disposition. Colchester inhabitants, on the other hand, apparently had the right for free disposition of all personal goods, but with some exceptions--married women, children, prisoners, traitors, heretics, and those of unsound mind generally did not have the freedom to make a will, although a few married women in Colchester did make wills with the consent of their husbands. As for the disposition of real estate, Colchester was one of the privileged boroughs within which the inhabitants had the right to devise houses and lands.⁴

Wills, of course, did not cover the entire population, since the majority of wills were written by adult males, and some in that group died intestate, or their wills were not registered. We cannot pretend, then, to have a total picture, but we can only attempt to measure the strength of devotion in the lives of those whose wills are extant. Furthermore, the extant wills may possibly draw a picture of a greater percentage of pious people than was actually the case, since the desire to provide for prayers or for the giving of alms was one of the motives for making a will. The church had strongly encouraged the making of wills for that reason, a fact which incidentally explains why the probate of wills fell to the ecclesiastical courts. One of the prayers which might be heard in church on Sundays was the following, taken from the York Manual: "For all that give or lease in testament any goods to the right maintenance and upholding of the work of the church. . . ." ⁵

Whether medieval wills are representative of all social and

economic groups is a matter for debate, and it is probably true that the very poorest had no resources for making wills. Sylvia Thrupp wrote about London wills, "The wills of which copies are on record are likely to be weighted with those of men who were above the average in wealth and particularly with those of landed men." Other studies, however, have found the opposite to be true. Margaret Spufford, studying peasant inheritance customs in Cambridgeshire in the last quarter of the 16th century, found that all groups in the village of Willingham produced wills and, surprisingly, that it was the poorer groups which produced the most wills. She concluded that, whether rich or poor, the need to provide for children who were not independent was a major motivating force for the making of wills. Robert Gottfried has determined that the testamentary population in Bury St. Edmunds was also very broadly based, with from two-thirds to three-fourths of the adult male population making wills.⁶

From Colchester in the years from 1485 through 1529, there are 203 extant wills of lay people, but the number of wills before 1500 is proportionately fewer, since most of the wills before 1500 are missing from the records of the court of the Archdeacon of Colchester, where the majority of Colchester wills were proved. From 1500 on, many more wills are extant, giving a more accurate picture, with 187 extant wills of lay testators from 1500 to 1529. Using Robert S. Gottfried's categories of wealth based on the bequests to the high altar of the parish church, which Gottfried used in his study of Bury St. Edmunds, Table 7 shows a distribution of will-makers among all levels of wealth in the years from 1500 to 1529 in Colchester. The bequest to the high altar, given in almost all of the wills, was stated typically in the will of

Table 7

Wealth of Testators Based on
Bequests to the High Altar, 1500-1529

Amount, Given ¹	Number of Wills	Percent of Total Wills
5d. or less	13	7%
6d. - 20d.	86	46%
2s. - 5s.	39	21%
6s. - 9s.	20	11%
10s. or above	12	6%
Gave in kind, or amount not stated	5	3%
Gave nothing	12	6%
	187	

¹ Using R. Gottfried's categories, Bury St. Edmunds, p. 127.

Katherine Jonys in 1517, as "to the high altar . . . for tithes and oblations forgotten . . . in discharge of my conscience." The bequests to the high altar in Colchester, however, are not always an accurate measure of wealth as wills can be found where the bequest does not seem to reflect the true wealth of the testator. For example, William Breton in 1499 left only 3s. 4d. to the high altar of St. Giles' Church, an amount which by Gottfried's standard would place Breton in the middle range of wealth, whereas Breton in his will spoke of property all over Essex, indicating that he would have been actually in the upper level of wealth in Colchester.⁷ Although we must not regard bequests to the high altar as necessarily a true measure of wealth, they never-

theless give a rough picture of the levels of wealth of the will-making population, and they assure us that it was not only those in the upper economic stratum who made wills in Colchester, for 46% of the testators only gave from 6d. to 20d., which is the next to the lowest wealth category given. Only 6% gave 10s. or above, in the highest wealth category of bequests to the high altar.

All of the Colchester wills have been categorized according to the importance of piety evidenced in them, and for this three categories have been set up: Category I--those wills which are a strong expression of the ideal of piety; Category II--those which manifest some piety but which do not evidence an overwhelming sense of its value; Category III--those which exhibit little or no concern for the ideal of piety. At least 90% of the testators left something to the church, if only the money left for tithes withheld or forgotten, but if the giving seemed perfunctory and their primary concern was with their worldly goods, then they have been placed in the latter category, as was William Barker, a "waterman" who died in 1517. Barker, sick in body, "remembering that I must need die and depart out of this world and know not when not willing that in me is to die intestate," bequeathed 20d. to the high altar of St. Leonard's Church "for my tithes negligently forborne if any such be in discharge of my soul," and the rest of Barker's will was taken up with provision for his family, with only the stipulation that if all 3 children died, then the money was to be disposed "for the wealth and profit of my soul and all Christian soules."⁸ Barker's will might possibly have gone into the middle category of regard for piety, considering that his 3 children were yet unmarried, but when in doubt I have tried to err on the side of caution, placing

Table 8

Lay Piety in Colchester Wills, 1485-1529

	Total No. of Wills	I Pious Concern a dominant value		II Pious Concern of moderate value		III Pious Concern of minimum value	
		No. of Wills	% of Total	No. of Wills	% of Total	No. of Wills	% of Total
1485-99	16	13	81%	2	13%	1	6%
1500-09	81	32	40%	26	32%	23	28%
1510-19	64	28	44%	18	28%	18	28%
1520-29	42	16	38%	10	24%	16	38%
Totals	203	89		56		58	
1485- 1529	(100%)	(44%)		(27.5%)		(28.5%)	
Totals ¹	(187)	(76)		(54)		(57)	
1500- 1529	(100%)	(41%)		(29%)		(30%)	

¹ The 30 years from 1500 to 1529 are the most representative of the total population, as the wills from the earlier period were almost entirely from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

doubtful cases into a lower category of piety.

Before going on to explain my method of using wills to ascertain the relative concern for piety of the testators, it will be helpful first to have an overview of the results of my categorization. The three groups of wills, which I graded according to the nature of pious acts, are admittedly somewhat arbitrary--Tudor wills, being the personal documents that they are, have a way of defying logical and statistical analysis--yet the three categories give us a tentative idea of the importance given to holiness among the will-making population.

Table 9

Enrollment of Colchester Wills, 1485-1529

	P.R.O. ¹	E.R.O. ²	Other ³	Total
1485-1499	13	1	2	16
1500-1509	13	66	2	81
1510-1519	5	57	2	64
1520-1529	<u>7</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>42</u>
Totals (% of total wills)	38 (19%)	158 (78%)	7 (3%)	203 (100%)

¹ Wills enrolled in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, now housed in the Public Record Office.

² Wills enrolled in the Court of the Archdeacon of Colchester, now housed in the Essex Record Office.

³ Wills enrolled in the Colchester court rolls, the Red Paper Book, or transcribed by Morant who had access to documents which are no longer extant.

Eighty-nine or 44% of all Colchester wills written between 1485 and 1529 were placed in category I, revealing pious acts and gestures as a dominant value in the lives of those testators, with 27.5% in category II and 28.5% in category III (see Table 8). Taken by decades, the first period (actually one and one-half decades) is skewed since the wills from the Court of the Archdeacon of Colchester from that period are no longer extant. Almost all of the extant wills before 1500 are from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (see Table 9), which handled wills whose testators owned land in more than one diocese, and they therefore reflect a higher social and economic stratum of people. The high degree of concern for piety, 81%, in the P.C.C. wills before 1500

perhaps tells us something about the sense of responsibility for doing good deeds within that social group. Our picture of the first three decades of the 16th century, in which wills from all social levels were available, is more accurate because of its broader base and it therefore comes closer to reflecting the attitudes of the total population. In those 30 years (1500-1529), 41% of the testators were found to be in category I, those who highly valued the acts of piety. The relative percentages of the 3 categories in those same 30 years do not change greatly from decade to decade, with one exception: category III, those exhibiting few acts of piety, rose significantly in the last decade, a condition possibly impelled by the rise in Lollard beliefs as well as by the investigation into Lollardy in that period, both of which engendered anticlericalism.

It is not always an easy matter to ascertain into which of the 3 categories of piety a will should go. In devising a method for categorization, I used as a starting point the amount of money spent on prayers and charitable deeds. Obviously a testator cannot be judged pious simply because he spends a huge amount on holy deeds. Two other factors must be taken into account when assessing the amount spent on prayers and charitable giving: the financial resources of the testator and the family situation. As already noted, a method of determining the wealth of testators has been developed by Robert Gottfried in his study of Bury St. Edmunds, using the amounts given to the high altar of the testator's parish church for tithes. I have partially used that measure,⁹ but that measure alone provides only a rough beginning point for categorization, for as already noted Gottfried's wealth indicator, though very helpful, is not an entirely reliable gauge of the wealth of

Colchester testators. Other indicators of wealth must also be taken into account when evaluating the amount spent for charitable deeds, such as the amount of money and goods bequeathed to family and friends, the number of houses or lands mentioned, whether the testator had servants, and whether he could afford to be buried inside a church. Even the money which was often given to the executor or supervisor of the will in payment for services can provide a useful comparison to the amount spent for holy deeds.

Not only must the financial situation of the testator be taken into account when evaluating amounts spent on charity and prayers, but the family situation could likewise alter the amount which a testator could legitimately spend. An older man who had already set up his sons with a start in life and had provided for the marriage of his daughters could probably spend more on pious works than could the younger man who had minor children living at home. A number of wills were made by men in the latter situation, since the need was urgent to provide for the sustenance of the family after the father's death, yet some of those testators amply provided for charitable bequests, thereby testifying to the strength of the value place on holiness in the society. Thomas Clere, who died in 1520 leaving a wife and 4 minor children, is such an example. Clere bequeathed money and houses to his children, yet his pious concern was clearly evident in his provision for a stipendiary priest to pray for his soul and his friends' souls, for an obit in his parish church for 10 years, for masses at his burial and on the month anniversary of his death, and for money to be given to the poor.¹⁰

Charitable giving and prayers were not the only marks of piety, though, and one must look for the subtle indicators of spirituality

apart from charitable giving. The tone and language of the will might be helpful, particularly if the will seems to have been worded by the testator himself. For example, William Smyth's additional plea in 1491 seems heartfelt in its simplicity when, after detailing liberal provision for prayers, he directed his wife and son to divide his goods, "praying you all to remember me with praying and with alms deeds."

Robert Ruoke's phrasing signified a concern to honor God: "I will that my tenement be sold by mine executors and the money thereof received I will that the churchwardens then being of St. Nicholas Church . . . shall receive the said money and they to bestow it in such things to the honor and worship of God by them most necessary and needful to be done within the said church as to books, vestments, copes or other things to the honor and worship of God." Another indicator of personal piety might be the possession of a personal religious artifact, such as "my best rosary," left by Joan Bretton in 1500, or "my cross of silver" bequeathed by Dame Margaret Teye to her son in 1519.¹¹

The type of charitable gift might also indicate a distinct concern for piety; for example, money left to buy books to aid in worship would bring less lasting glory to the testator than perhaps a new window, but would help others in their worship to God. In 1507 Roger Burgon was very precise in his directions: "I bequeath to the quire of the said church a dirige book with the mass of requiem noted and the commendation and the burial. Also I bequeath a quayre of the New Fest of the Transfiguration of Christ and the Fest of Jhus and the Fest of the Visitation of Our Lady and all noted with the legends and the octaves of the said festes." A shearman in the cloth industry, John Glede, left 6s. 8d. to his parish church in 1508 "to the new antiphoner

Table 10

Wills Which Mention No Clerics, 1485-1529¹

Categories of Pious Concern	Total No. of Wills in Category	Wills Not Mentioning Clerics	% of Wills in That Category
I--a dominant value	89	5	6%
II--of moderate value	56	6	11%
III--of minimum value	58	30	52%

¹ These wills mention no cleric by name, make no general references to "a priest," nor do they even ask for prayers which would require a priest.

lately ordenyd" and for "a new precessionary of print." Another gift which obviously indicated a solicitude for the continuing devotion of others was that left by Robert Fraunces in 1502 when he ordered that 5 marks be used by the wardens of the Guild of Jesus Mass to purchase four sheets of parchment "to be set in the mass book of Jhus and in that to be set all the brethern and sisterne that hath give unto the said mass."¹²

Another supportive clue to the value placed on piety by the testator is the reference to clerics in the will. Some wills, however, mentioned no clerics at all, and the number of those wills are given in Table 10, in the categories already assigned to the wills, according to the import of pious behavior manifested in them. The absence of a reference to a cleric in the will is the more revealing, as it was quite common to mention clerics or at least to ask for clerical prayers. A big majority, 80%, of all the 203 Colchester wills from 1485 to 1529 mentioned clerics or clerical prayers. The more significant finding

Table 11

Wills Naming Clerics as Executors or Supervisors, 1485-1529

Categories of Pious Concern	Total No. of Wills in Category	Wills Naming Clerics	% of Wills in That Category
I--a dominant value	89	18	20%
II--of moderate value	56	9	16%
III--of minimum value	<u>58</u>	<u>0</u>	0
	203	27	

was that the percentage of wills not mentioning clerics was much higher in the category which placed little value on piety. Fifty-two percent of the wills in category III, those placing little importance on piety, made no reference to clerics, whereas only 6% of the wills in category I, those which highly valued piety, mentioned no clerics or clerical prayers.

The most common occurrence of clerical names was in the list of witnesses at the end of the will, and the clerical witness sometimes, perhaps often, wrote the will for the dying testator. A cleric was also listed occasionally as an executor or supervisor of a will; in the 203 Colchester wills, 27 wills or 13% designated a cleric for one of those jobs (see Table 11). In contrast, Norman Tanner found that in Norwich wills of 1370-1517, between 1/4 and 1/3 chose a cleric as an executor or supervisor, although the percentage fell after that period.¹³ In Colchester, no one in category III, those having little or no regard for conventional piety, named a cleric as executor or supervisor of his will. Noting the absence of clerical allusions, then, is most useful in spotting those who attach little value to conven-

tional piety.

There is one kind of clerical allusion which seems to be a fairly reliable sign of high esteem for pious behavior in the will, although it does not occur very often in Colchester wills. Only six clerics were named in Colchester wills as sons or stepsons, and every one of the nine testators, both parents and stepparents, who mentioned those six clerical sons were rated on other grounds as having a high regard for piety. A list of those testators and their sons can be seen in Appendix 4; three of those six sons were Augustinian canons, two were friars, and one was a parish priest. Interestingly, none of the parents of the clerics were borough leaders, although all seemed to be in a comfortable, middle economic range. By contrast, Norman Tanner found that in Norwich between 10 and 11% of sons mentioned in wills were secular priests or religious, a large number when contrasted with the 4% mentioned in Colchester wills (i.e. 6 clerical sons out of 135 sons who were definitely named in the wills from 1485 to 1529).¹⁴

Another strong clue concerning the importance of piety for the testator can be found in the references to godchildren in wills. Sixteen testators mentioned having godchildren,¹⁵ and eleven of those apparently had more than one godchild. The godparent-godchild relationship was a spiritual one, with the godparents being charged by priests to teach their godchildren the Paternoster and the Creed and to bring the godchild for confirmation. The church considered the tie between godparent and godchild to be a significant spiritual bond, and, just as blood relatives were not allowed to marry, so marriages were not permitted between spiritual relatives either.¹⁶ Although little is known about the actual relationships between godparents and godchildren, the

Colchester wills indicate that godparents were generally chosen for their adherence to pious ways, and that the relationship was taken seriously, at least by most. Of the sixteen godparent-testators, fourteen were placed (using other criteria) in category I with those who greatly valued acts of piety, so we can conclude that a strong indicator of value placed on piety by a testator is a reference to a godchild. Legacies to the godchildren varied from 3d. to 3s. 4d. in money and included several gifts in kind, from sheets and sheep to a tenement. Three testators tied their legacy, in each case 12d., to a request that the godchildren pray for their souls, another indication of the spiritual relationship between them.

Having then established our method for categorizing the piety of testators by evaluating pious bequests in light of the wealth available and also in view of the family situation, we have in the process also identified other indicators of the value which one placed on pious acts, such as the type of charitable bequests, the tone and language of the will, the possession of religious artifacts, and, more quantifiable, the reference to clerics or to godchildren. Of those, references to clerical sons and to godchildren have been found to be almost certain signs of a great concern for piety and its deeds on the part of the testator. Conversely, the absence of a reference to a cleric is often an indication that the testator had little regard for the conventional acts of piety.

Having placed the wills into 3 categories graded according to the concern shown for the performance of pious acts (see Table 8), we found that 41% of the Colchester testators in the period most repre-

Table 12

Comparative Wealth of Testators in Categories
of Concern for Pious Acts, 1500-1529

Comparative Wealth ¹	Category I	Category II	Category III	Total
5d. or less	3	2	8	13
6d. - 20d.	29	29	28	86
2s. - 5s.	18	14	7	39
6s. - 9s.	11	6	3	20
10s. or above	9	1	2	12
Gave in kind, or amt. not stated	3	1	1	5
Gave nothing	3	1	8	12

¹ Based on bequests to the high altar, using Gottfried's divisions, Bury St. Edmunds, p. 127.

sentative of the total population (1500-1529) were in category I--those whose concern for pious acts was a dominant value. Category II contained 29% of the testators, and category III, 30%. Since we have had to rely heavily on actions and deeds in our categorizing, it is only fair to inquire if we have in fact merely divided the testators into categories of the financial ability to perform pious acts. In other words, do the wealthiest testators dominate category I, and the poorest, category III? To help answer that question, Table 12 shows the comparative wealth of testators based on the amounts given to the high altar of the parish churches, divided into the three categories of value placed on pious acts. Twelve donors were in the group leaving

Table 13
Enrollment of Wills in Categories
of Concern for Pious Acts, 1500-1529

	P.C.C.	Court of the Arch- deacon	Other	Total
Category I (% of wills in I)	17 (22%)	56 (74%)	3 (4%)	76 (100%)
Category II (% of wills in II)	5 (9%)	48 (89%)	1 (2%)	54 (100%)
Category III (% of wills in III)	<u>3</u> (5%)	<u>53</u> (93%)	<u>1</u> (2%)	<u>57</u> (100%)
Totals (% of total wills)	25 (13%)	157 (84%)	5 (3%)	187 (100%)

the largest amounts to the high altars, and nine of them were in category I which highly valued deeds of piety. At the lowest end of the wealth scale were 13 donors, and 8 of them were in category III, having little involvement in pious acts. Yet, as already noted, total confidence cannot be placed in the bequests to the high altar as an indicator of wealth. Table 13 is therefore another attempt to measure the correlation between wealth and pious acts. In Table 13 the wills in the 3 categories of concern for pious deeds were divided according to the enrollment of the wills. Those testators whose wills were enrolled in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury were generally in a higher social stratum than those whose wills were enrolled in the Court of the Archdeacon of Colchester, though there were certainly exceptions. For example, Dame Margaret Teye's will was enrolled in the Archdeaconry Court, whereas the wills of her 2 sons were predictably enrolled in the P.C.C.¹⁷ Table 13 reveals that 22% of the wills in category I were

enrolled in the P.C.C., whereas only 13% of the total number of wills from 1500 to 1529 were P.C.C. wills.

Both Tables 12 and 13 show, therefore, some correlation between greater wealth and greater concern for piety as shown by the testators' pious deeds, yet there was still a large percentage of donors in category I who were far from wealthy. In Table 12 we see that the largest number of testators (86) gave only from 6d. to 20d. in tithes to the high altars, and a third of those (29 testators) were in Category I of pious concern. Table 13 shows that 84% or 157 out of the 187 lay wills from 1500 to 1529 were enrolled in the local archdeaconry court. Of the 76 wills placed in category I (great value placed on pious acts), 74% (56 wills) were from the archdeaconry court. Obviously, many ordinary people were manifesting a concern for piety through their charitable and prayer bequests; pious deeds were not the sole province of the more prosperous testators.

Another look at the nature of those who highly valued acts of religious devotion in Colchester is in Table 14, in which those in the three categories of pious concern have been divided by sex. Twenty percent of the Colchester testators from 1500 to 1529 were women, but in category I, 26% were women. In the will-making population, then, women as well as the wealthier testators were proportionately manifesting a greater concern for the performance of pious deeds than were men or the less wealthy.

Possibly the possession of wealth tended to give some testators a greater sense of social responsibility, although certainly not in all cases. For example, we shall find later (see Table 23) that 21% of the aldermen evidenced little or no concern for pious acts. On the

Table 14
Categories of Pious Concern
among Men and Women, 1500-1529

	Males	Females	Total
Category I (% of wills in I)	56 (74%)	20 (26%)	76 (100%)
Category II (% of wills in II)	43 (80%)	11 (20%)	54 (100%)
Category III (% of wills in III)	51 (89%)	6 (11%)	57 (100%)
Totals (% of total wills)	150 (80%)	37 (20%)	187 (100%)

other hand, 50% of the aldermen--higher than the 41% in the general will-making population--placed great value on pious deeds. If there was, as it seems, a greater degree of social concern among those with greater financial resources, we should be able to see it in the giving of alms to the poor or for the repair of highways, acts which seem to be less self-serving than requests for prayers. As we shall later note, even money for prayers was not just for oneself, since others were always included as recipients of those prayers. Nevertheless, alms-giving showed a primary concern for the welfare of others, although that too was for the benefit of one's soul. Table 15 shows the comparative wealth of alms-givers and those leaving money for the repair of highways, and we see that such giving by Colchester donors was spread throughout all levels of wealth. If we compare the figures in category I in Tables 12 and 15, we can see that out of the 20 testators in the two top levels of wealth, 14 of them bequeathed money to the poor or for the repair of highways. Seventy percent of the wealthiest

Table 15

Comparative Wealth¹ and Piety of Those
Giving to the Poor and for Repair of Highways,² 1500-1529

Comparative Wealth	Categories of Pious Concern		
	I	II	III
5d. or less	2	-	-
6d. - 20d.	4	-	2
2s. - 5s.	9	2	-
6s. - 9s.	6	-	-
10s. or above	8	-	-
Gave in kind, or amount not stated	2	-	-
Totals	31	2	2

¹ Based on bequests to the high altar, using Gottfried's divisions, Bury St. Edmunds, p. 127.

² Those who made bequests to the poor, prisoners, hospitals, and for the repair of highways.

testators who also had a high regard for acts of piety included almsgiving and/or money for the repair of highways among their bequests. Many of the wealthier pious, therefore, had a heightened sense of responsibility for the welfare of others. Also, Table 15 incidentally reveals almsgiving or money for highways as a fairly good indicator of a testator's high level of respect for deeds of piety, since 89% of the Colchester testators who gave to the poor or for highways were placed in the top category of pious concern.

Having in mind this general analysis of the Colchester wills, ranked according to the value placed on pious acts in them, we shall

now look in detail at the specific acts of piety mentioned in the wills. We shall find that lay people were placing great trust in each other for the implementation of pious deeds and prayers, though within the context of the institutional church.

Section 3:

Manifestations of Pious Concern-- Charitable and Prayer Bequests

The goal of religious devotion was to know and serve God and, finally, to live with God in Heaven. However imperfectly the late medieval man might achieve personal holiness, he could nonetheless acquire merit through charitable deeds. Prayers for one's soul also speeded the progress of the soul from Purgatory to Heaven. There was a kind of "works salvation," and as J. A. F. Thomson has stated, "Behind all giving in the Middle Ages lay one basic motive, the good of the donor's soul." Though essentially correct, Thomson's statement does not give the total picture, for charity demanded that one be aware of responsibility to others. Even the prayers for the soul after death, which would seem to be the most self-serving, always included others as beneficiaries of that intercession.¹⁸

To look at the specific acts of piety mentioned in Colchester wills, I have divided the charitable and prayer bequests into 3 large categories: 1) bequests to a parish church, including money, land, or goods for maintenance or for repair of the fabric, for new building, or for church furnishings (but excluding the almost universal bequests to the high altar for tithes forgotten or withheld); 2) requests for prayers for the soul in a parish church, in a religious house, or by

Table 16
Charitable and Prayer Requests in Colchester Wills

Years	Total No. of Wills	Total BEQUESTS to PARISH CHURCHES	BEQUESTS for PRAYERS			OTHER CHARITABLE BENEFACTIONS					TOTAL ³ Making Charitable or Prayer Bequests
			In a Parish ¹ Church	In a Religious ² House	Total ³ No. of Testators	To the Poor and Prisoners	To Religious Houses (fabric or furnishings)	To the Repair of Highways	To Other Civic or Educ. Needs	Total ³ No. of Donors	
1485-99	16 ⁴ (100%)	10 (63%)	14	9	14 (88%)	7	1	5	1	9 (56%)	16 (100%)
1500-9	81 (100%)	35 (43%)	42	11	46 (57%)	12	1	6	1	14 (17%)	60 (74%)
1510-19	64 (100%)	20 (31%)	35	21	43 (67%)	12	3	4	1	14 (22%)	49 (77%)
1520-29	42 (100%)	16 (39%)	20	8	23 (55%)	8	1	1	2	8 (19%)	29 (69%)
Totals	203 (100%)	81 (40%)	111	49	126 (62%)	39	6	16	5	45 (22%)	154 (76%)
1530-9	58 (100%)	14 (24%)	18	7	21 (36%)	13	2	4	0	16 (28%)	29 (50%)
1540-9	68 (100%)	6 (9%)	4	0	4 (6%)	16	0	3	3	18 (26%)	25 (37%)
1550-8	75 (100%)	0	1	0	1 (1%)	18	0	2	1	18 (24%)	18 (24%)

¹ For fabric or furnishings; excludes bequests to the high altar.

² Includes bequests to parish guilds.

³ Total is not necessarily the sum of the sub-groups, as testators often gave in more than 1 group.

⁴ Not a representative group of testators; see pp. 204-5, 213.

Table 17

Charitable and Prayer Bequests
in Three Categories of Pious Concern, 1485-1529

Categories of Pious Concern	Total No. of Wills	Bequests to Parish Church ¹		Prayers for the Soul		Other Benefactions	
		No. of Wills	% of Total	No. of Wills	% of Total	No. of Wills	% of Total
I--a dominant value	89	52	59%	82	92%	43	48%
II--of moderate value	56	23	41%	40	71%	7	13%
III--of minimum value	58	6	10%	4	7%	2	3%
Totals	203	81	40%	126	62%	52	26%

¹ Excludes bequests to the high altar for tithes.

laity; 3) other benefactions, such as those to the poor and prisoners, to hospitals and religious houses, for education, for repair of highways and other miscellaneous civic benefactions. Many testators left money or goods for several types of bequests, and each one of those bequests has been noted. Table 16, which looks at all the wills together, shows that 40% of the wills made bequests to the parish church, 62% requested prayers for the soul, and 22% made other benefactions. Again, we must remember that many testators gave in more than one category, so the percentages may equal more than 100%. Looking at the wills from the opposite angle, 24% of the wills left no money, goods, or land for charity or for prayers; predictably, almost all of those testators come from our category III--those having little regard for piety.

A look at Table 17, which shows the bequests in each of our 3 categories of the value placed on piety, reveals that category I has, predictably, the highest percentage of testators giving to the parish church (59%), for prayers for the soul (92%), and for other benefactions (48%). In category II, all giving was down, particularly that for other benefactions, which largely included alms for the poor. Giving in all areas was 10% or below for those people in category III, those with little regard for the acts of piety.

Section 3A: Bequests to a Parish Church

Giving to the parish church was encouraged; a prayer included in the York Manual read: "We sal pray also specially for all pise pat gifes or sends or in testment wytes any gode in mayntenynge of his kirk or kirkwarke." Bequests in Colchester wills reveal substantial loyalty to the parish church, with 40%, or 81 of all the wills, contributing something to the parish church beyond the usual offering to the high altar. When those 81 bequests to the parish church are examined, almost half (38 wills) contributed toward the fabric of the church, sometimes toward new building but more commonly toward its repair. The building itself, then, was important to them, and as we noted earlier most of the parish churches in Colchester were engaged in some rebuilding of their fabric in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. The additions and rebuilding were quite extensive in the two richer parishes of St. James and St. Leonard, and those two buildings remain the finest examples of medieval churches in Colchester today. Concern for rebuilding was not unique to Colchester, however; W. G.

Hoskins writes: "There was a tremendous resurgence of parish church building (more strictly, rebuilding) from the 1480s onwards, lasting for two generations or so until about 1540, a period which rivalled the great wave of ecclesiastical building of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries."¹⁹ It is understandable that many testators would be concerned about the church building itself, since some major events in their lives took place in the parish church, and it was there or in the churchyard where so many Colchester testators (89%) asked to be buried.

More than the church building itself, though, the furnishings aroused the creativity of the testators; G. H. Martin predicates that the townspeople furnished their churches "as they might furnish their own prized properties," which seemed to be true of Thomas Barker when he left £3 6s. 8d. to his parish church for "a shipe of silver and gilt to put in frankencense." The sensitivity of William Wheler is evident in his gift to St. James' Church of "a coverlet with birds and flowers" to be laid on a stool, apparently the seat for women who were being purified after the birth of a child. Margaret Bayly's loyalty to her parish church was manifested in her directions to her executors to have made for the use of the church a cloth of silk with the picture of All Saints' Church on it.²⁰

In his study of the 14th century, B. L. Manning has written that the holiness of a church lay in the "holy things which it contained," in "certain objects used in prayer," and in the Colchester wills the roodlofts and statues of Mary and the saints evoked the veneration of a number of testators. The roodloft, a kind of gallery over the screen at the dividing line of the nave and the chancel, contained the rood or crucifix for the people to gaze upon. Several testators left money for

the gilding of the roodloft in their parish church, but Nicholas Clere left a description of the roodloft in St. James' Church, when he provisionally left £20 "to be spent on making or mending a crucifix, called 'le Roode,' with Mary and John, to stand over the rood-loft . . . in the place where the Rood, with Mary and John, now stands."²¹

Statues were important to the testators; some asked to be buried before certain images and others left money for the mending of statues or for lights to be placed before them. Each parish church was supposed to have in the chancel the image of the saint to whom the church was dedicated, and John Elys wanted to be buried before the image of St. James in St. James' Church. Churches obviously had other statues, too: John Leveson bequeathed 5 marks for the "new dyghting" of St. Paul in St. Leonard's Church, Margaret Thorne left "my best beads of jet" for the adornment of the image of Our Lady in St. Botolph's, and Alice Goddiscok left a sheep in 1523 for the founding of a light before the image of Our Blessed Lady. Bequests for votive lights, what Norman Tanner calls the more superstitious form of devotion to saints, were many fewer in Colchester than in Norwich. Tanner tells us that almost one in two of the lay testators in Norwich between 1518 and 1532 left bequests for lights. In the same period in Colchester, only 4 out of 62 testators made such bequests.²²

A few testators left money to the parish church for books which would aid in the worship, with the antiphonary being mentioned most often. H. B. Swete informs us that the antiphonary, connected with the services of the Hours, contained the antiphons to the Psalms which were recited before a Psalm and repeated at the end. Other responses, hymns, and musical portions of the offices were often added, so the

antiphonary could be quite a large book and was therefore rather costly for a parish church; nevertheless, wealthy Thomas Cristmas directed that two antiphonaries be bought for St. James' Church, if they did not choose new vestments instead.²³

Section 3B: Response to Purgatory-- Bequests for Prayers for the Soul

Bequests to the parish church did not evoke the enthusiasm of the testators so much as did the provision for prayers for the souls of the dead. Galpern has remarked that late medieval Christianity was in large part "a cult of the living in the service of the dead." W. K. Jordan found that in the pre-Reformation years, more than a fourth of all charitable wealth was disposed for prayers, far more than the amount spent for any other single charitable use. In the pre-Reformation Colchester wills, 62% made provision for prayers for the souls of the dead, and in those wills which highly valued pious acts, 92% requested such supplicatory prayers (see Tables 16 and 17). In Norwich, too, more money was left for masses and prayers than for any other type of bequest. Tanner found that after 1489, two in five Norwich testators left at least £5 for masses and prayers. Here again Norwich testators proved themselves to be more attached to conventional pious acts than were the testators in Colchester, where only 22% (45 out of 203 wills) left at least £5 for prayers. Nevertheless, the large number of Colchester testators (126) who wanted prayers was significant.²⁴

Medieval men and women believed that even the person who died in a state of grace was not yet pure enough to enjoy the glories of Heaven and so must be purged by the sufferings in the intermediate state

called Purgatory. Happily, the pains of Purgatory could be lessened and shortened by good works and by the prayers of others, a belief which explains the zeal and meticulousness with which many directed the giving of alms and the kinds of prayers which were to be offered for their soul after death. The reality of Purgatory and the possibilities for its mitigation were made very clear to the people in such teaching as that in the sermon for All Souls' Day given in John Mirk's Festial:

Good men and women on Sowlemasse-day, holy chyrch makyth mynd, and syngyth, and redythe generally for all þe sowles þat ben yn purgatory, havynge full beleue forto relesch hom of hor payne, othyr yn parte, othyr yn all. Wherfor ych crysten man and woman schall as þys day helpe þe sowles þat ben yn payne, for soo þay mown and þay woll; for þe lest prayer þat ys made for hom dothe hom ese. So þagh a man say but þus: 'God haue mercy on all crysten sowles!' so þat he þat sayth þus, be yn charyte and out of dedly synne. Then schull ze know wele þat þre þynges helpen soules most out of penance, þat ys: devot prayng, almes-zeuyng, and masse-syngyng.²⁵

If the pains of Purgatory sound harsh, we must remember that the church taught that the torments and tortures of Hell were even greater and were everlasting, no doubt behooving the parishioners to endure Purgatory in order to avoid the fate of Hell, if possible.

(1) Prayers on Burial Day

The church taught the importance of the last moments of life and had also developed a series of prayers for the funeral of the dead. First came the vespers service, said the evening before the day of the funeral and commonly called "Placebo," since it began with the antiphon, "Placebo Domino in regione vivorum."²⁶ The next service, known as matins or "dirige,"²⁷ was theoretically held shortly after midnight but in practice was usually much later in the morning so that it only

slightly preceded the final service of the Mass for the Dead. The Mass was a solemn and dignified service, lent significance by the fact that a funeral was one of the rare occasions upon which a priest was permitted to celebrate twice in one day. Nothing was said in any of the wills about the cost, if any, of the regular burial offices for the dead in one's own parish church, but when Robert Hervy in 1488 designated that the priest serving the cure in every parish church in Colchester say "placebo and dirige and mass of requiem" for his soul, each church was to receive 3s. 4d.²⁸

Descriptions of the funerals of several wealthy people survive, and they were often quite lavish and costly, with many priests in attendance as well as a number of poor mourners paid to attend, dressed in new clothing for the occasion.²⁹ Much less is known about the funerals of ordinary people; Colchester wills gave very little information about funerals, so the form was probably fairly standard, with now and then the more prosperous adding touches as they were able. For example, three women in Colchester left money for four men or priests to bear their bodies to the church. As might be expected, wealthy Thomas Cristmas left a flurry of activity behind with his £100 to be spent on his burial day and during the first 30 days thereafter; but his directions were rather general: "for diriges and masses of requiem and other deeds of charity." He was more specific about wanting the parson of every Colchester parish church in attendance "at my burial," paying each 3s. 4d. "to the intent that after my burial they shall say dirige and mass for my soul at their own parish church."³⁰ Carpenter Robert Prynchet, with his 6s. 8d. requested only "that there be bestowed in the said church the day of my burial for the wealth of my

soul," but Peter Franke was explicit in his request for extra masses, wanting "5 masses of the 5 wounds for my soul" on the day of burial. All of the priests in Colchester must have been employed if Peter Borow's stipulations were followed; Borow desired "that at the day of my burying there be sung and said a trental of masses for my soul in the church of St. Nicholas if there can so many priests conveniently gotten or to be done immediately after."³¹ Some of the more prosperous testators also left money to be given to the poor on the day of their burial, but Colchester seems not to have had the custom of feasting after funerals except perhaps in the country parishes.³² Robert Gottfried has found evidence that some funerals in Bury St. Edmunds were quite elaborate with feasting and new clothes for those in attendance, which makes one wonder if Lollardy in Colchester had perhaps had a moderating influence on the lavishness of funerals, since an early mark of Lollardy was a resistance to funeral pomp.³³

(2) Obits and Other Prayers for the Soul

Enthusiasm was not lacking in the bequests for prayers for the soul of the testator beyond those at the funeral, in the hopes of securing a quick passage from Purgatory to Heaven. Alice Piggisley's concern was evident in her careful request that "there be sung for me and my friends six masses of the resurrection, five masses of the holy cross and thirty masses for a trental as soon after my burying as it may conveniently be done."³⁴ Though haste in saying prayers for the dead was not always achieved, such prayers generally seem to have been taken seriously. In a complicated case of debt which came before

the borough court on January 11, 1518, the bailiffs in making the settlement stipulated that the person winning the case must "dispose for the soul" of the dead priest whose goods were the original source of conflict. In the same court roll, a deed was recorded in which the will (no longer extant) of John Downe, dated February 6, 1504, was mentioned. The will had specified that if his son the heir died, Downe's tenement was to be sold and the money used for a chaplain to celebrate masses for the souls of Downe and his wife. Thirteen years later, that request for prayers was honored.³⁵

Some of the requests for prayers were rather vague, such as that in William Clerke's brief will in 1529, "to the high altar of the said St. Nicholas for my tithes and to be prayed for." A few left money to a specific cleric for prayers, but most testators were quite certain of the type of prayers which they wanted for the money that they had. Out of the 203 Colchester wills, 111 of them requested prayers in a parish church, with the obit in 43 wills, 21% of the total, being the most commonly designated form of prayer. Interestingly, J. A. F. Thomson found the same percentage of wills requesting obits in London, where obits had gained in popularity in the 15th century.³⁶ The obit generally was the service for the dead held on the yearly anniversary of the death of the testator, although some also had a "month-mind" on the thirtieth day after the decease or burial, and Robert Rokewood went even further: "On the day of burial and on the seventh day and on the thirtieth day and at yeartide my wife to do for me as I would do for her if she were in like case." For the month day, the usual practice seems to have been to make it much like the burial day, spending as much or almost as much as was spent on the day of burial. Adam Norman

left 20s. for each of those days, and Robert Northern left £6 for his burial day and £5 for his month day.³⁷

The frequently requested yearly obit had the advantage of being affordable to many people, since it could be elaborate or spartan, as resources required; consequently, many of the directions for obits were very detailed. John Vertue directed that an obit be kept for 20 years, using the rent from his houses and lands at Milend to pay 20s. yearly for the obit, rather more than the usual expenditure for an obit, which was normally from 3s. 4d. to 6s. 8d. At the other extreme, Widow Katherine Ruffull left the amount spent on Vertue's obit annually, 20s., to be spread out for an obit for 12 years, which meant that each obit for Ruffull cost only 20d. Often, as in Vertue's case, a piece of land such as a meadow or a grove was given for the obit, with the plan that the rental from that land would be used to pay for the obit. Margaret Aleyn even directed that £20 be used "for the purchase of free lands so that with the profits my obit and deeds of charity to poor folks shall be done and kept yearly." Those in the country parishes of Colchester left farm animals which were then rented out for a fee, which paid for the obit; William Pylgryme of Lexden bequeathed "two kine price 20s.," and John Camoke left 2 cows and 8 sheep. Following are Camoke's directions, a good example of the careful detail which went into many of the requests for prayers:

I bequeath to the church of St. Giles for to keep an obit yearly during the world in the week afore the Purification Our Lady for my soul, my wife's soul, and all Christian souls and for to be prayed for in the beadroll 2 kine price 20s., 8 ewe sheep price 10s. to be at the letting or keeping of the churchwardens within the parish of St. Giles and my obit to be kept under this manner and form. The curate to have for beadroll 12d., dirige and light 10d., the clerk for the knell ringing and dirige 6d., the sexton for the herse 2d., the churchwardens for my mass penny and for their labor to see this mine obit kept 9d. The residue of the profits of my obit left to

go to the reparation of the church.³⁸

Added up, Camoke's obit was to cost 3s. 3d. annually.

Accompanying the saying or singing of masses at obits were lights and ringing of bells, if one could afford it. Robert Herde, shoemaker, planning an obit for 12 years at 3s. 4d. each, required "the said parson to find my herse and light to the same yearly to burn both at dirige and mass." The "herse" was a framework whereupon lighted candles were placed at funerals and obits. A number paid from 6d. to 8d. for the ringing of a bell at their obit, but Robert Everard gives us a clearer picture of what was involved, in his payment of 8d. to the sexton for lights and for a knell with one bell for 2 hours after the dirige and mass. William Wheler also requested a peal on the day after his mass and left 2d. for the bell-man of the town to go about the town with his bell "to cause the people to pray for my soul."³⁹

Several testators specified the number of years for their obit, whereas others wanted their obit to go on forever; notably, Camoke's phrase "during the world" has a unique, confident charm about it. Of those who designated the number of years, John Bardefeld was the most optimistic, requesting an obit for 100 years, using the 6s. rental from a certain field. His extra resources allowed him to have at his obit 3 extra priests at 4d. each and even 5 children at 1d. each. John Haslyngham's obit was only for 5 years, but he had some other masses said during those 5 years, whereas the seven years at 4s. each requested by John Curstover was probably all that a baker with minor children could afford. Not all testators wanted their annual obit to be on the anniversary of their death or burial; three men requested that their obits be kept on the first Monday in Lent, with William Wheler specify-

ing that a "placebo and dirige" be said on the first Sunday in Lent "afore evensong" and on the Monday "a mass of requiem for my soul."⁴⁰

Some of the payments for obits included the provision for placing the names of the dead on the parish beadroll, but comparatively few wills, only 12, made payment for placing names on the beadroll alone. It is possible that one's offering to the high altar automatically placed one's name on the beadroll at death, at least for a time. Every Sunday at mass there was the Bidding Prayer, or Bidding of the Bedes, which was said in English before the sermon. There was no fixed form, but generally prayers were first asked for the spiritual necessities, then for the king, his government and people, for the sick and whole, and lastly for the dead. Here, from the York Manual, is the suggested prayer for the dead:

Ye shall make a special prayer for your fathers' souls and for your mothers' souls, godfathers' souls and godmothers' souls, brothers' souls and sisters' souls, and for all your elders' souls, and for all the souls that you and I be bound to pray for, and specially for all the souls whose bones are buried in this church or in this churchyard or in any other holy place; and in especial for all the souls that bide the great mercy of Almighty God in the bitter pains of Purgatory, that God for His great mercy release them of their pain if it be His blessed will. And that our prayers may somewhat stand them in stead, every man and woman of your church, help them with a Pater noster and an Ave Maria.⁴¹

Along with the prayer, the beadroll which contained the names of the dead was read, with commendation of them to the prayers of the congregation. The reading of the names every Sunday must have had a striking effect, touching the memories of most of those in attendance and reminding them of the prevalence and sureness of death. Of those making payment for placing names on the beadroll, Peter Borow and William Wheler each bequeathed 2s. to be paid to their parish church yearly for inclusion on the beadroll. William Breton left 4s. yearly, but he

Table 18
Prayers for the Dead in the Parish Church

	Total No. of Wills	Total Requests for Prayers	Types of Prayers							
			Extra Prayers at Burial	Stipen- diary Priest	Tren- tals	Obits	Bead- roll	Guilds	Chan- tries	"a Priest"
1485-99	16	14	4	5	-	7	3	3	2	3
1500-9	81	42	3	14	9	11	4	11	1	10
1510-19	64	35	6	12	8	16	4	7	-	9
1520-29	42	20	4	9	4	9	1	5	-	5
Totals (% of total)	203 (100%)	111 (55%)	17 (8%)	40 (20%)	21 (10%)	43 (21%)	12 (6%)	26 (13%)	3 (1%)	27 (13%)

wanted the names of several relatives included on the roll. Agnes Bownde apparently thought the beadrolls to be efficacious, since she requested that her name and that of her husband be placed on the beadroll of every parish church in town for 7 years.⁴²

If a testator wanted more immediate results than an obit or beadroll might give and yet did not have enough money to hire a priest to pray for a lengthy time, for 10s. he could direct that a trental, or 30 masses, be said or sung for his soul in a parish church. A common order was that the trental be sung, in John Glede's words, "as shortly after my departing as it is possible to be done," but John Thurske, obviously concerned for his widow's maintenance, asked for a trental of masses "where that it may soonest be spared." Some testators, able to afford more than one trental, commanded that the trentals be spread out. Alderman George Aleyn requested that a trental be sung every quarter of

the year for 5 years, and Peter Borow, who had asked for a trental of masses on his burial day and on his month day, directed that 3 other trentals be sung by "an honest priest" within a year after his decease, paying 4d. per mass, which added up to the usual rate of 10s. per trental.⁴³ With priests normally permitted to sing or say only one mass a day, a large number of priests would have had to be hired for Borow's trentals sung at burial and on the month day, but to hire only one priest for the remaining 3 trentals assured that the prayers would be spread out.

(3) Stipendiary and Perpetual Chantries

Another favored type of prayer in parish churches was the hiring of a stipendiary priest for a set period of time, most commonly for 1 year. On Table 18 we can see that 40 testators, or 20% of all Colchester testators from 1485 to 1529, arranged for the hiring of a priest to sing daily masses in a parish church, making that method of praying for the dead second only to obits, which were mentioned in 43 wills. The usual stipend paid to a chaplain in Colchester for 1 year was 10 marks, or £6 13s. 4d., so of course it was not for the poorer sort of people.⁴⁴ Although most wills arranged for a stipendiary priest for 1 year, one testator hired a priest for a quarter of a year and four testators directed the hiring of a chaplain for 1/2 year. On the other hand, five years requested by two wills was the longest period mentioned for the hiring of a chaplain; in 1488 Robert Hervy willed "that a priest of good and honest conversation . . . sing in the church of St. Peter's for 5 years to pray for my soul and all my good

friends' souls."⁴⁵

As in Hervy's will, the qualifications of the priest were often mentioned, with Harry Bear wanting "an honest and wellbespoke priest," and George Aleyn demanding that the chaplain who was to sing for his soul be "an honest and an able priest." None of the testators wanting a stipendiary priest mentioned the specific duties of the priest, so there was probably a standard method used by such priests in Colchester. The custom in other places varied. Colin Platt relates two examples from other towns which give some idea of the procedures followed by perpetual chantry priests: in Southampton in 1462 Joan Holmhedge endowed a perpetual chantry, stipulating that the chantrist was to receive £6 13s. 4d., a high rate for Southampton, and he was to celebrate mass every day in the parish church, to be present every Sunday and feast days at prime, vespers, matins, high mass and second vespers, and to say services and commemorations for her soul once a week, with a requiem mass the following day. In Chester, the chaplain of Robert Parys' chantry was to celebrate a mass of the Trinity on Sundays, a mass of St. Mary on Mondays, a requiem mass on Tuesdays, a mass of the Holy Spirit on Wednesdays, another requiem mass on Thursdays, a mass of the Cross on Fridays, and on Saturdays, another mass of St. Mary. In earlier years, some testators had asked for a requiem mass every day, but Kathleen Wood-Legh tells us that this proved to be an irksome requirement. Some parish churches had special chantry altars, and more elaborate perpetual chantries might be in a chapel added to the choir of the church and opening into it, or a chantry might simply mean a share in the use of an altar. Only 2 Colchester testators specified that the chaplains who were praying for their souls were to pray in

certain places; John Abbott in 1502 directed that a priest sing for his soul at St. Barbara's altar in St. Peter's Church, which seems to have been the altar of the Guild of St. Barbara in that church. Nicholas Clere requested that a chaplain celebrate for his soul for a year in the Church of St. James, before the image of St. Ignacious.⁴⁶

Colchester also had 10 perpetual chantry foundations, but by 1500 the earlier 7 foundations, the oldest being from the 14th century, had been partly consolidated. In the early 16th century, two of the chantries were housed in the ancient St. Helen's Chapel in Maidenborough Street, and four chantries, earlier consolidated under the Guild of St. Helen, had prayers celebrated by the Crossed Friars in their chapel. One chantry, the well-endowed Joseph Elianore chantry, was the only one of the earlier chantries which was still within a parish church, in the Church of St. Mary-at-Wall. The last 3 perpetual chantries were founded near the beginning of the Tudor period, all to be housed in parish churches. Richard Heyne's chantry was in St. Peter's Church, and the chantries of Peter Barwick and Edmund Harmanson were in St. Leonard's Church. The survey of the chantry lands taken in the reign of Edward VI tells us that the chaplains serving the Barwick and Harmanson chantries in St. Leonard's Church were there "to help serve the cure" in that parish, and no doubt many of the stipendiary priests also helped with parish duties.⁴⁷

One of the most interesting and innovative foundations set up in the reign of Henry VIII was the school called Westons which was established by the will of Thomas Cristmas in 1520. It resembled a chantry, in that the priest and master of the school was to say mass in the Church of St. James every Sunday, holy day, and Friday, but since it

was a school Cristmas would not have had the bother of obtaining a costly chantry license. The learned priest, for an annual salary of £10, was "to teach grammar and other virtuous conditions and learnings" at Westons, a tenement belonging to Cristmas in the parish of All Saints, where the priest was to dwell and "teach continually 24 children born within Colchester freely without anything for the teaching of them." In turn, Cristmas was to have the benefit of their prayers, with his requirement that the master and scholars were to say every morning a particular psalm with a collect for the soul of Cristmas and for all Christian souls.⁴⁸

(4) Parish Guilds

Few testators had the resources of Thomas Cristmas or of the founders of the perpetual chantries, but another option was open to many of them--membership in a parish guild or fraternity. Though 19th century scholars were eager to stress the primacy of the political and the economic elements in the medieval trade and craft guilds, many of the guilds seem largely to have grown out of religious devotion. Scholarship on guilds has been most fruitful in its analysis of the 1389 guild certificates, and the descriptions of the 8 guilds then in existence in Essex indicate that they all had as a primary purpose the maintaining of lights before the image of their patron saint and the hiring of a chaplain to celebrate for the souls of dead brethren, as well as for the living. Some Essex guilds had a regular calendar of obits to be kept for dead brothers, with requirements for the living lay brothers and sisters to say certain psalms or prayers for both the

living and the dead and to attend the funerals of the deceased. One guild had a weekly subscription of a quarter pence from each member for maintenance of the chaplain, and two guilds required that each member give a penny (in Chelmsford) or one and a quarter pennies (in Maldon) in soul-alms at each funeral. None of the 8 Essex guilds listed in 1389 were in Colchester; generally guilds seem to have come late to Essex, and Colchester, with its unusually powerful borough organization, seems to have had fewer guilds than most towns its size.⁴⁹

A guild was founded in Colchester in 1407; leading citizens formed the Fraternity and Guild of St. Helen, obtaining possession of the chapel of the decayed hospital of the Crutched Friars and there founding a chantry of 5 chaplains and providing for the maintenance of 13 poor men to pray for the king and for the brothers and sisters of the guild. In 1499 the Crutched Friars were reinstated to their house, and it seems probable that the Friars then took over the chantry duties of the Guild of St. Helen. By that time, however, St. Helen's Guild seems not to have had as its primary role the provision of prayers for the dead, since only one will, in 1491, mentions the guild.⁵⁰ Instead, as happened in several towns, it apparently became primarily a fraternal society for the leaders of the borough, involved in the ceremonial of borough affairs and probably having elaborate annual feasts. The wardens of the Guild of St. Helen were mentioned twice in the Tudor borough court records, and in each case the lay wardens were aldermen, lending support to the idea that it had become, in a sense, the "borough guild."⁵¹

More important to individual piety were the guilds in parish churches which maintained chapels or lights before images. Several

towns have been described as having guilds in every parish church in town,⁵² and references in the wills and other records indicate that most of the 12 parish churches in the towns and suburbs of Colchester had a guild at one time. Some allusions to guilds, however, are rather indefinite, such as Margaret Barty's bequest to "every light of the guilds in the Church of St. Giles," and guilds in 8 other parish churches are mentioned only once or twice.⁵³ In all of the 203 Colchester wills, 26 or 13% refer to guilds, about the same proportion as in Norwich. Half of the references to guilds in the Colchester wills named the Guild of Jesus Mass in St. Peter's Church, which seemed to be fully organized into what H. F. Westlake calls a cooperative chantry. Except for the Guild of Jesus Mass in St. Peter's Church, we are given no clues as to the activities of the parish guilds, yet it is probably instructive to note that out of the 26 wills mentioning guilds, only 2 of them left money both to a guild and for an obit within their parish churches, indicating that Colchester parish guilds were probably very much in the business of praying for the deceased, both at burial and at obit time. We have no indication, however, that they were mutual benefit or "friendly" societies, although Colin Platt says that guilds sometimes assumed the function of a benefit society when it acquired property.⁵⁴

From the several bequests to the Guild of Jesus Mass, we can deduce much about its customs and activities, with some wills being especially informative. Clothmaker Robert Hervy in 1488 wrote the following in his will:

I bequeath to Jhus Mass within the said Church of St. Peter four torches ready made, each of them weighing fifteen pounds. To the maintenance, reparation, and renovation of the said four torches as often time as need shall require forevermore to endure, 40s. to be

paid and delivered for the folk of the same to the Masters of the said Mass of Jhus under this condition, that one or two of the said torches shall be light and brenne every Friday in the year at the time of the elevation of the said Jhus Mass and burying of every brother and sister at the elevation time of the same mass. And all the same mass time so that every brother or sister of the said Jhus Mass which that shall fortune to decease will give a certain money to the use of the same four torches by the advice of the Masters of the said Mass of Jhus which shall be for the time. . . .

Hervy also bequeathed lights of a pound of wax to burn before the images of Jesus and Mary in the Jesus Chapel in St. Peter's Church, the cost being paid by the rental of a certain tenement belonging to Hervy. In 1508 William Bownde followed Hervy's lead in supplying torches: "I will that four torches be delivered and 40s. with them to the masters of Jhus Mass to burn every Sunday, Holy Day, and Friday at the elevation." Robert Norman in 1518 bequeathed 3s. 4d. to the gilding of Jesus altar, so we know then that the Guild of Jesus Mass had its own chapel in St. Peter's Church, in which was an altar, images of Jesus and Mary, and large torches and smaller lights which were burned at burials, on Sundays, holy days, and on Fridays at the elevation of the eucharistic bread. We can surmise that the guild had its own mass every Friday, which was the day on which some aspect of the passion of Jesus was commonly commemorated. Probably all men and women belonging to the guild were expected to attend the mass on Friday.⁵⁵

The will of Robert Fraunces, written in 1502, gave information about expectations in the guild; Fraunces granted "unto the Mass of Jhus in the said church 5 marks in money under this condition that the masters of the said mass shall order four sheets of parchment and to do be set in the mass book of Jhus and in that to be set all the brethern and sistern that hath give unto the said mass 6s. 8d." Those who contributed 6s. 8d. to the guild were to be specially honored, and

probably they were given more elaborate commemorative services. Of the 14 testators who left money, goods, or property to the Guild of Jesus Mass, five of them gave 6s. 8d., four gave well above that amount, with John Tyall endowing the guild with a tenement in 1500, and five testators left less than the 6s. 8d. mentioned by Robert Fraunces, in amounts from 4d. to 3s. 4d.⁵⁶ The Guild of Jesus Mass, then, seems to have included all economic levels, though it was probably aimed more at the middle and upper levels, or at least the more prosperous were given more honor.

Friday, with its special connections with the Passion of Jesus, was probably the day on which the guild chaplain celebrated obits for deceased brothers or sisters of the Guild of Jesus Mass; certainly obits seem to have been a definite part of the activities of the guild, for as popular as obits were in Colchester, not until 1514 did anyone from St. Peter's--seemingly a non-guildsman--ask for an obit, so the guild seems to have been supplying that need. In the 1520's, however, the guild seems not to have been so active and prosperous; in 1523 and 1525 members of the Guild of Jesus Mass requested, for the first time, an obit or special prayers at their burial.⁵⁷

Even earlier the guilds were not trusted with all of the praying for the souls of the dead, however; in only one case did a testator bequeath money solely to a guild. Nicholas Cooke's only charitable or supplicatory bequest was 4d. to the Guild of Jesus Mass, the lowest amount given to that guild, so Cooke could probably afford no more.⁵⁸ Of the 13 other testators who also gave to the Guild of Jesus Mass, seven of them included money for the hiring of a stipendiary priest, as well as for other kinds of prayers, so if guild members could afford

it, they did not place all their trust in the prayers of the guild.

On the other hand, a few (3 out of 26) obviously valued the prayers of guilds, since they gave to more than one guild. For example, William Smyth, of the parish of St. Leonard, bequeathed 20d. each to Our Lady Guild, St. Leonard's Guild, St. Anne's Guild, and St. Helen's Guild in 1491. A parish church might also house more than one guild, as was the case in St. Peter's Church which also had a Guild of St. Barbara, at least for a time.⁵⁹

Maynard Smith believes that medieval guilds were lay associations which for the most part were entirely independent of clerical control, and Tanner found that to be the case in Norwich. Evidence is scanty, but lay direction seems to have been the rule in the Guild of Jesus Mass in St. Peter's, the one about which we have more information. Unfortunately, only two listings of the names of the masters or governors of the guild occur, first in a transaction recorded in the Colchester court roll on January 12, 1520, in which the masters of the guild, both laymen, with the "brothers of the fraternity," were selling 2 tenements which had been willed to the guild some years earlier. Later, in a 1526 document, the two lay masters of the guild leased some water rights, "with the consent of all the parishioners." Though the services of a chaplain were necessary to a guild, yet the voluntary lay association, self-governed, was a definite step away from the dominance of the church, though still retaining loyalty to the parish and to the parish church housing the guild. Robert Gottfried reports that in Bury St. Edmunds, 27% of the testators sampled provided something to one of the fraternal guilds in that town, which is certainly higher than the 13% in Colchester.⁶⁰ Yet, we must remember that Bury St. Edmunds was

under the domination of a powerful abbey, and its guilds were its only way of exerting political power. Though not so prominent in Colchester, the guilds nevertheless provided one means of expressing the laity's devotion to God, in a setting largely controlled by themselves though in the context of the church.

(5) Prayers in Religious Houses

Another step away from the hierarchy of the church were those entreaties for the soul which were commissioned to be said in the religious houses in Colchester or elsewhere. Forty-nine testators out of 203, or 24% (Table 19), requested prayers in religious houses, with all but two of those testators requesting prayers in one or more of the 4 religious houses in Colchester. The mendicant Grey Friars were by far the most popular, being mentioned by 39 testators, comprising 19% of all will-makers in Colchester. Palliser and Thomson found an even higher reliance on the friars in York and London, where in both cities one-third or more of the wills remembered one of the orders of friars. In Norwich, over 44% of the lay testators made bequests to a friary.⁶¹

We know far too little about the reasons for the popularity of the Grey Friars in Colchester, but it may be that their sermons were an attraction; one of the points made about the mendicant friars by Bernd Moeller is that they preached to the whole town without respect for parish boundaries, a ministry "appropriate to the internal ordering of the commune." We have no record of other Colchester religious houses having sermons, but in 1488 the Grey Friars were preaching, for Robert

Table 19
Prayers for the Dead in Religious Houses¹

	Total No. of Wills	No. of Wills Requesting Prayers	Religious Houses				
			St. John's Abbey	St. Botolph's Priory	Grey Friars	Crossed Friars	Outside of Colchester
1485-99	16	9	4	2	6	-	2
1500-9	81	11	1	6	10	5	3
1510-19	64	21	4	10	16	9	2
1520-9	42	8	5	2	7	4	1
Totals	203	49	14	20	39	18	8

¹ Several testators obviously left money to more than one religious house.

Hervy directed that his name be mentioned in the beadroll "every Sermon time" at the Grey Friars. Also, in 1520 Thomas Cristmas left 20s. yearly for "the maintenance of sermons" at the Grey Friars on every Sunday in Lent. There was at least one learned friar among them in 1507, when Friar John Spryngwell, B.D., was a witness to a will. Also, there were 2 guilds for the laity in the Grey Friars, although we know little about them.⁶² Trentals of masses were especially favored by 25 of those testators who requested prayers at the Grey Friars, and obits were ordered by 6 testators. The heaviest support for the friars came from four of the richest parishes, St. James', St. Leonard's, St. Peter's, and All Saints'.

St. Leonard's also heavily supported the Crossed Friars, even though the Priors of the House of the Holy Cross were often cited in

the court rolls for aggressive behavior.⁶³ Though it was not mentioned in the wills, we know that the Crossed Friars offered one service to the layman which would have been popular with some--an indulgence granting the same remission of sin which one might have obtained by visiting the basilica and churches of Rome and those churches outside it, even that of the Ladder of Heaven, the Scala Coeli, at the Three Fountains. Such indulgences came only with formal church approval, and we have record of the Crutched Friars receiving permission to grant indulgences in 1401 or 1402. Not long after the granting of that document, however, the House of the Crossed Friars in Colchester decayed and was not again occupied by the friars until the end of the 15th century, at which time it received support from some of the wealthiest people in town. Support for both the Franciscan and the Crossed Friars declined in the 1520's, and in 1523 the Crossed Friars, having received permission from church authorities, had a number of indulgences printed by Richard Pynson, "King's Printer," two copies of which were found at the turn of this century in the binding of a book in Chichester Cathedral, preserved because a 16th century book binder found the paper useful as backing. Issued by John Driver, Prior of the Crutched Friars, the indulgence resembled that printed by Caxton in 1481 but was even closer to that issued under Leo X's authority by Albert, Archbishop of Mainz, the notorious one which was so flagrantly hawked by Tetzel, an abuse which helped to precipitate Luther's protest. The indulgence, with a blank for the recipient's name, admitted its holder into the Confraternity of the Crossed Friars, promising that at decease, "that office shall be done for you which is accustomed to be done for our Confraters." Mentioning the authority of Leo X (who died in 1521), the

indulgence went on to grant that the faithful and truly penitent of either sex who visited the Friars' church on specified festival days or on any Friday, or who "sent a sufficient gift of alms through another person to the said Church," would receive the same remission of sins which they would receive from visiting a church in or near Rome. Furthermore, "the confraters of the Confraternity" could choose their own confessor, either a parish priest, "or regular of any order, even of the Mendicants." Moreover, the confrater would receive special favor if during Lent he or she visited any church and on bended knee said the Lord's Prayer with the Angelical Salutation five times over. The Pope also granted 50 days' indulgence to those who recited the Lord's Prayer and Angelic Salutation on rosaries of the Virgin Mary which had been blessed by the Prior of the Holy Cross.⁶⁴

F. R. H. DuBoulay writes that indulgences were becoming less popular with the English people after the mid-15th century, and we have no indication as to how popular the Crossed Friars' indulgence was, but the reference to the Scala Coeli was making use of a point of popular piety in Colchester, for earlier in 1508 two testators had requested that a priest say masses "in the chapel at Westminster that hath such pardon and indulgence as is named at Scala Coeli." Scala Coeli referred to one of the three churches at the Tre Fontane near Rome, St. Mary Scala Coeli, which commemorated the vision of St. Bernard in which, while celebrating Mass for certain deceased persons, he saw their souls ascending by a ladder to Heaven. It appears that certain chapels and altars in England were granted the privileges of the Scala Coeli, among them Westminster and the Austin Friars in Norwich, but by 1516 Colchester also seems to have had its own privileges for saying such

masses. The leaders of the town in 1516 granted to the Prior of the Holy Cross a piece of land adjacent to their house, on condition that the Prior and his successors celebrate yearly in their church, "at an altar, de skala celi there, a solemn mass" on Monday after Hokeday "pro salutari prosperitate ville." Also, Matthew Rede in 1517 requested that the Prior of the Crossed Friars say 8 masses "at Scala Coeli there," and that the Sub-Prior of St. Botolph's "pray for me at Scala Coeli."⁶⁵ Such a privilege for special masses and indulgences had the potential of making the House of the Crossed Friars in Colchester an object of pilgrimage, but we have no indication that such occurred.

The connection between a confraternity attached to a religious house and indulgences was evident in Elizabeth Harmanson's will in 1505, in which she gave 3s. 4d. "to every place where I am sister by any pardon." The Augustinian Priory of St. Botolph in Colchester also seemed to have some special privilege for the remission of sins: Alice Garrard left 8d. in 1514 to the priory "to have part of the pardon," and William Thorne asked to be buried "before the pardon door" of St. Botolph's. Two testators, no doubt wanting some of that pardon too, asked to be a part of the confraternity at St. Botolph's; in 1505 William Fuller left 20d. "to be received as a brother," and John Salough in 1511 bequeathed 10s. to St. Botolph's so that he might "be prayed for as a brother of the place."⁶⁶ St. Botolph's, though, does not seem to have been making a broad appeal for confreres such as that attempted by the Crossed Friars through their indulgence of 1523. Although St. Botolph's did not have the wide support such as that given to the Grey Friars, support from testators in their own parish was notable. Of the ten testators from St. Botolph's parish who left money

to a religious house, nine left it to St. Botolph's Priory; it seems, then, that the Augustinian Canons were probably quite active in pastoral work in their own populous but poorer parish, composed largely of small craftsmen and laborers.

Fewer will-makers gave to the Benedictine St. John's Abbey for prayers than to the other religious houses in Colchester (see Table 19), and half of those asking for prayers at St. John's were from St. Giles' parish, where St. John's was located and where the Benedictines served the cure of the parish church. Furthermore, the other testators asking for prayers at St. John's were, for the most part, aldermen or gentlemen, so the appeal of the Benedictines was largely to the upper levels of Colchester society. Apparently some sort of lay confraternity was also attached to St. John's; in 1488 clothmaker Robert Hervy left 10s. to the "chapter house of St. John's so that I be made there a brother of the same chapter house," and forty years later William Lake, Gent., left 6s. 8d. "to the convent of the monastery of St. John Baptist beside Colchester that I may be absolved in their chapter house as a brother."⁶⁷

So much attention given to the provision for prayers in both the parish church and the religious house to aid in the release from the pains of Purgatory bespeaks an insecurity on the part of the testators. The doctrine of Purgatory was a part of a "works salvation" in which the devoted would always wonder if they had done enough, particularly if they had the resources for doing more. Economically, the church benefitted; Jordan tells us that in the years prior to the Reformation (from 1480), the amount of money disposed for prayers represented more than a fourth of all charitable wealth, and in Colchester, though we

have not looked at it in terms of the amount of money spent, we have found that 62% of all lay testators made provision for prayers for deceased souls. There was a heavy investment in the dead.⁶⁸

(6) Prayers of the Laity and the Poor

One other small provision for prayers for the dead in the wills has not been touched upon, i.e. money given to the laity for prayers. In no case did anyone depend only on the laity for prayers for their soul, yet the help of the laity was usually desired, even in the prayers in the parish churches and the religious houses. At the reciting of the names on the beadroll, the congregation was urged to pray for the dead, and provision was often made to encourage the attendance of the laity, especially the poor, at burial masses and during obit time. The parish guilds were a voluntary association of the laity primarily for the purpose of praying together for the living and the dead, and members were expected to attend the regular guild services. Prayer was a communal effort, and the part of one's neighbors in that endeavor was deemed to be most helpful. William Wheler carefully made provision for the bell man of the town to go about every year "with his bell to cause the people to pray for my soul."⁶⁹

Twelve Colchester testators left money to laymen with the proviso that they were to pray for the soul of the donor. Three of them named specific laypersons to pray, including a blind man, women, and a certain "little Thomas," paying them each 3s. 4d. or 6s. 8d. One of the laypersons was a tenant, and it is probable that the others who were to pray were servants or tenants of the gentlemen-donors. One

Colchester testator, Agnes Bownde, left 10s. to a tenant on the condition that he go on pilgrimage for her to Canterbury, Walsingham, and Ipswich, among other places. Four other testators left money, from 4d. to 12d., to "every godchild" to pray, affirming the importance of that spiritual relationship.⁷⁰ All of the above bequests, though, were to people known personally to the testator; perhaps more interesting was that 9 of the 12 people who left money to laymen for prayers gave merely to "the poor," who were to meet certain conditions such as attendance at an annual anniversary mass, at burial, or on the month day.

The prayers of the poor were thought to have exceptional influence with God, whose son was once a poor man. As the mythical Pauper said to Dives:

Wytdrawe nought þin zyfte from hym þat is in tribulacioun. Turne nought away þin face from the nedy ne turne nought þinne eyne away from the helpeles and the pore ne yeve hym noo cause for to curse þe. For ȝyf he curse þe in bytternesse of soule, his preyere shal been herd, for God þat made hym shal heryn hym.

The Dreamer in Piers Plowman contrasted the plight of the poor and the learned clerics as follows:

In other words, none are more easily seduced from the right beliefs than clever scholars who study a lot of books; and none are sooner saved or are firmer in their faith, than simple ploughmen and shepherds and poor common labourers. For by pure faith, these cobblers, herdsmen, and peasants, who know so little and whose earthly lives are so imperfect, can pierce with a single Paternoster to the palace of Heaven; and when they die, pass through Purgatory unscathed into the bliss of Paradise.⁷¹

Section 3C: Other Benefactions

Almsgiving to the poor was a favorite virtue of the Middle Ages, thought to be good for the soul and a means of laying up riches in the next world. One of the purposes of charity, even though unstated, was the purchase of prayers, as expressed by the Dreamer in Piers Plowman: "So my advice to all Christian people is to build their lives on charity; for Charity, most certainly, frees the spirit, and releases many souls from Purgatory by its prayers." The virtue of charity was valued by a number of Colchester testators; from 1485 through 1529 there were 39 testators who made some kind of benefaction to the poor (Table 16), with only 9 of those testators, as already noted, specifically mentioning that the poor were to pray for the donor. A few gave to the poor in a certain parish, or even to the poor in every parish, as directed by testator Agnes Bownde, "40s. to be divided unto every parish according to the quantity of the people." More common were alms or sometimes bread given to the poor on burial day and on the month day, probably with the intent of having the recipients in attendance for the requiem masses on those days. Five testators left money to be given weekly, usually on Friday, to a certain number of poor people for a specified period of time, from 1 year to 20 years; interestingly, each one of those five donors stated that the prayers of the recipients were expected, probably because a sizable sum was involved. As John Salough put it: "To five bedefolk they to pray for my soul, my wife's soul, and all Christian souls for 3 years, every one of them to have week and weekly, 3d., on the Friday in every week to be paid by the hands of my executors." Other donors required that the poor attend a memorial mass for the donor on the Fridays. Sometimes food or money were given to

prisoners in the moothall and in the castle on burial or anniversary days in conjunction with the giving to the poor.⁷²

Some testators were rather more creative in their giving than others; Agnes Bownde, having already given 40s. to the poor in every parish, willed "that thirteen of the poorest women in St. Peter's and St. James' parish have a petticoat of white ready made to wear." She also left "to James mine alms child every year 20s. to his finding til he be ten years old so that he be honestly kept and found to school . . . and then to be set a craft." Bownde's husband, William, left "to the marriage of ten maidens £3 6s. 8d. that is to each of them 6s. 8d. And to other three maidens marriage most piteously chosen £3."⁷³ Bequests to assist in the marriages of poor maidens were rare in Colchester, although they were common elsewhere. Some bequests to the poor were given through hospitals, with St. Anne's being by far the most popular recipient. Usually bequests to St. Anne's were in the form of mattresses, sheets, or coverlets for the alms beds, but sometimes money was given to the guild which was attached to St. Anne's.

In addition to bequests for the poor, other gifts for the welfare of the people, such as for highways or education, were to the benefit of the donor's soul, but they also helped to provide a rationale for the townsmen's pursuit of money. As Lester K. Little noted, such philanthropy "held one of the keys to the justification of profit-making." William Langland touched on that idea in Piers Plowman in a section about the pardon received by Piers:

But truth sent the merchants a letter under His secret seal,
telling them to buy up boldly all the best goods they could get,
then sell them again, and use the profits to repair the hospitals
and to help folk in trouble--to get the bad roads mended quickly
and rebuild the broken bridges--to enable poor girls to marry or

to enter nunneries--to feed the poor and the men in prisons--to send boys to school or apprentice them to a trade, and to assist Religious Orders and give them better endowments.--"And if you will do these things," said Truth, "I myself will send you St. Michael my Archangel when you die, so that no devil shall harm your souls or make you afraid; and he will ward off despair, and lead your souls in safety to meet my saints in Heaven."

The merchants were pleased with this, and many of them wept for joy. . . .

In Colchester wills, 16 persons (Table 16) gave from 2s. to £13 6s. 8d. each for the improvement of roads, or in Richard Ball's descriptive phrase, for the "reparation of fowle waies." A few of the more prosperous also gave money for other miscellaneous civic improvements such as the gift of 3 statues to be placed over the East Gate and £20 for "the amendment of the creek in Colchester Heath." Surprisingly, only 2 testators left money for education. Thomas Cristmas' establishment of Westons School has already been noted, and Elizabeth Harmanson's £40 bequest was not to be used in Colchester, but was for "the foundation of a fellow" in Cambridge University.⁷⁴

Altogether, almsgiving to the poor or for other charitable purposes is to be found in 45 or 22% of Colchester wills written by the laity (Table 16). Putting the almsgiving together with the other charitable giving to the parish church and for prayers in the parish church or in religious houses, we have a total of 154 wills out of 203, or 76%, which engaged in charitable and religious giving, which economically would have a significant impact on the distribution of wealth in the borough.

Section 3D: Evidence of Communal Concern

Pious works had more than economic effects, though; a communal bonding was created by the acts of piety. Bequests to the parish church or to the poor helped to draw the community together, but more basically a communal nexus stemmed from the necessity of prayers for easing the horror of Purgatory, a fate common to all. Based on the idea from at least as early as the 9th century that one could perform an act of penance for another, the belief that one could pray for another's soul after death developed into a communal activity. One evidence of the seeking of collective security was the formation of religious guilds, lay brotherhoods which were, in Lionel Rothkrug's grand words, "triumphant expressions of soteriological democracy." Rothkrug sees an important shift in purgatorial piety during the upheavals of the 14th century from the principle of simple substitution to the principle of collective responsibility, which was fully developed in England by the time the Tudors were on the throne. All of the community was informed by the church bells when there was a burial service or when anniversary masses were being said, and even the poor of the community were drawn into this activity.

Evidence for feelings of communal bonding can be found in the directions for arranging for prayers for the soul after death. Frequently, testators named a number of people who were to be remembered in prayer; joiner William Neve directed that a stipendiary priest pray for a year "for my soul, my father and mother, my wife and her father and mother . . . and for all Christian souls which that God's will is to be prayed for." Testators were not trying to limit the prayers to

their own individual needs, although they were most certainly concerned for their own soul. Often the phrases, "for all Christian souls," or "for my friends," were included in their prayer directions; as J. C. Dickinson has remarked, special prayers and almsgiving were not "a series of individual efforts to jump the queue for the exit from purgatory." Testators were aware of their responsibilities to each other; for example, Joan Inkley left 20s. for the Grey Friars to sing 2 trentals "for my soul and for the souls that I am bound to pray for," and her directions for a stipendiary priest were for him "to pray and sing for my soul, my husband's soul and the souls of all Christians." John Byrch directed that some recently purchased land and tenements be sold and the money received "to be disposed for my soul and for the souls that I bond for." Kathleen Wood-Legh, in her studies of chantries, has noted the sense of solidarity among the pious, though she says that it was based less on love than on fear.⁷⁵

Not only did the pious develop a sense of collective responsibility, but the sense of responsibility within the family was strengthened. Rosenthal found in his study of chantry licenses and wills that a high proportion of donors named one of their immediate family as a co-beneficiary of the prayers being set up, with the wife--or husband--and the mother and father named most often. The same was certainly true in Colchester wills, and testators were often generous enough to include multiple wives or husbands since the high mortality rate meant that many had been married more than once. William Breton also named his grandparents and an aunt, and occasionally other names were given but with no indication of relationship, if any.⁷⁶ There was a strong urge to name parents, but seldom children; presumably each generation

assumed that they in turn would be prayed for by their children. James Aleyn spoke of his regard for his parents when he left a sum of money to his executors for "discharging my debts and other works of charity, namely relief of poor and needy beggars, bad highways near the town of Colchester and other uses as may seem to them right and pleasing to almighty God and to use in honor of the souls of my parents." Only 2 wills requested that children be included in the prayers, and the prayers in one of those were to occur only if the wife and all four daughters died without heirs, in which case the testator's dwelling was to be sold and the money used "to pray for my soul and for the souls of my wife, children, and all Christian souls."⁷⁷

Prayers for the soul, then, created a bonding, connecting the living with the dead in the family and in the larger society but also forging a unity among the living in their attempts to practice piety, especially in the communal prayer efforts to release the souls of the dead from Purgatory. Prayers for the dead gave the community a tie with the past,⁷⁸ but also meant that the community had a stake in the future, in its desire for future prayers for itself. Furthermore, the laity had come to rely heavily on each other for the execution of pious works and were thereby building up confidence in themselves as spiritually capable people.

Section 4: Lay Administration of Pious Bequests

It has been assumed by Jordan and Rosenthal that the church was the primary administrator for works of piety; in Rosenthal's words, "Almost all forms of medieval gift giving, whatever the ultimate

purpose and destination, were administered in the first instance by the church."⁷⁹ Whatever might have been the situation in other places, good works and prayers requested by Colchester will-makers, particularly annual obits and almsgiving, were almost entirely administered by laity, mainly by executors but also by churchwardens and guildsmen. True, priests were essential in the approach to God in prayer, but it was the laity in Colchester who were arranging and paying for the prayers. Colchester's strong tradition of self-governance in political affairs had been translated into spiritual affairs.

Section 4A: Executors of Wills

Naming an executor to a will was legally an essential part of the will, for if no executor was named, the testator was considered to have died intestate. Remarkable confidence was placed in the executor, as he or she not only handled the directed distribution of goods, but also usually received the residue of goods with the injunction, as in Joan Inkley's words to her executor, her son-in-law, to use the residue "to bring me to the earth . . . and to dispose in deeds of charity for my soul and all Christians as he thinks best." Most testators named their closest family members as executors and therefore seemed to have complete trust in them, whereas others felt the need for some reminders as to the duty of executors. John Argentine's gentle charge to his executors reminded them that "my very trust is in them," whereas others used stronger motivating language; e.g. Roger Burgon warned his 2 executors "to perform this my last will . . . as they will answer before God at the day of judgement." One wonders about the relationships in

John Upcher's family after his warning to his executors, his wife and son, "that they shall dispose the foresaid goods for my soul and my friends' souls as they will answer before God at the day of doom."⁸⁰

Not only did executors handle the secular legacies, but over and over again they were mentioned as being responsible for administering all sorts of spiritual business for the testator. Margaret Bayly bequeathed to her parish church a "cloth of silk with the picture of All Hallows therein and to be bought by my executors." Thomas Clere desired his executors to provide a taper of wax to be burned during the singing of masses in his parish church for one year. Elizabeth Harman-son bequeathed £26 "to one priest or to students in the university [Cambridge] after the discretion of mine executors." Her husband, beer-brewer Edmund Harmanson, directed "to the Cross Friars £10 to be paid by my executors as they see their reparations done or else none. . . . I will that my beer house . . . remain to my executors and they to find a good and honest priest to sing for me, and they to keep the beer house in good repair." Agnes Bownde ordered "that I may be prayed for in every parish church in Colchester in the beadroll and at the friary in Colchester . . . for three years and my executors to agree with the curates and friars for the same." John Grene's directions to his executors were that they "do say for my soul continually after my decease six masses." Grene obviously meant that his executors were to hire one or more priests to say the masses, but many executors did have to make decisions about the type of spiritual services which were to be provided for the testators; widow Agnes Jonson placed extraordinary confidence in her executor when she wrote, "I will that Thomas Browne, brasier, of Colchester receive all the payment that cometh of my house

in More Lane and a part of that money that cometh thereof to be disposed for my soul, for my husband's soul and all Christian souls as it shall seem the said Thomas Browne to take as it shall please him for his labor."⁸¹

To fulfill the business of executing a will such as George Aleyn's might take several years; Aleyn wrote "that my executors shall cause to be sung for my soul every year during the term of five years, every quarter of a year a trental, paying for every trental 10s. and then to distribute to poor and needy people every quarter . . . with every trental 3s. 4d." The hiring of priests and the distribution of alms was very much the business of the executor, it seems, rather than merely handing over money to the parish priest and assuming that he would arrange it all. Testators were especially careful to put lay people in charge of prayers or alms which were to take place or to be given over a period of time. The anniversary masses, or obits, certainly fell into this category, and when looking carefully at the 43 obits which were instituted by Colchester testators from 1485 to 1529 in parish churches, 27 of those testators specifically named executors as being in charge of yearly arrangements, 10 named churchwardens, 1 named the bailiffs of the town, and 5 left it indefinite, although we can probably assume that the executors were in charge of those 5 also since the testators did not name anyone else (see Table 20). John Bardefeld was very clear in his directions, stating that, with the rent from a certain field, "Margery my wife my executor shall once a year keep an obit therewith solemn for my soul." After Margery's decease the land and obit were then to "remain to the hands of the churchwardens of St. Leonard's." John Denby also wrote, "I will that my

Table 20

The Administration of Obits in the Parish Church

	Total No. of Wills	No. Requesting Obits	Administered by:			
			Executors	Churchwardens	Other	Uncertain
1485-99	16	7	4	2	-	1
1500-9	81	11	9	1	-	1
1510-19	64	16	9	5	-	2
1520-9	42	9	5	2	1	1
Totals	203	43*	27	10	1	5

* An additional 3 testators left money or lands for obits in one of the Colchester religious houses. Four of the 43 testators wanting obits in a parish church also wanted an obit in a religious house. In all, 12 obits were requested in Colchester religious houses, half of them in the Grey Friars. Of the 12 obits in religious houses, 6 were administered by the houses themselves, 4 by executors, 1 by the bailiffs of Colchester, and 1 was uncertain.

executors or the executors of them shall yearly during the space of 18 years keep an obit in the said church of St. James for my soul and all my friends' souls to the content of 5s."⁸²

Likewise, the giving of alms by testators was almost completely handled by lay people. Many of the alms to the poor or prisoners were to be given at burial or at obit time, and those seem to have been handled by executors. Testators were very specific, however, if they were leaving alms to be given weekly, which was in every case for a period of one or more years so that a sizable sum of money was involved. Five Colchester testators left money for weekly almsgiving, and each of those five donors clearly directed that his lay executor was to be in

charge. Thomas Cristmas kept his executors very busy; he directed in his will of 1520 "that my executors and their executors for 20 years after my decease do every Friday distribute to 12 lame, poor, and needy persons in Colchester and the 12 poor persons shall every Friday come to St. John's monastery to devoutly hear mass and prayer for my soul about my tomb, 12d. Executors to distribute every Friday for 20 years to the prisoners of the castle in meat and drink, 12d." John Salough likewise left "to 5 bedefolks they to pray for my soul, my wife's soul, and all Christian souls for 3 years, everyone of them to have every week and weekly 3d. on the Friday in every week to be paid by the hands of my executors."⁸³

Executors, then, had power when it came to the hiring of priests and the giving of alms, and lay executors were preferred in those cases which required supervision over a period of time. To be named the executor of pious works probably meant that the executor was considered to be pious or, in any case, to have a respect for piety. Some testators evidenced concern for the welfare of their executors; William Wheler stipulated that his executors were "to receive 3d. every time they spend 2d. of their own goods in execution of this will." On the other hand, some executors, finding themselves near death without having finished the business of being executor, were quite concerned, as was William Nicoll who wrote in his will of 1529, "I put mine executors . . . in full power and authority that I have in the execution . . . of the testament of Robert Crakebone . . . to see it fulfilled in every point."⁸⁴

We have noted that executors were of significance in the performance of the acts of lay piety, but of course if those executors were

Table 21
Executors of Colchester Wills, 1485-1529

First Order Kin		Affines and Other Relatives		Clerics	Other Non-Kin		
Wives	121	Sons-in-law	13	Parsons	3	Friends ²	72
Sons	36	Brothers	" 4	Others	6	Church-wardens	4
Brothers	10	Fathers	" 3			Misc.	5
Daughters	4	Other	8				
Mothers	3						
Husbands ¹	3						
<hr/>		<hr/>		<hr/>		<hr/>	
177		28		9		81	
Total: 295 executors ³		205 relatives 69% of total		90 non-kin 31% of total			

¹ Only 4 married women made wills, and the fourth named her son as executor.

² Many which I have classified as friends were possibly relatives, especially in-laws.

³ In 198 wills; the other 5 lays wills were incomplete as they have come to us, or they were illegible at the end. In the 198 wills, 118 named sole executors, of which there were 78 wives, 12 sons, 12 friends, 5 sons-in-law, 3 husbands, 2 parsons, 1 former apprentice, and 5 assorted relatives.

mainly clerics then we will not have proved very much about lay piety. An analysis in Table 21 of the executors of the 198 wills whose executors are known shows that, out of 295 executors named, 121 were wives, and 78 of those wives were sole executors. In their role as executors, widows held economic power and were also a significant factor in the execution of prayers and pious works. Many testators who named their wives as sole executors expressed confidence in them, revealing what

seemed to be a close relationship with their wives. John Lyard left his residue of goods to his wife, Alice, his sole executor, desiring her "to dispose them in deeds of charity as it shall seem best and where as most need is and as I have shewed her my mind in divers things." Of the 295 executors named, 177 were first-order kin (wives, sons, brothers, daughters, mothers, and husbands), and 28 were affines or other relatives, with a total of 205 executors or 69% who were relatives. Wrightson and Levine, in their study of the Essex village of Terling, found that 87% of the executors were kin and only 13% were non-kin, again pointing to the fact that people in towns had to depend more on friends than did those in smaller villages.⁸⁵

The small number of clerics, only nine, named as executors in pre-Reformation Colchester wills is significant especially when we note that only two of those clerics were named as sole executors; in all the other cases, the cleric served with a lay executor. Interesting, too, is the fact that no clerics were named as sole executors after 1506 and only one as a co-executor after that, in 1533. In only one will was an executor instructed to get the advice of a cleric; Peter Borow's sole executor was his wife, and Borow stipulated that "my executor under-written by the advice of master parson of St. Nicholas shall find an honest priest to sing 3 trentals of masses for my soul in the Church of St. Nicholas." No doubt other executors sought the advice of their parish priests when hiring chaplains to say prayers, and nineteen clerics were named as supervisors of wills, which was an advisory position only. In Norwich, between one-fourth and one-third of the testators chose a cleric as an executor or supervisor, whereas only 13% of Colchester testators did so. Wealthy Thomas Cristmas in 1520

revealed the strong reliance on lay executors in Colchester. His will expressed confidence about the endurance and longevity of the concern of laypersons for pious acts when he named a lay executor and willed "that my executors and their executors for four score years following my decease shall yearly pay unto the wardens of the Grey Friars L3 6s. 8d. . . ."⁸⁷

Section 4B: Churchwardens

Also important in the system of pious works in the late medieval period were the two churchwardens of every parish church. A few testators who seemingly had no family even named churchwardens as executors of their wills. More often, though, churchwardens were named as recipients of money, land, or animals since the wardens were the legal guardians of all parish church property. Elected annually in most places, the office of churchwarden seems to have grown out of the greater involvement of all parishioners in the care of church property in the 13th century. By the Tudor period some churchwardens had fairly heavy responsibilities--keeping the church clean and in good repair, supervising any rebuilding, managing church property and stock let out for hire, administering funds and accounting for them annually, seeing that the church possessed all requisite books and ornaments, organizing church festivities, some of them for profit such as church ales and church plays, and presenting to the ecclesiastical court any moral delinquencies of either cleric or layman. Some wardens also provided for the poor out of church funds in emergencies, and this function was to become a major one in the Elizabethan period.⁸⁸

No doubt the two churchwardens in each parish, seemingly chosen by all of the parishioners, were responsible leaders who respected pious ways. In Oxford the churchwardens were often drawn from the upper ranks in society, but this was not generally true in Colchester, where the upper levels of society found their outlet in borough affairs. We have the names of a number of churchwardens, collected primarily from the borough court records, and though leaders in their parish, almost none were above the second rank in borough affairs. The 1521-22 borough court record yields the names of 6 churchwardens for that year, and though it is a small sampling, a useful picture can be drawn from those 6 men (see Appendix 5). All were from parishes in or adjoining the central market area (St. Peter's, St. Runwald's, and All Saints'), one was a gentleman and the other occupations represented were card-maker, husbandman, surgeon, and tailor. In the lay subsidy of 1524-25, their wealth ranged from 40s. to £14 in goods, and two of them later served on the Second Council of the borough and as constables from their parish. Furthermore, the office of churchwarden does not necessarily seem to have been a stepping stone to the holding of an office in the borough, as only eight aldermen had ever been churchwardens, so far as we know.⁸⁹

Having a say in the election of their churchwardens no doubt gave the people more of a sense of proprietorship in the local church than would have been the case if the clerics had been completely in control. Certainly the Colchester wills reflect a strong sense of confidence in the dedication of the churchwardens and in their handling of money and property for the church and for the continuation of prayers. Wealthy Thomas Cristmas directed his executors to pay "unto the

churchwardens in every parish church within the town of Colchester to the use of the churches 6s. 8d." John Burwod had only his house to give; he left it to his wife, but "after her decease I bequeath my house unto the parish church of St. Botolph the churchwardens to put it to the reparation of the said church where most need is." Two women left houses to the churchwardens of St. Leonard's parish to be used as almshouses, which meant that the wardens would have to select poor people to live in the houses and keep them in repair. A few testators left cows to be hired out by the churchwardens in country parishes to establish lights in the churches; Margaret Barty wanted "two kine bought and devlivered to the churchwardens of St. Giles to maintain the light of St. Anthony perpetual." Occasionally deeds recorded in the borough court reveal that churchwardens were selling property left to the church, but as one deed stated, "by the unanimous assent, consent and permission of the whole body of the parishioners of the parish." William Pylgryme stipulated that his legacy to the church was "to be disposed . . . by the advice of the church and the churchwardens of the said church of Lexden." Only one will required that the parson also be consulted; Richard Ruoke ordered that his "tenement be sold by mine executors and the money thereof received I will that the churchwardens then being and others of the honest men of the same parish shall receive the said money and they to bestow it in such things to the honor and worship of God by them most necessary and needful to be done within the said church as to books, vestments, copes or other things to the honor and worship of God."⁹⁰

The continuation of prayers in anniversary masses for the dead was directly entrusted to churchwardens by 10 testators (see Appendix

5B), and other property and obits came under the oversight of the wardens after executors died. Cows and sheep were left to the supervision of churchwardens in country parishes, and other wardens were entrusted with houses, land, and a farm to be leased so that yearly prayers could be said for the donors.

Though clerics were most certainly necessary for the saying of prayers, lay people had placed enormous trust in their fellow laity for the continuing administration of prayers for the soul. We noted earlier that the Guild of Jesus Mass seemed to be free of clerical control, so the guildsmen, executors, and churchwardens--the lay administrators of pious works--were all a vital part of the communal effort to practice piety and to mitigate the pains of Purgatory. Though the object was to get one's own soul to heaven, the necessity of relying on others relieved the process of salvation of its purely selfish concerns as good works and even prayers extended themselves to others. The laity had found that one could perform an act of penance for another, and they found that they could even pray for another. They saw that people in certain situations, the clergy and the poor, had special access to God. The rich too had special opportunities to find God--their wealth could perform many good works and could buy the services of many priests. The townsman also wanted salvation, and so he developed his guilds and systems of mutual reliance for the attainment of salvation. If the poor, the clergy, and the rich had their special access to God, the townsmen would find it, too--and they did. And in the communal finding of ways and means toward the attainment of salvation, the townsmen also found a confidence in themselves. The strong predilection for obits, both those that they arranged themselves and those that they

attained through their fellow guildsmen, evidences an urgent need to be remembered as individuals. They found themselves to be of worth, and they did not want to be forgotten, either by God or by their fellowmen. Though they were in the midst of communal efforts toward salvation, they were also individuals wanting to be remembered. In finding varied and creative ways to practice personal devotion, their acts of piety validated and strengthened their family life and their civic life. Their devotion to God's ways gave them the confidence to proceed in the pursuit of profit, for they had found how to use profit "to the honor and worship of God."

Section 5: Piety and the Borough of Colchester

Though the late medieval townsman had certainly become more secure in his stance before God and before man, yet his mental set was hardly that of rampant individualism, since his piety was primarily expressed communally. First of all it was expressed within the context of the church, yet there are definite signs that the efforts of Colchester people were not so completely directed toward the church as were those in some other towns. Compared to Norwich, very few of the sons of Colchester inhabitants were going into the church, there was far less reliance on the clergy in the execution of wills, and there was less devotion to votive lights and to prayers for the dead. Also, the support of religious houses in Colchester was less than in towns such as York and London (see Table 22). Communal expressions of piety were to be found in religious guilds in Colchester. It has been said that the late medieval period was a golden age of small lay associations

Table 22

The Practices of Traditional Piety--
Comparison of Colchester and Other Towns

Act of Piety	In Colchester Wills	In the Wills ¹ of Other Towns
Sons who were clerics	4%, 1485-1529	Norwich: 10-11%, 1370-1532
Left at least £5 for masses and prayers	22%, 1485-1529	Norwich: 40%, 1489-1532
Bequests for votive lights	6.5%, 1518-1532	Norwich: almost 50%, 1518-1532
Bequests to an order of friars	19%, 1485-1529	Norwich: 44% 1370-1532 London: 35.6% 1401-1530 York: 33%, 1501-1538
Mentioned a guild	13%, 1485-1529	Norwich: about 14%, 1370-1532
Named a cleric as an executor or super- visor of the will	13%, 1485-1529	Norwich: between 25%-33%, 1370-1532
Endowment of an obit	21%, 1485-1529	London: 21%, 1523-5, 1529-30

¹ From Tanner, pp. 58, 206, 229-30, 245, 259; Thomson, "Piety," 189-90, 192; Palliser, York, p. 227.

of piety.⁹¹ Colchester had its "borough guild" of St. Helen and the active parish Guild of Jesus Mass in St. Peter's Church, both controlled by the laity yet in the context of the church; nevertheless Colchester had always had fewer guilds than most towns. With less dependency on the church and on guilds for its manifestations of piety, the borough

itself provided a setting for the expression of conventional lay piety in Colchester.

Bernd Moeller sees the late medieval town in Germany as being a sacral community, conscious of being religiously distinctive. Colchester too manifested a kind of civic piety, although it was not articulated as it was, for example, by the early humanists in Italy. Nevertheless, Colchester's governance and history afforded strong support, encouragement, and models for the confident performance of pious deeds. Colchester had a long tradition of self-governance and was as free of outside control as a town in England could be. As a royal borough, it did not have local, powerful lords dominating it, and it had its own courts and Justices of the Peace. It was the strength of the Colchester borough governance which largely precluded the need for guilds. Colchester was proud of the liberties as a borough which it enjoyed "from time out of mind," and Colchester was proud of its presumed connection with St. Helen, the mother of Constantine.

The leaders of Colchester had developed a tradition of religious responsibility in the town, dating at least from the 14th century. The founders of the 3 earliest chantries in Colchester, all founded in the 14th century, each designated the bailiffs of the town as the holders of the advowson of the chantry after the death of the founders. One of the richest chantries in Colchester was founded by Joseph Elianore, who had himself been a bailiff in the mid-14th century, and he was one of those who put his trust in the bailiffs, expecting continuing religious leadership from them. The founding of the Guild of St. Helen, which apparently became the "borough guild," involved the founding of more chantries, and the guild received under its supervision three other

chantries established in the first half of the 15th century. The bailiffs, then, were in control of almost all of the Colchester chantries. The bailiffs also assisted the parish churches; from 1349 to 1508 the bailiffs and commonalty granted to Holy Trinity Church a dwelling house for the rector. The bailiffs also helped the religious houses; the borough in 1499 granted to the Crossed Friars messuages and lands so that they could be re-established in Colchester. The bailiffs also encouraged the practice of prayers for the soul; in 1523 Robert Everard entrusted the bailiffs with the administration of an obit in perpetuity. The top leaders of the town, then, were assuming a leadership in spiritual matters, providing a model for the other lay administrators of pious works and prayers--the guildsmen, churchwardens, and executors of wills.⁹²

Charles Phythian-Adams has noted that in Coventry the higher the aspirations of the townsman the more did he attend church services. Although his piety might be more symbolic than genuine, his need to exhibit piety tells us much about the expectations of the community in regard to its leaders. We have no knowledge of the frequency with which the Colchester leaders attended divine services, but we can evaluate the value placed on piety by the 60% of the aldermen between 1485 and 1558 whose wills are extant (see Table 23). Fifty percent of those aldermen manifested great concern for the deeds of piety, and another 29% showed a moderate concern for piety and its deeds. The 50% placing great value on the acts of piety was a higher percentage than in the general will-making population of Colchester, which we found to be 41% of the testators from 1500 to 1529. The community wanted and expected more in deeds of charity from its leaders than was evident in the

Table 23

Value Placed on Pious Deeds by Aldermen, 1485-1558

Out of 63 aldermen, the value placed on pious deeds by 38 aldermen can be evaluated, mostly by the use of wills, but a few from other evidence such as the establishment of chantries or almshouses.

Category I

Evidenced a high regard for the acts of piety . . . 19, or 50%

Category II

Moderate regard for the acts of piety 11, or 29%

Category III

Minimum regard for the acts of piety 8, or 21%

community at large. The deeds of piety did not place one among the elite of the borough, for money was the crucial criterion for the aldermanic office, but being an alderman did place a responsibility upon one. The role of the leaders was to provide careful and strict order in the town, but there also seemed to be a genuine sense of social responsibility. For many, a part of that responsibility was to provide a model of piety.⁹³

We have already noted that Colchester was more elitist in its governance than was Oxford or even York. Only the wealthier in Colchester could be aldermen and almost all of them came from the more respectable trades, particularly from clothmaking. The deference given to the top leaders in Colchester meant that those leaders had great influence, and the dominant Cristmas family provided strong spiritual leadership. By all indications, members of the Cristmas family were exemplary patterns of piety, at least in its outward forms. In the will of Thomas Cristmas in 1520 (see Appendix 6), Cristmas established a school "to teach grammar and other virtuous conditions and learning,"

gave money to each of the parish churches, provided for the distribution of money to the poor every Friday for 20 years, left money for the repair of highways and the River Colne, provided bedding to the Hospital of St. Anne, left money for prayers in each of the Colchester religious houses and provided for the maintenance of sermons by the Grey Friars. His father, Thomas, was the burgess-M.P. who helped write the first account of Parliament written in English in 1485, so we know that the family had some learning. It was their parish church, St. James', which had a Bible available in it, and whose priest, John Adam, left his devotional books for the use of the parishioners in 1491. More than likely the elder Thomas Cristmas provided a large amount of the money for the rebuilding of St. James' Church, where the initials "T.C." are still to be seen in the wall of the east end which was built at that time. The Cristmas family was fortunate in its male progeny, and their longevity as leaders (through 1547) in the town must have been a factor in the development of laic orthodox spirituality in Colchester. Nor should we forget that their prosperity and that of others made it possible for them not only to be leaders of the town but to express their piety in many deeds of charity which would be seen by all. They were models of pious actions, showing that one could use money rightly, for the good of others as well as for the health of one's own soul, thereby helping to legitimate the pursuit of profit.

Other families provided models of piety for the community, notably the Clere family who served as Colchester aldermen for most of the Tudor period. The majority of the aldermen in Colchester seemed conscientious in their duties and were aware of their moral leadership. The record of an inquiry into a will in 1492 begins as follows:

We Thomas Cristmasse the elder and Nicholas Clere, Baillies of the Town of Colchestre, send gretynge in our lord God everlastyng, . . . and for as moche as it is right wel known that it is meriterus and meedefull to testyfy and bere record in everi mater of trouthe, to thentent that all collusion and fraude myght be repressid and putte out of thaire wrongful course, and ryght and equyte the rather to be more indifferentli mynistred. . . .

Even as businessmen they were aware of their responsibility before God and the people; in 1489 Aldermen Thomas Cristmas and Richard Barker, "moved with tenderness by the prayer of the Commonalty, undertook that they themselves would make, and build, at their own proper costs and charges," two mills, one for fulling and the other for grain, "to the honour of God and the Borough." No doubt the mills also benefitted the pocketbooks of the two aldermen, but their gestures were affirming that wealth and piety could work together for a loftier purpose. The best efforts of the leaders were going into the borough, both for the prosperity of the town and for "the wealth of their souls." A piece of land was granted to the Prior of Holy Cross on January 14, 1516, so that he could celebrate "de skala celi" yearly, "pro salutari prosperitate ville."⁹⁴ Colchester leaders were certainly supportive of the church, yet we have no record of any of the sons of Colchester aldermen going into the church. They had found that one could be pious in the borough while also vigorously and successfully pursuing their work in the world.

Certainly not all of the aldermen were models of piety, but their task of keeping order and providing for the welfare of the town was made more tolerable both for the leaders and for the other inhabitants when it was combined with piety. Their pious acts endorsed their role as leaders, and both they and the town were well served by that affirmation. Though the town was a center for production and exchange with the making of money as a goal, yet the seeking of God and the deeds

of charity provided both a rationale and a legitimization for their economic pursuits. Piety counterbalanced the money-making ventures of the community by showing how to use money rightly, not just for oneself, but for others in a way which was pleasing to God, even though one remained in the world. The practice of lay piety promoted confidence in the possibility of making a profit, since one could use that money in good works. Economically, piety spread money around the community; rather than keeping it entirely within the family, the pious gave money to the church, to the poor, and to the community as a whole. Furthermore, the wide distribution of money had political implications for the community, since each generation in Colchester had to prove itself. Very few families in Colchester were wealthy enough to perform pious works and still leave enough money for their sons to become leaders without having to work for it themselves. Political power was therefore less concentrated and was dispersed among a larger number of families. The diffusion of the family's money meant, too, that each generation had to develop its own confidence and self-reliance; each generation had to remain viable, or the family quickly declined.

Medieval lay piety also had the effect of strengthening the ties within the immediate family, among those with whom one had lived intimately. The frequent prayers for the soul requested by testators for themselves, their spouses, and their parents connected generations together, and testators apparently expected their children to pray for them in the future. A sense of family was built, with an expectation of the future of the family. There was also a confidence in the family, manifested by the heavy reliance on family members as executors of wills. The value of family life was affirmed by the piety of its lay members,

and that in itself was a threat to the ideal of clerical celibacy.

Phythian-Adams has noted the contribution of the town in late medieval England as a keeper of culture, with its cycles of mystery plays and with the best of art, architecture, and music to be found in its churches.⁹⁵ That culture was not solely the product of priests or the organized church, however; without the wealth, a desire to seek God, and the creativity of the laity, the culture of the town would have lost much of its significance. Conversely, the urban setting helped develop the piety of the layman, for the townsman probably had a greater need than his rural counterpart for the support of friends in living the life which was pleasing to God. The villager had an extended kin network; the townsman often did not. It was in the town where the layperson had more opportunities to hear sermons, more variety of religious experience, more contact with new ideas and learning, and the prosperity to experiment with a changing ideal of piety. The leaders of the town were expected to provide models of piety, and they were probably as successful in doing so as most clerics had been.

Footnotes to Chapter III

¹ Chaucer, "General Prologue," Canterbury Tales, in Works, ed. Robinson, ll. 531-4 (p. 22).

² Tanner, p. 58; Palliser, York, p. 227.

³ See Michael L. Zell, "Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Wills as Historical Sources," Archives, 14 (1979), 67-74. Some examples of the extensive use of wills by historians: in demography, Robert S. Gottfried, "Bury St. Edmunds and the Populations of Late Medieval English Towns, 1270-1530," J.B.S., 20 (1980), 5-8, defends the use of wills. One of the first uses of wills to study replacement ratios was by Thrupp, Merchant Class, pp. 199-200; see also Thrupp, "The Problem of Replacement Rates in Late Medieval English Population," Econ.H.R., 2nd ser., 18 (1965), 101-19. See Gottfried, "Bury," 15-21, for recent work in replacement ratios.

Patterns of inheritance have been studied by Margaret Spufford, "Peasant Inheritance Customs and Land Distribution in Cambridgeshire from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," in Family and Inheritance, ed. Jack Goody, et al (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 156-76.

One of the most innovative uses of wills by social historians has been Keith Wrightson and David Levine, Poverty and Piety in an English Village (N.Y.: Academic Press, 1979), who used wills to study networks of kin and neighbors, and also social standing.

A. G. Dickens, The English Reformation, rev. ed. (London: Fontana/Collins, 1967), pp. 266-7, used the phraseology of the preambles of wills to study the changes in religious thinking.

Robert S. Gottfried, Epidemic Diseases in Fifteenth Century England (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 31, 164-7, and Bury St. Edmunds, pp. 124-9, uses the amount of money left to the high altars of parish churches as wealth indicators.

Jordan, Philanthropy in England, was wanting to document attitudes, but his data was collected in pounds, shillings, and pence, and that not adjusted for inflation, so his method has been subject to much criticism. Following Jordan's method: Rosenthal, Purchase of Paradise; Thomson, "Piety and Charity"; Vale, "Piety"; Palliser, York, pp. 249-54; A. K. McHardy, "Some Late-Medieval Eton College Wills," J.Eccl.H., 28 (1977), 387-95.

For the development of the will, see Michael M. Sheehan, The Will in Medieval England (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1963). For useful information about wills, see Anthony J. Camp, Wills and Their Whereabouts, 4th ed. (London, 1974), pp. ix-xliii; Jeremy S. W. Gibson, Wills and Where to Find Them (Chichester: Phillimore, 1974), pp. xiv-xvi; Ralph A. Houlbrooke, Church Courts and

the People during the English Reformation, 1520-1570 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 89-97; Gottfried, Epidemic, pp. 15-18.

⁴ Camp, p. x-xi. In referring to wills in Colchester, no distinction is made between a will, dealing with real property, and a testament, dealing with personal property.

⁵ Quoted in Cutts, Parish Priests, p. 208; Camp, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii; Dickinson, Later Middle Ages, p. 348.

⁶ Thrupp, Merchant, p. 109; Spufford, "Peasant Inheritance Customs," pp. 169-71; Gottfried, "Bury," 8.

⁷ Gottfried, Bury, p. 127, and Epidemic, pp. 31, 164-7. Wills of Jonys, E.R.O. D/ACR2/63; Breton, P.R.O. 39 Horne. Gottfried also found a few testators whose obvious wealth did not correspond with the amount left to the high altar; see Epidemic, p. 31.

⁸ E.R.O. D/ACR2/70.

⁹ I used the bequest to the high altar by ascertaining what multiple of the tithe-giving was spent in charitable deeds, allowing a smaller multiple (2 upward) in the lowest range of tithes given, and requiring a larger multiple (6 upward) in the upper level; much giving was far in excess of those multiples.

¹⁰ P.R.O. 4 Maynwaryng.

¹¹ The wills of Smyth, P.R.O. 40 Milles; Ruoke, E.R.O. D/ACR1/171; the will of Joan Bretton is recorded in the Colch.C.R., Oct., 1541; will of Margaret Teye, E.R.O. D/ACR2/98.

¹² Wills of Burgon, E.R.O. D/ACR1/127; Glede, E.R.O. D/ACR1/138; Fraunces, E.R.O. D/ACR1/32.

¹³ F. G. Emmison, Elizabethan Life: Home, Work and Land (Chelmsford: Essex County Council, 1976), p. 141; Tanner, pp. 41, 245. See Table 24 below.

¹⁴ Tanner, p. 58.

¹⁵ I eliminated any who seemed to be referring to a grandchild, as some were obviously doing when they used the term "godchild"; see will of Edith Algood, E.R.O. D/ACR1/99.

¹⁶ Myrc, Instructions, p. 6.

¹⁷ E.R.O. D/ACR2/98; P.R.O. 22 Fetiplace; P.R.O. 17 Hogen. For a discussion of the enrollment of wills in the P.C.C., see Camp, pp. xxvi-xxvii, and Gottfried, Epidemic, p. 19.

¹⁸ Thomson, "Piety and Charity," 194.

- 19 The Lay Folks Mass Book, ed. Thomas Frederick Simmons (London: E.E.T.S., 1879), I, 71; Hoskins, Age, p. 33; see also Platt, Town, pp. 170-1.
- 20 Martin, "Leicester," 33; wills of Thomas Barker, E.R.O. D/ACR1/66; Wheler, P.R.O. 24 Doggett; Margaret Bayly, E.R.O. D/ACR1/106.
- 21 Manning, p. 137. Will of Nicholas Clere, P.R.O. 17 Moone; trans. of Clere will in G. Montagu Benton, "Essex Wills at Canterbury," T.E.A.S., n.s., 21 (1933-37), 245.
- 22 Gasquet, Parish Life, p. 53; Tanner, p. 229; wills of John Elys, P.R.O. 15 Milles; Goddiscok, E.R.O. D/ACR2/155; Leveson, P.R.O. 13 Doggett; Thorne, E.R.O. D/ACR1/112.
- 23 Swete, pp. 35-8; will of Thomas Cristmas, P.R.O. 28 Aylofffe.
- 24 Galpern, p. 20. Bossy, "Mass," 42 amends Galpern's statement, saying it would be more accurate to describe it as "a cult of living friends in the service of dead ones." Jordan, Philanthropy, p. 307; Tanner, pp. 183, 202-3, 206.
- 25 Mirk's Festial, p. 269. For history of the doctrine of purgatory, see Thomas Wright, St. Patrick's Purgatory (1844), and Lionel Rothkrug, "Popular Religion," in Religion and the People, ed. Obelkevich, pp. 32-40.
- 26 "I will please the Lord in the land of the living," Psalm 114:9, Vulgate.
- 27 Beginning "Dirige, Domine, Deus meus," or "Lead me, O Lord . . . make thy way plain before my face," Psalm 5:8.
- 28 Bennett, Pastons, pp. 196-7; Moorman, Church Life, pp. 88-9; P.R.O. 17 Milles. William Teye requested a variation, "dirige with a mass of requiem . . . after the old custom and manner," for which he paid 5s.; P.R.O. 22 Fetiplace.
- 29 See Bennett, Pastons, pp. 197-9, for a description of some Paston and Stonor funerals; M. Smith, pp. 4-5, for details of Henry VII's funeral; also Dickinson, Later Middle Ages, pp. 349-53, and Vale, 11-13.
- 30 Wills of Elizabeth Harmonson, P.R.O. 1 Adeane; Alice Haynes, E.R.O. D/ACR1/133; Alice Kersey, E.R.O. D/ACR1/103; Thomas Cristmas, P.R.O. 28 Aylofffe.
- 31 Wills of Prynchet, E.R.O. D/ACR2/54; Franke, E.R.O. D/ACR2/35; Peter Borow, E.R.O. D/ACR1/205.
- 32 Such as Lexden, where William Pylgryme in 1506 left 2 cows for an obit and to be on the beadroll, with any residue "to be disposed in meat and drink," E.R.O. D/ACR1/117.

- 33 Gottfried, Bury, p. 184; Vale, 11.
- 34 E.R.O. D/ACR1/113.
- 35 The deed, dated Nov. 11, 1517, records the selling of that tenement by Downe's remarried widow, the heir having recently died without issue. An indenture accompanying the deed stipulated that the buyer "find an honest priest to sing in St. Martins' Church for the soul of John Downe and his wife Katherine for one year." Colch.C.R., Jan. 11, 1518; Nov. 11, 1517.
- 36 E.R.O. D/ACR2/219. Thomson, "Piety," 192, found in a 1523-5 register of wills, 20.9%, and in a 1529-30 register, 21.2%.
- 37 Wills of Rokewood, P.R.O. 17 Horne; Norman, E.R.O. D/ACR2/153; Northern, E.R.O. D/ACR2/190.
- 38 Vertue's will, dated Jan. 28, 1486, was enrolled in the Colch.C.R., October, 1541; wills of Ruffull, E.R.O. D/ACR1/155; Aleyn, P.R.O. 3 Fetiplace; Camoke, E.R.O. D/ACR1/222; Pylgryme, E.R.O. D/ACR1/117.
- 39 Wills of Herde, E.R.O. D/ACR1/184; Wheler, P.R.O. 24 Doggett. Will of Everard is summarized in Morant, II, 53-4. On lights, heres, and bells, see Cutts, Parish Priests, pp. 311-15, and Dickinson, Later Middle Ages, p. 352.
- 40 Wills of Bardefeld, P.R.O. 18 Adeane; Haslyngham, E.R.O. D/ACR2/2; Curstover, E.R.O. D/ACR1/48; Wheler, P.R.O. 24 Doggett. The two others wanting obits on the first Monday in Lent were John Salough, P.R.O. 3 Fetiplace, and John Swayne, E.R.O. D/ACR2/22.
- 41 Quoted in Cutts, Parish Priests, pp. 210-11. See also M. Smith, pp. 127-8.
- 42 Wills of Borow, E.R.O. D/ACR1/205; Wheler, P.R.O. 24 Doggett; Breton, P.R.O. 39 Horne; Agnes Bownde, P.R.O. 8 Bennett.
- 43 Wills of Glede, E.R.O. D/ACR1/138; Thurske, E.R.O. D/ACR1/44; Aleyn, P.R.O. 1 Fetiplace; Borow, E.R.O. D/ACR1/205.
- 44 Chaplains in other places sometimes received less, around £5 annually, but with a few earning as much as £10 p.a. See Platt, Town, p. 170.
- 45 Will of Hervy, P.R.O. 17 Milles; see also the will of John Tyall, in Benton, "Essex Wills," 260-1.
- 46 Wills of Bear, E.R.O. D/ACR1/200; Aleyn, P.R.O. 1 Fetiplace; Abbott, E.R.O. D/ACR1/30; Clere, P.R.O. 17 Moone; Platt, Medieval Southampton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 188-9; Platt, Town, pp. 169-70; Wood-Legh, Perpetual Chantries, pp. 278-90.

47 Morant, II, 45-51; Martin, Story of Colchester, pp. 33-4; P.R.O. E301/19. For a history of perpetual chantries, see Wood-Legh, Perpetual Chantries, and Thompson, Parish Clergy, pp. 132-60; Dickinson, Later Middle Ages, pp. 257-63.

48 P.R.O. 28 Ayloffe, and see Appendix 6.

49 An example of a guild historian who chose to see the guilds as primarily secular was George Unwin, The Gilds and Companies of London, 4th ed. (N.Y.: Barnes and Noble, 1966), originally published in 1908. For an assessment, see Reynolds, Introduction, p. 81.

On the 1389 guild certificates, see Westlake, Parish Gilds, chapter 4; R. C. Fowler, "The Religious Gilds of Essex," T.E.A.S., n.s., 12 (1913), 280-90.

50 The license says that St. Helen's Guild was founded a-new; see Morant II, 41-3; Cutts, Colchester, pp. 102-3; E.R.O. D/DRg1/226, D/DRg6/8; P.R.O. 40 Milles.

51 Colch.C.R., Oct. 23, 1516, which mentions Wardens John Clere, Alderman, and Robert Symson, clerk; Dec. 5, 1524, Wardens John Cristmas and John Coll, both aldermen. For examples of guilds which were closely associated with the leadership of the town, see V.C.H. Leicesters, IV, 50-1; Gottfried, Bury, pp. 186-7; Reynolds, Introduction, p. 82.

52 Rogers, "Stamford," 33; Palliser, York, p. 231; Platt, Town, p. 164.

53 E.R.O. D/ACR2/9. Mentioned once are the following guilds: Guild of St. James "in the old hithe," E.R.O. D/ACR1/101; St. Leonard's Guild, P.R.O. 40 Milles; Guild of St. Mary's Chapel in St. Botolph's, P.R.O. 20 Milles; Trinity Guild (in Holy Trinity?), E.R.O. D/ACR1/200; Guild of St. Katherine in the parish of St. Mary Magdalen, Colch.C.R., Oct. 17, 1521; Guild of St. John the Baptist in St. Runwald's Church. Also, the Guild of the Mass of Jesus in St. Nicholas was mentioned twice: P.R.O. 12 Godyn and E.R.O. D/ACR1/205. E.R.O. D/ACR1/200 mentions St. Nicholas Guild. In All Saints' Church was the Guild of St. Barbara, both in E.R.O. D/ACR1/127, in the wills of John Barker and Roger Burgon.

54 Tanner, p. 259; Westlake, Parish Gilds, p. 44; Platt, Town, p. 164. Leaving money both to a guild and for an obit within their parish churches were Margaret Barty (1513), E.R.O. D/ACR2/9, who left 4d. to every light of the guilds in the Church of St. Giles, and Peter Borow (1512), E.R.O. D/ACR1/205. Three other wills left money for both an obit and a guild, but in each case the guild was in a parish church other than their own.

55 Wills of Hervy, P.R.O. 17 Milles; Bownde, P.R.O. 8 Bennett; Norman, E.R.O. D/ACR2/91. Wood-Legh, Perpetual Chantries, p. 288. The Guild of Jesus Mass was also called the Guild of St. John's in earlier records; see Morant, II, 51. Only one will in our period, the will of Nicholas Cooke (1502), E.R.O. D/ACR1/51, calls it "the mass of John."

In Colch.C.R., Jan. 12, 1520, the guild was called the "Fraternity of the Mass of the Name of Jesus."

⁵⁶ Wills of Fraunces, E.R.O. D/ACR1/32; Tyall, in Benton, "Essex Wills," 260-1.

⁵⁷ Wills of Adam Norman (1523), E.R.O. D/ACR2/153; Robert Northern (1525), E.R.O. D/ACR2/190; John Turnour (1525), E.R.O. D/ACR2/185. The first from St. Peter's to ask for an obit was John Haslyngham, E.R.O. D/ACR2/2, who left nothing to the guild.

⁵⁸ E.R.O. D/ACR1/51.

⁵⁹ P.R.O. 40 Milles. The Guild of St. Barbara was mentioned in the wills of John Abbott (1502), E.R.O. D/ACR1/30, and Harry Bear (1512), E.R.O. D/ACR1/200.

⁶⁰ Smith, pp. 112, 115; Tanner, pp. 136, 146; Colch.C.R., Jan. 12, 29, 1520; Morant, I, 1-2; Gottfried, Bury, p. 191.

⁶¹ The two testators who requested prayers only outside of Colchester were Robert Thorpe, E.R.O. D/ACR2/208, who requested prayers at St. Osyth's, where Thorpe had a brother; and John Elys, P.R.O. 15 Milles, who gave to the House of St. John in Jerusalem. Tanner, p. 230; Palliser, York, p. 227; Thomson, "Piety and Charity," 189-90; see also Rosenthal, p. 122.

⁶² Moeller, "Town," p. 263; wills of Hervy, P.R.O. 17 Milles; Cristmas, P.R.O. 28 Ayliffe, and Roger Burgon, E.R.O. D/ACR1/127. The will of John Hillys (1517), E.R.O. D/ACR2/58, gave 3s. 4d. to Our Lady Guild at the Grey Friars. The Guild or Fraternity of St. Crispin and St. Crispinian in the Friars Minor was also mentioned, in Colch. C.R., March 20, 1525.

⁶³ For example, Colch.C.R., May 12, 1511 (but in the 1511-12 roll), where the prior was cited for placing posts in the King's Way and stopping up a certain well "which used to be common to the neighbors there."

⁶⁴ Morant, Appendix to II, No. X. The indulgence has been printed by its founder, S. Fraser, "A Pynson Indulgence of 1523," Sussex Archaeological Collections, 50 (1907), 109-16. See also Oxley, pp. 61-2. For a history of indulgences, see Sumption, Pilgrimage, pp. 290-5.

⁶⁵ DuBoulay, p. 156; wills of Agnes Bownde, P.R.O. 8 Bennett; John Godfrey, P.R.O. 27 Bennett; Colch.C.R., Jan. 14, 1516; will of Matthew Rede, R.P.B., p. 67; Fraser, 115-16. In 1528, William Lake, E.R.O. D/ACR2/232, left 20d. for 5 masses to be said for his soul by the Crossed Friars "at Scala Coeli."

⁶⁶ Wills of Harmanson, P.R.O. 1 Adeane; Garrard, E.R.O. D/ACR2/10; Thorne, E.R.O. D/ACR1/178; Fuller, E.R.O. D/ACR1/97; Salough,

P.R.O. 3 Fetiplace. John Godfrey, P.R.O. 27 Bennett, left 3s. 4d. in 1508 "to every fraternity in England whereof I am a brother." On confraternities in Champagne, see Galpern, pp. 52-68.

67 Wills of Hervy, P.R.O. 17 Milles; Lake, E.R.O. D/ACR2/232.

68 Jordan, Philanthropy, p. 307.

69 P.R.O. 24 Doggett.

70 Wills of Breton, P.R.O. 39 Horne; Teye, P.R.O. 22 Fetiplace; Cristmas, P.R.O. 28 Ayloffe, named specific laypersons for prayers. Will of Bownde, P.R.O. 8 Bennett. Leaving money for prayers by god-children were Wheler, P.R.O. 24 Doggett; Aleyn, P.R.O. 3 Fetiplace; Cristmas, P.R.O. 28 Ayloffe; and Norman, E.R.O. D/ACR2/153.

71 Dives and Pauper, ed. Priscilla Heath Barnum, E.E.T.S., no. 275 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), Holy Poverty, i, 25-31; William Langland, Piers the Ploughman, trans. J. F. Goodridge (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1959), X, 453-62.

72 Langland, XV, 343-5; Vale, "Piety," 28; Rosenthal, pp. 9-10; wills of Bownde, P.R.O. 8 Bennett; Salough, P.R.O. 3 Fetiplace. For some reason, prisoners alone were never given food or money, except by one testator, William Wilkinson (1502), P.R.O. 21 Holgrave, who gave money to prisoners in Newgate and Ludgate Prisons in London.

73 Wills of Agnes Bownde, P.R.O. 8 Bennett, and William Bownde, P.R.O. 8 Bennett.

74 Little, p. 213; Langland, VII, 23-37; wills of Ball, P.R.O. 15 Horne; Elys, P.R.O. 15 Milles; Cristmas, P.R.O. 28 Ayloffe; Harman-son, P.R.O. 1 Adeane. For a discussion of charity and a description of its practice in France, see Galpern, pp. 29-43.

75 Rothkrug, "Popular," 38; Sumption, pp. 295-6; Dickinson, Later Middle Ages, p. 359; Wood-Legh, p. 313; wills of Neve, P.R.O. 8 Vox; Inkley, E.R.O. D/ABW/21/1; Byrch, E.R.O. D/ACR1/17.

76 Rosenthal, p. 15. In the case of Thomas Barker, E.R.O. D/ACR1/66, I was able to determine from other sources that 2 people named were his maternal grandparents. Will of Breton, P.R.O. 39 Horne.

77 Will of Aleyn, E.R.O. D/ACR2/11. Requesting prayers for children were Peter Franke (1515), E.R.O. D/ACR2/35, and William Hogge (1520), E.R.O. D/ACR2/109.

78 Bossy, "Mass," 37, sees the living and the dead as two articulations of a single social whole in the medieval community.

79 Rosenthal, p. 10. Jordan, Philanthropy, p. 306, believes that the decline in the foundation of chantries was caused by a distrust of the church as administrator.

⁸⁰ Camp, p. xv; wills of Inkley, E.R.O. D/ABW21/1; Argentine, E.R.O. D/ACR1/101; Burgon, E.R.O. D/ACR1/127; Upchar, E.R.O. D/ACR1/58.

⁸¹ Wills of Bayly, E.R.O. D/ACR1/106; Clere, P.R.O. 4 Maynwaryng; Elizabeth Harmanson, P.R.O. 1 Adeane; Edmund Harmanson, P.R.O. 8 Blamyr; Bownde, P.R.O. 8 Bennett; Grene, E.R.O. D/ACR1/41; Jonson, E.R.O. D/ACR1/44.

⁸² Wills of Aleyn, P.R.O. 1 Fetiplace; Bardefeld, P.R.O. 18 Adeane; Denby, P.R.O. 34 Bodfelde.

⁸³ Wills of Cristmas, P.R.O. 28 Aylofffe; Salough, P.R.O. 3 Fetiplace. See also the wills of William Wheler, P.R.O. 24 Doggett; Margaret Aleyn, P.R.O. 3 Fetiplace; and Adam Norman, E.R.O. D/ACR2/153.

⁸⁴ Wills of Wheler, P.R.O. 24 Doggett; Nicoll, E.R.O. D/ACR2/219.

⁸⁵ E.R.O. D/ACR2/59; Wrightson and Levine, pp. 99-100.

⁸⁶ E.R.O. D/ACR1/113. An exception is that Joan Brich, E.R.O. D/ACR1/191, named as executor her son, Sir Richard Roos, parson of St. Leonard's. He was counted among the sons, however, rather than among the priests. Also, in 1533 Robert Salman, E.R.O. D/ACR2/262, named Richard Caumond as co-executor with his wife (see Table 24).

⁸⁷ E.R.O. D/ACR1/205; P.R.O. 28 Aylofffe; Tanner, p. 245. In Colchester, out of 203 wills, 27 testators named a cleric as executor or supervisor. One testator, John Tyall, in 1500 named a cleric as both executor and supervisor, although neither held that position alone. See Tables 11 and 24.

⁸⁸ William J. Pressey, "The Essex Churchwarden," *E.R.*, 51 (1942), 145-50; Platt, *Churches*, pp. 88-90; J. R. Tanner, *Documents*, p. 508; Mason, "Parishioner," 26-7; Hart, *Man in the Pew*, pp. 58-88. Two testators without family who named churchwardens as executors: Joan Gilford (1514), E.R.O. D/ACR2/1, and Robert Norman (1518), E.R.O. D/ACR2/91.

⁸⁹ *V.C.H. Oxford*, IV, 70; *Colch.C.R.*, Oct. 14, 1521; Jan. 31, 1522; June 23, 1522. Aldermen Thomas Dybney, Ralph Fynche, Thomas Flyngaunt, Robert Leche, Ambrose Lowthe, Robert Maynerd, John Neve, and William Thursteyn served as churchwardens before coming aldermen.

⁹⁰ Wills of Cristmas, P.R.O. 28 Aylofffe; Burwod, E.R.O. D/ACR2/32; Inkley, E.R.O. D/ABW21/1; Aleyn P.R.O. 3 Fetiplace; Barty, E.R.O. D/ACR2/9; Pylgryme, E.R.O. D/ACR1/117; Ruoke, E.R.O. D/ACR1/171; *Colch.C.R.*, Aug. 10, 1522.

⁹¹ Little, pp. 209-10, quoting Marc Bloch.

⁹² Moeller, "Town," 259; Morant, II, 12, 41-2, 45-50, 53-4; *O.B.*, p. 144; *V.C.H. Essex*, II, 181.

⁹³ Phythian-Adams, *Coventry*, p. 138; MacCaffrey, pp. 276-9.

- ⁹⁴ R.P.B., pp. 103, 112; Colch.C.R., Jan. 14, 1516.
- ⁹⁵ Phythian-Adams, "Urban Decay," p. 184.

CHAPTER IV

DIVERGENCE AND CULMINATION: HERESY AND REFORM

Around 1500 a Venetian observer wrote, ". . . nor do they omit any form incumbent upon good Christians; there are, however, many who have various opinions concerning religion." The increasing confidence of the English laity in their own opinions and ideals went its quiet way unrelated to national events until that most confident of laymen, King Henry VIII began to take a leading role in religious affairs. In 1529 Henry allowed and even encouraged the House of Commons to assert its pent-up anticlericalism in a remarkable way, passing legislation against clerical fees and privileges, an area which was not supposed to be the province of laymen. In the House of Lords, Bishop Fisher strongly countered the action of the Commons with these words, "My lords you see daily what bills come hither from the Commons House, and all to the destruction of the Church. For God's sake, see what a realm the kingdom of Bohemia was, and when the Church went down, then fell the glory of the kingdom: now with the Commons is nothing but down with the Church: and all this, me seemeth, is for lack of faith only." Enraged at what they considered a slanderous charge of heresy, the Speaker of the House, Thomas Audley, who had also been the town clerk of Colchester since 1514, along with thirty other members went before the King to complain. "Are we infidels, are we Saracens, are we pagans and heathens, that the laws which we establish should be thought not worthy to be kept by Christian

men? I beseech your Highness to call that bishop before you, and bid him speak more discreetly of such a number as be in the Commons House."¹ These were confident men, and not just because they had the King behind them; they were confident in their competence in both law and religion. Theirs was not simply a negative and destructive anticlericalism which would soon be spent; they were trained in the law and, quite as important, had behind them many years of a tradition of lay piety which had increasingly found its own relationship to God, learning in its quiet way to circumvent and partially control the clergy. It was not their lack of faith, as Bishop Fisher charged; it was their faith which had given them boldness and confidence in themselves. Lay piety was about to make its mark on national events.

Part One: Heresy and the Reformation Years

The forces coming to a head in the Reformation Parliament which first assembled on November 3, 1529 were a complex mixture: first of the King's need for a divorce and a male heir; next the pressures to reform abuses in the church; then the influences coming out of the Lutheran Reformation; and finally Henry's new appreciation for Erastian thought. After reading Tyndale's Obedience of the Christian Man, an apology for Caesaropapism, King Henry remarked, "This is a book for me and for all Kings to read." In that momentous year, life in Colchester seemed very much the same as ever, with the court rolls reporting the usual uncleaned ditches and persons guilty of "ill rule." The powerful Abbot of St. John's Monastery sued John and Joan Thomson for not maintaining a certain fence, thereby permitting animals to enter and damage a herb garden

belonging to the Abbey.² Ten years later another Abbot of St. John's had rather more to worry about, for on December 1, 1539 the Abbot was hanged outside the city gate of Colchester for not handing over the monastery to the King. Much had changed in that ten year period in England, and in Colchester.

Though all on the surface seemed normal in 1529, some entries in the court roll nevertheless portended change on the national level. In the Colchester court roll beginning on September 30, 1529, a first order of business was to admit new burgesses, but some of the admissions in that year were unlike any other, one being an Essex knight and the other recommended by the Earl of Oxford, with both excused from any fines since they were to serve as "burgesses of Parliament" representing Colchester. Thomas Audley, who had been Colchester's burgess in the last Parliament of 1523, was now Knight of the Shire for Essex, probably because he had caught the King's notice in 1523 and was wanted as Speaker in this important Parliament. So far as is known, only local burgesses had been representing Colchester in Parliament, so the intrusion of men through the influence of the Earl of Oxford (and probably the King) was notable. Furthermore, the Earl of Oxford had his first man step down to make way for Richard Ryché to become a burgess of Colchester in the Parliament. Ryché, who was to be chosen as the Recorder of Colchester from 1532 to 1544, was to be even better known as the prosecutor in the treason trials of Bishop John Fisher and Sir Thomas More, and later as Lord Chancellor. Thomas Audley too was to become Lord Chancellor of England, succeeding Sir Thomas More, and both Ryché and Audley were to be leading assistants to the King and to Thomas Cromwell in their jolting reformation of the English church and society.

It was just such men to whom the rebels in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire in the 1536 Pilgrimage of Grace were referring when they demanded that base-born councillors be supplanted by men of decent birth. Most of the burgesses of Colchester would have disagreed with the rebels, for Audley and Ryché were laymen like themselves who respected the attempts of the townsmen to lead lives which were pleasing to God while also remaining active in the affairs of the world. Audley and Ryché were representative of the changes which had developed in lay society, of the increase in lay standards and competence, and in the rise of lay expectations of the church, of society, and of themselves.³ No doubt many Colchester burgesses were disquieted and shaken by the tactics and results of the reformation of the church and society, but that reformation was not a completely new and sudden break with the past, at least in Colchester. The Reformation was in part the result of the attitudes and practices developed in the piety of the laity, in the hiring of priests by the laity for prayers and in the lay administration of the church fabric and funds, all of which resulted in the laity's strong sense of confidence in themselves as they became more learned and as they viewed what they considered to be excesses and abuses within the ecclesiastical system. In the eyes of townsmen such as Thomas Audley the church had failed to reform itself, and so the laity, both King and commoner, stepped into the breach.

This chapter will look at Colchester and its people in the years of reformation under Henry VIII and Edward VI and at the retrenchment under Queen Mary, especially as those years affected spiritual practices. It is difficult to gauge the thinking of the people as they experienced the varying winds of change, but the last wills and testaments will help

to put within our ken the attitudes among the people of the time. However, before analyzing the changes evidenced in the wills written between 1530 and 1558, we shall rely mainly on the borough court records to look at some of the forces coming together in Colchester to produce some drastic and often traumatic changes in society. Anticlericalism, along with the strong, positive piety of the laymen, and the more radical Lollardy were all present in Colchester before 1529; and then the events of the Reformation itself, such as the closing of the Colchester monasteries and the dissolution of chantries and guilds, the numerous changes in worship services, the discarding of the belief in Purgatory, the new accessibility of the Bible, and the burning of Colchester inhabitants as heretics, all played a part in driving people even further from mediated religion. Those changes finally ended the medieval world view.

Section 1: Lollardy

Lollardy played no small part in making way for the events of the Reformation in Colchester, for Lollard beliefs had a long history in that town. In 1429 a Colchester Lollard, tailor William Chiveling, was condemned for heresy and was burned in front of the Colchester castle for his offense. Just a year before, John Wyclif's body had been disinterred from its grave in Lutterworth churchyard and burned, but persecution did not stamp out the teachings of Wyclif as continued by the Lollards. Though at first followed by some leading gentry, the burning of Sir John Oldcastle in 1414 moved the Wycliffite teachings "underground," where they remained viable mainly among lesser craftsmen. From about 1490 Lollardy seemed to be having a revival, or perhaps the ecclesias-

tical authorities were becoming more zealous in their attempts to stamp it out. Certainly it was present in Colchester and its influence was not merely among the lesser folk. Calling themselves "Known Men," Lollards followed Wyclif in a desire for the Bible in English, prohibited since 1408 except for any translations sanctioned by a bishop, and they sought to recover from the Word a sense of the person and spirit of Jesus. Other Lollard beliefs varied, with some holding to only a part of the tenets which are more easily described in the negative: they were opposed to pilgrimages, the worship of images, the doctrine of transubstantiation, the validity of indulgences, the necessity of a special order of priests, and auricular confession. Most threatening to the organized church was the Lollard denial of transubstantiation, since that removed the necessity for the mediation of priests in one's relationship to God.⁴

Knowledge about Colchester Lollards comes principally from martyrologist John Foxe who gleaned information from Bishops' Registers and other documents, some no longer extant. Two men who had lived part of their lives in Colchester were examined for heresy in 1505, and their confessions before the Bishop's interrogators tell us something about Lollardy in Colchester at that time. Both William Sweeting, farmer and holy water clerk, and James Brewster, carpenter, had been examined in 1505 and had abjured, being then ordered to do penance in London and Colchester. Sweeting could read and he had knowledge of the Scriptures; moreover, he must have been a persuasive man, not only teaching the unlearned Brewster but also teaching George Laund, the Prior of St. Osyth's, who was then compelled to abjure the Lollard beliefs. Sweeting, who read to several others while looking after animals in the Colchester

town meadows, opposed pilgrimages and the worship of images and believed "that the sacrament of the priests' altar was not the present very body, but bread in substance, received in memorial of Christ." Sweeting and Brewster burned in the same fire in Smithfield on October 18, 1511.⁵

Also in 1511 a certain Thomas Man was examined, and it was revealed that Man had preached Lollard doctrines in several counties in England and had turned six or seven hundred people to those opinions. Man, who was burned in 1518, named Colchester as one of the towns in which he taught. There were other traveling Lollard teachers, and it was one of them, old Father Hacker, who opened the Pandora's box of Colchester Lollards in 1527. By then the notoriously conservative Cuthbert Tunstall was Bishop of London, and he was determined to stamp out the old heresy which was being infused with new life from the Lutheran Reformation. A. G. Dickens tells us that Hacker's group in London had close connection with the Lollards of Colchester and Buckinghamshire, but that their greater importance lay in their having a "ready-made" organization to promote the Lutheran book trade of the late twenties. Tyndale published his translation of the New Testament from Antwerp in 1526, and the new translation was quickly though surreptitiously being sold in England, including Colchester. Lollard teachers told of buying in Colchester one of the New Testaments for 4s. from a Lombard of London, and we also know that some Lutheran books came through the Colchester port. On October 23, 1526 Bishop Tunstall sent notice to the Archdeacons of his diocese, prohibiting the reading or possession of the English New Testament and certain other books. Tunstall's Vicar-General, Geoffrey Wharton, called in John Hacker who had been examined in previous years, and Hacker implicated the two leading Lollard teachers in

Colchester, John Pykas, a 33 year old baker, and tailor William Reyland, as well as an influential Colchester supporter, fishmonger Thomas Matthew. By the testimony of Pykas and Reyland, others were incriminated and called to London to appear before the Bishop himself in March and April, 1527. In April, 1528, a number of Lollards in Steeple Bumpstead in Essex were discovered, and their testimony revealed the names of even more Colchester Lollards; on May 14, 1528, Thomas Bowgas of St. Leonard's in Colchester was called before the Bishop where he publicly read his abjuration and was then absolved from his sentence of excommunication and ordered to do penance at his parish church in Colchester. In July, Wharton came to Colchester, holding court in St. John's Abbey and calling before him others suspected of heresy, many of them women. A few more were detected in 1530 and 1531; in all 41 persons in that period were implicated in Colchester, with all of them abjuring except for one Edward Freese, who went mad during cruel imprisonment after seeing his pregnant wife die from a kick by a prison guard.⁶

Fascinating information about the network of those holding heretical opinions in that period comes from some detailed depositions, most of them published by John Strype in 1823; the information gleaned about one of the main leaders of the sect in Colchester, Joyn Pykas, is particularly interesting. Pykas revealed in his own deposition that about 5 years before, his mother, then living in Bury St. Edmunds, persuaded him that he should not believe in the sacraments of the church. She gave Pykas a book of Paul's Epistles in English, bidding him "lyve after the maner and way of the said Epistoles and Gospels, and not after the way that the Church doth teche." A baker by trade, Pykas could obviously read, and he owned other books, some of them standbys of Lollardy,

such as The Pryck of Conscience, but he was also eager to obtain the new Tyndale translation of the New Testament, paying 4s. for it. Pykas heard the early Cambridge Protestant, Thomas Bilney, preach at Ipswich against pilgrimages and prayers to saints, and he was given another book, The Seven Wise Masters of Rome, by a friar of Colchester. Confident in his beliefs, Pykas taught in a number of homes in Colchester and surrounding villages. A few of those named by Pykas, such as Dorothy Long and Thomas Parker, had long been active in Lollard circles, whereas others such as Robert Best had been brought into the "same sect and learning" more recently. Pykas had known Best for about 6 years, but only in the last year had Best been taken as a "known man, and a broder in Christ, amongst them be called brothren in Christ, and known men." Best had borrowed from Pykas the New Testament in English, keeping it for about a month, and he had learned the Epistle of James by heart. There was an interesting mixture of forces coming together at this time, with the old Lollard beliefs being given new life by the Protestantism from Germany and Tyndale's translation of the New Testament. Also, some of the men from Steeple Bumpstead who "souped at John Pycas hous" in Colchester were also reading Erasmus' Colloquies and listening to Miles Coverdale preach.⁷

Their intense interest in learning about and discussing Scriptural matters, though at risk to themselves, bespeaks either iconoclasm or piety, unorthodox though it was. An examination of Pykas' beliefs is instructive, for he says, after giving the names of 19 people, that all of the people "stedfastly belevyd them: and did affirm them to be of truth." Pykas maintained that the "Sacrament of the Altar" was not "the very body of Christ, but only bred and wyne." After discarding

the crucial doctrine of transubstantiation, Pykas denied the validity of another sacrament, baptism, believing only in the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Pykas also rejected the sacrament of confession, although he himself was yearly "confessed and housled, but for no other cause, but that people shuld not wondre uppon hym." Then Pykas spoke against fasting, holy days, and pardons, and against pilgrimages and images, with the positive encouragement to "pray only to God, and to no saints." Pykas and those of his "conversation and learning" did not need saints or clerics to intercede for them; they were fiercely conscious of their own right to pray to God. Mentioned most often in describing their beliefs were the related matters of going on pilgrimage and praying to images; William Reyland reported hearing Pykas and Henry, Reyland's son, remark that "it is missavory to go on pilgrimage to Walsingham, Ipswich, or any other place. For they be but idols; and it is idolatry for to go to them in pilgrimage; and that they cannot help themselves therefore they cannot help another man." Some also added their disdain for the practice of setting up lights before images. Maryon Matthew boasted that "she had set up as few candles to images as any woman had, for it was not leful," and Pykas affirmed that "none of the known men did ever set up light before any images, as far as he knoweth." Interestingly, none of the Colchester people accused of heresy made mention of Purgatory; their concern was to find their own way to God in this life, with the aid of Holy Scripture.⁸

A. G. Dickens, writing about the social status of the Lollards, notes that most were of the common people, craftsmen and small tradesmen. In the 1524-25 lay subsidy rolls, the baker and Lollard teacher in Colchester, John Pykas, was listed as receiving 20s. in wages, as was young

fletcher and Lollard, John Thompson. Most of the others, however, owned from two to four pounds in goods.⁹ Not all of that "sect and learning" were of lower status, though; just such a one was Thomas Matthew, who was something of a patron of the Lollard-Protestants since he was far more prosperous than the others, being assessed in 1523 as having £30 goods. A fishmonger born in London, Matthew had been admitted to the freedom of the borough on June 30, 1516, and sometime before that he had married Maryon Wesden, widow of a respected parishioner of St. James' parish, Thomas Wesden. It was Maryon who was reported by John Pykas in the 1527-28 investigations to have been a "known woman, and of the brotherhood, that is to say, as a woman suspect of heresy, by the space of twelve years, as he hath heard say." Pykas had heard Maryon Matthew speak of the Epistles and Gospels in her own house many times, and "she had them well by heart." The house of the Matthews was the overnight stop for the "known men" of Steeple Bumpstead, where they were treated to a recitation from memory by William Pykas of the Dispute between the Friar and the Clerk, and the Matthews several times housed Robert Necton who traveled throughout East Anglia selling English translations of the New Testament. Necton read aloud "diverse tymes" from the New Testament in English before Thomas and Maryon Matthew and their servants, and it was also there where Necton heard "old Father Hacker speke of propheties." Matthew was one of the first called to London by Dr. Wharton in March, 1527, where Matthew pragmatically abjured "and submitted himself to correction" on March 5. Wharton then enjoined penance on Matthew, directing him to distribute in alms 6s. 8d. weekly during the five weeks of Lent, with 16d. going to the prisoners in the castle, 8d. to other prisoners in the town, and the remainder to the

poor of the town in bread and herrings. Matthew was also to break the loaves before they were delivered to the poor. Matthew's example seemed to set the standard for submissive truth-telling, and the fact that his punishment had not been harsh must have helped the lesser men make their decision to submit. Wharton made sure that Pykas was present when Matthew was examined, and at the next sitting of the court, two days later, the floodgate of Pykas' confession was opened, and all was revealed. Matthew's superior social position made him a natural leader of the Lollard-Protestants, although it may have been Maryon Matthew who was the more ardent.¹⁰

Matthew's money and position made him not only a leader among the "heretics," but he also had a certain standing in the community, in the second rank of borough affairs. Not wealthy enough to be an alderman--£40 in goods was the minimum requirement and Matthew had only £30--Matthew was elected to the Second Council in 1519, only 3 years after being admitted to the freedom of the borough, and he continued to serve on that council until September, 1533, when he was elected to the First Council where he served until his death in late 1534. His connection with the Protestants and his imposed penance in 1527 did him no harm in borough affairs, for it was after that when he was elected to the First Council, was elected as one of the 7 Constables of the East Ward, was appointed an arbitrator in a dispute, and above all was Chamberlain of the town in 1532-33, a necessary step for one on the "way up" in borough affairs. Also after Matthew's penance, Matthew was a pledge in a court suit for Alderman John Coll, coincidentally the same alderman who had been accused by another alderman in 1520 of having heretical relatives. The court records also show that Matthew had other well-placed friends

and business associates. Again, after his penance in 1527, the borough court records reveal Matthew to be a business associate of Alderman Thomas Flyngaunt as well as Alderman Coll. Furthermore, one of Matthew's closest associates, Austin Beriff, was to become an alderman in 1537, and the two executors of Matthew's will, step-sons-in-law George Sayer and William Mott, later became aldermen, with the Sayers becoming the leading aldermanic family and staunch supporters of Protestantism. Matthew obviously lived in a town where his nonconforming ways and attitudes, and his caution in submitting to authority when necessary, were quite acceptable and were even the wave of the future in Colchester and in Tudor England.¹¹

In order to have the kind of acceptance from the community which Thomas Matthew had, there must have been many, even among the leaders, who were sympathetic to his beliefs and practices. We do not have to look far to find sympathizers among aldermanic families, for two of the women cited as possible heretics were widows of aldermen. Katherine Swayne, widow of Alderman John Swayne, was among those named by John Pykas as having heard his teachings but in a statement perhaps reflective of her more exalted social position, Pykas, upon being asked about Mistress Swayne, said that he was ignorant, but that "she is reputed for a known woman." Robert Best, a "known man," seems to have been the oldest son of Alderman Robert Best, who had died in 1508.¹² Also named as a listener to John Pykas was Margaret Cowbridge, widow of Alderman Robert Cowbridge, and William Reyland testified that Mistress Cowbridge was a "known woman." However, in the July, 1528 visitation by Wharton to Colchester, Cowbridge brought 8 compurgators who swore that she was not a heretic, and she was therefore "lawfully purged" and restored "to

her former fame." She then had to swear to "keep the Catholic faith, that she should not knowingly favour heretics, nor conceal them, nor contract familiarity with them: and that if she knew any heretics, she should denounce them with their heresies, as soon as she could." In light of that oath, one wonders if she was alive when her son, William Cowbridge, was burned as a heretic at Oxford in 1538.¹³ One of Mistress Cowbridge's other children, Kateryn, married into another aldermanic family, the Bardefelds, who had connections with Lollard Maryon Wesden Matthew. Piety in its more radical form was an undercurrent in several aldermanic families. Yet, they were not willing--or foolish enough--to suffer for it; they saw the power of the church and realistically submitted to it when necessary.

Piety, whether expressed conventionally in charitable bequests or in prayers for the dead or expressed by belief in John Pykas' unorthodox teachings, was a unifying force in late medieval Colchester, merging the lay people together in a single desire to seek God.¹⁴ Both the streams of conventional piety and the radical piety of the Lollard-Protestants were accelerated by a certain anticlericalism in the community. We shall see that the Bishop's investigations into Lollardy in Colchester produced anticlericalism, and the increasing confidence of the townsman in his ability to lead a life pleasing to God made any abuses in the ecclesiastical system and the need for reform all the more evident.¹⁵ Yet, knowing how impotent they were against the power of the church or of the ruling society, the burgesses bided their time, waiting to seize opportunities as they came. Thomas Audley--and the King--found an opportunity in the Reformation Parliament beginning in 1529, and many of the Colchester burgesses were quick to do what they

could to point out abuses in the church and among its clergy.

Section 2: Anticlericalism and Early Reform

The Colchester court rolls often recorded suits involving clergy, with the greater number of the suits being originated by the clergy, sometimes against each other but more often against laymen on charges of debt, fraud, or trespass. Too, the clergy were often cited for having unclean ditches and for other petty offenses. The behavior and morals of the clergy, though, were normally the province of the ecclesiastical courts and only rarely were such matters mentioned in the Colchester court records, and then only at one of the three court leets during the year, called a Law Hundred. In 1511 there seem to have been an unusual number of unruly priests in Colchester, for the jurors at the Law Hundreds mention priests assaulting aldermen and each other, "against the King's peace and to the evil example of other unruly priests." Such citations were not common, and to have more than one a year was notable, so it is probable that the several citations against unruly priests indicate a wave of anticlericalism around the time of the burning of William Sweeting and James Brewster in 1511.¹⁶

The same manifestation of anticlericalism is evident at the first Law Hundred after the many Colchester people were called to London for examination for heresy in March and April of 1527. Suddenly the presentments in the South Ward read like a gossip column: "Sir Roger, soul priest at the Hythe, ill rule with Hurry's wife. . . . John Blak-sall, for maintaining his wife in ill rule with priests and other knaves Dominus John Thixstyll, Sacrist of St. Botolph's, ill rule with

the wife of the late Richard Rychold." After that, one or two such citations were given at each Law Hundred, but at the January 16, 1531 Law Hundred the burgesses seemed more eager than usual to report the sins of the priests, even of the parsons of the leading churches.¹⁷

The unusual indictments of long-established Colchester parsons in 1531 mirrored the events on the national level. King Henry had been moving toward the idea of Royal Supremacy with his attacks on the privileges of the clergy, and the first session of the Reformation Parliament in 1529 had passed three acts against the privileges of clergy which made inroads into the exclusive jurisdiction of the Courts Christian within the realm. In January, 1531, both Convocation and Parliament met, and on January 24 the Southern Convocation, followed by the northern body, formally submitted to the charges against them and received royal pardon, costing them £100,000. The laity had won a major battle over the clergy, but only with the help of the King.¹⁸

The burgesses of Colchester, apparently already annoyed by the authority of the ecclesiastical courts over the lives of its people, were quick to make their own inroads into the jurisdiction of the church courts. On October 4, 1529, before the passage of the three acts against the privileges of the clergy, the burgesses tested the waters by trying the Curate of Lexden in a Session of the Peace on charges of the regrating of grain. Heretofore, clerics had been charged only in the milder court leet, the Law Hundred. No more clerics were charged in Sessions of the Peace until January 16, 1531, the same month in which the Submission of the Clergy came, and this time the burgesses in a Session of the Peace charged two long-established and influential parsons with charges of misbehavior, having first charged them in a Law Hundred on the same

day. Richard Caumond, Vicar of St. Peter's Church since 1494, was accused of raping Joan Feks, having "his pleasure and lust with her," and John Wayne, Rector of St. James' Church since 1510 and the Bishop of London's Official, was in an affray with a Sergeant of the Mace who had come to deliver an announcement, its nature unknown to us, from the Bailiffs of the town.

Relationships between the clergy and the laity remained strained in 1532, when some pert replies were given by Margaret Bowgas to a parson in Colchester when he asked her if she would go on pilgrimage. The exchange between them quickly moved into his warning her that she would burn for heresy, but she remained boldly disrespectful. Finally, though, with "great persuasions, she gave over to Foxford, the chancellor, and submitted herself." Perhaps it was the same kind of boldness against the priests and confidence in themselves which prompted the Colchester burgesses in 1532 to make an accusation of witchcraft (the first recorded in the Tudor court rolls in Colchester); this was again an area normally left to the ecclesiastical courts. On the national level, the same boldness again prevailed in the Supplication against the Ordinaries, a long list of complaints against the workings of the church courts, clerical fees, frivolous excommunication and tithes, a list probably drawn up in 1529 by the House but presented to the King by Speaker Audley on March 18, 1532. Also in the same year, Colchester M.P. Richard Ryché was elected Recorder of Colchester, and Thomas Audley resigned as Town Clerk of Colchester, becoming Lord Keeper of the Great Seal in May, 1532; the new seal, cut when Audley became Lord Keeper, significantly showed Henry sitting in majesty wearing the domed crown imperial rather than the flat crown of a king.¹⁹

The Crown published pamphlets to make its view of Royal Supremacy known to the people: A Glasse of the Truthe in mid-1532, the Articles devised by the holle consent of the King's Council in late 1533, and in 1534 A Little Treatise against the Mutterings of some Papists in Corners. It was probably those same pamphlets which caused more tension between the clergy and laity in Colchester, when Henry Fasted (probably the Henry Fersted listed by Foxe as one who had earlier abjured) showed "certain books of the King's print" which "the holy fathers of the Spirituality cannot abide to read or hear" and which they prevented the King's subjects from reading. John Wayne, the same rector who was in an affray with a town official in 1531, preached against the books and refused to look at them when Fasted tried to show them to Wayne after he had already shown them to "certain worshipful men of Colchester." Wayne wanted the "worshipful men" to confiscate the books, but they did not, although they did write down their titles. Dr. Thystell, probably the same cleric who had been charged with "ill rule" in 1527, preached against the books in the Grey Friars' Church, likening them to the fig tree which Christ cursed. There seems to have been wide support for the King's policies, both among the "heretics" such as Margaret Bowgas and Henry Fasted, but also among the "worshipful men." After all, Audley had lived and worked among those worshipful men for 17 years as town clerk, and he was a cousin to the leading family, the Cristmasses.²⁰ Though some of the support for the King stemmed from anticlericalism and from Lollard-Protestant beliefs, orthodox lay piety helped prepare the laity for its confident control of the church under the King.

The Act of Supremacy, making King Henry "Supreme Head on Earth of the Church of England," passed in the sixth session of the Reformation

Parliament at the end of 1534. A Session of the Peace in Colchester in April, 1535, revealed the strength of feelings which were engendered by the Act of Supremacy. It was charged that William Havens, chaplain in charge of the parish church of St. Nicholas, "read a certain book called 'le sentence' and then and there prayed for the very Holy Father in Christ, the Bishop of Rome, with the College of Cardinals and then and there said, in accordance with certain articles contained in the said Book of Sentences, we cannot have absolution unless we are willing to be subject to the holy court of Rome. And he said and propounded very many other words against the laudable statutes of the Lord King in this case lately issued and provided." The burgesses thought the statute of the King to be "laudable," even though it was the same act with its accompanying Treason Act which would bring the Carthusian monks, John Fisher (who had been made a Cardinal in early 1535), and Thomas More to their deaths within the next 3 months.²¹

The burgesses of Colchester were undoubtedly loyal to the King and were decreasingly reliant on the clergy. One mark of the lessening influence of the priests which we can chart was the small number of clerics who were named as executors or supervisors by Colchester testators (see Table 24). Almost none were named in the Reformation years, with the last cleric named as executor in 1533 and the last one as supervisor in 1540.

Though the burgesses of Colchester showed themselves on the King's side against the clergy, especially in the matter of Royal Supremacy, they were not radicals by any means; the more conventional orthodoxy still prevailed on many religious issues. In the same Session of the Peace in which William Havens was cited for his sympathy with the

Table 24

Number of Testators Naming Clerics
as Executor or Supervisor, 1485-1558

	Total No. of Wills	Named Cleric as Executor ¹	Named Cleric as Supervisor	Total Naming Clerics
1485-1499	16	3	-	3 (19%)
1500-1509	81	4	6	10 (12%)
1510-1519	64	-	11	11 (17%)
1520-1529	42	-	3	3 (7%)
1530-1539	58	1 (1533)	1	2 (3.4%)
1540-1549	68	-	1 (1540)	1 (1.5%)
1550-1558	75	-	-	0

¹ Only 2 clerics were sole executors, in 1501 and 1506.

Papacy, a parish clerk was charged for his opposition to auricular confession, and four lay persons were charged with having opinions "against the sacrament of the altar." The colorful statements in English of the lay persons were all given, and the following opinions attributed to William Wodcok was typical of their thinking:

That the sacrament of the altar is made of dough, and they would make us believe that it is God in form of bread, and so they make us believe that the moon is made of a green cheese, and that a 'torde of his arse' is as good as any picture in the church, and that the water running in the gutter is as good as the holy water and that he had as leave to be buried in the high way as in the church yard for any hallowing that is there.

Again in these indictments, the Colchester burgesses were handling matters which were within the purview of the ecclesiastical courts, not only in the matter of moral behavior, but now concerning heretical opinions. Ralph Houlbrooke found that in Norwich, too, lay courts in the

same period were proceeding against many of those who expressed unorthodox opinions. It seems that at least some of the episcopal courts were neglecting such topics. Margaret Spufford found that the diocesan courts of Ely were dealing with the morals of the laity, but not with their beliefs. Thus, the way was left open for the local secular courts to act on the matter of unorthodox opinions. The Colchester borough court records, then, are quite valuable for the light that they shed on the religious views of the laity in the period of reform.²²

The burgesses of Colchester were not only firmly with the Crown on the matter of Royal Supremacy over the church, but their judicial citations on matters of belief show them to be doctrinally prescient in upholding auricular confession and transubstantiation, for the first doctrinal formulary issued by the Supreme Head of the Church of England, the Ten Articles, took the same stand on penance and the Eucharist.²³ The burgesses of 1535 were thereby rejecting the extreme positions of the Lollards and of many Protestant reformers, though there was no doubt of their support of the King and his lay control of the church. Theirs was not mere anticlericalism either, but their position was also a development of the urban lay piety which had been growing in Colchester--a piety which, though fairly orthodox, was increasingly desirous of lay control.

Section 3: Dissolution of the Monasteries

There is no indication in the borough court rolls that the dissolution of the monasteries was particularly upsetting to the people of Colchester. The dissolution did, of course, force some changes on the religious life of the town, partly because the advowson of most of the

Colchester parish churches had been held by the religious houses. A comprehensive survey of English monastic wealth, the Valor Ecclesiasticus, was made in 1535, and at the beginning of the following year, the last session of the Reformation Parliament was given evidence by Thomas Cromwell that corruption was rife in English monasticism. Parliament then passed an act dissolving all houses worth less than £200 a year, and their properties were vested in the Crown.²⁴ Of the four religious houses in Colchester, all but the Benedictine St. John's Abbey fell under the act of 1536. The first to be dissolved was the Augustinian St. Botolph's Priory, which was granted to Sir Thomas Audley on May 26, 1536. The entry in the borough court rolls which first mentioned the dissolution was a triumphantly phrased deed, dated September 10, 1536: "I, Thomas Audley, Knight, Lord Chancellor of England, have granted to Thomas Flyngaunt, Alderman, a certain meadow in St. Botolph's parish and . . . which were late part of the lands of the late Priory of St. Botolph's, recently suppressed and dissolved by authority of Parliament, and which I, the aforesaid Thomas Audley, lately had to myself and my heirs in perpetuity, by the gift and grant of the most dread and unconquered Prince and Lord, Henry VIII, King of England and France, now Defender of the Faith, Lord of Ireland and on earth Supreme Head of the English Church, as is fully shown by Letters Patent. . . ." Another alderman, John Cristmas, Esq., of the leading aldermanic family and a cousin to Thomas Audley, was a major purchaser of former priory lands from Audley, but even the last Prior of St. Botolph's, Thomas Turnour, and his sister purchased some of the property.²⁵

Financial benefit from the dissolution was not very widely spread among the burgesses of Colchester, however. Lord Chancellor

Audley was enriched, having also received the Priory of the Holy Cross on April 24, 1542, and Audley helped his successor as town clerk, Richard Duke, Gent., and some other local gentry to profit, which is in accord with other studies of the recipients of the wealth of the monasteries. As. W. G. Hoskins noted in his study of the "plunder of the church," it was "the gentry, old and new, who gained by far the most land." King Henry kept the Colchester Franciscan Friary for awhile, leasing it to Francis Jobson, the son and grandson of Colchester aldermen, who was rapidly rising into the gentry through his enrichment as one of the official Visitors to the Monasteries.²⁶

In 1538 the dissolution of the greater monasteries was being considered, and Audley at first pleaded for the continuance of the Benedictine St. John's Abbey, not as a monastery, but as a collegiate church, with Audley arguing that numerous poor people in Colchester were relieved by St. John's. Nothing was to save St. John's, however, not even a recalcitrant Abbot, Thomas Beche (alias Marshall), who was arrested in October, 1539, on a charge of treason, but actually because he was unwilling to hand over the monastery to the King. The account of the examination of Marshall and of the witnesses against him provide a glimpse into some of the ecclesiastical thinking about the King's reform. Beche had asserted that "two or three of the King's council had brought his grace to such a covetous mind that if all the water in Thames did flow gold and silver it were not able to quench his grace's thirst." Speaking of the rebellion in 1536, the Pilgrimage of Grace, Beche had said that the Northerners were "good men, muckle in the mouth, great crackers, and nothing worth in their deeds," and "I would to God, the rebels in the North Country had the Archbishop of Canterbury

[Cranmer], the Lord Chancellor [Audley] and the Lord Privy Seal [Cromwell] amongst them, and then, I trust we should have a merry world again." The Abbot was sent back to Colchester to be tried by an appointed commission of Essex gentry and a grand jury of Essex men, including the aldermen of Colchester. The Abbot was found guilty and was drawn on a sledge through the streets of Colchester to his execution by hanging on December 1, 1539. Although Audley was most eager to have the abbey lands, they stayed in the hands of the King until the wars with France and Scotland forced the massive selling of monastery lands in the early 1540's. In Francis Jobson's possession for a time, the abbey lands were finally sold in 1548 to John Lucas, Esq., Town Clerk of Colchester and third son of a Bury St. Edmunds gentry family--thus another example of the gentry benefitting from the dissolution of the monasteries.²⁷

In the month before Abbot Beche's execution, on November 12, 1539, the bailiffs and commonalty of Colchester were presented with a gift from King Henry, perhaps for their loyalty to him, the gift being the chantries in St. Helen's Chapel and in St. Mary's Church with their attached lands, with the condition that the bailiffs maintain a free school in the town, in accordance with the wishes of Thomas Lord Audley. Little is known of the fate of those chantry lands, but a deed of 1550 reveals that the Audley family owned some of the "possessions of the confraternity or guild of St. Helen," so probably both Audley and the town benefitted from the gift. The chantries in St. Helen's Chapel had earlier been under the supervision of the bailiffs and of the Guild of St. Helen, but the Holy Cross friars had served as chaplains for the Guild of St. Helen for some time, and in the early 1530's the Prior of

the Crossed Friars had been described as the Prior of Holy Cross and St. Helen, indicating a merging of the two. It is quite possible, then, that the King had taken the chantry lands when the Crossed Friars were dissolved, so that now the King was giving back to the town what was already its own, but with more freedom in handling it. The other part of the gift, the chantry in St. Mary's Church, the Elianore Chantry, was possibly a part of the King's attack on episcopal estates, since St. Mary's was in the patronage of the Bishop of London. A grammar school in connection with St. Mary's Church had existed under the Bishop of London since at least the early 13th century, so now the school was under the bailiffs of the town for the first time. Education in Colchester was therefore coming under lay control through the early expiration of chantries.²⁸

Section 4: Reformation Doctrine and Practices

The dissolution of the monasteries and the giving away of chantry and bishop's lands were far from the only church reforms of the late 1530's; significant statements of doctrine and practice were also issued. The Ten Articles of 1536, partly influenced by Lutheran theology, limited the number of sacraments to three (penance, baptism, and the Mass), allowed images to remain in churches but without worship being given to them, and denied the existence of Purgatory although prayers for the dead might continue. A second set of Royal Injunctions appeared on September 5, 1538, showing strong Erasmian influences. "Superstitions," including pilgrimages, were to be denounced and abused images were to be destroyed, parish registers were to be kept, the

clergy was to teach and catechise in English and to preach regularly, and an English Bible was to be set up in every parish church and was to be available to all. Within months, the Colchester court rolls reflected the new injunctions; at the Session of the Peace on April 28, 1539, the Curate of Lexden was charged with teaching "his scholars the pater noster [i.e. in Latin], against the mandate of the Lord King." for which he was fined 6s. 8d. The court roll of 1539-40 also showed an interesting change from reliance on saints, in that the usual dating from Saints' Days was replaced by modern dating by month and day. The availability of the Bible was reflected in a practice not mentioned before in the Tudor court rolls: in a debt case in October, 1540, a burgess acknowledged the debt and offered, "if the complainant so wished, to swear on the book of the Evangels of God," to which the complainant "accepted oath on the book." In another debt case in 1542, the defendant "swore on the Gospels of God that he did not owe the complainant" all of the debt.²⁹

A doctrinal retrenchment came in 1539 with the Act of Six Articles, which reaffirmed transubstantiation and auricular confession, and stipulated severe penalties for heretics. A parish clerk of St. Peter's Church in Colchester was arrested for his stout belief in general confession, but his case was finally dismissed by the Bishop. A case of blasphemy by carpenter Matthew Estwood, "an enemy of God" who had railed against Christ himself, came before a Session of the Peace on October 3, 1541, but its outcome is unknown. Cases charging the clergy with moral wrongs continued to appear with regularity, with the Master of the Hospital of St. Mary Magdalen, Ralph Lee, doing the most to feed the anticlerical mood with his repeated lechery, rape,

eavesdropping, and ill rule. There were, however, other kinds of offenses by the clergy which disturbed the burgesses of Colchester, and those offenses had to do with the King's injunctions concerning religion. At a Law Hundred on January 15, 1543, the Rector of St. Mary's Church, Thomas Kyrkham, who had been presented by the conservative Bishop of London, Edmund Bonner, was charged with not having "left in the church the Injunctions of the Lord King, as he ought to have done." It was the same rector of whom it was said on January 14, 1544, that he "maintaineth bawdry," and in a Session of the Peace on January 19, 1545, "that the Rector of St. Mary's Church has not published the Injunctions or Statutes of the Lord King in the aforesaid church four times annually, according to the effect of the same statutes as he ought to have done." Also, Henry Becke, Vicar of St. Peter's Church, was more than once charged with moral offenses, such as having "a woman in his house illicitly, in evil example," but he was also said to "not preach the Gospel of God nor the Statutes of the Lord King." For both offenses Becke was fined 10s. each.³⁰

The burgesses, then, were supporting the King's stand on religion; Richard Colbrande showed his loyalty in his will of 1540, when he left 6s. 8d. to his parish church "to make a sermon in setting out of the glory of God and the honor of our most noble prince." Support for the King remained even though more conservative positions had been taken in 1539 and after. Ardent reformist theologians such as Hugh Latimer were immediately upset; he resigned as Bishop of Worcester and was in custody for a year. It is a commonplace of modern historical interpretation that Henry's last years were conservative. For the average burgess, however, significant changes had already occurred and

had left their mark. True, there were two substantial doctrinal shifts in 1539: the affirmation of the Eucharistic doctrine of transubstantiation and the reassertion of the role of works in salvation. Both were stated clearly in The Necessary Doctrine and Erudition of a Christian Man, which is also known as the "King's Book," issued in 1543. To an urban parishioner, however, the accessibility of the Word of God in his own language was probably much more significant than were the vacillations in doctrine. Although the Act for the Advancement of True Religion in 1543 limited the availability of the Bible somewhat--under that act women of less than gentle status, apprentices, serving men and persons of low degree were not to read the Bible--yet everyone could still hear it read, and in his own tongue.³¹

A statement by King Henry in a speech given to Parliament in 1545 tells us something of the impact made by the Bible. Always eager to avoid extremes so as to keep peace and right order, Henry cautioned the laity in the Parliament:

And although you be permitted to read Holy Scripture and to have the Word of God in your mother-tongue, you must understand that it is licensed you so to do only to inform your own conscience and to instruct your children and family, and not to dispute and make Scripture a railing and a taunting stock against priests and preachers, as many light persons do. I am very sorry to know and hear now unreverently that most precious jewel, the Word of God, is disputed, rhymed, sung and jangled in every ale-house and tavern, contrary to the true meaning and doctrine of the same.³²

The Word of God had penetrated into the ale-house; truly it made an impact on the people. Although the people generally no longer prayed to saints and were without the attendant images, lights, and pilgrimages, they now heard prayers to God in their own language, and in 1544 a litany in English was introduced into the churches. Furthermore, their clergy was to preach more regularly, and the people were to be taught

the traditional Lord's Prayer, the Articles of Faith, the Ten Commandments, and the Creed in English. Access to God in their own language, through the Bible and prayers, would no doubt help to lessen any regret at the loss of one's favorite saint or even a pet doctrine. Important changes had occurred in the people's religious life, in part a development of the piety of the orthodox lay person with his desire to know and serve God more perfectly. Lay piety in Colchester had generally not been radical in doctrine, but it was strongly supportive of the reform measures imposed by their layman King which had brought God and his word closer to the average parishioner. The burgesses of Colchester could say about their King, in an unusual memorandum in the Oath Book in 1544 after Henry had taken Boulogne, "in his designs, may God give good fortune."³³

Reform measures became more aggressive during the Edwardian years, with the abolishment of the Act of Six Articles and with priests being allowed to marry. The Act Dissolving the Chantries was passed in 1547; it was, as Alan Kreider has pointed out, a natural result of the earlier doctrine denying the existence of Purgatory, going as far back as the Ten Articles in 1536. Overall, the dissolution of chantries and religious guilds seems not to have made a big difference, except that there were fewer priests holding divine services in the churches. The major chantries had already been ended in 1539, and guilds were never so important in Colchester as they were in some other towns. Obits, terminated at the same time, were probably missed, yet even the establishment of obits had been on the decline. In the 1520's nine obits had been established (see Table 18) and in the 1530's, six had been instituted, the last one in 1535, so by the time the 1547

Chantries Act abolished obits, a new one had not been established for 12 years. Colchester had not been slow in throwing off traditional ways.³⁴

Other changes during Edward's reign turned things upside down; many ceremonies, such as the use of holy water and holy bread, were revoked, and the destruction of remaining images was encouraged. A new Prayer Book came into use on June 9, 1549, which abolished all Latin services, although in other ways the Prayer Book was quite conservative in tone. Not until Warwick's ascendancy in late 1549 did the more extreme Protestant position exert much influence, and the English Ordinal, introduced in the spring of 1550, transformed the Catholic priest into a Protestant minister, and the altar into a communion table. The revised Book of Common Prayer, used from November, 1552, abolished the Mass, prayers for the dead, private confession, and many ceremonies. The medieval church was no more, though Queen Mary would frantically try to reverse the situation.³⁵

Some months after Edward became King, a General Visitation of the Church in England was proclaimed, and the reports of the Visitors in Essex, made in 1548, reveal that the churchwardens in Colchester had taken the injunctions against superstitious images and pictures seriously. Even before the injunctions, however, St. Mary's Church had led the way, beginning 14 years before by selling some of its silver plate, using the money to put up a steeple and bell, to help the poor, and later to whitewash the church and inscribe the walls with Scriptural texts to replace the medieval wall paintings. True reformers, they had also defaced and glazed the church windows, i.e. they substituted plain glass for stained, and they had bought a chest bound with iron,

presumably for the safekeeping of the parish register. Since St. Mary's was Thomas Audley's parish church during the years when he lived in Colchester as Town Clerk, it is not surprising that the churchwardens of St. Mary's would be the first to foresee the prudence of benefitting themselves from their excess church goods, rather than having them taken by someone else. Rich St. James' Church had sold several copper furnishings, using the money "in glasinge, whytelyminge, and paynting the same churches"; they were not dragging their feet, it seems, in changing their emphasis from saints to Scripture. David Palliser has noted that one of the indicators of Protestantism was the early removal of stained glass and of images. Some conservative areas such as Oxford and York made only token compliance in 1548. Wall paintings in some churches in York were not whitewashed until a long time after. Those churches which unwisely kept all their extra church plate would have cause to regret it when in 1551 the Privy Council declared that, since "the Kinge's Majestie hath neede presently of a masse of money," a commission would "take into the Kinge's hands suche church plate as remaineth, to be employed unto his highnesse use."³⁶

The appearance of the parish church had therefore changed drastically; the services were quite different, being in English with many ceremonies abolished, and the number of priests and services were fewer, with the dissolution of the chantries, religious guilds, and anniversary obituary masses. Another change for Colchester clerics was that most of them were now presented to their livings by a lay person, either by the King or a member of the Audley family; whether that resulted in better priests is uncertain. A number of the appointees to benefices after the dissolution of the monasteries seem to have been

former members of religious houses, such as cleric John Gyppys who was presented to the Church of St. Michael in Milend in 1542. A John Gyppys had sworn fealty to the King as a canon of St. Botolph's in 1534, and there are several other clerical names in that 1534 list which re-appear as parish priests in later years.³⁷ The career of one of the chantry priests in Colchester can be followed. One Sir Nicholas Davy, described in the 1548 chantry certificates as being about 50 years of age, of small learning but of good conversation, was chaplain of the Barwick chantry in St. Leonard's Church at its dissolution. King Edward VI presented him to the church in Greenstead in 1548, and in 1550, to St. Leonard's Church. He was still parson of St. Leonard's at the writing of his will in 1560, by which time he had married and fathered a son.³⁸

Section 5: Under the Fire of Queen Mary

Since Colchester had changed comparatively quickly into the ways of the Reformation, it might appear that Mary's accession on the death of King Edward in July, 1553, would occasion immediate resistance from the Colchester burgesses. Instead, town officials welcomed Mary in Colchester with a silver cup and £20 as she made her way to London, triumphant in her victory over Northumberland's attempt to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne. Although Queen Mary was known to be an ardent Romanist, the burgesses had no reasonable choice but to welcome the rightful heir to the throne. Their strength and freedom, after all, lay in the Crown; without the protection of the Crown they could easily fall prey to the power of the local nobility and gentry.

Nevertheless, during Mary's reign lesser folk of Colchester would provide plenty of resistance to Mary's ways, causing one of Mary's chief courtiers, Sir Anthony Browne to comment that Colchester "is a harbourer of heretics and ever was." Wanting to make her position clear, Mary had quickly issued a proclamation stating her attachment to the Catholic faith, and in the first Law Hundred in Colchester after Mary's accession came the first indication of resistance when seven people were named for non-attendance at divine services. Such charges had been made before in Colchester, although not frequently, but suddenly several were willing to show their religious displeasure by not attending church services. Their resistance was mild, however, compared to the armed rebellion in Kent in January, 1554, in opposition to Mary's proposed alliance with Spain. Mary's punishment to those rebels was harsh, with some 100 dying for treason, and it was in the same month of February that Mary's council ordered that punishment be given to lewd persons around Colchester "that have gone about to dissuade the Quenes people there from frequenting suche Divine Service as is presentlie appointed by the lawes to be observed in the realme."³⁹

One such person was Thomas Putto who, under King Edward, had been chastised for "lewd" preaching. Sent to Archbishop Cranmer for correction in 1549, he finally recanted his Anabaptist opinions, and in 1552 the reformist Bishop of London, Nicholas Ridley, ordained Putto. On April 27, 1556, however, Putto was charged by the Colchester burgesses with having preached his heretical doctrines and opinions on November 10, 1554, to about 20 persons. As the Marian persecution of heretics continued, more testimony would reveal the extent of the resistance to Mary's Romanist ways. An informer priest, Stephen Morris,

told of the close connections between the London and Colchester Protestants. Morris named three preachers from "King Edward's days, and their most abiding is at Colchester," but when in London they had "much resort" to a center of Protestant teaching, an "ale-house in Cornhill." One of those three preachers was John Pullen, Oxford graduate who had forfeited the rectory of St. Peter's, Cornhill, in London. Noted as preaching privately to the brethren in Colchester, Pullen finally had to flee to Geneva in 1557, and that same John Pullen would be admitted to the freedom of Colchester in 1559 after Mary's death and was also appointed Archdeacon of Colchester.⁴⁰ Some English Protestants fled to Colchester, among them the Rector of St. Michael's, Tower Hill, in London, to get a boat there for passage to the safety of the Continent. Conversely, the Colchester harbor received Protestants from abroad, even extremists such as Christopher Vitells, a joiner from Delph and follower of the Family of Love, a Dutch sect. The testimony of one Henry Orinel tells us not only about Vitells, but about Colchester as a center of Protestant teaching in Essex. Orinel, a husbandman from the Cambridgeshire village of Willingham which was over 50 miles from Colchester, had a definite reason for visiting Colchester, where he "happened into a common inn. The cause of my repair thither at that time was, that I was desirous to provide, that my conscience should not be entangled with the popish pitch. And being there, I met with divers of mine acquaintance; and also with strangers, who came thither, to confer concerning the safety of their consciences. . . . There we found, at our coming thither, one Christopher Vitells, a joiner, who . . . held many strange opinions," denying even the divinity of Christ. A local man came to argue with Vitells, but the wily Vitells "put Barry

to silence, and blanked him. So that he had not a word to say; to the great offence of divers; and especially of two women gospellers." Some of the Colchester inns, then, had become centers of Protestant teaching. In 1579, William Wilkinson referred to that time in Colchester:

The ancient and famous city of Colchester was, in the troublesome times of Queen Mary's persecution, a sweet and comfortable mother of the bodies, and a tender nurse of the souls of God's children, and was at that time the more frequented, because it afforded many zealous and godly martyrs: who continually with their blood watered those seeds, which by the preachers of the word had been sown most plentifully in the hearts of Christians in the days of good king Edward. This town, for the earnest profession of the gospel, became like unto the city upon a hill; and as a candle upon a candlestick, gave light to all those, who, for the comfort of their consciences, came to confer there, from divers places of the realm. And repairing to common inns, had by night their Christian exercises: which in other places could not be gotten.⁴¹

Such activity in Colchester was sure to gain the notice of those of Queen Mary's Catholic persuasion, particularly that of the conservative Bishop of London, Edmund Bonner. In March, 1555, three Essex men were burned as heretics, and for their execution they were sent to three different towns, Braintree, Maldon, and Colchester, probably as an example to the inhabitants. There was obvious sympathy for the man burned in Colchester, John Lawrence, an ex-friar, whose legs were so damaged by the heavy irons in prison that he had to be burned while sitting in a chair; at his burning he was surrounded by young children who are reported to have cried, "Lord, strengthen thy servant, and keep thy promise." One of the first Essex laymen to be burned for his religious convictions was a gentleman from Coggeshall, in June, 1555. It is probably significant that few others of his social status were burned in the Marian persecutions--they simply fled to the Continent.⁴²

Although the clergy of Protestant sympathies continued to suffer persecution, notably Ridley, Latimer, and Hooper who were all burned in

1555, laymen had another year before their persecution began in earnest. On March 28, 1556, just a week after Archbishop Cranmer was burned at Oxford, several Essex men were sent to Bonner, and those who did not recant their heretical opinions burned at Smithfield on April 28. Three Colchester men were among those burned, and it was probably not coincidence that on the day before their burning, the Colchester burgesses first charged Thomas Putto with preaching before Colchester people, whose names were also given. Yet, it had taken the Colchester burgesses almost one and a half years to make the charge; they were seemingly scared into making some show of loyalty to the Queen's policies. At the same Law Hundred, some of the parishes noted smugly that all of their inhabitants attended divine services, and some gave one or two names of people who did not attend or of those who refused to receive the Eucharist. Interestingly enough, several of those named were said to have already fled, et modo effugit in contemptu. The charges of Colchester burgesses did little harm to anyone, which is probably what they had intended.⁴³

Two other Colchester people, among them a pregnant woman, the wife of a weaver, were among the thirteen persons burned at Stratford-le-Bow near London on June 27, 1556. A new Commission was issued in August to the Earl of Oxford and some Essex gentry to deal with heresy, to seize the goods of those who had fled overseas and to proclaim the Queen's Warrant for the restitution of church goods. A letter to Bishop Bonner from his Commissary describes the proceedings of the Commissioners in Colchester; among other things they sent 22 people from Colchester and the surrounding area to Bishop Bonner for examination. Bonner thought them to be "very obstinate," but they were allowed to

make a mild submission and return to their homes; some of them would later burn.⁴⁴

The Commissions's investigations in Colchester had created much turmoil. The Bishop's Commissary had complained in August that, while delivering some heretics to the Commissioners, "I was going betwixt the castle and St. Katherine's chapel, two hours and a half, and in great press and danger," and he asked the Bishop to require the town bailiffs to aid him with men and weapons. A letter written by a priest, Thomas Tye, also gives a view of the situation in Colchester at that time. At the beginning of Mary's reign, Tye professed himself to be a gospeller, frequenting the company of godly men and women and laboring to keep a good conscience. Turning back to the old religion, however, he made it his business to report on "the detestable sort of schismatics," for which he was rewarded with the benefice of Great Bentley. Complaining that the 22 people whom Bonner had dismissed had become bolder than ever, Tye reported on Colchester:

The rebels are stout in the town of Colchester. The ministers of the church are hemmed at in the open streets, and called knaves. The blessed sacrament of the altar is blasphemed and railed upon in every house and tavern. Prayer and fasting are not regarded. Seditious talks and news are rife, both in town and country, in as ample and large manner, as though there had no honourable lords and commissioners been sent for reformation thereof. The occasion riseth partly by reason of John Love of Colchester-heath, a perverse place; which John Love was twice indicted of heresy; and thereupon fled with his wife and household, and his goods seized within the town of Colchester, to the king and queen's majesties use. Nevertheless the said John is come home again, and nothing said or done to him. Whereupon the heretics are wonderfully encouraged, to the no little discomfort of good and catholic people, which daily pray to God for the profit, unity, and restoration of his church again.⁴⁵

Not long after Tye's letter, a number of gospellers were imprisoned in Colchester castle, and after depositions were taken and sent to

Bishop Bonner, they were condemned to be burned. On August 2, 1557, six Colchester residents were burned outside the town walls early in the morning, and in the afternoon, four Essex people were burned, followed by two more women on September 17. Great crowds watched the burnings, crying encouragement to the sufferers, according to Foxe's report. Bishop Bonner and the Queen's Council issued a fresh commission in April, 1558, to search for heretics in Colchester and Harwich, and on May 27, three persons were burned at Colchester, the last Protestants to suffer that fate in Essex. In all, at least eleven inhabitants had burned for their convictions, and others had fled their homes to save their lives.⁴⁶

None of the eleven Colchester martyrs were of great social standing, a fact noted by Bishop Bonner's scribe, John Boswell, who wrote in a letter to the Bishop about the situation in Colchester:

I do see by experience, that the sworn inquest for heresies do, most commonly, indict the simple, ignorant, and wretched heretics, and do let the arch-heretics go; which is one great cause that moveth the rude multitude to murmur, when they see the simple wretches (not knowing what heresy is) to burn. I wish, if it may be, that this common disease might be cured amongst the jurats of Essex; but I fear me, it will not be, so long as some of them be, as they are, infected with the like disease.

Of the eleven Colchester heretics, six were men, and five were women, with the men having six different occupations--apothecary, weaver, tanner, laborer, glazier, and tallow chandler. Even more is known about the women; three were wives (of a weaver, a miller, and a currier), and one of the wives was pregnant and one had a suckling infant when they were burned. The fact that so many of the heretics were women probably accounts for Commissary John Kingston's suggestion to Bishop Bonner that if "the householders" of Colchester "might be compelled to bring

every man his own wife to her own seat in the church in time of divine service, it would profit much." One of the women burned was 20 year old Elizabeth Folkes, "a tall, well-favoured young wench," whose courage and plight elicited much sympathy, even from the Bishop's commissioner, Dr. Chedsey, who wept when the sentence of condemnation was read against her. Left at her uncle's house rather than in prison, she had opportunities for escape but chose instead to suffer the martyr's death. The fifth woman, 60 year old widow, Agnes Downes (alias May, Smith, Silverside), seemed to be a leader among Essex Protestants, and Foxe recorded a letter written to her by an Essex heretic from his prison in London.⁴⁷ Most of the women seemed to be able to read, as some are mentioned as having spent their time in prison in reading and prayer. Furthermore, the appeal of the gospellers before the commissioners and the Bishop was strongly based in Scripture, and they seemed to be quite knowledgeable of the Word.⁴⁸ Accessibility to the Bible had done its work, even among the laity of lesser social status.

Boswell's letter to the Bishop quoted above indicates that many of the "jurats" or burgesses of Colchester were "infected" with the disease of heresy, and we have already noted the apparent ease with which Colchester accepted Protestant reforms, yet Foxe's description of the 1557 investigations in Colchester show some of the aldermen to be taking an active role in detecting and apprehending the gospellers, thereby placing themselves in the Queen's camp. We must remember, though, that the only prudent course for the sake of the town was to make some show of cooperation, since the Queen could have easily taken away their liberties, if she had so desired. One of the bailiffs in

the borough year of 1554-55, Thomas Dibney, in the wake of the burning of the first layman in Essex, admitted to the Queen's Council his "evil behavior" in religion, whereupon he was ordered to confess his fault in two Colchester churches at service time, and to supply a certificate that he had done so before Corpus Christi. The burning of some Essex people, even of a Coggeshall gentleman, and the cooperation of all the Essex gentry in those burnings, coupled with Dibney's encounter with the Council and enforced penance, must have made the leaders of Colchester cautious. They never again elected Dibney as bailiff, though he remained as alderman through the borough year of 1560-61. Earlier, the Colchester alderman, Robert Brown, who was sitting as the M.P. from Colchester in Mary's third Parliament (November, 1554--January, 1555), was among the 37 members who walked out of Parliament after perceiving the extremities of the legislation which was passing, mainly its restoration of Catholic doctrine and practices and of the statutes against heretics. The burnings of the Essex laymen were a result of the acts of that Parliament. Yet, it seems paradoxical that Robert Brown, though he had walked out of that Parliament, was one of the two bailiffs who helped preside over the investigations of 1556-57 and helped administer all the burnings of Colchester inhabitants which took place in Colchester.⁴⁹

Though finally having to cooperate with the Crown and episcopal authorities, the burgesses and leaders of Colchester did not hasten into compliance, and the borough court rolls during Mary's reign manifest several instances of a definite strain in matters of justice between the Crown and Colchester.⁵⁰ Yet, the burgesses did eventually indict 16 people for listening to the preaching of Thomas Putto, but

those indictments came almost one and a half years after the fact, and they came after some of those sixteen and the other six indicted for religious reasons at the same time (for not receiving the Eucharist or attending divine services) had already fled the town. Of the twenty-two cited for religious offenses at that Law Hundred of April 27, 1556 (the day before the first Colchester people burned at Smithfield), only four were later investigated by the Queen's commissioners, with only 1 of those 4 later being burned.⁵¹ Furthermore, the bailiffs waited to be officially ordered to assist in the apprehension and interrogation of the heretics; Commissary Kingston, according to his letter to Bishop Bonner in August, 1556, feared for his own physical safety and had therefore requested that Lord Darcy, one of the Commissioners, command the bailiffs to provide men and weapons for protection. It fell to Robert Brown, the former M.P., and clothier Robert Maynard to be bailiffs during the most difficult year of 1556-57, when both the investigations and the burnings moved to Colchester. The bailiffs were present at the examinations of suspected persons, and Maynard came in for particular condemnation from Foxe's narration of the events. Described as "a special enemy to God's gospel," Maynard was said to have slept on the bench as he "sat in judgment upon life and death, . . . so careful was his mind on his office." Yet those same bailiffs made no haste in carrying out the executions which they were commanded to effect, and they carefully wrote a long letter to Bishop Bonner explaining that they had not burned Agnes Bongeor, a young woman with a suckling infant, because her name was misspelled on the writ of execution.⁵²

At the first court session just after the death of Mary, the record stated proudly that this was the "first year of the reign of

Lady Elizabeth, by the Grace of God, Queen of England, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith." The burgesses showed their loyalty to their new queen by citing one Geoffrey Golerd for absenting himself from church during the time of the coronation of the new queen; and Richard Cosyn, for blasphemy. Cosyn's inn, the White Hart, had housed the Bishop's inquest into heresy in Colchester. At the first election after the accession of Queen Elizabeth, three aldermen were replaced, Robert Maynard among them. The burgesses showed their regard for the ardent reformer and preacher, John Pullen, by admitting him without fee to the freedom of the borough. Colchester, led by the aldermen, among them Robert Browne, was one of the first towns to hire a common preacher, in 1564. Colchester was a Protestant town, even though it had given the appearance of compliance with Mary's persecution. Paliser believes that towns such as Coventry, Colchester, Ipswich, and Leicester which displayed a zealous Protestantism almost as soon as Elizabeth became queen, must have had Protestantism firmly established before 1553;⁵³ certainly that was true of Colchester.

The Protestantism of Colchester was not merely a product of the influence of the Lollards and later the gospellers in Colchester, although those movements as well as the resultant ecclesiastical investigations surely affected the town, producing noticeable anticlericalism. It was, however, the piety of the orthodox, particularly that of the borough leaders, which had exerted the most influence. Eager to better know and serve God, they had found ways to exert control in the church and they had built a confidence in themselves and their own ideal of piety which gave them boldness and assurance in matters of reform, especially when they viewed abuses in the church and in the

lives of the clergy. The town leaders were not threatened by Lollardy, with some of them even being in sympathy with some of its tenets. With the Bible being given to all the people by Henry VIII, the power of the Word of God was extended, and the confidence of the laymen in themselves was confirmed and developed further. Few were extremists ready to die for a doctrine, however; most were pragmatists who were able to bide their time when necessary, as in Mary's reign. The power in lay piety was real, and much had been slowly changing in religion and in society, even when people remained conventionally orthodox. The wills written during the Reformation years in Colchester will next be examined to see how the changes of those years affected its citizens' manifestations of piety.

Part Two

Wills of the Reformation Period

Alderman John Clere in his will of December 26, 1538, requested "that five sermons be made in the parish church of St. James by the most discretist, wisest, and best learned men that can be gotten within the space of one whole year after my decease, and they to have for every sermon so to be made 10s., to the laud, honor, and praise of almighty God and to the true setting forth of his word." Just 3 years before, 10s. would have bought a trental of masses said for the soul in Purgatory, but in 1538 it was buying a learned sermon. Clere's will suggests certain of the changes of the Reformation time, when monasteries were closed, the doctrine of Purgatory was rejected, and the power of saints was denied. Though giving money to the poor and for the repair of highways, Clere had no need for prayers for his soul after death. He would place his trust in the "blood shedding of . . . Jesus Christ to have forgiveness of my sins." Furthermore, the Word was to be "set forth" to all persons through the sermons requested by Clere, and no doubt those sermons at St. James' Church were well attended.⁵⁴

Clere's will, which was undoubtedly a firm solefideian expression of his personal beliefs, was significant because Clere was, in borough affairs, second only to John Cristmas, Esq. Just as the borough leaders were earlier in the forefront in the practices of a

conventional piety which was creative in developing new lay ideals and confidently unafraid to evaluate traditional ways, so Clere in 1538 was a model for the acceptance of Protestant beliefs. Clere's will was one of the early Protestant wills in England. A year before, a London merchant and a Bristol widow had made such wills; not until 1547 did a York citizen make one.⁵⁵

Although Alderman Clere's will was openly Protestant, medieval orthodoxy nevertheless continued well into the early 1540's in Colchester. A late but very complete example of the expression of medieval lay piety in Colchester was in the will of brasier Thomas Preston, written in May, 1536. Preston had an unusual sense of the drama of the burial service, requesting that 6 of his godchildren bear tapers of wax at his dirige and mass of requiem and that every child in the parish who could sing be there for a payment of 1d. each. Prisoners and the poor were to be given bread on Preston's burial day and even the priests hired to say 6 masses were to have a dinner. Preston left 40s. for his burial day and a further 26s. 8d. for his month day; both Clere and Preston probably thought they had good value for their money.⁵⁶

The wills of John Clere and Thomas Preston well illustrate the diversity of religious thinking in the 1530's, though orthodox ways still prevailed. In attempting to classify the wills according to the value placed on the practices of piety in them, I found that my method used with the pre-Reformation wills began to break down in the last years of the 1530's. Obviously, much was changing. The outward work of sustaining the ecclesiastical system, in which so much effort had gone toward prayers for the dead, was gradually being replaced with a sense of the necessity for inward faith and a knowledge of the Word of

God. Nevertheless, basic thinking and practices change slowly, and so I have analyzed the acts of piety in the wills of the 1530's, since traditionalism was still dominant in that decade. The results of my analysis show that category I, those who highly valued the acts of piety, was down from 38% in the 1520's to 33% in the 1530's, continuing the downward trend of the previous decade. Category III, those with minimal regard for the acts of piety, included 46% of the wills, up from 38% in the 1520's.⁵⁷ These findings are probably somewhat less accurate than was possible earlier, since Protestantism was beginning to make an impact and was slowly eroding the traditional "works" approach to piety which was so easy to chart in the medieval period. I abandoned any attempt to classify the value placed on pious acts in the wills of 1540 through 1558--standards of piety were too much in a state of flux. Yet, looking at some of the changes in the wills during the Reformation years helps us to evaluate the significance of the acts of piety of the earlier period.

The most obvious change in Colchester wills in the Reformation years occurred after 1536, the year in which the Ten Articles demoted saints and denied the doctrine of Purgatory and when monasteries began to disappear. At that time there was a sharp and sudden decline in bequests for prayers. Looking at the whole decade of the 1530's, 36% of the wills requested prayers for the soul (see Table 16; page 218), well below the 55% of the wills of the 1520's which left money for prayers. However, in the wills from 1530 to 1536, the first seven years of the decade, 49% requested prayers, but only 14% in the last three years of the decade. The percentage went down to 6% in the 1540's and to 1% in the 1550's. The widow of Alderman Ambrose Lowthe in 1545 was the last

testator to bequeath money for prayers for dead souls. In contrast, testators in the city of York continued to leave frequent bequests for prayers for religious guilds, for church furnishings, and above all for prayers for the dead, with some York citizens continuing to request prayers for the dead until 1551. Even during Mary's attempt to restore the practices and beliefs of the medieval church, only one person in Colchester asked for anything akin to prayers for the souls of the dead during that period.⁵⁸ There did not seem to be any deep sense of regret at the rejection of the doctrine of Purgatory; perhaps most people in Colchester were coming to agree with Hugh Latimer's assessment of Purgatory as "our old ancient purgatory pick-purse."⁵⁹ The reformers allowed prayers for the dead to continue, however, although the denial of the existence of Purgatory seemed to take away much of the need for such intercessory prayers.

Seemingly closer to the hearts of the people, though, was their attachment to saints, an understandable feeling since the love of saints was a positive relationship which could be helpful in daily living. The reluctance to give up saints is seen most clearly in the slow changes in the preambles of wills. The typical medieval phrasing was to commend one's soul "to almighty God, to our blessed lady saint Mary, and to all the holy company of heaven." Table 25 shows the great attachment to saints in the early Tudor period, with 95% or more of the wills through 1519 using the traditional formula which included Mary or the saints in the bequest or commendation of the soul. In the Reformation years of the 1530's and 1540's the traditional formula was used in something over 50% of the wills, but in the 1550's, there was a sudden drop to 5%. Mary's reign was not an encouragement to traditionalism in

Table 25

Percentage of Traditional Wills in Colchester, 1485-1558¹

	Total Number of Wills	Wills Which Include Mary or the Saints in the Commendation	Percentage of Total
1485-99	15 ²	15	100%
1500-09	80 ²	77	96%
1510-19	64	61	95%
1520-29	41 ²	34	83%
1530-39	58	33	57%
1540-49	68	35	51%
1550-58	75	4	5%

¹ Based on the commendation of souls in the preamble.

² One incomplete will in this group is not counted.

Colchester, and the persecution of Colchester people was probably counterproductive to Mary's cause. By contrast, David Palliser has found that 88.5% of the wills in the conservative city of York remained traditional in its preambles during Mary's reign, and only one York testator toward the end of Mary's reign adopted a positively Protestant form.⁶⁰

A problem in the use of the preambles of wills, however, was the possible use of formulae, especially when the same scribe wrote a number of wills. A. G. Dickens, in his pioneering study of Lollards and Protestants in Yorkshire, used the phraseology of the bequests of the soul to find non-traditional beliefs. Yet, Dickens warned that the results of the analysis of preambles "should not be presented in any spirit of statistical pedantry." Margaret Spufford, in her analysis of

Cambridgeshire wills, investigated the difficulty of drawing conclusions from wills which were obviously written by scribes. She concluded that, although caution must be used, the wills show a change away from the Cult of the Virgin and Saints in the 1540's and 1550's. As Spufford noted, it was highly unlikely that a testator would choose a scribe whose opinions were strongly opposed to his own. In Colchester, I found that by 1545 there were 2 parish priests, Bevys Wright at St. Botolph's and John Thorpe at St. Peter's, who wrote at least 8 Colchester wills, most of them definitely Protestant.⁶¹

Protestant theology replaced the need for the intercession of the prayers of the saints and Mary in heaven by teaching about the atonement through the sacrifice of Jesus. All seven of the testators in the 1540's who commended their souls to Jesus (or to God and Jesus) "preached" a Protestant mini-sermon in their preambles; typical was Alderman William Buxton's will, written in 1546: "I commend my soul unto Almighty God, Jesus Christ, my maker and redeemer in whom and by the merit of whose blessed passion is all my whole trust of clean remission of my sins."⁶² The old system of the intercession of saints had been rejected and replaced by the "once-for-all" sacrifice of Jesus, which was made efficacious by the trust or faith of the testator. For some testators, faith had replaced works, even the "work" of prayer which had so readily been bought for a price. However, in the early Protestant wills in Colchester, the faith of the testator was not emphasized so much as it was in Luther's theology--rather, the stress was on the object of the faith, Christ's passion and atonement.⁶³ The emphasis on Christ in English Protestantism may have come partly from the desire in Lollardy to find in the Word a sense of the person of Jesus,

Table 26

Commendations of Testators' Souls
in Colchester Wills, 1485-1558

	Total No. of Wills	T R A D I T I O N A L - - - - -						- P R O T E S T A N T			
		GMS	GS	JMS	TMS	Al- mighty God	Omitted Commen- dation	God, Maker & Redeemer	J	GJ	T
1485-99	15 ¹	14	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1500-9	80 ¹	77	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	-
1510-19	64	58	1	-	2	3	-	-	-	-	-
1520-9	41 ¹	32	-	2	-	4	-	-	3	-	-
1530-9	58	31	-	1	1	12	8	2	-	1	2
1540-9	68	32	-	2	1	13	1	8	3	4	4
1550-8	75	3	1	-	-	34	1	23	5	7	1

¹ One incomplete will in this group was not counted.

CODE: G = God
M = Mary
S = Saints
J = Jesus
T = Trinity

but it probably also came partly from the emphasis on Jesus in late medieval English piety. However, in the popular piety of the 15th century especially as told in legends, the humanity of Jesus was foremost, whereas the Jesus of the Reformers was a Divine Savior fulfilling a high office in the plan of salvation.⁶⁴

The preambles, then, which commended the souls to Jesus but not to Mary or to the saints were clearly Protestant, but Table 26 shows that there was also a large middle group of wills which might be viewed

as being noncommittal, with most of them directed to God. David Palliser believes that such wills are neutral, and no doubt for many testators a simple commendation of the soul to Almighty God was an easy way out of the confusion. Also, a few, particularly in the transitional years of the 1530's, omitted altogether the usual bequest of the soul. Other evidence, however, indicates that we cannot assume that a simple bequest of the soul to God signifies religious neutrality. For example, two known Lollards, Thomas Matthew and Alice Gardyner, bequeathed their souls to "Almighty God."⁶⁵

More interesting in Matthew's 1534 will, however, was the giving of his body simply "to Christian burial," the first instance of that phrase in Colchester wills. Colchester testators had almost always designated their burial place, usually in one's own parish church or churchyard. It was important to medieval man to be buried in hallowed ground, and burial in one's own parish was practical and economical, since the parish church could demand a share of burial fees if the parishioner was buried elsewhere. Some reformers, however, rejected the necessity for burial in hallowed ground, and such thinking was a part of William Wodcok's vulgar statement when he was before the borough court for having opinions "against the sacrament of the altar." Wodcok stated that "he had as leave to be buried in the high way as in the church yard for any hallowing that is there."⁶⁶ In the 1540's other testators began to follow Matthew's and Wodcok's thinking, often asking for "Christian burial where it shall please God." Six testators in the 1540's and 13 in the 1550's made such requests, and most of them gave other indications of Protestantism, such as a commendation of the soul to Jesus, a request for sermons, a daughter with the "new" name of

Grace or Faith, or the naming of known Protestants as witnesses or friends. Spufford, too, noticed in the Cambridgeshire wills that the absence of a clause requesting burial in the churchyard is a possible sign of religious dissent. The general request for Christian burial is probably, then, another indicator of Reformist sympathies. A point to be noticed, though, is that 9 of the 19 persons requesting "Christian burial" commended their soul simply to "Almighty God," the seemingly noncommittal phrase, so the detection of Protestantism in wills is not a simple matter. A similar phrase, apparently neutral, was the commendation of the soul to "God, my maker and redeemer." "Redeemer" could refer to Jehovah God, but was more commonly used in reference to Jesus, of course. The phrase, "to God, my maker and redeemer" (or "my creator and savior") was heavily used in the 1550's, and it was for some possibly a disguise of Protestant sympathies during the reign of Mary.⁶⁷

The dramatic decrease both in prayers for the soul and in the traditional commendations of the soul to saints were not the only changes in the Reformation wills in Colchester; the effect on the parish church was startling. There were bequests to the churches (aside from offerings to the high altar) in 40% of the pre-Reformation wills, but that figure went down to 24% in the 1530's, to 6% in the 1540's, and to an astonishing zero in the 1550's (Table 16). Even more striking was the decrease in bequests to the high altar, an offering to the parish priest for tithes withheld or forgotten. Ninety percent or more of the pre-Reformation testators made a bequest to the high altar, but that offering was made in only 69% of the wills of the 1530's, in 53% of the wills of the 1540's, and in 3% of the wills in the 1550's

Table 27

Bequests to the High Altar of the Parish Church, 1485-1558

	Total No. of Wills	No. Giving to the High Altar	% Giving to the High Altar
1485-1499	16	15	94%
1500-1509	81	75	93%
1510-1519	64	62	97%
1520-1529	42	38	90.5%
1530-1539	58	40	69%
1540-1549	68	36	53%
1550-1558	75	2	3%

(Table 27). One would have thought that there would have been more of a resurgence of traditionalism in Mary's reign, but that was not the case. W. K. Jordan, in his study of philanthropy, also found that there was an abrupt decline in giving to the parish church beginning in the 1530's, and Christopher Dyer likewise found a striking collapse in the bequests to the church in Worcester.⁶⁸ As the mediation of the church and of its priests became less and less important, so the need to support the church was taken away.

No doubt the decrease in the support of the parish church was connected with anticlericalism. Here too the Colchester wills show a diminishing dependence on the clergy, both for the saying of prayers and for the writing of their wills; Table 28 reveals that 20% of the pre-Reformation wills made no mention of clerics, whereas by the 1550's 87% of the testators did not mention a cleric in any way. Of course, there would have been fewer clergy available after the closing of

Table 28

Wills Which Mention no Clerics, 1485-1558

	Total No. of Wills	Wills Not Mentioning Clerics	% of Total No.
1485-1529	203	41	20%
1530-39	58	28	48%
1540-49	68	31	46%
1550-58	75	65	87%

the religious houses and the cessation of chantries. However, the need of the people for the church and for its representative, the priest, had lessened considerably; the priest was still needed at the Eucharistic table, but the people, through their access to the higher authority of the Bible, available in the churches at least from 1538, were more likely to make offerings to God on their own. Many of the prayers in divine service were now in English, and much teaching, even by the priests, was also being given to the people in English. Furthermore, as confident laymen were wont to do, they began to take steps, though slowly, in directing some of that teaching. A few testators left money for the preaching of sermons; one example was John Smyth in 1545, who left 5s. to the parson of his parish church, St. Leonard's, "for preaching the holy gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ." In Elizabeth's reign, the laymen of Colchester would be among the first to hire a town preacher in 1564.⁶⁹

One other area of traditional bequests remains: gifts to the poor or for civic improvement. Table 16 (page 218) informs us that alone of all the charitable or prayer bequests, those to the poor or to

one's neighbors did not decline in the Reformation years, but were in fact slightly higher than before the Reformation. In Worcester, too, bequests to the poor were higher after the Reformation. Often bequests to the poor in Colchester were still to be given on the testator's burial day, but occasionally money was to be put in "the poor box." Rising prices and the stagnant cloth industry had made poverty more acute than ever, and though the statistics from the Colchester wills do not evidence a striking rise in relief given to the poor, there was a continuation and perhaps an increase in personalized giving. For example, though not necessarily appearing as a bequest to the poor, Philip Haywarde in 1544 left 20d. "to the old woman Mother Suffolk," and in 1546 Richard Hampken left 3s. 4d. to fatherless Margaret Foorde. John Byrde in 1555 left £20 to the poor, but his will also lists some women who were to receive 20 or 40s., along with some female servants who were also to receive 20s. We do not know that all of those people were poor, but it seems likely that most of them were. Our list of examples could go on and on, although we cannot legitimately count them with the general bequests to the poor. In a recent study of Elizabethan Warwick, A. L. Beier concluded that the chief concern of testators was with the immediate relief of friends and neighbors. That seemed to be the case with husbandman John Langlay who had few earthly goods but yet requested that a bushel of rye be distributed among 4 poor folk in his country parish of Lexden.⁷⁰

Giving to the poor could defy statistics in another way: charitable giving could be to relatives who were poor. Seldom, though, would the relatives be called poor in the will; most unusual was the bequest of a gentleman in St. Leonard's parish to "the poorest of my

kinfolk." Though difficult to chart, there seemed to be a greater concern for relatives, but whether they were poor relatives is unknown. John George left 10s. yearly to his mother for the rest of her life, and Alderman John Stone provided a dwelling and 40s. a year to an unmarried sister.⁷¹ It is likely that those women needed that help, and it would certainly be possible to provide other examples of probable charity which cannot easily be classified.

Beyond providing for poor relatives, though, the concern shown for families, especially children, by Reformation period testators is more noticeable than in pre-Reformation wills. One unmistakable factor, of course, was that more money was available since so little was being given to the church in the Reformation years. Church teaching certainly permitted proper support of one's family, and even Anima in the 14th century Piers Plowman had remarked:

Alas! you lords and ladies, how ill-advised you are to deprive your heirs of their ancestral heritage, and hand it over, for the sake of their prayers, to men who are rich already, and specially endowed to pray for the souls of others!⁷²

The taking away of the necessity to hire prayers for dead souls, whether one's own soul or that of parents, did more than merely free the pocket-book. The concern which had gone toward the past and toward another world could now be redirected to this world and to this time, both to the present and to the future. The reformist theology of justification by faith contributed to the new emphasis on the present; a works salvation could continue after death whereas a faith salvation was possible only during one's lifetime. With the possibility of the lay person now being more in control of his relationship with God, so the ordinary burgess was more free to try to direct the present and the future of his family. The stronger inclination to guide the future of the family

is seen most clearly in the wills of testators who left minor children behind. Most often, little was said about minor children except that money or goods were left to them, to be given them at a certain age. In the 203 pre-Reformation wills, only nine testators said something more about the upbringing of their minor children, usually something rather general, such as shoemaker John Fraunces' guidance to his wife to "keep and bring forth honestly my children and hers." In the 201 Colchester wills from 1530 to 1558, eighteen testators gave directions for the training of their minor children. Though the 18 is a 100% increase, it is still a small number; nevertheless, there was a noticeable difference in the quality of many of the later instructions. In four of the later group of wills, careful detail was given about the guardianship of the children, and in some there was a genuine concern about the learning and virtue of the children. William Alldust wrote in 1553: "I will also that my wife shall bring up my children in the fear of God. And that my sons shall learn to write and read til they be able to be bound prentice." In 1557 Richard Stampe charged his executors, his brothers, to see that his children "be virtuously brought up in the fear of almighty God." The wills of Alldust and Stampe are an interesting contrast, as Alldust's preamble shows him to be obviously Protestant, whereas Stampe was one of only four Colchester testators in the 1550's who alluded to saints in their preambles. Yet, both Alldust and Stampe were clearly concerned that their children be brought up "in the fear of God," a term not used in that way in earlier wills. Both the traditionalist and the Protestant cared deeply about the quality of training which their children received, as the children's faith must be prepared for life in this world and this

time.⁷³

Protestant William Alldust, unlike the conservative Richard Stampe, was careful to mention that his sons were to learn to write and read; certainly the ability to read the Bible became a tenet of Protestantism, yet the Colchester testators seemed to view the ability to read only as a preparation for work. There are, however, surprisingly few allusions in the wills to the instruction of children--in only 3 of the pre-Reformation wills and in 3 of the Reformation period wills. John Turnour in 1525 seemed to have the same concern of William Alldust that his children be given the necessary preparation for apprenticeship; Turnour directed his wife to keep his children "to school during their non-age til they can write and read. And as soon as any of them can write and read, I will he be put to service with a convenient master and so one after another as they grow in age and learning." Learning was pragmatic, and yet when Alderman Thomas Cristmas set up Westons, a free school for 24 children, they were to be taught "grammar and other virtuous conditions and learnings." Even before the teaching of the Reformation, piety and practical learning went together.⁷⁴ In that late medieval period, learning was often a part of the equipment of the pious townsman, and it was just such men who forged the Reformation--men such as Thomas Cromwell and Colchester Town Clerk Thomas Audley. Though there was certainly a concern for practical learning in early Tudor Colchester, the reliance on lay learning became more evident in the Reformation years, and not just among the counsellors surrounding the King. For example, more than ever before Colchester testators used laymen rather than clerics to write their wills, and, interestingly, some of the notaries began to identify themselves as the writers of the

wills, a new development in Colchester wills and an example of emerging individualism among the more learned laymen.⁷⁵ Learning, whether in the law, in commerce, or in the Bible, had within it a power which would not be stopped, and it was in the urban context where learning was so practical and so needed for business that it had combined with piety, even before the Reformation, to greatly increase the power of the layman both before and during the period of reform.

Our finding that the Reformation came quickly to Colchester is no surprise, for historians have noted that by the Marian period the Protestant underground congregation in Colchester was seemingly second only to London's. The southeast of England has long been recognized as an area which was generally more receptive to the new ideas and practices of the Reformation, partly because of its proximity to the Continent.⁷⁶ Ports such as Colchester were especially open to influence from abroad, but Colchester showed an unusual receptivity to reformist ideas and practices. In looking at the reasons for that openness, we find that several conditions were merging in Colchester in the late medieval period, and a look at those conditions will help us to summarize our findings.

Its status as a royal borough permitted Colchester much independence, and its long tradition of self-governance nurtured confidence within the townsmen. Yet, the burgesses' status in the larger society was lowly, and their efforts to raise themselves through their money-making were suspect and even ridiculed. The townsman, however, found a way to validate his mode of life by developing his own ideals of piety, incorporating his work in the world and his profit-making with

cultivating a life pleasing to God. The forging of this practical, mixed form of piety enabled the townsman to be confident before man because he felt worthy before God. Clerical ideals of withdrawal from the world were left behind.

As the lay townsmen began to take more initiative not only in the observance but also in the administration of conventional religious practices, Colchester burgesses were increasingly attracted to Lollard beliefs, even at the highest levels of the borough, and some members of aldermanic families actually embraced Lollard beliefs. However, after the 1527-28 diocesan investigations of Lollardy in Colchester, there was a kind of uniting of nonconforming and traditional piety, evidenced by the sudden and strong expressions of anticlericalism in the borough court records at that time. There seemed to be a growing desire for more lay control in matters of religion.

The strong civic tradition in Colchester undergirded the emergence of the lay townsman as a possible model of piety. Colchester had many leaders who valued and practiced acts of civic piety, and Colchester had influential priests such as John Adam in the reign of Henry VII who encouraged the spiritual life of the laity by making devotional works available to them, alongside the Bible, even at that early time. Learning also merged with piety to bolster the confidence of the townsmen. The most influential leaders of Colchester in the early Tudor period saw themselves, in their own words, as working "to the honour of God and the Borough." In the merging of secular power and personal piety in the top leaders of Colchester, we see the embryo of the grand merging of secular and ecclesiastical power when the King of England became "Supreme Head on Earth of the Church of England." The townsmen

of Colchester were willing and able allies of King Henry's path of reform. There was no better testimony of their loyalty to Henry's reforms than the 1538 will of an influential alderman, John Clere. One of the earliest Protestant wills in England, Clere's will openly embraced Protestantism, "to the laud, honor, and praise of almighty God and to the true setting forth of His Word." More ordinary Colchester burgesses also approved of Henry's reforms; in 1540 Richard Colbrande left money "to make a sermon in setting out of the glory of God and the honor of our most noble prince."⁷⁷

The confidence and strength which the late medieval townsman of Colchester found through his self-governance, his piety, and his learning supported the reform of an entrenched medieval church. The remaking of the church broke down long-enduring social bonds but also created new ones and strengthened others. The community was no longer needed to pray a soul into heaven, and so some of the old bonds of loyalty to the parish church disintegrated; but emerging was an even stronger borough community which passed its own poor relief measures in 1557 and which came to see itself as having the right to hire its own town preacher.⁷⁸ The clerical ideal of celibacy gave way to a stronger sense of the godly family, with the spiritual shaping of the children increasingly being the responsibility of the parents. At the same time, individualism became a stronger force, both because of greater lay learning and reliance on it, and because the individual had access to the Word of God in his own language. There was authority and power in the Word and in the ability to read words. The practice of deep devotion to God while remaining in the world had helped prepare the way for the emergence of the lay townsman as a force in English society.

Footnotes to Chapter IV

¹ A Relation, p. 23; Fisher and Audley speeches quoted in Dickens, Reformation, p. 139.

² J. J. Scarisbrick, Henry VIII (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1968), p. 247; Colch.C.R., Oct. 25, 1529; Nov. 29, 1529. On differing interpretations of the Reformation, see Christopher Haigh, "The Recent Historiography of the English Reformation," Historical Journal, 25 (1982), 995-1007.

³ Colch.C.R., Oct., 1529; Scarisbrick, pp. 242, 340.

⁴ R.P.B., pp. 52-3; Dickens, Reformation, pp. 41-62; Thomson, Later Lollards, pp. 121-6, 130, 134.

⁵ Foxe, IV, 180-1, 214-16; Thomson, Later Lollards, pp. 137, 162.

⁶ Foxe, IV, 208-18, 666-7, 683, 694-5; John Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1822), I, pt. 1, 113-21, 124-33; Dickens, Reformation, p. 50.

⁷ Strype, Memorials, I, pt. 1, 120-3, 126-7; I, pt. 2, 53; Claire Cross, "'Great Reasoners in Scripture': The Activities of Women Lollards 1380-1530," in Medieval Women, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), p. 373; Brit. Lib. Harley 421; Oxley, p. 14; on Thomas Bilney, see Dickens, Reformation, p. 51.

⁸ See John F. Davis, "The Trials of Thomas Bylney and the English Reformation," Historical Journal, 24 (1981), 775-90, who finds a movement called Evangelism in this period, especially in Thomas Bylney, whom Pykas mentions having heard preach in Ipswich. Sensitive to Lollardism, Evangelism espoused the doctrine of faith, especially faith in the all-sufficiency of Christ's passion and atonement, while remaining in communion with Rome.

⁹ "Weaver, or a maker of cloth," Robert Best, had £3 6s. 8d., placing him above the ordinary weaver such as Thomas Parker, a Lollard who had 40s. in goods. Lollard fletcher Robert Hedil had £3 in goods, and tanner John Hammond had £4 in goods; P.R.O. E179/108/154; P.R.O. E170/108/169; Dickens, Reformation, p. 51.

¹⁰ Strype, Memorials, I, pt. 1, 118, 120, 128-9; I, pt. 2, 53, 63-5. On public penance, see Houlbrooke, Church Courts, pp. 46-7. W. T. Whitley wrote a series of articles speculating that Thomas Matthew was the translator of Matthew's Bible which was published in 1537. Whitley

was mistaken, I think; he misread some of the court rolls and thought that Matthew was alive until 1543. I can see no evidence of Matthew's association with the publishers on the Continent, or that he had the ability to make such a translation or the resources for financing its publication. See E.R., 43 (1934), 1-6, 82-7, 155-62, 227-34; 44 (1935), 40-4.

¹¹ Colch.C.R., Oct. 5, 1520; Nov. 21, 1527; Nov. 25, 1527; July 25, 1530; Jan. 16, 1531.

¹² If Best was the son of Alderman Best, then he also had connections with another alderman, John Clere, as Clere's sister had married Alderman Best.

¹³ Strype, Memorials, I, pt. 1, 121, 129, 131; Wills of Bardfeld, P.R.O. 18 Adeane; Cowbridge, P.R.O. 22 Fetiplace. William Cowbridge was mistakenly listed as Mark Cowbridge by Foxe, V, 251-3.

¹⁴ Even in some individuals who were among the "known" there was a merging of the conventional and the radical. Alice Gardyner adhered to the teaching of John Pykas, but even so her godson from Steeple Bumpstead reported that she still considered going on a pilgrimage to Ipswich. See Strype, Memorials, I, pt. 1, 124, 129; I, pt. 2, 54.

¹⁵ Dickens, Lollards, p. 245, says that the historical importance of Lollardy "may lie in the fact that it united with the more worldly types of anticlericalism to form an extensive platform of critical dissent upon which the various newer movements could build."

¹⁶ Colch.C.R., May 12, 1511; Jan. 19, 1512. The dating of the court rolls is confused at this time; I follow Benham's dating.

¹⁷ Colch.C.R., May 6, 1527; Jan. 16, 1531.

¹⁸ Scarisbrick, pp. 250-2, 273-5; on p. 243 is an excellent discussion of anticlericalism. See also Alexander, Religion, pp. 30-3.

¹⁹ Colch.C.R., Jan. 16, 1531; Jan. 15, 1532; Foxe, V, 39; G. R. Elton, Reform and Reformation, England, 1509-1558 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 150-2; Scarisbrick, pp. 270, 297.

²⁰ Scarisbrick, p. 265; Foxe, IV, 585; Oxley, p. 84. The relationship between Audley and the Cristmas family was mentioned in the will of John Cristmas, Sr., enrolled in Colch.C.R., 1534-5; the will was proved before Master John Wayne on Dec. 9, 1534.

²¹ Colch.C.R., April 19, 1535; Scarisbrick, p. 332.

²² Colch.C.R., April 19, 1535; Houlbrooke, p. 230, notes that the Norwich mayor's court books reveal far more about unorthodox opinion in the city between 1534 and 1547 than do the diocesan consistory court act books in the same period. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, pp. 250-8, says that R. A. Marchant found the same to be true in Yorkshire.

²³ For a summary of the Ten Articles, see Ken Powell and Chris Cook, English Historical Facts 1485-1603 (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977), p. 110.

²⁴ For the act of 1536, see Joyce Youings, The Dissolution of the Monasteries (N.Y.: Barnes and Noble, 1971), pp. 155-9. For history of the Valor and the first stage of the dissolution, see Elton, pp. 232-5.

²⁵ Colch.C.R., 1536-7, m. 3; deed of Sept. 10, 1536, Colch.C.R., 1553-4, m. 10; deed of March 12, 1542, in Colch.C.R., 1541-2, m. 14; deed of March 28, 1541, in Colch.C.R., 1544-5, m. 6. On the dissolution of St. Botolph's, see Oxley, pp. 105-6, and Morant, II, 40-1.

²⁶ Hoskins, Age, p. 136; Christopher Kitching, "The Disposal of Monastic and Chantry Lands," in Church and Society in England, ed. Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day (London: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 119-36. Other gentry to benefit from the sale of Colchester's monasteries were John Golder, Gent., and John Barnabe, Gent.

The grandfather of Francis Jobson (or Jopson) was Alderman and M.P. Thomas Jopson, and his father was Alderman William Jopson, who died in 1524, having been assessed as having £100 of movable goods. About 1540 Francis Jobson married Elizabeth Plantagenet, granddaughter of Edward IV, and at various times he was Surveyor of Woods, Master and Treasurer of the Crown Jewels, and Lieutenant of the Tower, having been made Sir Francis Jobson. He was M.P. for Colchester several times; see Rickword, "M.P.," E.R., 4 (1895), 114, 116-21, 235.

²⁷ G. H. Cook, ed., Letters to Cromwell and Others on the Suppression of the Monasteries (London: John Baker, 1965), pp. 194-6; V.C.H. Essex, II, 99-100; Oxley, pp. 126, 129-30; Morant, II, 20, 36; L.P. XIV, pt. ii, App. 43; Rickword, "M.P.'s," 113-115; Hoskins, Age, p. 135.

²⁸ Colch.C.R., 1549-50, m. 13, deed of April 18, 1550; Colch. C.R., July 23, 1534; V.C.H. Essex, II, 502; P.R.O. E319; Morant, III, 9; Martin, Story of Colchester, p. 51.

²⁹ Powell, pp. 110-11; Scarisbrick, p. 399; Colch.C.R., 1540-1, m. 6; 1541-2, m. 24. On the English Bible, see Dickens, Reformation, pp. 183-96.

³⁰ Colch.C.R., Oct. 3, 1541; 1542-3, m. 3; 1543-4, m. 2; 1544-5, m. 2. Oxley, p. 144; L.P., XIV, pt. i, 1001; Lond. Epis. Reg. Stokesley, folio 33; Lond. Epis. Reg. Bonner, folio 130. Cases involving Master Ralph Lee: Colch.C.R., Oct. 1, 1537; May 6, 1538; April 28, 1539; Jan. 19, 1540; May 1, 1542; Oct. 2, 1542; Jan. 15, 1543, April 16, 1543.

³¹ E.R.O. D/ACR4/82; J. D. Mackie, The Earlier Tudors 1485-1558 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 427, 429; Powell, p. 113; Elton, Reform, pp. 287-8; Dickens, Reformation, pp. 262-5.

- ³² Quoted in Renaissance and Reformation: 1300-1648, ed. G. R. Elton (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1963), p. 199.
- ³³ Tanner, Documents, p. 101; O.B., p. 164.
- ³⁴ Kreider, pp. 116, 186. The will of Joane Roberts established the last obit in Colchester; E.R.O. D/ACR3/9. On the effect of the Chantries Act, see V.C.H. Essex, II, 22-4. For a discussion about the decrease of chantry foundations, see Jordan, Philanthropy, pp. 306-7.
- ³⁵ Powell, pp. 114-16.
- ³⁶ Quoted in Bettey, p. 66; Edward P. Dickin, "Embezzled Church Goods of Essex," T.E.A.S., n.s., 13 (1915), 165; V.C.H. Essex, II, 26-3i; Platt, Church, pp. 150-5; Oxley, pp. 169-72; Palliser, "Popular Reactions to Reformation, 1530-70," in Church and Society, ed. Heal and O'Day, p. 40; Palliser, "The Reformation in York, 1534-1553," Borth.P., 40 (1971), 27.
- ³⁷ Such as William Patche, canon of St. Botolph's who became Rector of Greenstead in 1541; John Peper, monk of St. John's who became Rector of All Saints' Church in 1546; John Smyth, Holy Cross friar who became Rector at St. Leonard's; and John Francis, monk of St. John's who became Rector of St. Mary-at-Wall in 1556. Some, of course, may be other clerics with the same name. See Lond. Epis. Reg. Bonner, folios 137, 156; Ridley, folios 308, 466. For the 1534 list of inhabitants swearing fealty, see R.P.B., pp. 87-92.
- ³⁸ Lond. Epis. Reg. Bonner, folio 163; Ridley, folio 308. E.R.O. D/ACR5/100; P.R.O. E301/19.
- ³⁹ Martin, Story of Colchester, p. 47; Oxley, pp. 180, 197; Colch.C.R., Oct. 3, 1553; V.C.H. Essex, II, 32; Elton Reform, p. 380. Palliser, "Popular Reactions," p. 42, says that it is now accepted that the ease with which Mary ascended to the throne was owing to her legitimate hereditary claim and not to her religion.
- ⁴⁰ Pullen became Archdeacon of Colchester on Dec. 13, 1559. Oxley, pp. 166-7; Colch.C.R., April 27, 1556; Foxe, VIII, 384; Dickens, Reformation, pp. 375-6; O.B., p. 180; Newcourt, I, 92; Christina Hallowell Garrett, The Marian Exiles (1938; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 262-3.
- ⁴¹ Oxley, pp. 193, 197; John Strype, Annals of the Reformation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1824), II, pt. 2, 284-5. Orniel's name was given as "Crinel" by Strype who copied it from William Wilkinson. The Wilkinson quote is in Strype, Annals, II, pt. 2, 282. Spufford, Contrasting Communities, pp. 246-8, found in some 1575 records that Orniel was a husbandman, farming a half-yardland at that time.
- ⁴² V.C.H. Essex, II, 34; Davids, Annals, p. 34; Oxley, p. 214. On the exiles from Essex, see Oxley, pp. 195-7, 201-4. On the geographical distribution of the origin of the exiles and the martyrs as

related to the incidence of Protestantism, see Palliser, "Popular Reactions," 43.

⁴³ Elton, Reform, p. 387; Oxley, p. 222; Davids, pp. 43-4; Colch.C.R., April 27, 1556.

⁴⁴ Foxe, VIII, 304-10; Oxley, pp. 226-8.

⁴⁵ Foxe, VIII, 305, 383; Davids, p. 48.

⁴⁶ Foxe, VIII, 384-92, 420-3, 467-8; Davids, pp. 49, 54; Oxley, pp. 232-3. Possibly others of the Essex Martyrs were from Colchester; I have numbered only those who were definitely said to be from Colchester.

⁴⁷ Foxe, VIII, 306, 388, 414, 416. Downes was the widow of a priest named Silverside, probably Thomas Silverside, Colch.C.R., March 22, 1548. Her first husband was possibly William Downes, Gent., who had died by 1517; Colch.C.R., 1516-17, m. 22.

⁴⁸ Foxe, VIII, 308-9, 391, 423.

⁴⁹ Oxley, p. 217; Davids, p. 29; Powell, pp. 35; Acts of the Privy Council, V, 134, 137; Elton, Reform, pp. 383-6.

⁵⁰ Colch.C.R., May 28, 1556; writs dated Oct. 14 and Oct. 21, 1558, in Colch.C.R., 1558-9, m. 5.

⁵¹ Colch.C.R., April 27, 1556. Joan Fletcher, Margaret Simpson (wife of William Simpson, Jr.), and Allin Simpson later submitted to the authorities; Ellen Ewing burned on August 2, 1557.

⁵² Foxe, VIII, 305, 387, 390, 421-2. Agnes Bongeor was burned on September 17.

⁵³ Colch.C.R., Nov. 28, 1558; April 17, 1559; May 6, 1560; Foxe, VIII, 390; E.R.O. D/Y2/2. The replaced aldermen may have died, but there are two wills from 1566 and 1569 which seem to be those of the former aldermen, John Beriff and William Strachye; see P.R.O. 17 Crymes and P.R.O. 9 Sheffield. Palliser, "Popular Reactions," 41-2.

⁵⁴ P.R.O. Dyngley; see Appendix 6. Miriam Usher Chrisman, Strasbourg and the Reform (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967), p. 98, has noted that it was through sermons that the new ideas of the Reformation were communicated.

⁵⁵ Palliser, "Popular Reactions," 40. See Spufford, pp. 337-8, for the earliest Protestant wills in Cambridgeshire villages, where some came as late as 1569.

⁵⁶ E.R.O. D/ABW28/36.

⁵⁷ See Table 8, p. 203, for piety in the earlier decades.

58 Thomas Samforth, E.R.O. D/ABW33/323, in 1557, requested that his month day be kept. Will of Katherine Lowthe, E.R.O. D/ACR3/100; Palliser, "Reformation," 18; Palliser, York, p. 252.

59 In a sermon preached in 1536, in Sermons, ed. George Elwes Corrie (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1844), p. 50.

60 Palliser, York, p. 251, 253.

61 Dickens, Lollards, pp. 171-2; Spufford, Contrasting, pp. 320-325; Palliser, "Popular Reactions," pp. 39-40; Palliser, "Reformation," 19-20, 28, 32; M. L. Zell, "The Use of Religious Preambles as a Measure of Religious Belief in the Sixteenth Century," B.I.H.R., 50 (1977), 246-9; Matlock Population Studies Group, "Wills and Their Scribes," Local Population Studies, 8 (1972), 55-7; N. R. Evans, "Testators, Literacy, Education and Religious Belief," Local Population Studies, 25 (1980), 42-50.

62 E.R.O. D/ACR3/120. In some of the wills directed to Jesus in Mary's reign, however, the testator was more circumspect, as was Nicholas Wilbore when he bequeathed "my soul to the tender mercy of our lord and savior Jesus Christ," E.R.O. D/ABW39/196.

63 This stress on the object of faith is mentioned in an article by J. F. Davis, "Trials of Thomas Bylney," 788.

64 M. Smith, p. 524.

65 Palliser, York, pp. 250-1; Foxe, IV, 585; Foxe, V, 42; wills of Matthew, E.R.O. D/ABW25/35, and Gardyner, E.R.O. D/ACR4/70.

66 Colch.C.R., April 19, 1535; Philippe Aries, The Hour of Our Death, trans. Helen Weaver (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), pp. 71-4.

67 The latter phrase was used by former Lollard Margaret Bogus in 1558, E.R.O. D/ABW4/140; Spufford, p. 335.

68 Jordan, Philanthropy, pp. 301, 316; Dyer, p. 243.

69 E.R.O. D/ABW33/126; E.R.O. D/Y2/2. Claire Cross, "Parochial Structure and the Dissemination of Protestantism in Sixteenth Century England," S.C.H., 16 (1979), 273, found that there were fewer clergy in Hull after the Reformation.

70 A. L. Beier, "The Social Problems of an Elizabethan Country Town: Warwick, 1580-90," in Country Towns, ed. Peter Clark, p. 72; wills of Haywarde, E.R.O. D/ACR3/55; Hampken, E.R.O. D/ACR3/80; Byrde, E.R.O. D/ABW4/48; Langlay, E.R.O. D/ABW23/93. For good discussions of the problem of poverty in the mid-Tudor period, see Hoskins, Age, pp. 226-9, and Whitney R. D. Jones, The Mid-Tudor Crisis 1539-1563 (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 135-9.

71 Wills of gentleman William Cornewall, E.R.O. D/ABW8/245;

George, E.R.O. D/ACR3/2; Stone, E.R.O. D/ABW33/199. Dyer, pp. 241-2.

⁷² Piers Ploughman, ed. Goodridge, XV, 11. 321-4; Bolton, Medieval English Economy, pp. 332-4.

⁷³ Wills of Fraunces, E.R.O. D/ACR2/1; Alldust, E.R.O. D/ABW1/90; Stampe, E.R.O. D/ABW33/313. Another manifestation of the concern of the testator for the future of his minor children was the provision in some of the wills of the 1550's that, if the wife marry again, she was to make a bond of surety, "for the performance of the will." See wills of Thomas Reve (1550), E.R.O. D/ABW31/63; William Smythe (1556), E.R.O. D/ABW33/277; John Dynes (1557), E.R.O. D/ABW12/82; John Gylder (1557), E.R.O. D/ABW16/124.

⁷⁴ Wills of Turnour, E.R.O. D/ACR2/185; Cristmas, P.R.O. 28 Aylofffe.

⁷⁵ Some notaries who identified themselves in the 1540's and 1550's were John Andrewes, Robert Lambe, and William Mauncell. See E.R.O. D/ABW39/48; E.R.O. D/ABW23/42; E.R.O. D/ABW3/146; E.R.O. D/ABW4/57; E.R.O. D/ABW1/46; E.R.O. D/ABW35/119.

⁷⁶ Palliser, "Popular Reactions," pp. 36-7, 43-4.

⁷⁷ R.P.B., p. 103; will of Colbrande, E.R.O. D/ACR4/82, and of Clere, see Appendix 8.

⁷⁸ Martin, Story of Colchester, p. 48.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Officers of the Borough of Colchester¹

Bailiffs. Two men, who were also aldermen.

Legis Peritus (Recorder). A lawyer, usually one of the gentry. Legal consultant to the town, usually non-resident.

Justices of the Peace. Four men, who were also aldermen. The two bailiffs and the recorder were also J.P.'s, making seven in all.

Aldermen. Ten men, including the two bailiffs. Generally, the aldermen served until death.

Chamberlain. One man, not an alderman; usually from the Common Council. Term of service was only for one year, and the same man never held the office twice. Was often a prelude to becoming alderman.

Coroners. Two men, who were also aldermen.

Claviers (key bearers). Four men, two being aldermen and two men from the Common Council.

Clerk of the Town. A lawyer, usually one of the gentry; resident in the town; handled the everyday legal affairs of the town.

Serjeants-at-Mace. Four men. For each serjeant, four men were sureties for £40 for each serjeant.

First Council. Sixteen men, elected by the aldermen.

Second Council. Sixteen men, elected by the aldermen and the First Council.²

First Group of Electors.³ Twenty-four men, six from each of the four wards. Many were on the First or Second Council, but none were aldermen. Elected the bailiffs, recorder, J.P.'s, aldermen, and chamberlain.

Second Group of Electors.³ Twenty-four men, six from each of the 4 wards. Elected the coroners, claviers, clerk of the town, and serjeants.

Others. Mentioned occasionally were: constables; water bailiff; clerks of the market; supervisors of fish in the market, of tanned leather, of the butcher's art, of land; and common dredgerman of oysters.

¹ Elections were held yearly. Listings of officers are found in the borough court records, but complete listings were seldom given;

only in 7 court rolls were complete listings given of the members of the two councils, as well as the two groups of electors. The medieval Oath Book lists the bailiffs and often the chamberlain for each year, a valuable aid for the years in which court rolls are missing.

² According to the charter of Edward IV, there were to be four men from each of the four wards, but in practice the richer two wards--the Head Ward and the East Ward--usually predominated. Most of the aldermen likewise came from those two wards.

³ "Electors" is my term for those men.

Appendix 2

Aldermen of Colchester, 1485-1558*

Name	Occupation	Years as Alderman	Tax Assessment		Family Connections	Admission as a Burgess
			1524	1525		
1. +Aley, George	Merchant	1509-10	-	-	-	-
2. +Bardfield, John	-	1490-1506	-	-	-	-
3. Barker, Richard	-	1489-1500	-	-	-	-
4. +Barker, Robert	Clothmaker	1493-?	-	-	-	-
5. +Beket, William	-	1529-36	£40	£43	Mar. widow of T. Clere	1522-3
6. Benyght, William	-	1505-11	-	-	-	1492-3
7. Beryff, Austin	Clothmaker	1537-46	£30	£30	-	1513-14
8. +Beryff, John	Clothier	1549-59	-	-	-	-
9. +Best, John M.P.	Merchant	1547-73	-	-	Aldermen Father & Grandfather	-
10. +Best, Robert	-	1502-?	-	-	Mar. dau. of Ald. N. Clere	-
11. Bradman, John	Merchant	1520-25	£80	80 mks.	-	1513-14
12. +Breton, John	(Gent.)	1498-99	-	-	-	1486-7
13. +Brown, Robt. Sr.	Innkeeper	1536-48	£20	£20	Mar. sis. of alderman	1509-10
14. +Brown, Robt. Jr. M.P.	Grocer	1540-68	-	-	Nephew of alderman	-
15. Bryan, John	Clothmaker	1511-16	-	-	-	1488-9
16. +Buxston, William	Mercer	1540-46	£30	?	-	-
17. Clere, Benjamin	-	1540-74	-	-	Aldermen Father & Grandfather	-
18. +Clere, John M.P.	Clothier	1511-38	£120	£80	Son of alderman	-
19. +Clere, Nicholas	-	1491-1500	-	-	-	-
20. +Cok, Thomas	Shipowner	1531-44	£40	£40	-	-

Appendix 2--Continued

Aldermen	Occupation	Years as Alderman	Tax Assessment		Family Connections	Admission as a Burgess
			1524	1525		
21. +Coksale, John	Innholder	1515-29	£44	£40	-	1504-5
22. +Colle, John	Clothmaker	1511-36	£140	£80	-	1498-9
23. +Cowbregge, Robt.	Clothmaker	1501-11	-	-	-	-
24. +Cristmas, John	Clothier	1515-26	£18	£18	Son of alderman	-
25. Cristmas, John	(Esq.)	1525-48	£600	£400	Aldermen Father & Grandfather	-
26. Cristmas, Thomas M.P.	-	1474-1500	-	-	-	-
27. +Cristmas, Thomas	Merchant	1497-1520	-	-	Son of Alderman	-
28. +Debenham, Wm.	(Gent.)	1517-20	£40	£40	-	1510
29. ^W Dybney, Thomas	Butcher	1549-61	£16	£16	Mar. step-da of ald.	-
30. ^W Fynche, Ralph	Brewer	1547-49	-	-	-	-
31. Flyngaunt, Robt.	-	1542-52	-	-	Son of Alderman	-
32. ^{W+} Flyngaunt, Thom.	Clothier	1520-41	£140	£80	-	-
33. Gardener, Robt.	Pewterer	1516-17	-	-	-	1502-3
34. Halke, Richard	-	1488-89	-	-	-	-
35. Hamond, Chris.	(Gent.)	1525-31	-	£40	-	1509-10
36. Hervy, Richard	Clothmaker	1487-?	-	-	-	-
37. Heynes, Richard M.P.	(Gent.)	1488-?	-	-	-	1484-5
38. John, John	Mariner	1501-11	-	-	-	-
39. Jopson, Thomas M.P.	-	1481-1515	-	-	-	1462
40. Jopson, William	-	1519-25	£100	-	Son of Alderman	-
41. ^W Leche, Robert	Mercer	1536-54	-	-	-	-

Appendix 2--Continued

Aldermen	Occupation	Years as Alderman	Tax Assessment		Family Connections	Admission as a Burgess
			1524	1525		
42. ^{W+} Lowthe, Ambrose M.P.	Merchant	1516-36	£40	£40	-	-
43. Markes, Richard M.P.	-	1471-94	-	-	-	-
44. Mayken, John	Grocer	1503-36	£80	80 mks.	-	1490-1
45. +Maynerd, John	Clothier	1553-69	-	-	-	-
46. ^W Maynerd, Robert	Clothier	1551-59	-	-	-	-
47. +Mott, William	Haberdasher	1549-61	-	-	Bro-in-law of Ald.	-
48. ^{W+} Neve, John	Clothmaker	1525-40	£40	£40	-	1515-16
49. +Northern, Robt.	Clothmaker	1524-25	£66	£40	Mar. sister of Alderman	-
50. Pakke, Richard	-	1504-16	-	-	-	-
51. Plomer, Richard	Clothmaker	1485-88	-	-	-	-
52. +Reve, Thomas	Ironmonger	1544-49	-	-	-	1534
53. +Reynold, John	Capper	1510-23	-	-	-	-
54. +Sayer, George M.P.	Clothier	1539-72	-	-	Son of Alderman	-
55. Sayer, John	-	1508-9	-	-	-	1493
56. Smalpece, John	-	1511-19	-	-	-	-
57. +Smalpece, John	Clothmaker	1526-40	£100	£40	Son of Alderman	-
58. +Stone, John	Clothier	1549-51	-	-	-	-
59. +Strachye, Wm.	Merchant	1554-59	-	-	-	1546-7
60. +Swayne, John	-	1498-1515	-	-	-	-
61. +Thurske, John	Clothmaker	1495-?	-	-	-	-
62. ^W Thursteyn, Wm.	Tilemaker	1536-42	£15	£15	-	-
63. +Upchar, John	-	1485-?	-	-	-	-

Appendix 2--Continued

* Information from Colch.C.R., O.B., last wills and testaments, and the 1524-25 lay subsidy, P.R.O. E179/108/162 and E179/108/169. Records are incomplete for the reign of Henry VII, so some of the aldermen serving during that period may have served longer than the years given. The admissions to the freedom of the borough were those who came as adults and paid a fine for admission.

+ A will is extant.

^w Served as a churchwarden.

Appendix 3

Occupations in Colchester, 1485-1558¹Manufacture of Textiles
and Clothing

Capper (maker of caps)
 Clothier
 Clothmaker
 Dyer
 Fuller
 Hosier
 Kendalman (dyer of green cloth)
 Shearman
 Spinster
 Tailor
 Weaver

Transportation

Carrier
 Carter
 Loder (pilot of a boat)
 Mariner
 Shipwright
 Waterman (seaman; a boatman
 who hires out his own boat)

Officials of the Borough

Clerk of the Market
 Examiner of Cloth
 Jailor
 Land Surveyor
 Sergeant-at-Mace
 Summoner
 Town Clerk
 Water Bailiff

Distributive Trades

Apothecary (drugs, herbs)
 Chandler (candles)
 Draper (cloth, especially cheaper
 cloth, such as linen)
 Grocer
 Haberdasher (caps & small items)
 Mercer (costlier fabrics, e.g.
 silk, velvet)
 Merchant
 Woolen draper (woolen cloth)

Food and Drink

Baker
 Beerbrewer
 Butcher
 Fishmonger
 Innholder
 Miller
 Taverner

Professionals

Attorney
 Clerk
 Notary
 Organ Player
 Priest
 Schoolmaster
 Scrivener
 Surgeon

Building Trade

Carpenter
 Glasier (glass maker)
 Joiner (finer work of
 carpentry)
 Millwright (sets up mills or
 machinery)
 Painter
 Sawyer (saws timber into
 lumber)
 Tilemaker (makes tiles for
 roofs)
 Tiler

Leather Crafts

Barker (strips bark from trees
 used in tanning; tanner)
 Cordwainer (makes better shoes)
 Glover
 Harness Maker
 Saddler
 Shoemaker
 Skinner
 Tanner

Woodworking

Basketmaker
 Bowyer
 Carver
 Cooper (maker of barrels)
 Corkmaker (heels on shoes & some
 slippers were made of cork)
 Fletcher (maker of arrows)
 Turner (fashioned objects of wood,
 metal, bone, etc. on a lathe)
 Wheelwright (maker of wheels and
 wheeled vehicles)

Miscellaneous

Barber
 Cook
 Gentleman²
 Hogherd
 Husbandman
 Laborer
 Saffron Grower
 Servant
 Yeoman

Metalwork

Armorer	Ironmonger
Brasier (worker in brass)	Pewterer (maker of tableware of an alloy of tin)
Cardmaker (makes instru- ment which raises nap on cloth)	Plumber (worker in lead, zinc, or tin)
Cutler	Smith
Furbisher (polisher of meta	Tinker
Hardwareman	Wiredrawer (maker of small articles of metal)

¹ Information from wills, court records, and O.B. Lists of occupations in Pound, "Norwich," Appendix 6; Phythian-Adams, Coventry, Appendix 3c; Patten, Table 13. Job descriptions: Palliser, York, 164-73.

² Gentleman indicates social status, yet included in most lists.

Appendix 4

Wills Naming Clerical Sons

1. Roger (1507)¹ and Margaret (1512) Burgon - her son was Friar Matthew Shipman, Grey Friar, Colchester.
2. John (1501) and Joan (1512) Byrch - her son was Sir Richard Rose (or Roos), parish priest in Colchester.
3. Thomas (1512) and Alice (1514) Garrard - son, John, canon at St. Botolph's Priory, Colchester.
4. Katherine Ruffull (1509) - son, Sir John Ruffull, canon at St. Osyth's (Augustinian) Priory, St. Osyth, Essex.
5. John Salough (1511) - wife's son was Friar John Andrew, at Cambridge.
6. Robert Thorpe (1530) - son, Sir John, canon at St. Osyth's Priory. Another son, Robert Thorpe (1528) also mentioned Sir John.

¹ The date in parentheses is the date of the will. The wills: R. Burgon, E.R.O. D/ACR1/127; M. Burgon (or Burgyn), E.R.O. D/ACR2/17; John Byrch, E.R.O. D/ACR1/17; Joan Byrch (or Brich), E.R.O. D/ACR1/191; T. Garrard, E.R.O. D/ACR1/194; A. Garrard, E.R.O. D/ACR2/10; K. Ruffull, E.R.O. D/ACR1/155; J. Salough, P.R.O. 3 Fetiplace; R. Thorpe (1530), E.R.O. D/ACR2/227; R. Thorpe (1528), E.R.O. D/ACR2/208.

Appendix 5
Churchwardens

A. Some Churchwardens, 1521-22

Name	Occupation	Wealth, 1524-25	Borough Offices
Barker, William	-	40s.; £3 goods	-
Casour, Richard	Husbandman	£14 goods	2nd Council; Constable
Horpole, Robert	Gentleman	-	-
Kyng, John	Cardmaker	40s. goods	-
Luke, Thomas	Surgeon	£10 goods	2nd Council
Webbe, John	Tailor	£3 6s. 8d.; £3	-

B. Obits Handled by Churchwardens

Testator	Year	Where Obit to Be Kept	Money from:
William Bome	1492	Colne	2 cows
William Breton	1499	St. Giles'	Profit from a farm
William Pylgrim	1506	Lexden	2 cows
Margaret Barty	1513	St. Giles'	6s. 8d. yearly for 20 years
John Camoke	1514	St. Giles'	2 cows and 8 ewe sheep
William Teye	1514	St. Giles'	Tenements in Ardleigh
John Swayn	1515	All Saints'	Profit from a meadow
Matthew Rede	1517	St. Runwald's	Profit from 6 acres of land
John Caser	1520	Milend	Tenement
John Turnour	1525	Messing	2 cows

Appendix 6

Five Colchester Wills¹A. John Vertue, 1486

(Written January 28, 1486; recorded in Colch.C.R., 1541-42, m. 6. Vertue was a clothmaker living in St. James' parish; he was an M.P. with Thomas Cristmas in the 1485 Parliament. The account of that Parliament by Vertue and Cristmas was the first one written in English by an M.P.)

. . . my soul to almighty God and to our blessed and glorious Virgin Mary, and to all the saints of heaven. . . . my body to be buried in the parish church of St. James in Colchester . . . to the high altar of St. James', 20s.

To the new work of St. James', 2 cloths of murrey grey for to bury me in the chapel of St. Peter within the said church and one of the cloths to be delivered within the space of a month after my decease and the other cloth to be delivered within 12 months.

Item, I will there be found a priest singing for me within 6 months after my decease, for 12 months, and for my friends, in the said church of St. James.

To the alms beds at St. Anne's in Colchester 6 pair of sheets to be delivered within 6 months after my decease.

To the amending of the highway in Hakeney Lane, 6s. 8d. . . . amending of the highway against Cogill Field, 6s. 8d.

To the Grey Friars of Colchester, 10s.; thereof 3s. 4d. to help bury me and the residue for 10 masses sung for me.

Unto Johane my wife my house that I dwell in and the tenantries adjoining to give or to sell. Also, in jewels, value £10, and in household goods to the value of £10, and in wood to the value of £10, and in cloth to the value of £10.

To my older son my house at St. Botolph's gate. To my younger son my house at Eastgate, and that the same housing be builded sufficiently for him at the cost of my executors. To both sons, at 26 years of age, to have in jewels and in household goods to the value of 5 marks. To Agnes, my daughter, my house in Morestreet, and £12, and

¹ In these transcriptions, much of the spelling has been modernized, many repetitive phrases have been omitted, and punctuation has been added for easier reading. Vertue's will is taken from Benham's translation of the court rolls.

jewels and households goods to the value of 5 marks.

. . . that my executors dispose for me at my burying and at my month day, the sum of £10 to poor folk, and that is not disposed, in the year following.

. . . that my executors keep my obit, or else the executors of them keep it, 20 years after my decease in the parish church of St. James, with the ferme of my house and lands at Mylend, and they to bestow on my obit every year 20s., and after 20 years, the house and lands be sold, and with £20 thereof coming I will that they find a priest singing in church of Holy Trinity in Colchester for 12 months to sing for John Beche [Beste?] and my friends, and the priest to have 10 marks.

Also, I will there be found another priest singing in the parish church of St. Botolph's, for 12 months, to sing for John Vertu the older and his friends, and he to have 10 marks. Also, there be found another priest singing in the parish church of St. James, for my soul and for my friends, for 12 months, and he to have 10 marks for his salary.

To my brother Adam Vertue to the value of £4 in housing.
Residue . . . to my executors.

To the reparation of the new work at St. Botolph's, late hurt, 5 marks to pray for John Elys and for me, to be paid within a year after my death.

Executors: Johane, my wife, and Thomas Cristmas, the son of Richard Cristmas.

Witnesses: Sir John Adam, parson of St. James', Richard Baldwyn, John Smalpece, Thomas Northen, and John Harvey, town clerk.

B. Nicholas Clere, 1500

(P.R.O. 17 Moone. In Latin; written on Sept. 17, 1500; proved on November 19, 1500. Alderman Clere's son and four grandsons were aldermen after him. Most of the following translation was taken from Benton, "Essex Wills at Canterbury," 245-6.)

. . . my soul to God almighty, to the blessed St. Mary, virgin, and to all saints. And my body in the church of St. James, next to the grave of John Adam, lately rector of the same church. To the high altar, for tithes forgotten and kept back, 5s. To the work of St. Paul, London, 4d.

Item, I leave to buy a cross for St. James' Church, one woollen cloth of russet or tawny color 24 yards long.

To my son Thomas my 2 tenements in Wirestreet, in the town of

Colchester, when he shall come to the age of 23 years; also 5 marks. If he die before attaining the above age, the tenements to be sold and £20 of the purchase money to be spent on making or mending a crucifix, called "le Rood," with Mary and John, to stand over the rood-loft in the church of St. James aforesaid, in the place where the Rood, with Mary and John, now stands. [A daughter, Margaret, wife of Robert Bieste, is mentioned.] To the said Thomas my son 3 silver spoons and a maser with a little band at the age of 23. To Nicholas Clere and Robert Bieste, my godsons, 20s. each at the age of 23. To my son, John, my house in which he dwells in Eastreet, Colchester.

. . . rentars in Eastreet, to find a chaplain to celebrate for my soul in the said parish church of St. James, before the image of St. Ignacius, for one whole year.

To my son Thomas a brass bowl, which was my father's. To my wife Elizabeth the house in which I dwell in Estrete, and two houses in Wirestrete; also a messuage which I lately bought of Margaret Barker, widow, and a messuage, formerly John London's in Estrete.

My executors to sell two messuages in Magdaleyn Street.

. . . an obit for 20 years in St. James'.

Executors: my wife Elizabeth and son John. Supervisor . . . Richard Baldewyn.

Witnesses: John Lowthe, rector of St. James'; Thomas Beriff, shearman; Henry Holwell.

C. Thomas Cristmas, 1520

(P.R.O. 28 Ayloff. Written January 13, 1520; proved March 31, 1520. Cristmas, a merchant who lived in the parish of St. James, was the leading alderman in Colchester after the death of his father, Alderman and M.P. Thomas Cristmas around 1500. Cristmas' son, Alderman John Cristmas, Esq., was the last of the family to participate in borough affairs, with the family then rising to gentry status.)

. . . I right humbly commend my soul unto almighty God, creator and redeemer, and unto his blessed mother and to all the holy company of heaven. To be buried in the chapel of St. Thomas the martyr within the church of the Monastery of St. John's. Unto the Abbot and convent of St. John's for breaking of the ground where it shall happen me to be buried, 10s.

I will that my obit shall yearly be kept in the said monastery forever after such form and according to such indentures thereof made between the said abbot and convent and me . . . in consideration whereof I have assigned and given unto the said abbot and convent . . .

lands in Monuden which I bought of John Denby for £50.

I will that my executor do expend and bestow about the making and finishing of a tomb of marble or free stone over the grave where I shall be buried, £6 13s. 4d.

To the high altar of St. James' for my tithes . . . unpaid, 40s. To the vicar of the parish church of Thorpe for like cause, 6s. 8d. To the vicar of the church of Kyrkby for the like, 6s. 8d.

I will that my executors shall expend, distribute and dispose at the day of my burial and month day and the days between, £100 in form following: 20s. to be distributed every day between my burial day and month day for dirges and masses of requiem and other deeds of charity to be done and celebrated every of the same days by the discretion of my executors. And 40s. to be disposed to 4 honest priests for 4 trentals to be sung immediately after my decease whereof 2 of them shall be sung in the parish church of St. James and the other 2 in St. John's Monastery. And the residue of the said £100 I will mine executor shall dispose at the day of my burial and month day in masses singing, giving of alms to poor people, and other deeds of charity by his discretion. And if the said £100 is not sufficient, then I will my executor employ more of my goods as will sufficiently serve.

My executor to find an honest priest to sing one year in the parish church of Our Lady in Colchester for my soul, my late wife, my father and mother and all the souls that I am bound to pray for.

My executor shall pay unto the churchwardens in every parish church within the town of Colchester to the use of the churches, 6s. 8d. And to every parson and curate of the said churches being at my burial, 3s. 4d., to the intent that after my burial they shall say dirge and mass for my soul at their own parish church.

To the use of the parish church of Our Blessed Lady in Colchester, to be employed about the necessities of the church, 20 marks. To Kyrkby church, 13s. 4d. To Thorpe church, 6s. 8d.

I will that if the parishioners of the church of St. James within a year next after my decease do pay to my executor £20 for the suit of vestments which I have newly bought and delivered to the use of the same church, that then my executor shall buy and deliver to the use of the said church another suit of vestments of the very value of 50 marks. And if the said parishioners will not so do, then I will my executor shall bestow about the buying of 2 antiphoners to the use of the same church, 20 marks, and thereupon to be discharged of and for buying of any suit of vestments.

I will that my executors and their executors for four score years following my decease shall yearly pay unto the wardens of the Grey Friars, £3 6s. 8d., to be employed, i.e. 33s. 4d. thereof shall yearly be employed for my [illegible] to and about masses and other divine service within the said friars to be done and celebrated, and

20s. thereof yearly toward the maintenance of sermons . . . in the said friars every Sunday in Lent, i.e. to every one thereat doing the said sermons, 3s. 4d. And 13s. 4d. residue to be distributed yearly by the said wardens for the keeping one obit yearly during the said fourscore years within the said friars on the same day that I die, in form following: to the warden, 12d., to every friar priest thereat present 4d., and to every novice 2d. And any overplus of the said 13s. 4d. to be expended for lights and necessary repairs of the said house by the disposition of the warden.

. . . if the Prior of St. Botolph's will make a grant under their convent seal as shall be advised by my executors to keep yearly for my soul an obit within the same house after the form of the obit of William Tey, Gent., deceased [his son-in-law], that then my executor shall pay unto the Prior £20. . . . And that my executor the day of my burial and month day do to be sung within St. Botolph's a solemn dirge and mass of requiem by the Prior and convent, and to dispose the said 2 days among them, 20s.

To the prior of Crossed Friars £3 6s. 8d. for reparation and building of the said house by the discretion of the prior and convent. On day of my burial, 12d. to every friar priest singing mass for my soul on that day.

I will that my executor expend about the amendment of the high way between the headgate and the hamlet of Lexden, £6 13s. 4d. And to the amendment of the highway called Hallane, £3 6s. 4d.

Unto the hospital of St. Anne, 6 mattresses, 6 pair of sheets and 6 coverlets.

I will that my executors and their executors for 20 years after my decease do every Friday distribute to 12 lame, poor, and needy persons in Colchester, and the 12 poor persons shall every Friday come to St. John's Monastery to devoutly hear mass and prayer for my soul about my tomb, 12d. My executors to distribute every Friday for 20 years to the prisoners of the castle in meat and drink, 12d.

To the amendment of the creek in Colchester heath, £20.

I bequeath unto 2 persons as shall yearly be named from year to year by the bailiffs of Colchester an amity or yearly rent of £4 to go out off all my mill, houses, lands . . . in Bergholt, Milend, Lexden, and Horkesley, and in the Colchester parishes of St. Leonard, Greenstead, St. Runwald, St. Botolph's, St. Mary, and in the parish of the Holy Cross to have the same amity and yearly rent unto the foresaid 2 persons, to be named yearly at the feast of Easter and St. Michael, to the intent that the 2 persons collect the amity and yearly rent for the bailiffs. In consideration whereof I will the said bailiffs and commonalty shall discharge and acquire forever all the petty land, toll, and custom used before time to be taken at the 4 gates of the town, of and for horses, carts, woods, corn packs coming and going

Unto John Cristmas, my son, my mill called Newbridgemill and lands [in places mentioned above] with all the store of cattle, brewing vessels, corn, woods. In default of male heirs, remainder to my second son, Thomas.

Heirs shall pay the aforesaid amity or yearly rent of £4 in manner abovesaid, and shall make sufficient grant out of the premises as shall be reasonably advised by the bailiffs. And over that, to find an honest priest being learned and beneficed to pray for my soul and all Christian souls, and also to teach grammar and other virtuous conditions and learnings within Colchester at my tenement called Westons in the parish of All Saints. And to pay yearly to the priest out of the said mill, lands and tenements for his salary and wages, £10, at the feast of Easter and at St. Michael, in even portions. And the priest to have my tenement, Westons, to dwell in and to teach his school, keeping the reparation and paying the quitrent thereof. And the priest shall sing mass every Sunday, Holy Day, Friday . . . in the parish church of St. James. And shall teach continually 24 children born within Colchester freely without anything for the teaching of them. The children to be named by my son and his heirs, and if no heirs, by the bailiffs of the town. And I will that the said master and scholars shall say every morning at their coming to school all the psalm of Deus insereatur and the collect Inclina for my soul and all Christian souls.

Unto Joan my wife 200 marks and so much of my plate and household stuff as she will choose. And my tenement in St. Martin's parish. And amity or yearly rent of £20 as agreed between me and my son, John, from the manor called Downehall. And Joan to receive during her life the rent from my lands at Bradwell on Sea which I purchased from William Downe, Gent.

Unto Thomas, my son, to be delivered at the age of 20, the residue of my plate and household. Unto Elizabeth, my daughter, at the age of 20 years or at marriage, 200 marks. To Emme, my sister, tenement in Goldfingers in parish of Our Lady. And £6 13s. 4d. To Thomas Cristmas, my godson, £6 13s. 4d.

To every of my tenants that be fullers, weavers, and shearmen, 6s. 8d. To every household man servant, 6s. 8d. To every household woman servant, 3s. 4d. To every of my long-time spinners, an ell of linen cloth of value of 6d.

My son, John Cristmas, to have the manor of Downe Hall and all the other lands in Bradwell next the sea and in the county of Essex. . . . If no male heirs [of son, John], remainder to my second son, Thomas.

To Thomas, my son, my house that I dwell in when he comes to the age of 20 years, and the meadow near Stockwell, and the five tenements in Eastrete . . . to him and his male heirs. If no male heirs, remainder to my first son, John. And my wife to live in my house freely until Thomas comes to the age of 20 years. If Thomas should die before then, my wife to live there for the term of her life. My wife to have

£10 yearly to bring up my children, Thomas and Elizabeth, in good honest conversation and learning.

I will that Thomas Cristmas, my godson, shall have all my tenements in the parish of St. Mary which sometime my father dwelled in.

Residue unto my son and heir apparent, John.

Executor: my son, John.

Supervisors: my Lord Abbot of St. John's; Sir John Raynsforth, Knight; George Willoughby, Esq.; Thomas Bonham, Esq.; and Thomas Audley, and to each 66s. 8d.

Witnesses: William Butt; John Wayne, clerk; John Clere; John Messing; John Cristmas; Thomas Cristmas; and Thomas Audley.

[Addendum dated January 18] . . . my following tenants, fuller, weavers, and shearmen are to have 6s. 8d. each: John Raynolde, weaver; Robert Willoughby, weaver; John Orell, weaver; Robert Parker, weaver; John Wodman, shearmen; Richard Clerk, shearmen. And to Robert Dyxe, 6s. 8d. . . . Also, that Joan Hatche shall have her dwelling free in my tenement that she now dwells in for the term of her life, and also yearly 3s. 4d., to pray for my soul. Also, Mother Parke, widow, and John Wade, to have free dwelling for term of their lives. Also, John Arnolde. To each of my godchildren to pray for my soul, 12d.

D. John Clere, 1538

(P.R.O. 25 Dyngley. The son of Nicholas Clere, whose will is above. Alderman Clere was a clothier living in the parish of St. James. His will is an excellent example of early and devout Protestantism. Two sons, Benjamin and Nicholas, later became aldermen.)

I commend my soul unto the hands of almighty God, trusting that by his mercy and by the merits, passion and blood shedding of his dear and only son, Jesus Christ, to have forgiveness of my sins. . . . to be buried in the churchyard of St. James' Church, at the west end. To the high altar, 10s.

. . . that five sermons be made in the parish church of St. James by the most discreet, wisest, and best learned men that can be gotten within the space of one whole year after my decease, and they to have for every sermon so to be made, 10s., to the laud, honor, and praise of almighty God and to the true setting forth of his word.

To the reparation and amending of the highway, 40s. To five poor maidens' marriages within the parish of St. James, to each 10s. To five poor within the said parish, 5d. every week by the hands of my executors where they shall think most needful, to continue for five years after my decease.

To the new making up of the Guild in St. James' Church, 40s.

I will that Joan my wife shall have the custody and keeping of my son, Nicholas Clere, til he come to the age of 7 years and no longer. After that time, my executors to have the custody, tuition, and keeping of the said Nicholas in bringing him up in learning and virtue til he come to the age of 21. The said Joan to have every year that she has the custody of the said Nicholas, 4 marks.

To the said Joan yearly during her life, 4 marks, to be paid by my executors, half yearly at the Feast of John the Baptist and at the Nativity of Our Lord, by even portions on the font stone in St. James' Church between the hours of 8 and 11 of the clock in the forenoon. And, to the said Joan, 100 marks in money and all apparel and jewels on condition that she quitclaim and release all her dower and right that she had in any of my lands or tenements, by or from me during the espousals between me and the said Joan. If she refuses, all legacies to her are void and the custody of Nicholas void.

To my son, Nicholas, £100 at the age of 21. If he dies before then, £40 to the reparation of the highway between Colchester and London; £20 to John Best and his children; £20 to the children of my daughter-in-law, Katheryn Bradok; and £20 to my nephew Nicholas Clere. If they all die, their portions to remain to the children of my son-in-law, William Bonham.

To John, my son, £80 sterling.

My executors shall take all profits out of lands in Haverton . . . and of the messuage that my son, Benjamin, now dwelleth in, with the five rentars to the same belonging . . . to the performance of my bequests, til the said Nicholas, my son, come to 21 years of age, at which time the lands . . . to go to him, and if he die without heirs, to Benjamin, my son, and his heirs.

All my lands in Suffolk to John Clere, my eldest son, during his natural life, without strip or waste doing, and remainder to Benjamin Clere, my son, and his heirs forever.

All my plate to be divided amongst my three children, saving that my son, Nicholas, shall have the better part by £5 sterling.

Residue to my executors, son Benjamin Clere and son-in-law, William Bonham, and the latter to have £6 13s. 4d.

Witnesses to the making of this will, Bartholomew Cowey, John Best, Nicholas Maynard, Richard Thorpe, and Robert Belden. These being present at the surrender . . . per me William Benet, Thomas Man, Robert Colley, Robert Sheparde, Robert Belden, Henry Andrewe.

[Proved February 1, 1539; was written on December 26, 1538.]

E. John Adam, Priest, 1491

(P.R.O. 7 Vox. Proved 1493. Adam was Rector of St. James' Church from 1470 to 1493; his will is included because he seems to have been influential in the development of lay devotion in his parish, in which the leading aldermanic families lived, including all of the above testators.)

. . . I, John Adam, parson of St. James' in Colchester . . . my soul to almighty God, my maker and savior, and to all the saints of heaven . . . my body to be buried in the Church of St. James in Colchester at the feet of Sir Jon Balle, sometime parson of the same. Item, I will have a marble stone upon me with my name thereupon within half year after my burying.

I will that every canon of Botolph have 3s. 4d. so that each of them say that be priests within the thirtieth day, 3 masses and 3 diriges. And they that beeth none, 6 diriges, lauds, and commendations for me and my friends.

Item, I will that at the day of my burying be delivered among poor folk 5 marks on this wise, 4 marks in silver and 13s. 4d. in ferding bread, that is to say, each man, woman, and child, 1d. and a loaf. And in the same wise, 5 marks at my seventh day. And the same wise at my thirtieth day. And I will that it be proclaimed openly at each day by the bedesman of the town. And if any be left of the same . . . that it be delivered amongst poor folk in St. James' parish . . . the bedesman have for his labor my short green gown so that he say for me and my friends 5 times Our Lady Saveth with the thirtieth day.

Item, I will have a master priest within 30 days after my burying that they say for me and my friends a Jesu mass and as many placebo, diriges, and commendations. . . . I will have a priest immediately after my burying in St. James' Church, and he to say daily placebo, dirige, lauds, and commendations by himself or by another and he do have every year £8.

Item, I will that the Grey Friars, the Black, and the Friars Augustine in Norwich every house of them to have 10s. to the common priest for to have a mass of requiem solemnly, placebo, dirige, and commendation for me and my friends and that it be done within 30 days after my burying and they to have my letter of the brotherhood for I am a brother unto the 3 houses.

Item, I will that the Grey Friars of Colchester have among them that is to say priests and novices 10s. evenly parted among them so that they say for me and my friends a solemn mass by note placebo, dirige, laud, and commendations. And other 10s. to the common priests and they to have my letter of brotherhood for I am a brother of the place.

Item, I will that every monk and novice of St. John's in Colchester have 12d. so that they say a mass by note for me and my friends

with placebo, dirige, and commendations.

Item, unto St. Anne's for poor folk, a mattress, 2 blankets, a pair of sheets, and my green coverlet, and a pillow.

Item, I have 4 silver dishes of the Abbey of St. Osyth and a standing piece of silver and gold and a cover thereto, pledge of 16 marks of the which 16 marks I will that they have to pray for me and my friends 13s. 4d.

And £10 to St. James' Church to barre with all the windows in Our Lady Chapel and in other places within the church as far as it will stretch. And that to be done within half year after my burying. Item, unto St. James' Church my blue coverlet to lie before the high altar on good days.

Item, I will that the clerk have my short gown Item, I will that William Mas have my worsted long gown. And the hood thereto, a doublet, a shirt, a pair of hosen, a pair of old shoes, and a cape.

Item, I will that Johanne Wale my sister's daughter dwelling in Stepul Elayd in Berkshire have my featherbed, and the best bolster, pillow, a pair of blankets, sheets . . . and beside that 6s. 8d. in money. . . . that Agnes Lethermer have my blue girdle.

. . . that my 2 tenements that be in More Street that William Stevyn have them during his life so that he keep my given day in St. James' Church, the curate have 4d. for a mass and dirige, placebo, and commendation for me and my friends, and the sexton 2d. for a peel after mass. And after the decease of the said William I will that they be had to St. James' Church. . . .

Item, I will above all things that this might be written in the mass book anent after my burying.

Item, I will that each novice in Botolph's house have 4d. anent after my decease so that they and each of them say Our Lady Psalter or else do say within 7 days after my decease for me and my friends.

. . . that 6 of my best cushions be had to St. James' Church and my best bunkers [seat] to be laid in the 3 presbiters, that is to say, 2 in the chancel and one in Our Lady chapel upon good days [a day or season observed as holy by the church]. . . . that my portuse [portable breviary] and all my books that be bound that they be chained in St. Peter's chapel by the Bible within 30 days after my burying, and all my books that be not bound be delivered among secular priests within the town of Colchester after the discretion of my executors. . . .

. . . my standing maser unto the friars of St. Botolph, under the condition that it never be sold and [if] not, I will it be brought to St. James' and there to be sold to the profit of the church, and priest to say once every quarter a mass of requiem for me. . . . And this be noted in the mass book of St. James'.

. . . that the canons of St. Botolph's have my laten chafer and my laten basin. . . . my mantle to some poor woman for to lay on her bed.

. . . that each parish church in the town have towards their reparation 6s. 8d. within 8 days after my burying.

Executors: John Rodlond of St. Botolph's, priest, and William Stevyns, my servant, and Thomas Beryf, supervisor, and to each of them, 20s.

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