Faeza Yuldasheva

‘Earnest Penny of Heaven’: Idioms of Work, Wealth and Exchange in Middle English Devotional Literature

MA Thesis in Comparative History, with a specialization
in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies.

Central European University Private University

Vienna

May 2021

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Faeza Yuldasheva

(Russian Federation)

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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Author's declaration

I, the undersigned, **Faeza Yuldasheva**, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies, with a specialization in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, 25 May 2021

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Abstract

This study explores economic thinking in three works of Middle English devotional literature—*Our daily work, The Book of Margery Kempe* and Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love.* It is built on the premise of embeddedness of medieval economic thinking into the ethical and religious matters and traces the interpenetration between the ideas of economy and the theological messages in the selected religious texts. The categories of work, wealth and exchange were chosen as points of departure for this enquiry; they are explored in each chapter in the context of a particular source. The findings of this study show the uneasy engagement of the Middle English religious writers with the on-going discussions on the social organization, the value of work and the virtue of poverty. Their responses included reappraisal of labor through sits spiritualization and the "laborization" of spirit in *Our daily work* and *Revelation*, and peculiar absence of work from *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Poverty, in turn explored from a distance by Julian and Margery, is notably absent from the exhortations of labor in purportedly Rollean account. The key categories are viewed as parts of the economies of salvation outlined in some form in all the three texts —gift-based in the case of Julian and exchange-based for Kempe and *Our daily work*'s author.

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Introduction

I reflected on how nothing is less material than the money, inasmuch as any coin whatsoever is, strictly speaking, a repertory of possible futures.
Jorge Luis Borges, *Zahir*

Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks.
Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Ch. 10

I would like to start my investigation of the economic language in medieval English devotional literature with quotes from two modern authors. A strange conversion of those two sentences, one talking about the future possibilities, another about the labor of the past, pins down the capital's ability to extend itself over time. *Capital*, subtitled as *Critique of Political Economy*, was aimed to give the systematic tools for precisely what Borges accomplishes playfully in one stroke—taking off the veil of dull matter from the world we inhabit. Capital, (and money is only one subspecies of it in Marxian sense), is the result of labor that once had been alive, subjugating the living labor now and forming the repertory of possible futures for the labor that is yet to come. If under capitalism one believes themselves to inhabit a world of commodities, the first step to liberate the living labor from the weight of the dead is to see the social relations behind the commodities, *in* the commodities.

Marxian critique of political economy is departing from the narrow and well-meaning diatribes against consumerism in that it does not encourage us to reject the commodity, or to see through the vanity of material abundance. Neither it is a celebration of toil that brings the commodities into being. Rather, Marx offers a possibility to see humans navigating the world of spirit and matter alike through the abundance they create and immiseration that some of them endure. To paraphrase Borges, there is nothing less material than capital, inasmuch as it is a repertory of possible futures and a fossilized slice of the past.

This is to say that the discourse about economy is never solely about money or goods. The idea of economy as a self-sustaining sphere of human life distinct from politics, philosophy and ethics, and its diametrical opposite, the idea of complete rupture between economic and the spiritual matters are both relatively recent. Late antique and medieval Christians knew very well that their earthly goods and labors are by no means irrelevant to their spiritual lives, and never refrained from integrating their economic endeavors with the quest for salvation and with the lives of their communities.[1] What a modern western reader often perceives as scandalous and vulgar interpenetration of the ways of spirit and the ways of matter was not perceived as dangerous contamination.[2] Rather, we find idioms of work, wealth and exchange ever-present in Christian theology, used routinely and naturally.

One might be tempted to overlook those idioms as metaphors, vehicles that convey deeper spiritual meaning, insignificant in their exact signification. However, as noted by Peter Brown, those were the metaphors *to live by*.[3] In the light of current ecological crisis, global pandemic and economic collapse the examination of economic thinking that re-embeds it into the political and ethical context from which it was once extracted appears necessary. It is the desire that guided Sylvain Piron's investigation of Western economic thought in the *longue duree* in *L'occupation du monde* project.[4] The long-term perspective is taken to assert the continuity of the economic thinking in the last millennium of Western history. Rather than

[1] These processes have been explored, among others, by Peter Brown for Late Antiquity and Adam Davis for the high Middle Ages. Cf. Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012. Adam J. Davis, *The Medieval Economy of Salvation: Charity, Commerce, and the Rise of the Hospital*, Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2019.

[2] Peter Brown provides an example for this kind of straightforward translation of the earthly goods into heavenly treasure in a form engraving on the tombstone of Hilary, the bishop of Arles— "Caelum donis terrestribus emit", translated as "He bought up Heaven with earthly gifts", referring to the salvation of the deceased as stemming from his generosity. Brown, *Through the Eye*, 84.

[3] Peter Brown, *The Ransom of the Soul: Afterlife and Wealth in Early Eastern Christianity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015, 31.

[4] I am referring here to a planned trilogy, two volumes of which are out at the moment—Sylvain Piron, *L'Occupation du monde*, vol. I, Le Kremlin-Bicêtre: Zones-Sensibles, 2018; *Généalogie de la morale économique. L'Occupation du monde,* vol. II, Le Kremlin-Bicêtre: Zones-Sensibles, 2020.

conceiving scholastic, and particularly mendicant reflections on the nature of wealth and exchange as irrelevant progenitors of the modern economic science, Piron shows that a thirteenth-century Languedoc theologian operates with many of the concepts that we think of as unique to the discipline of political economy as it emerged in the Enlightenment era.[5]

Peter of John Olivi, the Languedoc Franciscan in question, is an author who treats systematically and explicitly such matters as contracts, credit and poverty, all the things that would hardly be unrecognized as non-economic.[6] Until recently, I have worked with the Middle English mystical tradition that cannot be farther away from the methodical reasoning on the nature of just price that scholastic theologians like Olivi offer to regulate and explain the burgeoning economic life around them.[7] However, the more I was thinking about the texts I am so familiar with, the more I realized that there might be more intersections between the contemplation of the divine and the contemplation of credit. Indeed, the facets of those texts that I have studied before, corporeality and emotions, can be elucidated by bringing in the reflections upon the nature of labor and mendicancy.

Medieval affective piety was firmly grounded in the lay urban context or in the monasteries operating as property owners. It did not pass through the world untainted by the productive and monetary activity that was happening around it, and moreover, allowed this type of religious devotion to exist and proliferate. The type of devotion centered on Christ's suffering humanity could not disregard the world around it, replete with human suffering. The monetary coating of the spiritual truths preached by the Christian writers (often traceable to the Gospels) should not be simply discarded as imperfect vehicles of meaning. In my thesis I

[5] Piron, *L'Occupation,* 176–179.
[6] Piron, *L'Occupation,* 160–161.Indeed, one might assert that by creating separate ethical systems for those wishing to achieve the highest perfection and the everymen and women of Languedoc, Olivi anticipated the sharp divide between economic and religious as it emerged in the modern Europe.
[7] I am referring here to the work I have completed for my bachelor's thesis—"Emotions in *The Revelations of Divine Love* by Julian of Norwich", Higher School of Economics: Moscow, 2019.

propose to study these idioms of wealth, money and exchange as conveying certain ideas on how society is or should be organized.[8]

Furthermore, one has to remember that the premises of intellectual production were often shared by scholastic philosophy and mystical devotion. Both happen in the same kind of place, a cell or a convent, and are performed by the same people of religious vocation. One of the most popular meditation guides in medieval Europe, *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, was written by an unknown Franciscan friar for a poor Clare and later attributed to saint Bonaventure.[9] The fact that we can find the ideas on agricultural labor in the treatises on divine love shows that we are not talking about the practical down-to-earth matters and the pursuit of religious perfection separately. Rather, I prefer to treat these writings as two different facets of reflection on ethical life, and, larger, inhabiting the world. I would like to attend to the intricacies of economic idioms in middle English devotional writing to show how they react to the very intense and high-stakes debate on the organization of society that is happening in fourteenth-fifteenth century England.

Those Lollard-related tribulations went side by side with the religious movements originating on the continent. Pre-Reformation England was a stronghold of mendicants, "using" some of the most lucrative London real-estate.[10] The works of continental mystics like Bridget of Sweden and Marie d'Oignes were circulating in Latin and vernacular.[11] Margery Kempe, one of the heroines of the present study, is known for her vast travels around Europe that she managed to undertake without knowing any language other than English, and the first draft of her book was initially written in a strange fusion of Middle English and unknown

[8] This is the approach taken by many of the scholars I am referring to, most notably Peter Brown and Sylvain Piron. See more on this subject in the "Research background" section of the present Introduction.
[9] Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body. Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 53–54.
[10] Jens Rôhrkasten, "L'économie des couvents mendiants de Londres à la fin du Moyen d'après l'étude des documents d'archives et des testaments" in Nicole Berriou, Jacques Chiffoleau, eds., *Économie et religion L'expérience des ordres mendiants (XIIIe-XVe siècle)*, Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2009, 211-273.
[11] Bernard McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism: 1350–1550*, New York: Herder & Herder, 2012, 486.

German dialect. This is to say, while this work is concerned with a particular local tradition, I by no means intend to isolate it from the rest of western Christendom.

General concept of my study thus established, let us proceed with an overview of the primary sources.

Primary sources

The reflection upon economy that mendicant orders, particularly the order of Saint Francis, resuscitated, had far more prolific consequences than the theological scrutinization of poverty. Those willing to pursue a perfect life—whether clerics or laymen, monks or anchorites—had to grapple with the nature of wealth and labor, the value of earthly and heavenly goods. Countless manuals were written for medieval Christian devotees, meaning to instruct them on the perfect life.[12] These included guides to induce mystical seizures and, in the end, pave their way to salvation. Spiritual teachers did not hesitate to share their own visions along with instruction for the others. It is this genre of devotional literature that I have chosen for my enquiry, these testimonies of ethical life in Late Medieval England. Primarily, I will be focusing on three milestones for Middle English mystical tradition—works by Richard Rolle, Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe.

Chronologically, the first of the authors under consideration is Richard Rolle (c. 1300-1349), the hermit of Hampole.[13] My original plan was to focus on his most popular works, *Incendium amoris* or *The Fire of Love*, which contains the account of his own mystical experience; *Emendatio Vitae* or *The Mending of Life* and *Meditations on the Passion*, both of which are supposed to guide devotees with the goal of achieving a mystical revelation in

[12] Pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditationes*, for instance, were translated into Middle English by Nicholas Love and enjoyed popularity under the mane *Mirrour of the Blessyd Life of Jesu Christ*. For a survey of this literature available in England, cf. Beckwith, *Christ's Body*, 60–65. A relevant example from the Low Countries— Frank Willaert, "Margaret's Booklets: Memory in *Vanden seven sloten* by Jan van Ruusbroec," 99–128, in Susan K. Hagen, ed., *Medieval Memory: Image and Text* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004).

[13] Only the year of Rolle's death is certain, but he must have been born some time at the junction of thirteenth and fourteenth century. For more biographical data, cf. Nicholas Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 32-33.

mind.[14] I will still reference these books in my analysis of Rolle's work ethic in Chapter I. However, in the course of my research I have come across a short treatise entitled *Our daily work*, largely forgotten since its first publication in late nineteenth century.[15] The peculiar vision of labor presented in this piece deserves far more attention that it has gotten to date; thus, I have chosen it as my core source for this work while relegating the more acclaimed books of Rollean corpus to the background.

Julian of Norwich (1343– *post* 1416), also a hermit and a later contemporary of Rolle, authored two books on the basis of a singular seizure she experienced as a thirty-year-old woman on May 13th, 1373.[16] The first book, entitled *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman* was written at some point between 1373 and 1393, and is extant in a sole fifteenth-century manuscript dating back to 1413.[17] A short postscript in this book indicates that the devout woman in question still dwells in a cell by saint Julian's church in Norwich.[18] A longer account of the same seizure, *A Revelation of Love*, was written at some point after 1393 and incorporates

[14] Due to the COVID-19 library closures, I was relegated to using the older publications that are open-access online. Richard Rolle, *The Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. by Margaret Deanesly (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1915), accessed May 21, 2021. https://archive.org/details/incendiumamoriso00roll/page/n7/mode/2up. *Emendatio Vitae* is currently available only in the modern rendering of the fifteenth-century Richard Mysin translation, *The Form of Living and Other Prose Treatises of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. and trans. Geraldine Hodgson (London: Baker, 1910). Rolle's shorter Middle English writings are available in Rolle, Richard. *English Writings of Richard Rolle*, ed. Hope Emily Allen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

[15] This is a less popular text that has not been the subject of any recent editions. Therefore, I all references here are to the Middle English version from 1895. Richard Rolle, "Our Daily Work," in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole, an English Father of the Church, and His Followers*, ed. Carl Horstmann, Vol. 1 (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1895), 137-56. I treat the matter of authorship of this piece and its treatment in historiography on the pages of Chapter I, and I would like to relegate my reader to it for more detail.

[16] All the citations for Julian's *oeuvre* are referring to the most recent critical edition: Nicholas Watson, Jacqueline Jenkins, eds., *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Shown to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love*, University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006. I am also following the naming introduced by Watson and Jenkins that retrieves the titles directly from the manuscripts rather than applies those under which Julian's writing circulated in print since the seventeenth century.For an alternative, cf. Julian of Norwich, *A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich*, ed. E. College O. S. A., J. Walsh S. J. Wetteren, Belgium: Universa Press, 1978. In order to shorten the footnotes, I will refer to the earlier and shorter version as ST (short text), and to the later and longer one as LT (long text), followed by a page number according to the Watson and Jenkins edition.

[17] The dating of the texts is subject to much debate, May 13th, 1373 is given by Julian in the longer version, and later she indicates that the true meaning of the revelation did not come to her until twenty years later, that is 1393. Since it is the 1393 insight that pushed Julian towards writing a new account of her visions, the first attempt must have happened before it. For more detail cf. Nicholas Watson, "The Composition of Julian of Norwich's Revelation of Love" in *Speculum 68*, no. 3 (1993), 637–683.

[18] "Introduction" in Watson and Jenkins, *The Writings*, 11.

most of the short version' text.[19] For the purposes of this study the long version would be of greater value, as it contains very explicit piece of social theory in a form of "The Lord and the Servant Parable" that I treat in Chapter II. Nevertheless, as the shorter text contains much of the same ideas in the same wording, it will not be left out of my study.

Finally, *The Book of Margery Kempe* will be considered.[20] It is, perhaps, one of the most well-studied pieces of medieval devotional writers for those scholars who place the category of gender in the center of their enquiry. Margery Kempe of Lynn, fifteenth-century female mystic, was a married laywoman who scandalized the surrounding male clergy by the conspicuous manner of her seizures accompanied by weeping and yelling and happening in the midst of the masses. The book that she dictated to a scribe narrates her turmoil, her revelations and her continuous struggle with the devil. On her way Margery provides quite vivid accounts of the people around her and the opinions she has on them, including powerful bishops, travelling noblewomen, and a special category of "powr pepil". Out of all the three, Margery is the only one whose social standing is clear and corroborated by other sources—she comes from an upper-class merchant family, her father thrice mayor of Bishop's Lynn.[21]

Research background

In this project I seek to bring together cultural and economic history, while not conceiving of "the economy" as a neoclassical self-governing entity, manifesting itself in figures and tables. I am drawing here on the recent trend in scholarship that can broadly be put into two categories. The authors in the first category relate themselves to the Foucauldian project of genealogy, even if they do not follow it to the letter— Giorgio Agamben, Devin

[19] "Introduction" in Watson and Jenkins, *The Writings*, 32. The survey of manuscript tradition for the LT can be found on the pp. 37–40 of the same edition.
[20] All the quotes in my work are given from digital edition *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Lynn Stanley (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), accessed May 21, 2021, https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/staley-the-book-of-margery-kempe. I refer in my footnotes to the lines, not the pages.
[21] Margery's father has been identified as John Brunham figuring in the documents on the city archive of Lynn. Cf. Anthony E. Goodman, *Margery Kempe and Her World* (London: Longman, 2002), 49.

Singh, Dotan Leshem and Sylvain Piron.[22] The work of other scholars like Giacomo Todeschini, Jacques Le Goff, Benjamin Nelson and Peter Brown's later writing drifts towards more conventional history of economic thought.[23] Both types of research offered insights for this project. Nevertheless, it was the first, genealogically oriented type of analysis that is key to its design.

The notion of economy that Giorgio Agamben employs in his work is neatly tied to the original meanings that word *oikonomia* had in Greek language.[24] Following Foucault's thought in seeking for the origins of modernity in Late Antique Christians, Agamben conceives *oikonomia* as a notion through which the governmentality was mediated.[25] In short, things that we usually think of as belonging to the realm of political authority and its subsequent legitimization via Christological doctrines can be rendered economic if one views *oikonomia* as divine government of the world towards salvation.[26] Economy in this view is not a natural self-balancing system as we conceive of it through the neoclassical lens, but rather something to be governed and looked after by the ones in charge, the head of Christian empire assisting Christ in his salvific effort.

[22] It is quite peculiar that some of those scholars do not seem to be aware of each other's work. The absence of Piron references in the books of Singh and Leshem and vice versa can be explained away by the impasse between anglo- and francophone academic traditions. However, neither Leshem, nor Singh who are building up on Agamben's work cite each other.

[23] Benjamin N. Nelson, *The Idea of Usury: From Tribal Brotherhood to Universal Otherhood* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949); Giacomo Todeshini and Donatella Melucci, *Franciscan Wealth: From Voluntary Poverty to Market Society* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2009); Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980); *Your Money or Your Life: Economy and Religion in the Middle Ages*, trans. Patricia Ranum (New York: Zone Books, 1988). When talking about Peter Brown's later writing, I was referring to his latest to date book on the subject, *Treasure in Heaven: Holy Poor in Early Christianity*. London: University of Virginia Press, 2016. This work, based on the series of lectures, indeed is written more in the history of ideas vein. However, his more voluminous account of Late Antique economic thinking, *Through the Eye of the Needle* integrates it neatly with the political economy of the era. This effect Peter Brown achieves though the flow of his prose more than through a methodical and explicit outline of the correlations. I am limited in the space I can relegate to the literature survey in the introduction, but I integrate the works of those authors into my analysis in the body chapters.

[24] I am referring here to Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

[25] This argument is unfolded in Agamben, *The Kingdom*, 109–119.

[26] Agamben, *The Kingdom*, 109–111 et passim.

Devin Singh and Dotan Leshem both elaborate on Agamben's research. Singh does so through the monetary language he finds in the patristic theological writing. He aligns the extensive use of monetary metaphors to the merging of divinity and sovereignty, happening in the newly christianized Roman Empire.[27] While in the introduction he criticizes Giorgio Agamben, whose analysis he wishes to expand, for concentrating too much on the emergence of modern-type economy of the state, either heavenly or sublunary, Singh himself does not leave much space to anyone but the sovereign and uses explicitly political accounts such as *Life of Constantine*.[28] Leshem departs from both Singh and Agamben's accounts in that he objects to limiting Late Antique economy to divine dispensation.[29] Leshem identifies the notion of infinite growth as the key feature of neoliberal doctrine.[30] The modern shape of endless multiplication of wealth is interpreted in his book as secular transposition of idea of infinite spiritual growth.[31] The infinite growth doctrine, according to Leshem, was born between councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon.[32] Thus, Agamben and Foucault's shared focus on the fourth century AD is pushed half-a-century later.

Agamben makes a detour into the High Middle Ages with his investigation of monasticism. *The Highest Poverty*, his book on the subject, closes with chapters on Bonaventure and Peter John Olivi's philosophy of mendicancy.[33] The concern with divine economy is mostly absent from this book, Agamben's concern of Western monasticism, including the mendicant movement, lies in the implications it can yield for the legal theory.

[27] Devin Singh, *Divine Currency: The Theological Power of Money in the West. Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 30.
[28] Singh, *Divine*, 15–17. *The Life of Constantine* occupies p. 27–103 of Singh's analysis.
[29] Dotan Leshem, *The Origins of Neoliberalism: Modeling the Economy from Jesus to Foucault*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016, 145–146.
[30] Leshem, *The Origins*, 7.
[31] Leshem, *The Origins*, 9.
[32] Leshem, *The Origins*, 1.
[33] Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*, trans. by Adam Kotsko (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

Thus, modern investigations of the doctrine of divine economy—both before and after Nicaea—have been undertaken, but the scope of scholarly work rarely transgressed Late Antiquity. Prioritizing this era is understandable, as it is believed to be the time when Western practices of the self were born. Sylvain Piron is the one scholar who takes up the project of genealogy outside of these chronological limits. He asserts the continuity in the economic thinking throughout the second millennium AD, the sort of thinking he does not relegate to the realm of the markets and manufactures.[34] The key term he also employs as title for his books is *l'occupation du monde*, or the occupation of the world.[35] Tracing the core concepts of modern economic theory such as value or labor through millennium, Piron offers a critique of the applications these concepts have in the political landscape of the twenty-first century. The way we conceive inhabiting of the world, our relationship to nature and the use of its resources, is neither objective and value-neutral, nor put together from scratch in the Enlightenment era. The goal of social sciences as Piron sees it is to offer alternatives and dissect the common sense, and it is the alternative to the common sense of the economics of scarcity that he seeks to offer through medieval past.[36]

None of those scholars' insight can be reapplied directly to the Middle English devotional writing. However, the present project was built upon their quest to reconceive economy as a matter of ethical life. In one form or another, all these scholars share the insight expressed most clearly by Devin Singh—namely, that the religious allure of modern economics stems from its theological origin.[37] This approach to inquiry is simultaneously a promising theoretical paradigm, and a means to talk about pre-modern economy in its own terms. Far

[34] The thesis of continuity within the last millennium of Western economic thought is an on-going refrain in both volumes. For more precise treatment of it, cf. Piron, *Généalogie*, 13–14.
[35] The term in explained in Piron, *L'occupation*, 15–16.
[36] Piron, *L'occupation*, 6.
[37] I am rephrasing here the statement Singh makes on the very first page of his work: "The tendency to highlight money's purportedly religious dynamics can be traced in part to the ways in which economic ideas and activity have actually interacted with religious thought and practice over the cen- turies in Western societies." Singh, *Divine*, 1.

from viewing market relations as a sphere of its own, Late Antique and Medieval intellectuals reflected upon them within a greater picture of the history of salvation. Ethical value and correspondence to the nature of the creation (sometimes equated) were the criteria of proper economic activities—not profit margins.

The pre-modern *oikonomia*, however, does not present such a radical rupture from economics of our days. With Dotan Leshem, I contend that the path from Aristotelian *oikonomia* as governing of the household to the Cappadocian *oikonomia* as divine dispensation and, finally, to the production or market relations as we use the term now is not a mere curiosity in the history of ideas.[38] Historical meanings of the word emerged because of, and not in spite of the previous ones.

Since this particular angle of enquiry has yet to be undertaken on the basis of Late Medieval English devotional writing, I believe that my research might be of value to the scholars that concern themselves with this category of texts but did not think of relating them to the matters of economic thought. As I will attempt to show through this work, much of the ways in which devotional writing was already explored—gender, corporeality, emotions, etc., are intertwined with the economic idioms in these works.

Methodology

Throughout the present thesis I aim to investigate the economic thinking as it unfolds in my primary sources. As established by the history of thought, "economy" meant a variety of things before it came to mean trade and production-related activities. I kept the classical and the early Christian meanings of the word in mind when developing my argument; I come back to the questions of household management and divine dispensation in Chapters III and II respectively. However, I would like to limit my search for economic thinking to three key

[38] Leshem, *The Origins*, 2–3.

categories—**work**, **wealth** and **exchange**. Those are to be thought of as series of oppositions: with wealth comes poverty, with work idleness, with exchange giving. Even the extended list of six concepts does not exhaust medieval English economic vocabulary. The core notions of work, wealth and exchange, were chosen due to their significance and persistence. Other important aspects of medieval European economic life such as almsdeed or pilgrimage are explored through those key dyads.

In each of the chapters I sought to move between the detail and general view of the text examined. First, one has to focus minutely on the very fragments of the texts that talk of labor or poverty, and then explore how do they integrate into the overall structure and message. Despite the fact that my investigation is focused on three particular authors working in the same tradition, the analogies and contrasts with the relevant context such as patristic writings, as well as comparisons between the selected Middle English authors, are employed. For otherwise it would be impossible to tell whether Late Medieval England gave rise to anything of peculiarity.

Chapter I. Catholic Work Ethic in *The Mirror of Discipline*

> In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return
> *Genesis 3:19, King James Bible*

Introduction

In his essay "Labor Time in the 'Crisis' of the Fourteenth Century" Jacques Le Goff addresses the invention of mechanical clock in Prague. The device, tellingly placed on the tower of the town hall, imposed a measurement on time, more precise than ever before. The introduction of mechanical clock turned the time of natural solar cycles into the productive time of labor.[39] This is, unfortunately, the only development from outside France explored in this article. One piece cannot do everything, and my work will try to cover one of its lacunae with an exploration of labor ethics in fourteenth-century England. The object of this inquiry will be *Our daily work or The Mirror of Discipline,* a short treatise with an ambivalent relationship to the corpus of Richard Rolle of Hampole, the anchorite.

I also refer to Richard Rolle's works of undoubted authorship—his two major devotional guides and the short pieces, like *The Form of Living*, *The Commandment,* and *On Grace* that are considered to be Rolle's original works rather than later abridgments of his longer treatises.[40] With the aid of these works I will try to show that Rolle elaborated a sort of Catholic work ethic centered, not unlike the Protestant, around the worship of God.

[39] Jacques Le Goff, "Labor Time in the 'Crisis' of the Fourteenth Century," in *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), 48-50. There is a similar line in another article from the same collection: "Merchant's Time and Church's Time in the Middle Ages," 34-36.

[40] The two former are cited according to Emily Hope Allen, ed., *English Writings of Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931). The latter could be found in Rolle, *Yorkshire Writers*, 132-36.

Source

The status of *Our Daily Work* is peculiar in Rolle scholarship. The treatise is extant in two manuscripts, published twice and since then largely forgotten by Rolle scholars.[41] The first publication was conducted in Middle English in 1895 under the Yorkshire Writers Series, the second was a modern English rendering undertaken by Geraldine Hodgson in 1910.[42] For most medieval texts, being printed more than once would imply that they are well-studied by scholars and widely recognized by the general public. This is, however, not the case for *Our Daily Work,* most likely due to the shaky nature of the Rolle canon. Nicholas Watson, a major Rolle scholar of our times, criticized the way the corpus of his works was constructed in the nineteenth century.[43] The editorial policy of Carl Horstman, whose publication of *Our Daily Work* and *On Grace* I am using, was dismissed by Watson as too undiscerning, attributing to Rolle every piece of writing that remotely resembled his works. Neither Watson, nor any other Rolle scholar provides an alternative to Horstman's approach that would form a new, less extensive Rolle canon. Rather, current Rolle studies prefer to deal with the works that are clearly attributable to him and avoid the debate on the authorship of the others.[44]

Richard Rolle was a very productive and a very popular author. He wrote in English and Latin and was translated into both languages.[45] There are 108 extant manuscripts of his

[41] This is a less popular text that has not been the subject of any recent editions. Therefore, I all references here are to the Middle English version from 1895. Richard Rolle, "Our Daily Work," in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole, an English Father of the Church, and His Followers,* ed. Carl Horstmann, Vol. 1 (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1895), 137-56. The edition contains the text from two manuscripts, Arundel 507 on pp. 137–156 and Thornton on pp. 310–321. Since Thornton manuscript presents a slightly abridged rendition of Arundel 507 text, I have relegated myself to the fuller Arundel 507 version.

[42] Richard Rolle, *The Form of Living and Other Prose Treatises of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. Geraldine Hodgson (London: Baker, 1910).

[43] Nicholas Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 34-5.

[44] A recent study that aims to review Rolle's prose treatises only mentions *Our Daily Work* twice, both times in footnotes. Claire Elizabeth McIlroy, *The English Prose Treatises of Richard Rolle* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004).

[45] Works that Rolle has written in Middle English were translated into Latin, Latin originals into Middle English. More on this in Tamás Karáth, *Richard Rolle: The Fifteenth-Century Translation*s (Turnhout: Brepols 2018), 3-5.

most popular work, *Emendatio vitae,* and 16 of its translation into Middle English.[46] Rolle's major works are long, rhetorically elaborate and well-structured. In this context a small treatise just under ten pages extant in a sole manuscript can be cut out from the Rollean canon without much harm, since scholars would have plenty of material to work on in any case. Still, the fact that the work is not clearly attributable to Rolle does not explain why scholars of Middle English devotional literature did not take it on as a piece by another anonymous author. It seems like soon after Rolle's authorship was called into doubt, the works of disputable authorship sunk into oblivion.

Although I do not have any means to prove the authenticity of the attribution, and the question cannot be resolved with the means and materials that we have, I remain skeptical about attributing the treatise to someone other than Rolle. The manuscript in which *Our Daily Work* was found contains other clearly identifiable works of Rolle, but his name is not mentioned anywhere therein. Neither is any other author's name present in the book, which led Hortsman to believe that Rolle has authored all the works in the manuscript. The teaching in *Our Daily Work* is somewhat consistent with Rolle's writing as well, as I show in this study. The mere fact that this treatise was less popular and elaborate than Rolle's other work is not substantial enough to change the attribution.

When viewed in the context of Rolle's ethical writings, *Our Daily Work* does not provide many radically new insights. Rather, it mostly condenses the points Rolle made in his larger works. This is, however, the case with most of his short treatises: he recapitulates in a few paragraphs the points he elaborated in several chapters earlier. The continuity in content between *Our Daily Work* and other writings clearly belonging to Richard Rolle is another indication of his authorship, albeit circumstantial. Nevertheless, the treatise mostly does not live up to Rolle's own rhetorical standards. Quotations from the Bible and the Church Fathers

[46] According to Karáth, *Richard Rolle*, 3.

are thrown in piles at the beginning of paragraphs, most of them are never elaborated upon. The author raises issues only to drop them and never come back to them again. The treatise is split into three loosely arranged parts: first, an introduction extolling the virtues of work; second, detailed instructions on good life, and third, a roughly summary of the others. Overall, the text gives a raw impression. I could not possibly prove that until I would have seen the manuscript, but I can speculate that the text was either a draft or a document for internal use, kept to have the arguments and the quotations at hand.

"It is a shame not to work in this time of grace"

In *The Form of Living*, Rolle talks about the active life and contemplative life with manual and spiritual work corresponding to both.[47] Quite conventionally, he places the contemplative life above the active. Within this higher *modus vivendi* he distinguishes an external and lower form, which encompasses reading and meditating on the scripture, and a higher internal one, which is contemplation of God with the mind alone. In the *Form* and even more so in *Mirror of Discipline* the notion of work is central to both lifestyles. For *vita contemplativa* the major form of labor is prayer, a topic which will be treated later in this paper. However, *vita activa* in Rolle's account does not seem to contain work as a means of procuring one's living, specifically the material means. He briefly mentions the duty of giving alms to the Church, for the churchmen are preoccupied with higher matters and must rely on others to feed and clothe them. Paradoxically, this is the only context in which earthly goods are referred to in a positive light:

> And nameli men of religion are halden to worschip god with praier, & men of haly kirke for thai life bi almes & tendis—for al the werld travails to bring thaim to hand that thaim nedis, so that thai mai serve god with rest & with thaire haly bidis make saghtlyng bitwix god & man.[48]

[47] *The Form*, 117-8.
[48] *Our Daily Work*, 141. I have taken the liberty of using 'th' instead of the Middle English letter 'ð', standing for the same sound. It does not impact the meaning of the text and prevents compatibility issues with computers not equipped with medieval scripts.

In Rolle's own definition, the active life is for the people who do not, or cannot, detach themselves from the material world. Yet, while lecturing extensively on the virtues of work he does not mention the fact that the purpose of most human labor is procuring material goods. As demonstrated above, *Our daily work*'s author is well aware that people make things and need things, this is the very justification he gives for almsgiving. But the reason why people have to work is the fact that **it is virtuous to do so**. The most powerful justification used to argue for it is the following:

> God gifs vs ensample to wirk: bi him-selfe as the apostle witness ther he sais: Exinanivit semetipsum: formam servi accipiens; in similitudinem hominum factus & habitu inventus vt homo; humiliavit semetipsum factus oboediens usque ad mortem mortem autem crucis: propter quod & Deus illum exaltavit & dedit illi nomen quod est super omne nomen, vt in nomine Ihesu: omne genu flectat caelestium et terrestrium et infernorum, & omnis lingua confiteatur quia Iesus Christus in gloria est dei patris.[49]

With this lengthy quote from Phillipians 2:7-2:10 the incarnation itself is conceived as an act of labor. This is, to my knowledge, an original idea. It was and still is common to refer to incarnation as the debasement of the divinity and an act of utmost self-humiliation; this is precisely what the apostle Paul is saying in the quoted passage. Work is natural to the human condition after the fall, so the connection between Christ being a human and Christ working is not unthinkable. Indeed, later in this treatise the apostles are referred to as earning their living with the work of their hands, also a common point of reference for the mendicant orders.[50] However, thinking of the incarnation itself as work, not only of the actions that Christ performed during his earthly life, is a different kind of proposition.

What is more interesting is the fact that nowhere in the Gospels Christ can actually be found working. Much of the labor exhortations in the New Testament actually come from Pauline letters. Sylvain Piron observes that the only instance in which Christ is referred to as a

[49] *Our Daily Work*, 139.
[50] *Our Daily Work*, 156.

carpenter is an indication of his descent from one, not his personal occupation.[51] Otherwise, Christ is engaged in the exact opposite of making one's living through the work of their hands: namely, he miraculously multiplies the food and beverage for his followers. Thus, conceiving the miracle of incarnation as an act of labor is the only way to ascribe work to Christ without contradicting the Gospels. Strangely enough, the fact that Christ had never worked leads to the highest possible elevation of labor in the rhetoric of *The Mirror of Discipline*. For if Christ did work as a carpenter, he would give an example to his followers in manual labor. Since his work is being incarnated and administering the salvation, the "ensample" he gives to the devout is not connected to the work of the hands, to any particular sort of sublunary occupation to be pursued. Rather, it elevates the abstract work to the level of salvific principle.

When it comes to economic language in Christian account of salvation, the ransom metaphor is one of the most persistent. Devin Singh's recent book, *Divine Currency,* shows the deep rootedness of ransom and redemption-related language in the political economy of the late antique Mediterranean. In a world where much of the labor was performed by the unfree purchasable human beings, it would only make sense that Christ's sacrifice was conceived as a ransom for the fallen humanity, enslaved to the Devil.[52]

There is a commonality between ransom and work—they are both a form of exchange. Modern consciousness equates work with wage labor—exchange of time and effort for money. Some types of labor in medieval England were based on exchange among other things. In some spheres waged labor was present but it is safe to say that the majority of the population was not employed in this way. One could work on the land of a lord in exchange for the lord's protection and the right to eat the fruit of the land; one could produce items in bulk for merchants to sell, one could pray for the dead in exchange for donations from their relatives. The connection

[51] Piron, *Généalogie*, 183.
[52] Singh, *Divine*, 136-38.

between exchange, sacrifice and human toil was not unheard of and is present in Paul's lines that are being quoted, "formam servi accipiens". Paul underscores the fullness of sacrifice, the absolute misery in which Christ has fallen when calling him "servus", a slave. In *The Mirror of Discipline* the accents are reversed—servitude of Christ is an elevation of human work, not the token of his distress.

The intersection of exchange, labor, and sacrifice is equally explicit in another passage from *Our Daily Work*. Just a few lines after equating labor with the miracle of incarnation, yet another interpretation of the sacrifice is given:

> Alwa vs agh to wirk in this time of grace: for we are goddis thrallis with the price of his deorworthi blode: to work in his wyne-yarde. & yit he hightis vs made: if we do with gode will that we thorugh agh for to do.[53]

Here a more conventional theology of ransom is outlined, in its usual company— the unfree labor. Christ buys humanity as his servants by sacrifice; the covenant between God and men is conceived as a contract between a land-owning lord and peasants who work the land, "thrallis". Manual agricultural labor is invoked, but only metaphorically, as an allusion to the Gospel parable of vineyard. The passage at hand does not talk about the necessity of agricultural labor, but about labor as such, labor as a moral obligation to Christ. If the first interpretation of sacrifice, comparing incarnation to human labor, is supposed to inspire people to work by analogy, likening sacrifice to the purchase of human beings renders work obligatory and contractual.

Gardening and the Fall from Grace

If selective reading of the New Testament—the preference for Pauline the exhortations of work to the scorn for the bustling industry in the Gospels—is understandable in this eulogy of labor, the way its author deals with Genesis is more convoluted.

[53] *Our Daily Work*, 139.

Genesis 3:19, used as an epigraph for this chapter, is reinterpreted as an affirmation of work:

> Thou sal trauail stalworldli & noght fayntli, for he biddis the to trauail "with swete of thi face, ay til thou torn to the erth", that is al thi life-tyme, that thou lose na tyme in idlenes[54]

The emphasis on losing time is significant. The author does not cease to remind his reader that this life is only temporary, that the dwelling on earth is granted by God and, thus, should be devoted to him. The "travauail" used in this text as a full synonym to work with little of its second meaning, "to suffer" present; the connection between the misery and suffering of human condition after the expulsion from Eden is brushed over with it. The sheer eccentricity of this fragment stems from the fact that the author of *The Mirror of Discipline* does not make use of Genesis 2:15, more fitting for the occasion: "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." Genesis 2:15 confirms the existence of labor pre-fall and undoes the connection between work and the debasement of human nature as a result of expulsion.

The context for this peculiar rhetorical strategy lies in the debate that happened about a millennium prior, one between Augustine and Pelagius on the nature of sin. For Augustine, Adam's expulsion from Eden was a turnaround moment for the humanity; after Adam and Eve's disobedience the original sin compromised the integrity of the human nature and humans' proximity to God.[55] For Pelagius, the expulsion from Eden was a matter of by-gone antiquity that did not bear strong influence on the Christians of his day who could aspire to live a sin-free life after being purified in baptism.[56] The victory of Augustine and his doctrine of the original sin in this debate provides the context that the author of *Our daily work* has to circumscribe in order to turn Genesis 3:19 from malediction into affirmation.

[54] *Ibid*, 138.
[55] Piron, *Généalogie*, 130. The debate is also reflected upon in Brown, *Through the Eye*, 361–362.
[56] Ibid.

This transformation is accomplished by reshuffling the accents in the history of salvation. By the fourteenth century, the idea of irreversible nature of the fall and deep defilement of the humanity resulting from it is established as an official doctrine of Catholic Church. The expulsion from Eden marks a rupture, it is the time when the history began and the ultimate reason why the incarnation of Christ had to happen. But what has begun is also bound to end; thus, human history occupies the time in-between the fall and the second coming. This in-between time can, in turn, be divided into the era of law (post-Moses) and the era of grace (post-Jesus), the distinction that the author of the treatise refers to when saying "it is time to work in this time of grace".

When it comes to the duty to work, it does not seem like the time of grace and the time of law are any different. Neither does the coming era of beatitude after the final judgement offer repose in contrast to the toil of earthly existence. The author of *The Mirror of Discipline* does not avail themselves of the rhetorical potential of the juxtaposition between the earthly work and the heavenly leisure; nowhere in the treatise one can find a promise of future rest. One of the possible explanations for it is that the diatribes towards idleness that permeate the treatise foreclosed the opportunity to extoll leisure.

The classical appraisal of *otium* as the foundation of a good life, and *negotium* as distraction from it began to be reversed in the fourth-century Egyptian monasticism.[57] Thousand years forward, what used to be a voluntary resolution for the select few, appears as a universal dictum. If one agrees with early Foucault that modernity arrives when the self-control and discipline overflow the walls of schools and convents to infect the general public, *Our daily work* is the evidence for this process happening in late medieval England.[58] For as little as is known about this composition, it was clearly addressed to laity, and most likely to

[57] This transition is surveyed in Piron, *Généalogie*, 177–180.
[58] I am referring here to the vision of modernity he espoused when writing *Discipline and Punish*. The comparison of factory and monastery can be found in *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 149–150.

the urban one. Foreclosing the second section of the *Mirror*, the writer lists the kinds of people that are destined for Hell:

> glotones, licheowrs, robbeowrs, theues; Riche men vht thaire seruants: bat be pour harmed; Domesmen bat wold noght deme: bot it war for mede; Countowrs bat be wrangc bi baire sotilte mayntiend; Demesters bat leal men dawpnid : & delyumd stark theues Werkmen pat falsli swynkis; & takis ful hire; Tilmen bat falsli tendis; Prelates bat has cure of mawnes saulis : bat noider chastis ne techis bairn; Of all lede of men bat wrangli has wroght: bare I sagh bat ilkan bitterli it **boght**.[59]

The Babylonian confusion of this list composed of sinners (glutton and lechers), criminals (robbers and thieves), and people behaving improperly in their social position (the rich who harm the poor), should not take from the fact that most categories of the damned are identified by their occupation. Furthermore, their damnation results from the failure to fulfil those occupations properly. It is a result of the process observed by Jacques Le Goff in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century confession manuals that categorized sinners by their work and provided tailored guidelines on the employment-specific sins: financial fraud for accountants, vainglory for university teachers, etc.[60] The majority of professions listed require a level of education and people having them are likely to be urban-dwellers: accountants, two kinds of judges, prelates. Workmen could apply to either urban or rural wage laborers, but since tillers of the earth are listed separately after them, it is most likely done to emphasize the contrast between the lowest-ranking workers in the city and on the land.

This list is the closest *Our daily work* comes to defining its subject. One can speculate from the prevalence of urban professions that it was addressed to the city-dwellers, and from the reminder to give alms to the church that the audience was lay. Otherwise, the writer remains unconcerned as for what kind of labor is to be performed—prelates, judges, accountants, journeymen and peasants are joined in their busyness, each doing their part in humanity's

[59] *Our Daily Work*, 153.
[60] Le Goff, "Licit and Illicit Trades in Medieval West" in *Time, Work, and Culture*, 58–60.

common vocation. Each of them is buying bitterly a one-way ticket to eternal damnation, if they happen to be dishonest in their work.

A Monopoly for Time-Lending

The undiscerning valuation for work comes with undiscerning contempt for idleness. It is the root of other sins, taking this role over from pride: "Idelnesse is norice til all vices, & makis man rekles to do: þat he is halden to do."[61] It is not the specific sin of lechery, but the state of being unoccupied that is condemned in these lines, for a man who is not busy is easily tempted. One can reminisce of saint Anthony relentlessly working to stir the demons away, or even Leo Tolstoy mowing the grass to conquer his libido; the idea that labor can provide safe haven from temptation is not unique to this treatise. But the other aspect of the condemnation of slack belongs to the High Middle Ages. That is the idea that time is property of God:

> The first: man sal loke that he tyne noght his schort tyme, nor wrang dispend it, nor in idelnesse : lat it ouer-passe. God has **lent man this tyme**: to serue god in, & to **gedere** with **gode werkes grace**: til bi heuen with.[62]

These are the very first lines in the body of treatise, after the preface gives the most general idea of its content. The duality of the word "work" is played up— "gode werkes" are synonymous to "good deeds"; here author means both good deeds and good labor. Those good works are meant to gather grace for believers so that they can "bi", that is "buy" the Heaven with them. Startling is the audacity of this statement. Whilst bishop Hilary of Arles bought the heaven with his earthly gifts, *Our daily work* contends that is not even necessary to ladle out one's fortune in this life to secure a treasure in the eternity; good deeds and hard work are enough. Later in this chapter I come back to the contractual view of salvation these lines convey, but for now other strangely plainspoken economic idiom will be unpacked: the time-lending.

[61] *Our Daily Work*, 139.
[62] *Our Daily Work*, 137.

The connection is not made explicitly connection in the text, but the idea that time belongs solely to God was weaponized in the High Middle Ages to combat a sin other than idleness—usury. This argument against usury gained traction in the thirteenth century and was countlessly reiterated thereafter: since a usurer charges interest for the temporary possession of his money, he sells time itself.[63] Since time belongs only to God, the creator of time, usury is a theft from him. In *Our Daily Work*, idle people are said to be stealing from God as well, since he lent them the time that they are not using properly. Paradoxically, God himself becomes a blessed usurer, the only legitimate time-lender. The refusal to earn back one's debt to the time-lending monopolist is giving up on eternal life, since there is no place for the idle either in heaven or the purgatory, the existence of latter being presumed without any reservations.[64] This conception of earthly existence as continuous repayment of debt to the time-lending monopolist might be the key to selection of Genesis 3:19, not Genesis 2:15—working with the sweat of one's face was not human essence before the fall, but a duty for the time of grace.

Prayers, Alms and Contracts

After these exhortations of work, the treatise finally turns to what is actually to be done. The second part of the piece that is supposed to contain instructions on working is, in fact, filled with the most general instructions on leading a good life. The first couple of pages are devoted to prayer—it is a form of sacrifice and self-discipline to be offered to God on a daily basis, the more the better, without praying for superfluous things like earthly goods, a piece of advice similar to Chapter 20 in *Incendium amoris*.[65] Instructions on how to pray properly follow, and the obstacles to good prayer are listed, providing a schedule as well—one is supposed to wake up and go to sleep with the thought and the love of God, for at these times

[63] Le Goff, *Your Money*, 39-41.
[64] Purgatory is referenced on p. 139 of *Our daily work*: "In heuen mai he not dwel … , In purgatorie mai na idel dwell…"
[65] *Incendium*, Cap. 20, 203-4.

people are the most vulnerable to demons.[66] It is interesting that the word "occupation" is used to denote the distractions, that is improper activities that are not directed towards God. One of those "occupations" is caring for the worldly things, once again severing the link between work and material provision.[67]

A peculiar part of treatise is devoted to eating meat, which one should eat moderately and better preoccupy themselves with heavenly matters, however, excessive fasting, including the renunciation of meat-eating is equally not advisable. Here, again, a continuity is present between *Our Daily Work* and Rolle's main books, *Incendium amoris* and *Emendatio vitae,* where he advocates for moderate meat intake and devout meditation at mealtime.[68]

The last matter that the book treats is divine love and grace, and whether it can be expected in exchange for meditation and good deeds. The debate on predestination and the freedom echoes in these ruminations. *Our Daily Work* gives two slightly different readings of the matter:

> Amang all other, I trowe we greue god's mast: for we wil **noght swynk to wyn** this grace of god; and god hightis this grace til all that wil seke it, that thaire vessel be clene & voide til resceyvue it in.[69]

> And I saye the for sothe if thou wil leue syn & do goddis biddyngs & luf him as the agh: a riche sege & a faire god to the has made, whare in thou sal dwell with him with-outen ende.[70]

Both readings seem to say that God's grace and salvation can be guaranteed once certain obligations are fulfilled on the part of devotee, the first passage linking the grace to the cleanliness of the vessel that receives it. It is not clear if God's grace is analogous to salvation, or something else is implied, such as achieving mental union with God in this life, a mystical revelation. In both cases, the reader of this didactic text is left with the resolution of the

[66] *Our Daily Work*, 143.
[67] *Our Daily Work*, 140.
[68] *The Mending*, Ch. 4, 211-2; *Incendium*, Cap. 18, 199.
[69] *Our Daily Work*, 150.
[70] *Ibid*, 154.

providence question, not the argument itself. The fact that it is a didactic piece rather than a theological treatise may partly explain why such a position is embraced—it would be, indeed, hard to argue for good deeds and devout labor if they have no bearing on one's prospects of eternal life.

However, this still does not explain the radical contractual view of salvation. One could argue—as Saint Augustine did in his early years—that good deeds contribute to salvation, but the final decision is still in the hands of God.[71] A fleeting image from the first pages of the text might offer a clue: "For it is bot folie to prai god com to vs nedeful wreches & pouvere to dele vs almis of his deorworthy grace".[72] God's grace here is likened to alms and human fragility in the face of God is expressed through an inter-human form of disempowerment—poverty.

The invocation of the alms-deed implies a degree of liability on God's part. While giving alms and its secular analog, donating to charities, is now considered to be virtuous but mostly optional, Late Antique and Medieval Christians were obliged to donate to the poor if they happened to be wealthy.[73] People of certain lucrative but morally dubious occupations such as merchants and usurers were to go to hell unless they repented and donated a part of their wealth to the church and the poor.[74] Thus, when the author of *Our daily work* compares divine grace to the alms-deed, they do not mean that God is free to dispense grace at any time and place, but that he is bound to do so by his very nature.

The obligatory nature of alms-deed is equally present in the fragment quoted on the p. 16 of the present work, calling for the rendering of alms upon the men of "haly kirke" in exchange for their prayers. This a plea for the funds that are not to be distributed to the poor,

[71] Jaroslav Pelikan, "Nature and Grace," in *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1992), 293-95.
[72] *Our Daily Work*, 142.
[73] More on that in Eric Shuler, "Almsgiving and the Formation of Early Medieval Societies, A.D. 700-1025" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame), 2010.
[74] Le Goff, *Your Money*, 53-54, *et passim*.

only if by proxy through the benevolence of the clerks. The condemnation of rich men who abuse the less fortunate was quoted above (p. 21), and the worldly riches are relentlessly devalued throughout the text. But the poor are notably absent from any context in which they are conventionally brought up, safe from being the recipients of mistreatment from the powers that be. It might be that the "unworthy" poor such as abled-bodied beggars were grouped with the rest of the idle that are to be damned, yet there is nothing to be said for the "worthy" poor either. The treasures of this world are dust, but one is not expected to redistribute them to the ones most needful, just to achieve a sense of detachment from them.

I would not like to seek consistency in a text that seems to be hastily written and devoid of clear structure, but I will point out a motive that is not, perhaps, consciously put forward by whoever composed the treatise. *The Mirror of Discipline* is very explicit in its elevation of labor, going as far as likening the mystery of the incarnation itself to the human toil. The relationship between God and humanity is conceived as a contract, albeit between unequals, which is anything but unusual for Christian thought. What is unusual is mediating the human part of the contract through the notion of labor. People have to pray, meditate and avoid sin—this is well-known, but the idea that prayer, meditation and good deeds are a form of work is a novelty. This is not to say that it is unprecedented—the treatise is clearly drawing on the Gospels when calling devotees vineyard workers, and the Benedictine adage *ora et labora* saw work and worship as connected but distinct occupations.[75]

Fire and the Hierarchy of Devotion

If it were, indeed, Richard Rolle or anyone of his circle who authored *The Mirror of Discipline*, there are continuities to be observed between the ethical teaching presented elsewhere in Rolle' work and in this minor piece. Rolle's ethical views primarily rest on the

[75] I am drawing here on volume 6 of the *Homo Sacer* series by Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*, trans. by Adam Kotsko (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 23-25.

premise that the community of Christian believers is fundamentally hierarchical, and anyone of his followers must have shared this fundamental presupposition with him.[76] Few medieval authors would deny that there are degrees of sanctity and virtuousness within *res publica Christiana.* The textbook tripartite scheme with *laboratores*, who work on land, *bellatores*, who wage war, and *oratores*, who pray for all of them, is exemplary of such division.[77] The lifestyles of knights and manual laborers were inferior in their sanctity to the one of clerics; among the clerics monks were the holiest. However, the corruption of Church became a problem centuries before the tripartite scheme was articulated. Imperfect bishops compromising the sacrality of their position were subject to the debate between Donatus and Augustine. It was generally accepted that, although the clergy is in principle closer to God than the laity, there are laymen that are holier than certain clerics, as there are women who rise to higher virtue than men, though women are generally inferior.

Middle English devotional writings explored in the present thesis do not operate in these categories, Richard Rolle lest of all. For him, virtue and its highest rung, mystical revelation,

[76] This attitude to devotion was far from being default for Christians of his era. Despite the immense proliferation of mystical piety, it never ceased to elicit controversy. Jean Gerson (1363–1429), writing a few decades later, was the most renown of mystical skeptics. Unlike Rolle, Gerson was a high-ranking cleric who devoted a huge part of his life to administrative work. Inspecting personal revelations and regulating popular piety were central among his responsibilities. Daniel B. Hobbins, "Gerson on Lay Devotion," in *A Companion to Jean Gerson*, 44-45. The desire to have mystical experience was excessive. Gerson was far more concerned with the salvation of an ordinary believer, for which seizures and revelations are unnecessary. They are, in a way, surplus piety, sometimes beneficial, sometimes dangerous. Gerson recognized the utility of mystics and their writings as they were directing people to God away from the earthly matters. This is why mysticism should be neither embraced, nor condemned as a whole, but regulated on a case-to-case basis.
While outlining the principles of such decision-making, Gerson deals with the notion of a hierarchy of virtue. According to him, distinguishing more and less saintly among the devout is an evil urge that makes souls succumb to the deception of demons. Individual believers start thinking of themselves higher than their brethren, worthier of direct contact with the divine. It is necessary to remind ourselves of the virtue of humility to counter the competition in holiness; no true revelation can exist without true humility, no mystic should consider him/herself better than ordinary Christians, who avoid mortal sins and go after cardinal virtues. Gerson "On Distinguishing True from False Revelations," 342-48.

[77] The tripartite scheme was, of course, a particular concept formulated most clearly in the eleventh century by Adalbero of Laon, although it was first mentioned in the ninth century in the Anglo-Saxon commentary to Boethius. The tripartite division is of doubtful value when assessing either the actual structures of medieval societies or the dominant perception of those societies by the people living in them. Once taken as a specific idea of some medieval thinkers, the tripartite scheme can be contrasted with the ideas of others. In this work, the other is Rolle or the anonymous author. Cf. "Labor, Techniques and Craftsmen in the Value Systems of Early Middle Ages;" and "A Note on Tripartite Society, Monarchial Ideology, and Economical Renewal in Ninth to Twelfth Century Christendom," in Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture*, 53, 86.

are a matter of personal achievement. When writing to cloistered noblewomen, Rolle does not make references either to their gender, their status as nuns submitted to a Holy Rule, or their upper-class origins.[78] Holiness does not belong to an estate or a community and does not result from a vow of obedience to a rule. Furthermore, Rolle explicitly denounced the cenoby as a form of living inappropriate for those who strive for the true communion with God—community of others is an earthly distraction from inwardly-oriented contemplation.[79] In pursuit of virtue, the devotee is one on one with God, and the pursuit itself is hard work. The highly internalized work towards perfection is the principle for assigning the Christians their steps on the stairway to heaven.

Rolle is known to be an adherent of threefold divisions. In *Incendium* he introduces three levels of love, those are fire, song, and sweetness or *calor, cantor, dulcor.*[80] Those higher kinds of love are only available to the extraordinary believers.[81] In *Commandment* and *The Form of Living* he speaks about three "degres" of love: insuperable, inseparable and singular.[82] The short treatise *On Grace,* found in the same manuscript as *Daily Work,* also lists three degrees of grace without giving them particular names:

> The first: god gifs til alle creatures … & with-outen this grace creatures mai noght do nor last in their kynde… The second degree of grace is mare speciale, that god gyves freli til ilke man that is god & skilful creature…The

[78] *The Commandment* and *The Form of Living* are allegedly addressed to Magdalene Kirkby, cf. prefaces to these works in the edition quoted, p. 72, 82.
[79] *Incendium*, 197-99, *et passim*.
[80] *Incendium*, 184-6, *et passim*.
[81] The sensation of burning seized Rolle himself suddenly and did not leave him for a while. However, Rolle is also aware of the dangers of this view and along with the descriptions of the higher kinds of love this warning is present: "Superbia siquidem confundit plurimos, dum enim se aliquid egisse estimant, quod ceteri non amabant, statim se aliis preferunt et ipsis forte meliores apud se immerito postponunt. Sed sciant quod ille nondum nouit seipsum diligere qui communem naturam in proximo presumit contemnere. Quia et condicioni sue iniuriam facit, qui ius suum in altero non agnoscit. Unde et humane societatis ius uiolat, qui communionem nature in proximo non honorat," *Incendium, 215*. Modern English rendition: "Pride forsooth destroys many; when they trow they have done aught that others have not, anon they bear themselves before others, and they that are better than themselves they put behind. But, know it well, he himself knows not love that presumes to despise common nature in his brother; for he does wrong to his own condition that knows not his right in another. He that honours not the community of nature in his neighbor, defiles the law of man's fellowship." *The Fire of Love and the Mending of Live*, 107.
[82] *The Form*, 104-5; *Commandment*, 74-75.

> third grace is maste special: for it is gyven aneli til tha: that rescevyes the second grace, with thaire free wille, fillis it in dede.[83]

It is unclear what the third grace is, except that it is a certain improvement compared to the second one. The second one is the most interesting for the present investigation, for it seems to be the very grace the achievement of which is explained in *Our Daily Work.* The first grace is common to all creatures by virtue of being created by God, the second is reserved for humans specifically, and is to be achieved by devotion. Since the Apostle Paul is invoked as an example for the third grace, one can derive that is a superior, lifetime connection to God, one at the disposal of prophets, saints and mystics. In this scheme of things, the advice that is offered in *Incendium amoris*, *Commandment* and *The Form of Living* is for achieving the third "surplus" grace which is not necessary for salvation.

Rolle is also known to be quite disdainful of the self-imposed poverty. In the Chapter III of *The Mending of Life* he makes quite clear that the kind of poverty he calls for is inner, spiritual poverty, akin to the detachment from earthly goods advocated in *Our daily work:*

> Forsooth all that have forsaken their goods follow not Christ, for many are worse after the forsaking of their goods than they were before. Then they swell with envy; they gnash with malice; they set themselves before all others ; they praise their state, all others they either dispraise or condemn… Thou that understandest that I have said, take thy poverty another way. When He says go and sell He marks the changing of thy desire and of thy thought. [84]

The rugged individualism, the inward focus of the devotion and disdain for giving out one's fortune that is expressed in those lines is reminiscent of the spirit in which *Our daily work* is written. Since the audience of the treatise explored is expected to strive for the second grace, virtuous but not holy life, their quest is parallel if not equal to the one undertaken by anchorites. For according to Rolle, a hermit, not even a monk, is the most suitable vessel for perfection, which also means that the bar is lowered for common people.

[83] *De Gratia*, 133-40.
[84] *The Mending*, 204.

On the one hand, non-solitary lifestyles make believers too enmeshed with the world to achieve perfection. On the other, it is precisely the individualized quest for perfection that distinguishes a recluse from other people. Thus, even followers of imperfect lifestyles should get on their individual pathways of devotion, prayer, and good deeds to attain salvation. While Rolle and his circle engage in the work of devotion in their hermitages, the commoners may direct their mind to God while chewing on breakfast or going to bed. It is not an accident that Rolle calls contemplation "sweet and desirable labor."[85]

Conclusion

In this chapter I attempted to drive attention to an obscure Late Medieval treatise on the virtues of work. The question of its authorship will remain open unless some new evidence surfaces. There are affinities between *The Mirror of Discipline* and the writings of Richard Rolle, but I leave the reader to decide if they are strong enough to tilt the scales to re-inclusion of *The Mirror* into his corpus.

For now, it suffices to conclude that *The Mirror of Discipline or Our Daily Work* was most likely addressed to average Christians to inspire them to a life of devotion. Its persuasive, while not necessarily consistent argumentation is built on three elements—labor, exchange and contract. Christ's sacrifice is both an act of work and the purchase of humanity, human work and worship is repayment of debt to God. One thing should be clear to the reader of the treatise: devotion is labor, and devotion is virtuous, thus, labor is virtuous.

[85] *The Mending,* 240.

Chapter II. "Arte Thou Well Apaid?": Julian of Norwich and the Theology of Abundance

Preambule: Back to Gardening

Candide's resolution "Il faut cultiver notre jardin" sums up the symbolism of the garden and pertaining to it labor ethics in the tradition of Western Christendom. In order to make one's own way in the world which is certainly not the best of all possible, Voltaire, neither a Protestant, nor a Christian at all, proposes self-centered work ethic, resigned from the rest of the world. Depleted of eschatological fervor, the cultivation of one's garden becomes a secular ethical endeavor – it is about leading a good life here and now more than awaiting patiently for some sort of final resolution. Cultivating one's garden is a metaphor for cultivating oneself, transposing the location of garden to the spiritual realm. Voltairean garden in this sense inherits to Augustinian reading of the Garden of Eden, conceived as a site of spiritual delights. The Fall, getting Adam and Eve expelled from Eden, takes the divine proximity away, and the spiritual delights follow.

In his most recent book, *Treasure in Heaven*, Peter Brown asserts that the garden of Eden, no doubt imbued with metaphoric meaning, also meant something very familiar to the everyday lives of the peoples who authored *Genesis*.[86] He distinguishes between the two types of holy poor – the beggars and the workers; and connects the distinct preference for idleness in Syrian monasticism to the long-standing disfavor towards work among the peoples of the region.[87] Syrian fathers knew well that labor, especially the agricultural kind, is toil and anguish, and is not suitable for leading a holy life.[88] Their Egyptian counterparts that embraced

[86] Brown, *Treasure*, 39-40.
[87] Ibid., 42-3.
[88] Ibid.

labor did it as a part of their humility and self-sufficiency practice, and still did not offer any appraisal of work in and of itself. [89]

The Source and the Author

The Middle English authors dealt with in the present work might well be conceived as the steppingstones between Voltaire's celebration of gardening and saint Anthony relentless and self-abdicating manual labor. Julian of Norwich is still not quite an adherent of labor ethics. Her revelations do not result from a conscious practice of meditation on the suffering. Rather, entering a liminal state between life and death, half-paralyzed, Julian is seized by a vision.[90] Little is known about Julian's life both before and after this moment, but the singular revelation she received on what could have been her deathbed resulted in two books, both of them closely following the visions of that days. As we know from the later, longer version of Julian's text, she kept on ruminating on the revelation, and there is no evidence of her having mystical seizures apart from the 1373 one. [91]

The recluse of Norwich presents a case quite different from the other works discussed in my thesis. Her writing is neither instructional, nor biographical, she is not very to talk of the earthly matters at length. Nevertheless, there is much of interest in her writings when it comes to the economy of creation. One has to make a connection to the ancient meaning of *oikonomia* as divine dispensation, most importantly the divine organization of the salvation to make sense of the economic thinking in Julian's revelations.

The little biographical detail that we know about Julian mostly comes from her own writing, and one of those details might give us a clue to the social standing of Julian, otherwise

[89] Ibid., 84. This seems to be a point upon which several very different scholars agree. Same view is expressed in Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 23-4; and in Sylvain Piron, *Généalogie*, 177.
[90] The nature of Julian's illness has been discussed in James T. McIlwain, "The "Bodelye syeknes" of Julian of Norwich" in *Journal of Medieval History* 10, no. 3 (1984), 167-180. On the basis of symptoms described – the rapid onset of the disease, paralysis and fever James McIlwain speculated that it could be botulism.
[91] The chronology I am using here is based on Julian's own claim that the revelation occurred on May 13th, 1373 in the later version of her text, i.e., more than twenty years later. LT, 125.

obscure. When narrating her illness, Julian mentioned that she was lying sick in her bed in a separate room, her mother attending to her.[92] It remains unclear whether the room belonged to Julian or was just allocated to her for the time of her disease. The archaeological data on the medieval English urban household shows that people of modest income could have more than one room in their houses, but it required a considerable amount of wealth for a family to have separate rooms for family members, let alone bedrooms.[93] The ownership of the bed and the proverbial "room of one's own", thus, would enable us to place Julian into middle- to high-income urban family. It is more likely that she would lean to the middle – there are no servants mentioned at any point, and Julian's mother attends to her personally.

As stated in the Introduction, Julian has written two accounts of her revelations. The main difference between the books, as well as the reason why the second, longer version had to be written by Julian's own admittance is the lack of understanding she had for a certain vision. That was the parable of servant and the lord, used as a visual metaphor of the fall and the redemption. The lack of understanding of this part of her vision was the reason why Julian did not include when she was writing down her revelations for the first time, and it is after the parable became clear to her that she conceived of writing a second book. The role of the parable in Julian's theology is subject to much debate. Certain scholars assert that it is a key to her theology, while others maintain that the parable simply expands on the currents already present in the shorter version of the visions. It is my view that parable and its implications are continuous with what Julian maintains in the short text, although it gives more detail and more certainty to her views.

[92] Julian mother is only mentioned in the early version of revelations, ST, 83.
[93] Sarah Rees Jones, Felicity Riddy, Cordelia Beattie et al., "The Later Medieval English Urban Household" in *History Compass 5/1* (2017), 121-2.

Work, Suffering and Salvation

Labor is present in *Revelation* through three different stems. One of them is "labor" and all the words derived from it, like laborer, which Julian uses as an equivalent to servant and links with poverty and subjugation. The other one is "work", mostly spelled as "werk" in the text and all its derivatives, which are not used in connection with any kind of human activities. "Werking" is reserved for the God and the Holy Spirit in *Revelations* and designates the enactment of grace upon the humanity. Finally, "travelye" with derivatives, still closer to the modern French meaning that to what we call "travel", is mostly applied to Christ and to the servant from the parable. "Travelye" is used as both labor and suffering, the ambiguity purposefully played up by Julian.

The proverbial treasure in heaven appears in *Revelations* twice in passing, first as a promise of the future reward for the prayers:

> Oure lorde himselfe, he is the furst receivoure of our prayer, as to my sight, and he taketh it full thankefully. And, highly enjoyeng, he sendeth it uppe above, and setteth it in tresure wher it shall never perish.[94]

Here God is cast as a kind of spiritual banker, who receives the prayers from his devout and adds it lovingly to his deposit. Julian pushes the intermediary role of the church out of the equation by calling Lord, not his priest or his saints, "the first receiver". It can be presumed that Julian is talking about the individual act of prayer, a well-established devout practice by the late middle ages, as opposed to collective prayer of early Christian congregations. Thus, the absence of the intermediary that Julian postulates to encourage her readers to pray more often and more devoutly is congruous with the dominant practice of prayer she as individual act of addressing God. The unperishable treasure in heavens is reference to Matthew 6:19-20:

> Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
> But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor

[94] LT, 249.

rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

In the Gospel text we see an admonition to the believers to divest themselves from the earthly riches by devout life and giving. Both Matthew 6:19-20 and Julian's text understand the exchange of holy acts into spiritual currency very literally, somewhat disrupting the Augustinian vision of salvation as incommensurable with any amount of the earthly good deeds. Her literal reading notwithstanding, Julian bypasses the sheer materiality of the exchange between the earthly commodities and heavenly treasure. Matthew 6 starts with the topic of alms and proceeds to the publicity of one's fasting and prayer. Christ advocates for concealed devotion, and his invocation of the treasure in heavens is double-edged. Firstly, one should not be too invested in the sublunary goods and engage in almsgiving, for the goods will perish, but the alms will survive. Secondly, one should not pursue recognition for their devotion here and now, including for their almsgiving, for those who receive the esteem in this world squander their celestial deposit.

Firth-century African donors flaunting their generosity on the walls of the churches they helped build seem to have put the emphasis on the first meaning of Matthew 6:19-20, while Julian offers a peculiar fusion of both.[95] She does not talk about the equivalent exchange between the property renounced and the recognition in heaven, moreover, she never talks alms and any other deeds that pave the way to salvation. Rather, the thing exchanged into celestial treasure is prayer, not even a thing, but an action, a practice that yields money, albeit only of a spiritual kind. I invited the reader to dwell so much on this fairly conventional evangelical reference is to show Julian's contemplation of the generative nature of prayer, not a translation of a dull matter into splendid heavenly oof, but the generation of (spiritual) wealth through human action. We come here quite close to the theory of labor, but before delving into the

[95] Brown, *Through the Eye*, 367.

episode that illustrates most vividly Julian's views on the subject, let us treat the second time she invokes the treasures in heaven.

> For he beholde his hevenly tresure with so grete love on erth that he will give us more light and solace in hevenly joye, in drawing of oure hartes fro sorow and darknesse which we are in. [96]

Once again, Julian casts Christ himself as beholding the treasure which belongs to **him**, not the devotees. One is left guessing what this treasure might be, since the sentence is dropped in the eighty-sixth and final chapter of the LT without much elaboration. Since before this sentence Julian takes the pain of reiterating the message of God's love for humanity, it would make sense for "hevenly treasure on erth" to stand for the saved humanity. In other words, what Julian calls a "hevenly treasure on erth" for Augustine would be the concealed City of God, the community of the saved believers which is to be revealed at the Final Judgement.

Political Theology of Servitude

In *Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body Politic of Christ* Frederick Bauerschmidt proposes a political reading of Julian's revelations.[97] Drawing on John Milbank, he asserts that much of seemingly secular liberal political philosophy is built upon the secularized conceptual apparatus of the Christian theology.[98] In an act of reversal, Bauerschmidt interprets Julian's *Revelation* as work of political theory, affirming the feudal power by likening it to the power of God over humanity.[99] The parable of the lord and the servant is central for Bauerschmidt's argument for the body politic of Christians being harmoniously yet hierarchically organized in the view of medieval English mystic. I will show in this section that the parable which lends

[96] LT, 379.
[97] Frederick Bauerschmidt, "Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body Politic of Christ" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1996).
[98] As stated below, it is Carl Schmitt's doctrine of political theology that Bauerschmidt receives through the work of John Milbank. His unwillingness to reference Schmitt directly is, however, understandable.
[99] Ibid., 328-330.

itself quite gracefully to a political interpretation at the first glance might be better conceived of as an economic tale.

Before delving into analysis of the Middle English text, a couple of remarks need to be made on the twentieth-century Schmitt-Peterson debate, for it was Carl Schmitt who originally asserted the continuity between Christian theology and political theory. Carl Schmitt did not see law as consensually constituted; its foundation lay in the singular imposition of the will of the omnipotent lawmaker rather than any democratic deliberation.[100] Having noticed the homology between modern political and legal vocabulary and Christian theological apparatus, Schmitt has asserted that the former is a secular transposition of the latter. Thus, political theory proper necessarily has to be political theology, and God should be paralleled by a law-making monarch presiding over the state.

Eric Peterson took an issue with direct assimilation of the heavenly matters to the human society. [101] He draws on the Cappadocian theology to prove that being a Christian in faith does not transform into being monarchist in politics. Divine monarchy as unique interrelationship of persons within Trinity has no analog in the created world, nor can it have, with the failed attempts to elect three emperors underscoring the other-worldliness of the Trinity. Thus, what is said of the divine does not have to be translatable to the world around us, desire for monarchy does not have to be presumed as a feature of Christian theology.

What was argued by Peterson for the Cappadocian fathers can be applied to Julian of Norwich, for through the parable of the lord and the servant she is talking about the Trinity and the mystery of incarnation. Let us follow closely the text of the parable as narrated in *Revelation*:

> I sawe two persons in bodely liknesse, that is to sey, a lorde and a servant, and therwith God gave me gostly understanding. The lorde

[100] I am relying here mainly on György Gereby "Political Theology versus Theological Politics" in *New German Critique 105* (Fall 2008): 9-10. The debate is also surveyed in Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 2-12.
[101] Gereby, Op. cit., 15-16.

> sitteth solempnely in rest and in pees. The servant stondeth before his lorde reverently, redy to do his lordes wille. The lorde loketh upon his servant full lovely and swetly, and mekely he sendeth him into a certaine place to do his will. The servant not onely he goeth, but sodenly he sterteth and runneth in gret hast for love to do his lordes wille. And anon he falleth in a slade, and taketh ful gret sore. And than he groneth and moneth and walloweth and writheth. But he may not rise nor helpe himselfe by no manner of weye.[102]

This is the end of what Julian saw in "bodely liknesse", for she received the two versions of the vision – a bodily and a ghostly one, meaning roughly figurative and affective. With her spiritual vision Julian is given insight into the thoughts and dispositions of the characters, servant being willingly obedient and ready to please his master, and master being loving and desirous of alleviating his subordinate's suffering. In the end both the servant and the lord are renewed, servant dwelling to the right ride of the lord in shining white garment.

The writing is characterized by the same vividness of the visual detail that is present in the rest of the text. The initial puzzlement with the meaning of the example comes from Julian's interpretation of the servant as Adam, and the lord as God. Economy comes in precisely at this point, for the servant is the son of man – Adam as much as there is human in Christ. The parable does not narrate solely the Fall of humanity, but of the remedy of the Fall by Christ's sacrifice. Again, we see sacrifice presented as a form of labor – a servant eagerly running errands for his master. But there is more than just a relation of allegory between labor and sacrifice, for Christ's partaking in human toil is an essential part of the incarnation, of accepting humanity's fallen nature upon his divine essence.

This is also the point when Bauerschmidt's argument for likening the relationship between the servant and the lord from the example to any kind of earthly powers departs from Julian's own interpretation of the text. For this is what she has to say about the characters: "The lorde is God the father; the servant is the sonne Jesu Crist; the holy gost is the even love which

[102] LT, 273-5.

is in them both."[103] Since we see the two greatest mysteries of Christian faith, the mutual indwelling of the Trinity and the incarnation, allegorized by this parable, overturning the metaphor to apply to any actual power relation present on Earth seems quite strained. To Bauerschmidt's credit, we never see such an overturning dismissed in *Revelations*, and I can merely reapply what Peterson claims about Gregory of Nyssa understanding of the trinitarian dogma to Julian of Norwich hoping that they would agree on the incommensurability of divine and earthly polity.

The main ground for calling the lord and servant parable an economic tale rather than a political one is the sense in which the word *oikonomia* was used by Gregory of Nyssa and his "colleagues". The mutual indwelling of Trinity belongs to the realm of theology, fundamentally alien to the human mind. In a meanwhile, one can sense the divine in the created world, governed towards salvation. This process of directing the humanity towards the salvation, Christ's sacrifice being a central event, is economy in the patristic sense. Therefore, the tale of lord and the servant, summarizing the history of redemptive divine dispensation, is economic in one of the possible senses.

It is, thus, not surprising that the treasure comes back to play its role in the parable. It is the job of servant to unearth the treasure for his Lord:

> Ther was a tresoure in the erth which the lorde loved. I merveyled and thought what it might be. And I was answered in my understanding: "It is a mete which is lovesom and plesing to the lorde."[104]

We see in this fragment that it is not a treasure of gold or any other commodity that the servant is supposed to fetch. Rather, the treasure is "mete", or sustenance that the lord derives from the servant working his land:

> I beheld, thinking what **manner labour** it may be that the servant shulde do. And then I understode that he shuld do the **grettest labour and the hardest traveyle** that is: he shuld be a **gardener:** delve and

[103] LT, 283.
[104] LT, 281.

> dike and swinke and swete and turne the erth up and down, and seke the depnesse, and water the plantes in time. And in this he shulde continue his **traveyle**, and make swete flodes to runne, and nobille and plentuous fruite to spring which he shulde bring before the lorde and serve him therwith to his liking. And he shulde never turne againe till he had dighte this met alle redy, as he knew that it liked to the lorde, and than he shulde take this met with the drinke, and bere it full wurshiply before the lorde. [105]

This passage stands in striking contrast to Le Goff's assertion of the absence of the abstract labor in conceptual inventory of the early Middle Ages.[106] For Le Goff as for Marx the undifferentiated labor torn from its concrete manifestation, i.e., the idea that a carpenter, a peasant and a doctor somehow all participate in a type of activity called "work" emerges with the era of commodified labor – capitalism. [107] The cited fragment (and I would like to remind the reader that its role in the text is to explain Christ's sacrifice and redemption; thus, it is central to Julian's theological teaching) shows an early the awareness of the abstract labor. Latin progenitor of the word, *laborare*, was initially used only for agricultural work.[108] Hence, *laboratores* stand for peasants.[109] Julian does not only think there is labor-as-such, composed of qualitatively different activities, but she also knows that within this category occupations can be arranged hierarchically; some "manner" of labor is harder and greater than others. That is agricultural labor, the main productive occupation for medieval societies and the least prestigious one.

Christ-the-Gardner, "turning the earth up and down" and "watering plants in time" is simultaneously a sign of the ultimate self-humiliation of the divine – he is occupied with the

[105] LT, 281-3.
[106] Jacques Le Goff, "Labor, Techniques and Craftsmen in the Value Systems of the Early Middle Ages (Fifth to Tenth Centuries)" in *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), 71-2.
[107] I am relying here on the discussion of Marx's idea of abstract labor by Michael Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital* (New York: NYU Press, 2004), 42-55; and David McNally, *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires and Global Capitalism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012), 123-125.
[108] Le Goff, Op. cit., 78.
[109] Le Goff, "A Note on Tripartite Society, Monarchical Ideology, and Economic Renewal in Ninth- to Twelfth-Century Christendom" in *Op. cit.*, 53-54.

most arduous and the least honorable of all tasks, and the sign of its immense power – Christ-the-Servant produces the most necessary of all goods, the nourishment for his Father. In contrast with Christ's gardening activities, the Father sits waiting for him in the desert. It is the work of the agricultural laborer that makes the barren desert into a blossoming garden, and one might wonder whether Julian would subscribe under the labor theory of value if she were ever presented with it. For once again, we see Julian being aware that treasure is not unearthed by any means other than the application of human activity.

This unexpected appraisal of the peasant labor from a city-dwelling anchoress I will attempt to explain through her overall economy of salvation in the following section. To foreclose our treatment of the lord and servant tale let us now turn to another layer of material symbolism – garments of the characters.

Julian's preoccupation with clothes and what they mean betrays an urban Englishwoman in the waning of the Middle Ages. The fourteenth century is associated in the history of dress with the post-plague revolution.[110] Average people started having more than the bare necessities in the terms of wardrobe, which often meant that they had more than one change of clothes that were used for the shorter duration, not the point at which they were so physically worn-out that using them further was impossible. The merchant classes in Italian cities created fashion trends that would perish over a season, something familiar to the modern reader. Nevertheless, the clothes were still hand-woven, hand-sewn and dyed with natural pigments, which made their production rather costly and time-consuming. Before the mass-production, clothes were a much clearer indication of wealth and social status and took out a much higher proportion of one's income that they do nowadays.

[110] Fernand Braudel places the change in 1350 in *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th century. The Structure of Everyday Life*, trans. Sian Reynolds (London: William Collins, 1985), 317.

The rich-blue coloration of lord's garment and the bleak "whit kirtle" of the servant brought a striking class division to the mind of medieval Englishmen and women. The connection between purity and Margery Kempe's shining white attire is far more palatable for our age. The servant's garment is white both before and after renewal. However, those are two very different whites. In its initial state, the "kirtle" bears the darker sweat-stains, and its color is bleak; Julian might have thought of un-dyed linen, the go-to material for peasant attire until the arrival of cheaper wool and cotton textiles. The bright blue cloak of the lord, blue being among the most expensive pigments with its price rising according to intensity of the color, conveys his power and majesty in an instant. [111]

The other key difference is the amount of fabric used for these hypothetical garments. While the lord's body is fully covered by the richly colored flowing material, servant's shirt barely reaches his knees, exposing his body to the sun, the wind and the onlookers. The association between keeping one's physique covered and higher social standing is, again, inversed nowadays, but the time and place in which *Revelations* were written were ruled by the idea of enclosed body. [112]

Thus, we see Julian being alert of the class divisions in her society and of the way they inscribed themselves on the very bodies of her contemporaries. Father's dignity is symbolized through his static posture and the abundant blue of his garment. Christ's suffering is represented in the poverty of his shirt, for he had to assume the poor human flesh to redeem the fallen. The modesty of his looks is appropriate for the mission, "he was clad simply, as a laborer which was disposed to traveyle", and a sign of his devotion to the lord.[113] The renewed garment of the resurrected Christ is the ameliorated version of the same "kirtle", now as shiny and flowing

[111] Michel Pastoureau, *Bleu: Histoire d'une couleur* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2000).
[112] Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 23-25.
[113] LT, 281.

as Father's attire, underscoring both rupture of incarnation and its continuity with the history of salvation.

The Economy of Salvation

The phrase for which Julian is, perhaps, best known to her modern readers is "All shall be well, all manner of things shall be well". Illustrated by the parable of the servant and the lord in the Longer Version, it is already present and well-developed in the earlier text. Julian has been posited to be quite a subtle theologian, with certain authors asserting that her *Revelations* are, in fact, a theological treatise carefully masked as a mystical work, the type of writing more appropriate for her gender. [114] One thing telling Julian's writing apart from the learned theology of her era is how little she tries to provide any type of justification for her views. Their subtlety is unquestionable, but the arguments for those views are not to be found in her books.

Julian's level of literacy remains unclear. Although there is no autograph present, it is very unlikely that she was unable to write English. She calls herself "unlettered" which meant she did not have the command of Latin; and the only Latin phrase present in her text contains a grammatical mistake. However, as noted by Karma Lochrie, the ability to read and write were not conceived as inseparable in the Middle Ages.[115] One could be able to read and understand some Latin while being unable to write in it, one could know by heart and understand certain regularly heard Latin phrases while having no command over the rest of the language. Some key religious writings existed in fragmentary vernacular translations, some were referenced and explained by the preachers to their flock in vernaculars. Hence, it is not altogether impossible that the affinities between Julian of Norwich and Augustine of Hippo that are

[114] The view that Julian is a theologian rather than a mystic is the advanced by Bauerschmidt in Op. cit., 16. The gender dimension is introduced by Elizabeth Dutton in *Julian of Norwich: The Influence of Late-medieval Devotional Compilations* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), 30–32; and Diane McCray, "The Censored Pulpit: Julian of Norwich as Preacher" (PhD diss.: Duke University, 2014).
[115] Lochrie, *Margery*, 79.

explicated below stem from some form of engagement fourteenth-century mystic had with Augustine's works or ideas.

Julian grapples with many of the questions that puzzled the bishop of Hippo, and at times she very similar answers. Both Julian and Augustine ontologically conceive of evil as non-being, as nothingness. For Augustine this was a way to deal with the paradox of God's inherent goodness, something he consciously appropriated from Platonism – God is not responsible for the existence of evil, though he is responsible for everything that *is*, for the evil *is not*; it does not truly exist in the way people, animals and everything else do. Rather, it stems from the voluntary corruption of the creatures.[116] Despite ontological non-being of vice, it is a powerful current in individual's life and a major force to be combatted by a pious Christian on a daily basis. The daily practice of virtues that alleviate humanity's endless guilt while being unable to radically redeem is the basis of good life and is a reason to donate regularly.

This link between giving and the continuous expiation of sin is overridden in the way Julian conceives sin. Like Augustine she proclaims the nothingness of evil. But she takes one step further and equates evil with sin, something Augustine is reluctant to do as explicitly,[117] which she equates with sin— "sinne is nought", [118] and like him she notes that one is supposed to renounce the sin continuously in order to lead a good life.[119] However, the latter claim is only a side-warning she feels necessary to place for the recipients of her central doctrine – the loving mother-like nature of God, who might misinterpret it. Julian specifically warns us that

[116] Augustine's argument against the positive existence of evil is a polemical one, designed to undermine the Manichean doctrines. It can be found in Chapters II and III of the Book XII in *The City of God. Books VIII-XVI*, trans, Gerald G. Walsh, Grace Monahan (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 248-250.

[117] The closest Augustine approaches this view is when discussing "the enemies of the God": "In Scripture, those who oppose God's rule, not by nature but by sin, are called His enemies. They can do no damage to Him, but only to themselves; their enmity is not a power to harm, but merely a velleity to oppose Him." Ibid., 249.

[118] The idea is present in both versions, but the quote above is taken from ST, 77. In LT Julian is shown all kinds of things that exist, and she remarks: "Botte I sawe noght sinne", implying sin's ontological non-existence. LT, 93.

[119] Peter Brown treats the links between Augustine's views on sin, the nature of ethical life and economic foundations of the church in *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), 368.

although God is all-love and all-forgiveness, this does not constitute a carte blanche to sin however one is pleased in reliance on God's abundant love for humanity. She also takes notice of the possibility to interpret her teaching as universal salvation and goes on to notice that there will be some damned.

Apart from those occasional warnings, Julian does not concern herself with the continuous struggle against sin that is bound to happen in every Christian's soul. The sin is defeated once and for all, it is "nought"; and although it is important to refrain from wrongdoing, the combat within the human soul is just a rearguard hassle in the war that is already won.

The parable of the lord and his servant is one of the means to convey that the evil is defeated and unthreatening. Another widely discussed though not unique image is the motherhood of Christ.[120] This latter is present in both accounts of Julian's vision and conveys the same idea – the annihilation of sin through all-encompassing divine love. It is worth considering the detail in which Julian elaborates on Christ's motherly nature:

> The moder may suffer the childe to fall sometime and be dissesed on diverse manner for the own profite, but she may never suffer that ony manner of perel come to her childe, for love. And though oure erthly moder may suffer her childe to perish, oure hevenly moder Jhesu may never suffer us that be his children to perish. For he is almighty, all wisdom, and all love, and so is none but he. Blessed mote he be! [121]

Once again, the evil that humanity might encounter on its journey to heaven is not quite real. Earthly suffering is only a pedagogical device in the hands of all-wise mother Jesus. The specter of universal salvation slips through the text, carefully circumscribed by the restricting divine mercy only to **his** children. Since there is no reason given for the damnation of some other than the teaching of the church, and Julian is very cautious not to antagonize her

[120] A classical work on this trope was conducted by Caroline Bynum, though it is based on the twelfth-century continental sources. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982).
[121] LT, 317.

readership never seizing to acknowledge clerical authority over herself, there are grounds to suspect that we are dealing here with a careful writing strategy. It is my view that Julian is purposefully ambiguous on the subject in the wake of Lollard persecutions, avoiding potential causes for condemnation of her writing and self, yet trying to convey her message of divine love as neatly as possible.

The motherhood of Jesus and the vision of the servant and the lord are two opposing kinds of earthly relationships are used to conceptualize God's relationship to the humankind. One takes us to the domain of reproduction – unconditional and all-giving maternal love between the second person of the Trinity and the humans, and the relationship within the Trinity itself as one between the lord and his servant. The servant is supposed to stand for the human nature of Christ, which would be an interesting choice in the context of fourth-century Christological debates; it is unclear how aware Julian was of those. The image of Christ's humanity as being fundamentally subjugated and separate from the pure divinity of God the Father might be read as a kind of neo-Arian demarche. The fact that the servitude of Christ has not been a subject for any known controversy, and that Julian, otherwise quite cautious, does not find it necessary to warn her readers against taking the separation of the two persons too literally, leads one to believe that the Christological debate(s), unlike the universal salvation were not a concern for Julian.

What both motherhood and servitude of Christ convey is the absence of debt and exchange-based ethics in the equation. While motherhood is pure giving by its very nature in the eyes of medieval devotees, the power of feudal lord over his peasant is hardly an example of a harmonious and loving union. Using those estate positions as avatars for the Trinitarian dogma and the expiation of sin, Julian extricates them from any kind of earthly analogy: it is unseemly, she notes, that rich and powerful nobleman only has one peasant at his service,

thereby reminding the reader of the hypothetical nature of the scene. [122] On the economic side, this imagery brings forth the endless abundance of divine love, rendering obsolete daily virtue-bargaining, and drags in unwittingly affirmation of labor, productive and reproductive, abstract and concrete.

The question that Christ asks in both versions of Julian's revelations, "Arte thou well apaid?", is far from a token of ransom or exchange-centered economy of salvation.[123] For the question is addressed to Julian — "Arte thou well apaid that I suffered for thee? It is joy, bliss and endlesse liking to me that ever I sufferd passion for the. And if I might suffer more, I would suffer more."[124]

Conclusion

By the end of the second chapter, it is not necessary to convince the reader that the economic categories we are looking into: wealth and poverty, labor and almsgiving, debt and exchange, are never solely about economy. In *Revelations* by Julian of Norwich, economic categories are embedded in her reflection on the nature of sin and divine love. In other words, we are taken back to the patristic *oikonomia* – the salvific divine dispensation. preferring theology of Godly all-forgiving abundance to the exchange-based ethics of "treasure in heavens". In the conclusion that follows I will try to connect all the works read in a tapestry, however lacerated, of devotional writings in late medieval England.

[122] LT, 281.
[123] ST, 87; LT, 193.
[124] LT, 193–195.

Chapter III. "Earnest Penny of Heaven": Money and Matrimony in *The Book of Margery Kempe*

> "In this volume my principle was to discuss *minutiae*, few of which have any valid interest on their own. My method has been determined by the personal conditions of Margery as revealed by herself in her reminiscences: she was petty, neurotic, vain, illiterate, physically and nervously over-strained, devout, much-travelled, forceful and talented."
> Emily Allen Hope, *Prefatory Note, lxiv-lxv*[125]

As an epigraph for this work, I chose a quote from Emily Allen Hope, the scholar who identified the full manuscript of *The Book of Margery Kempe* in 1934. Before Hope, the book was believed to be lost, only a few fragments published in the sixteenth century surviving. Little could be told about the woman who authored this text from what was extant – Wynkyn de Worde's edition contained seven pages of the most generic godly advice, later revealed to be Christ's words addressed to Margery rather than her first-person narration.[126] It is after Hope's publication that the world came to hear Margery's own voice in its full power, and it was hardly well-received.

Karma Lochrie, one of the major Kempe scholars of our day, noted rightfully that even after feminist reclaiming of *The Book of Margery Kempe* it is still treasured more for the detail, Hope's *minutiae*, of Kempe's life and the circumstances around her, rather than for her mysticism.[127] A very recent introductory volume on Western mysticism grips with "unoriginal" devotional content of *The Book*, peculiar assessment for a work completed in the time where originality was hardly an asset.[128] Lochrie puts much of the blame for such treatment on Emily Hope's characterization of Margery and her book, connecting it specifically with the 'armchair-

[125] Emily Allen Hope (ed.), *The Book of Margery Kempe*, London, 1940, lxiv-lxv.
[126] Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 221.
[127] Ibid., 226.
[128] Bernard McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism: 1350–1550* (New York: Herder&Herder, 2012), 484-485.

diagnosis' given to Margery in the *Prefatory Note* – hysteria.[129] While there is certainly a misogynistic undercurrent in Hope's reading of *The Book*, there is also an aspect which is not accounted for. It is Hope's deep and reluctant admiration of the woman whose text she is putting out, shining through the cascade of rebukes: Margery is "petty, neurotic, vain, illiterate", but also "devout, much-travelled, forceful and talented".

Those are the two readings that I wish to combine in this paper – Hope's attention to Margery's *minutiae*, and Lochrie's respect for her overall mystical project. In my examination of the economic language in *The Book of Margery Kempe* I wish to attend to the abundant detail on her economic activities, and to the way they are incorporated into the highest points of her Christ-centered devotion. In doing so, I wish to reinterpret the label of "bourgeois mysticism" that is often used as an indication of Margery's own social standing and the intended audience of her book. While Margery was, indeed, an English bourgeois laywoman writing for her fellow laymen, her economic thinking is consistently inconsistent, and demonstrates her uneasy engagement with debates on poverty happening in Late Medieval Church.

Pilgrimage: Timeline and Structure

In 1413, shortly after her conversion, Margery Kempe set out to make a Great Pilgrimage. Five years later she would visit the site that comes right after Rome and Jerusalem in popularity and prestige—Santiago de Compostela, which she reached by the sea. However, taking the sea road, Margery does not complete the entire *Via Jacobi* itinerary through the

[129] Armchair-diagnosis is the term I introduce, not Karma Lochrie, in my reappraisal of her interpretation. Although 'hysteria' is, indeed, a misogynist label quite often put on female religious till this day, the context of interwar psychiatry is crucial for understanding this label coming from Hope. In late 1930s, the time when those lines were presumably written, 'hysteria' was an actual medical diagnosis, not unlike anorexia today. Despite its association with womanhood, it was also diagnosed in male patients, specifically in soldiers traumatized by the trench experience. This is not to dissuade the accusation of misogyny, I do not doubt it is an important undercurrent, but to show that there might be more to 'hysteria' than just that. For the history of the term, cf. Mark S. Micale, *Approaching Hysteria: Disease and Its Interpretations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, 3-5.

Iberian Peninsula. In 1433 she crosses the English Channel yet again to reach the holy sites of Northern Germany, Aachen and Bad-Wilsnack among them. This is Margery's last journey that gets reported in the book, and most likely the last one she made – during the German pilgrimage she was around sixty years old and her age was a major obstacle for travelling.

Margery did not only spend a lot of time *en route*, which follows from this brief outline of her travels. Rather, the pilgrimages play a structuring role in her text. In the first book of *The Book of Margery Kempe* her Great Pilgrimage takes up the chapters 26-42 of the first volume, and the pilgrimage to Santiago is described in chapter 44.[130] These short travelogues are among the few fragments of consecutive narration in the book, which is written in the sequence of events as recalled by Margery rather than in the sequence those events happened. The German pilgrimage forms the backbone of the second book and is most likely the reason why it was written in the first place. It is in the context of her German travels that Margery reports on her sole healing miracle. Namely, Margery's son who went on to live in Germany gets cured of his skin disease by her prayers.[131]

The huge role that pilgrimages play in Margery's life and narration, thus established, is precisely what makes the way she talks about her visits to the holy sites so paradoxical. Put simply, a scholar of pilgrimage would only find a part of their subject in *The Book of Margery Kempe* – the means, but not the end. Whereas the sites were clearly intriguing enough to Margery to drive her out of her house and set on the road, they are not worth anything but a brief mention when Margery arrives there. The travels, on the other hand, are reported upon in the minute detail, from incessant conflicts with compatriot pilgrims to contracting vermin from

[130] However repetitive this sound, *The Book of Margery Kempe* is divided into two books. The first book is in turn divided into the first and second parts. Thus, to be true to the structure of the source, I have to refer to the bigger units as books or volumes of *The Book*, and to the smaller units within the first book as part one and part two. All the quotes are retrieved from digital edition referenced above – Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Lynn Stanley (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), accessed May 21, 2021, https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/staley-the-book-of-margery-kempe. I refer in my footnotes to the lines, not the pages.

[131] *Ibid.*, Book II, 1, 40-52.

the beggars.[132] Minute detail like this makes *The Book of Margery Kempe* such a great source to mine for the economic aspects of her daily life. However, it is not the goal of my work to single these passages out and treat them as hidden gems of the text that is fundamentally about something else. Rather, it is my job to show that in the age of intense economic reflection both subversive, like Lollard, and accommodating, like Franciscan, Margery embraces a uniquely privatized view of the economy. Paraphrasing Marx, I would like to invite the reader to the underbelly of the reproduction.

Background

The exploration of the public and private division, its different social forms and physical manifestations has been a trademark of feminist scholarship for the past half a century. It proved to be especially fruitful for the gender history of the middle ages, since it allows one to explore the very material process of constructing and maintaining gender. Archeological evidence, in a sense more democratic than the written sources, is well-integrated into the study of public and private boundaries. The space of household, or, rather, its remnants is where the silent majority of medieval women lived their lives, mostly illiterate, and thus unable to tell their stories.

The household does not fade away in the works of (semi-)literate religious women of all kinds, whose lives no longer revolved around their families. Quite on the contrary, female mystics and some of their male colleagues transposed domesticity onto the spiritual level, their relationship with the Godhead. And while mystical marriage is far too common of a trope to tell us much about the nature of one's devotion, certain devotees engage with the economic dimension of the matrimony far more explicitly.

[132] This precise problem is referenced twice – during her stay in Rome and on her German pilgrimage. The first instance can be found in *Ibid*., Book I, 1, 34, 1993-9. The second in Book II, 6, 408-12.

One of them is referenced continuously by Margery as her role model and rival, and the other shares with her, possibly without any direct connection, a metaphor of the bride price to explain soul's relationship to God. I am talking here about Bridget of Sweden and Hugh of St. Victor, two towering figures of high medieval continental mysticism.

Bridget of Sweden describes her heavenly union with Christ in a peculiar commodity-centered way. As a token of love and harmony between Christ and his bride Bridget, standing in for all the saved humanity, a distinctly upper-class good is invoked – pillows. [133] A symbol of opulence and a lack of self-restraint in contemporary ascetic literature, pillows and rich bedding transform their connotations.[134] What had been a frivolity, when applied to Godhead became a sign of a blessed excess. The commodities that Bridget invokes belong to the bedchamber, thus firming the connection between divine matrimony and the affluent household. Eroticism of Bridget's devotion is inextricable from its economic dimension.

Hugh of St. Victor authored a short dialogue on the "Earnest Money of Christ". [135] The exchange takes place between a man and his soul, the former instructing the latter on the love of Christ. There is much to be said on Hugh's theory of the self: in this dialogue man's subjecthood is not seated in the soul but is external to it, the soul being an object of discipline. However, for this study the argument that man offers is of supreme importance. Trying to turn soul's affections away from the world, the man suggest that she learns to recognize the Creator behind his work.[136] The riches of the world are to be interpreted as generous gifts that groom

[133] Louise Campion, "Shopping or Scrimping?: The Contested Space of the Household in Middle English Devotional Literature." In *Gender in Medieval Places, Spaces and Thresholds,* edited by Blud Victoria, Heath Diane, and Klafter Einat, London: University of London Press, 2019, 182-3.
[134] Ibid., 180-1.
[135] Due to the library closures in the Covid-19 pandemic, I did not have the opportunity to access either the Latin original or the printed English version of the book. I am relying here on electronic copy from Library Gene sis, made on the basis of Hugh of Saint Victor, *Soliloquy on the Earnest Money of the Soul*, trans. Kevin Herbert (Brunswick: Marquette University Press, 1956), Kindle.
[136] I am quoting from the electronic version of translation directly since it would be impossible to refer to a particular page in an epub book: "Look at the universe and consider whether there is anything in it which does not serve you… Who directs all nature that with one accord it should be at your service? You accept the benefit, but you do not know your benefactor. The gift is plain to see, but the giver is hidden."

offers to a bride during their courtship, a bride price for her affections.[137] Any marriage is, despite the economic considerations behind it, despite all the gifts and money both sides exchange, ultimately not a pure transaction, but a relationship between people. And likewise, the heavenly bride should see beyond the material offerings. Soul must recognize her lover in the abundance of the creation and love the giver more than the gift.[138]

At this stage the distinction between production and reproduction needs to be explained. Contrary to its everyday *usus*, the term "productive labor" in the Marxian sense does not designate more useful or more material type of work. Productive labor is simply the kind that generates surplus value, or profit to put it into more classical-sounding terms.[139] A lot of indispensable labor like that of public teachers or doctors would be deemed unproductive in this particular meaning. The work of public doctor can be classified as reproductive, i.e., contributing to the reproduction of labor-power. Unlike doctor's, the majority of reproductive labor is not paid and happens in privacy of the households rather than in the workplace, thus landing mostly on the shoulders of women. The labor of women within the household, although unproductive, is by no means unnecessary—it includes household management, chores such as cooking and cleaning, and, last but not least, care work.[140]

[137] *Ibid.*: „By his gift he is revealed as one who loves and is worthy of being loved greatly. Not to respond to such a lover is wicked and perverse as not to gladly desire such a lover is foolish… My Soul, take care lest, heaven forbid, you be called harlot rather than beloved, should you prefer the gifts."
[138] *Ibid.*
[139] Isaak Illich Rubin, *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*, trans. Miloš Samardžija and Fredy Perlman, Black and Red: Detroit, 1972, 314.
[140] Social reproduction theory has been developed in Marxist feminism in uniquely presentist manner. In its basic form, social reproduction is applied to women's domestic labor as it ensures the social reproduction of wage labor-power. For this kind of research, cf. Laslett B., Brenner J., "Gender and social reproduction: historical perspectives" in *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1989;15, 381-404. The debate on applicability of the Marxian terms, including "social reproduction" to pre-capitalist societies is ongoing, and it is not the place for me to make an intervention to it my master's thesis. Jarius Banaji has made some of the most important contributions to the issue of pre-modern wage labor and its reproduction—Jairus Banaji, 'Reconstructing Historical Materialism', in Chakravarty, Prasanta, (eds.), *Shrapnel Minima: Writings from Humanities Underground* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014). Regardless of one's position on the role of wage labor in European middle ages, the idea that women's unpaid domestic work is played a crucial role in the economic functioning of the societies seems to be uncontroversial. Further in this paper I will talk about domestic labor that ensures the reproduction of gender and social structures, although in the Margery's case it might be directly linked to the reproduction of capital.

As we know from her own testimony, Margery engaged both in production and reproduction. She could afford servants, so most likely did not perform much manual labor around the house, and used to run a brewing enterprise.[141] It is quite telling that Margery does not report anyone taking an issue with her independent economic activities *per se*. The source of the scold that Margery eventually received for her brewing business is the fact that it had failed. Neither did she excel in reproduction – having born fourteen children, she was still regarded as improper wife later in her life for not living with her husband and not taking proper care of his health. One of the grounds for these accusations was the amount of travel Margery engaged in instead of staying peacefully in her house in Lynn. Margery's physical absence from the space of the household, whether she is in the city but living separately from her husband or on her way to some holy site is, thus, the point of contention. The key factor here is the liminality of her position.

When describing pilgrimage as a liminoid phenomenon, Victor and Edith Turner compare it to the rites of passage in tribal societies. The moment in-between, when one has already severed the ties with their previous social group and status, but is yet to obtain new status and identity, is, in their view, productive for social change.[142] In their piece, Turners are trying to establish this marginal, liminal space as more desirable than portrayed before, the site of danger, but also the site of freedom. Margery situates herself on the *limina* of medieval English society physically, by leaving her designated place as a wife in a house and travelling around having pious "conversations" with the public, and symbolically by refusing to fulfill the role of homely wife and mother and pursuing a spiritual path instead.

This is not to say that being a wife and a mother was the only possible option for a woman in the European middle ages. Quite on the contrary, there was a possibility of avoiding

[141] Margery talks about her brewing activities in Book I, 1, 2, 202-240. Household servants are mentioned in the context of mental breakdown Margery had after giving birth to her first child., Ibid., 1, 179-80.
[142] Victor Turner and Edith Turner, "Pilgrimage as a Liminoid Phenomenon" in *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 2-5.

matrimony altogether by pursuing *vita contemplativa* as a nun or a recluse. However, those were two distinct paths, not to be mixed. Pious married women could join a convent or become anchoresses, but this would normally happen after their husband had died and their children, if any, grown up. The way of purest perfection would be preserving one's virginity for Christ, thus endowing the initiate women with the same purity that is shared by them with the sacred spaces they inhabit. In this system, Margery fails the purity test. [143]

The lack of virginity and/or clearly defined religious status is the reason why Margery's appearance in the sacred spaces, the ones she visits during her travels and those available in her hometown, is often perceived as contamination. Her weeping and shrieking, though pious in nature, disrupt the liturgy and agitate the public. However, behind the very practical demands certain preachers place on Margery – stay silent or stay away from the church so that she does not interfere with their work – their reproofs show the impurity they sense in this woman. The desire of male clerics to keep her away is a desire to protect the sacred space from profane impropriety.

And if Margery is pushed to the margins of her own community as impure and improper, she is even more of a liminoid phenomenon in her travels.

Representing the poor between brotherhood and otherhood

Earlier in this chapter I have mentioned that a scholar of pilgrimage is not going to learn much from *The Book of Margery Kempe* about the sites visited. Karma Lochrie has shown that the Great Pilgrimage, namely the visit to Golgotha, is a landmark for Margery's devotion—since the revelation she has there she begins to roar and move around during her seizures.[144] Other than this key sole occurrence, there are no special revelations given to Margery when

[143] The notion of purity preserved through an enclosed body is advanced by Karma Lochrie as a key to interpreting Margery's text, specifically the contempt she faced and the way she handled it. Although I am indebted to Lochrie for the idea of purity, I am not following her analysis further in this paper, so no references are included other than this. Lochrie, *Op. cit.*, 23.
[144] *Ibid.*, 177.

she is physically in the space tainted by Savior's blood. Her accounts of pilgrimages are devoid of the sense of participation and inclusion in the religious experience coming from the physical proximity to foundational holy sites. Quite on the contrary, her narration focuses on exclusion—feeling excluded in the foreign lands due to the language barrier, being excluded from the holy sites due to her disruptive weeping, and most importantly being excluded by her fellow pilgrims.[145] Margery is especially bitter with her compatriots who know her language and can ensure her safety but fail to do so as they find her presence unbearable.[146]

It is in the context of marginalization and exclusion that the topic of poverty comes to the foreground. We have previously established that Margery was not a poor woman, her father was the mayor of Lynn and its parliamentary representative, and she herself was engaged in the trades before her conversion. Being a pilgrim, especially a female pilgrim travelling without a companion, severed the ties Margery had with her community back at home and left her to her own financial devices. Narrating her travels, Margery never ceases to complain of the financial troubles she encountered on the way exacerbated by the exclusion she faced from her compatriot pilgrims and, bizarrely, by her own volition. I am referring here to the instance in which Margery purposefully made herself destitute by giving to "powr pepil".

It might not be a coincidence that giving away her money while leaving nothing for herself and practically no means of securing her livelihood through community of others occurs during her travels in Italy, the home of saint Francis. Margery describes her urge to give in a fashion quite similar to the way Francis's conversion was narrated in both of his lives:[147]

[145] Those complaints are omnipresent in the pilgrimage accounts of *The Book*. The language barrier, for instance: "Sche toke hir leve wyth ful hevy cher and rewful, havyng gret hevynes inasmeche as schewas in strawnge cuntré and cowde no langage ne the man that schuld ledyn hir neythyr.", Book I, 1, 27, 1494-7.
[146] In the next chapter she reports on her companions refusing to eat with her due to her spiritual conversation and fasting, 28, 1530-7. She has to leave the ship as a result.
[147] The two lives I am referring to are the earlier written by Thomas of Celano and the latter by saint Bonaventure. While Bonaventure's life is believed to be more popular, his and Thomas's narration of the conversion of saint Francis are fairly similar, with Thomas of Celano providing more detail and emphasizing the contempt young Francis felt for his riches more vividly than Bonaventure. For the English translation of both lives see https://dmdhist.sitehost.iu.edu/francis.htm#1.1and https://www.ecatholic2000.com/bonaventure/assisi/francis.shtml.

> And, whil they wer in Rome, sche borwyd certeyn golde of hym and be the byddyng of God sche gaf awey to powr pepil al the mony that sche had, and that sche had borwyd of hym also, as is wretyn beforn. And than, whil sche was in Rome, sche hite hym to payn hym ageyn in Bristowe at this tyme, and so was he come thedyr for hys payment. And owr Lord Jhesu Crist had so ordeyned for hir, as sche went to Bristoweward, that ther was govyn hir so meche mony that sche myth wel payn the forseyd man al that sche awt hym. And so sche dede, blissed be owr Lord therfor. [148]

The obviously common elements are the spontaneity of decisions, their divine source and their fullness – Margery and Francis do not give away a **part** of what they have for alms, which would be a pious enough endeavor, but every single penny. In both cases donors are not handing out their own money: Francis discards his father's commercial profits; while Margery gives away the money she borrowed. The difference lies in the consequences. St. Francis has to face his father's rage and legal persecution for the embezzlement of his profit. Margery faces none: the money she gave away miraculously returned to her through the hands of other almsgivers, so that she can repay her debt without any discomfort.

It is quite telling that Margery does not talk about herself begging, although it is the way she obtained the money to repay her creditor. Rather, she says it was "govyn" to her, thus casting her fundamentally as an outsider to the world of "powr pepil" and beggars. There is something distinctly bourgeois about the whole episode that makes it all the more bizarre. Margery can hand out the borrowed gold only to get it back and keep her credit history clear. If discarding his father's money was a turnaround moment of young Francis that made him renounce material goods irrevocably and establish a new mode of living for himself and his followers in line with this renunciation, what Margery does is an act of very generous and, perhaps, excessive almsgiving, but nothing more. The poor and the beggars are **objects** of her almsgiving and care; Margery does not identify with them even when she is herself penniless.

[148] Book I, 1, 44, 2500-7.

An example of this compassionate but objectifying care is a relationship Margery establishes with one poor and diseased woman in Rome:

> Sche servyd hir as sche wolde a don owyr Lady. And sche had no bed to lyn in ne no clothys to be cured wyth saf hir owyn mentyl. And than was sche ful of vermyn and suffyrd gret peyn therwyth. Also sche fet hom watyr and stykkys in hir nekke for the poure woman and beggyd mete and wyn bothyn for hir. And, whan the pour womans wyn was sowr, this creatur hirself drank that sowr wyn and gaf the powr woman good wyn that sche had bowt for hir owyn selfe. [149]

The referent for this relationship is, most likely, saint Catherine of Siena, the woman referenced several times in *The Book*. The minute detail of misery and disease paints poverty as foremost physical deprivation, including lack of hygiene. However, this is only a temporal state for Margery; as we have seen before, the money ultimately returns to her and she parts ways with the diseased woman when she has to leave the city. Despite Margery's squalor resulting from her own decision to give away the means she had to ensure proper livelihood, she feels neither confident nor comfortable in her new position. Consider the reassurance she gets from Christ for anxiety and remorse that follow after her rash alms:

> Afftyr that this creatur had thus govyn awey hir good and had neyther peny ne halfpeny to helpyn hirself wyth, as sche lay in Seynt Marcellys Chirche in Rome, thynkyng and stodying wher sche schuld han hir levyng inasmech as sche had no sylvir to cheys hir wythhal, owr Lord answeryd to hir mende and seyde, "Dowtyr, thu art not yet so powr as I was whan I heng nakyd on the cros for thy lofe, for thu hast clothys on thy body, and I had non. And thow hast cownseld other men to ben powr for my sake, and therfor thu must folwyn thyn owyn cownsel. But drede the not, dowtyr, for ther is gold to theward, and I have hyte the befortyme that I wolde nevyr fayl the. And I schal preyn myn owyn modir to beggyn for the, for thu hast many tymes beggyd for me and for my modir also. And therfor drede the not. I have frendys in every cuntré and schal make my frendys to comfort the.[150]

Franciscan spirituality is quite often identified with a very literal reading of the Gospels, Matthew 6:25-32 being the reference point for the life of self-imposed poverty and

[149] Book I, 1, 34, 1993-9.
[150] Book I, 1, 38, 2157-67.

displacement. Like birds in the sky and lilies in the bog, a true follower of Christ must not concern themselves with the mundane matters of survival. Christ's own poverty was an argument for mendicant lifestyle, eliciting a fourteenth-century debate on whether he held any possessions at all. Margery is clearly following the same trend: her personal affective relationship with Christ leads her to partake in his poverty, and she is succored in her anxieties by a reminder of God's ability to provide his faithful regardless of the circumstances. However, I would like to draw reader's attention to the fact that Margery feels anxious and needs to be reassured in the first place. Being destitute and uprooted is clearly not a desirable state for her, neither a longer-term lifestyle in which she plans to engage. Rather, being stripped of her wealth and social liaisons is another one of distresses Margery suffers constantly in the love of Christ.

The notion of *kenosis* as an acquisition of power through purposeful disempowerment has been used frequently to explain the self-destructive and humiliating practices of medieval devotees. In the ethical system where humility was seen as a virtue demonstrating an excess of it could enhance one's authority. Margery, undoubtedly, uses the reproof and the discomfort she suffers as a means to assert herself. With the inquisition trials in picture, the idea of Margery benefitting from the persecution seems to underestimate the very real danger of being jailed, and possibly burned as a heretic that she faced. The embracement of rejection is better conceived as Margery's means of navigating the hostile environment, for which the cultural thrift-box gave her plenty of material, rather than something she chooses to do for her own spiritual advancement.

Amidst those more serious troubles, going on pilgrimage or being temporarily destitute are the ones that Margery has the power to choose for herself. She never ceases to underscore the involuntary nature of her devotion: the desire to go on pilgrimage and the desire to empty her purse were planted in her by Christ. It is hard to not see the benefits that being displaced

would offer someone like Margery. Being in the liminal state of pilgrim, constantly *en route* is quite appropriate for a woman shunned from her own community. It offers the benefits of liminal physical states without some of the most punitive features of being pushed to the margins of a community in which one is still physically present. The freedom of movement, the freedom of the forms of devotion—we never find Margery giving away all her savings or drinking puss from a wound in England, —the freedom from her role as a wife are all the joys of the road experienced along with all its trials and tribulations. England, at this point preoccupied with eradication of Lollards, could provide most of the same woes and none of the same liberties.

In *The Idea of Usury: From Tribal Brotherhood to Universal Otherhood* Benjamin Nelson traces the evolution double standard for the economic behavior of the devout.[151] He focuses on the series of controversies around moneylending, from the prohibition of lending at interest to the members of the group to the universalism of Calvin who permitted the interest-taking from and by people of any faith.[152] Nelson published his work in 1948, and some of his insight has been rendered obsolete, but the observation he makes on the different economic norms for insiders and outsiders of community of believers retained its moment. It is corroborated by Peter Brown, who observes brotherhood and otherhood interwoven in the world of Late Antique beneficence. On the one end of the spectrum there are poor members of the community such as Roman plebs who have the **right** to be provided for by the rich and powerful of their kind, and the **right** to express their dissatisfaction with riots if they are not taken care of. The other end is occupied by the "poor and useless" people, the others upon whom the gifts are bestowed voluntary, from the goodness of one's heart. Late Antique men and women of power, Jewish, Christian and pagan alike, dispensed their wealth to the brothers

[151] This is what he calls "Deuteronomic double standard", cf. Nelson, *The Idea*, 29–30.
[152] Nelson, *The Idea*, 73–75.

in their communities and to the others outside them. However, it was the Christian philanthropy that prioritized reaching out to the disempowered others, including the non-Christians.

On this scale Margery's almsgiving is tilted heavily towards the otherhood. Her view of the poor is utterly objectifying, and none of the people she meets has a rightful claim to her gifts. The fact that Margery only reports on the poor she encountered *en route* does not mean she did not give alms at home; the provision for her own townsfolk could just be presumed. However, it might mean that Margery only encountered the poor face-to-face when she was displaced. Hence, a member of beggars group that provided Margery with vermin and company on the way to Aachen addresses her reverentially as "dame".[153]

Exchange

As mentioned before, going on Great Pilgrimage is one of Margery's first undertakings after conversion. However, a woman in medieval Europe, especially a wed wife, could not make such decisions on her own. It is in the context of negotiation of her freedom of movement that the movement of money makes its way into Margery's narration. Here is how she describes the conditions on which her husband, after confessor's permission has been granted, lets her travel:

> Margery, grawnt me my desyr, and I schal grawnt yow yowr desyr. My fyrst desyr is that we schal lyn stylle togedyr in o bed as we han do befor; the secunde that ye schal pay mydettys er ye go to Jherusalem; and the thrydde that ye schal etyn and drynkyn wyth me on the Fryday as ye wer wont to don.[154]

As one can tell from this list of requirements, the financial dimension of Margery's relationship with her husband is intertwined with the practice of her devotion. Along with asking his wife to give up on her sexual abstinence and fasting, two practices Margery finds necessary for her spiritual life, her husband pleads to get his debt paid before she leaves for

[153] Book II, 6, 403.
[154] Book I, 544-548.

Jerusalem. While paying one's debts before setting out on pilgrimage was quite a common practice in middle ages, it is not Margery's personal debts that have to be paid—rather, she has to handle both her and her husband's financial affairs. The negotiation turns out to Margery's benefit; she is able to secure the most important feature of her devotion—sexual abstinence—while satisfying less important claims:

> Sere, yf it lyke yow, ye schal grawnt me my desyr, and ye schal have yowr desyr. Grawntyth me that ye schal not komyn in my bed, and I grawnt yow to qwyte yowr dettys er I go to Jerusalem. And makyth my body fre to God so that ye nevyr make no chalengyng in me to askyn no dett of matrimony aftyr this day whyl ye levyn, and I schal etyn and drynkyn on the Fryday at yowr byddyng.[155]

"Dett of matrimony" is an equivalent of her husband's financial debts. A strangely commercial transaction takes place between the spouses. Margery has to purchase her freedom. But the commercial nature of this arrangement offers us the key to Margery's idea of being a bride of Christ. Thus, the renunciation of the earthly reproduction happens in favor of the divine. It is precisely Margery's higher social status owed to her parental's family wealth and standing that allows her to get the upper hand in the relationship with her husband when she is supposed to express the virtue of obedience.

The relationship between Christ and his faithful is replenished with monetary exchange, and Margery is not the only one to notice it. The words chosen as a title for this work, „earnest penny of heaven" comes from the conversation Margery has with an anonymous male anchorite about the gift of tears and the revelations Margery has received. It is one of the many conversations in which she gets reassured against the contempt she faces for the very public display of devotion. The metaphor of the earnest penny is linked to the guaranteed salvation of Margery and her family members, something that Christ reveals to her in one of their conversations. Let us look at the full quote:

[155] Book I, 566-570.

> Than the ankyr wyth gret reverns and wepyng, thankyng God, seyd, "Dowtyr, ye sowkyn evyn on Crysts brest, and ye han an ernest peny of hevyn. I charge yow receyveth swech thowtys whan God wyl geve hem as mekely and as devowtly as ye kan and comyth to me and tellyth me what thei be, and I schal, wyth the leve of ower Lord Jhesu Cryst, telle yow whether thei ben of the Holy Gost or ellys of yowr enmy the devyl." [156]

The "ernest peny" or heavenly deposit that recluse is talking about are Margery's revelations. He implies that the revelations and the gift of tears are genuine and guarantee her future salvation. But the metaphor used, linking mystical revelation to a guarantee of financial transaction, is quite a peculiar way to say that somebody is to be saved, especially when used directly after the erotically charged image of "sowkyn on Crysts brest". This twist of imagery demonstrates that sucking on the breasts of Christ as a maternal figure and receiving a deposit-payment from him in a form of mystical revelation are things that are not that alien to each other in the minds of medieval religious men. As it comes from a male recluse, not Margery herself, it cannot be attributed to latter's enmeshment into the worldly affairs.

We can see that Margery **knows** her material wealth is a key to her spiritual life. She is willing to pay for her book to be written, and although she ultimately does not have to, she **knows** paying a scribe would be one of the ways to get her message out to the world.[157] She **knows** money is an instrument of her devotion and can be hardly accused in serving two masters. Rather, she puts the mammon in service of Christ. Her preaching of poverty that Christ mentions to console her in Rome is quite peculiar, since this is the only instance in which she claims to be advocating specifically for poverty. Otherwise, the content of the pious conversation she has with people is not reported but in the most general terms of leading a good Christian life.

[156] Book I, 1, 5, 396-401.

[157] Margery narrates her tribulations with getting the book written in the preface to it: "And so sche went to that man, preyng hym to wrytyn this booke and nevyr to bewreyn it as long as sche leved, grawntyng hym a grett summe of good for hys labowr. And this good man wrot abowt a leef, and yet it was lytyl to the purpose, for he cowd not wel fare therwyth the boke was so evel sett and so unresonably wretyn." Book I, 87-91.

Now, it would be too obvious to state that some of things can be purchased with money. Middle class purchasing the indulgences, or the aristocracy commissioning rich altars were aware that gold is a currency in spiritual matters. However, it is one thing to engage in a sort of spiritual exchange as one of the forms of devotion and another to see it as the only or the most effective space to enact one's autonomy. Consider the words in which Dotan Leshem describes the ancient genealogy of *homo oeconomicus*:

> The matron was the first person in our Western history to live a one-dimensional economic life as a freeborn person, and the first to experience happiness and demonstrate virtue restricted from a political or philosophical life. Contrary to the master, who in the political mode of government can become a ruler without being ruled, the matron, even when governing the interior of the house, is always already mastered by her husband. [158]

Fifteenth century English mystic shares with the ancient matron this one-dimensional economic existence. Whatever the differences between the rights and liberties awarded to women in various European societies throughout antiquity and the middle ages, almost all of the legal systems barred women from political life but left some space for them in the economic.[159] Like ancient matron, Margery is mastered by her husband, and her wifely disobedience is only justifiable as it is done for a higher authority. The mystical union happens while Margery's husband is still alive. The substitution of one couple with another occurs, and it is successful because there is a powerful patron offering rich payments to his faithful. Like the recluse affirming her revelation, Margery **knows** that it is a form of wealth that is better convertible than any earthly currency and is almost unlimited in supply. The "treasure in heaven" trope is coming from the Gospels, but Margery does not just speak of any treasure that is going to compensate her earthly reproof. It is a particular type of commercial exchange that

[158] Leshem, *The Origins,* 16.

[159] For some general surveys of the European laws at the time cf. Merry E. Wiesner, "Ideas and laws regarding women" in *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 13-47; Janet L. Nelson and Alice Rio, "Women and Laws in Early Medieval Europe," in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe, e*d. Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 103-117.

occurs between her and Christ – firstly, he is her husband, thus bound to provide for her. Secondly, he is a merchant giving a rich "ernest peny" to secure his claim on Margery's soul. Consciously or not, this is a reimaging of Christ as a fisherman for the souls in the Gospels – in fifteenth-century England he has to purchase them of the market.

Conclusion

How does one connect the nodes – pilgrimage, matrimony, poverty and exchange? The common denominator among them is liminality, something Margery cultivates consciously when she is able to do so, something she is bound to in other contexts. While it would be unjustified assume natural desire for liberty in any medieval subject, it is clear that Margery is engaged in a pursuit of autonomy that simultaneously stems from and is exacerbated by her liminal position.

Margery's pursuit of autonomy consists of strangely twisted series of exchanges. Christ, her heavenly spouse, takes the place of her earthly husband; this is the substitution Margery makes very explicit in her text and very consciously so. But the way this substitution happens is exchange-based in its nature. Margery has to literally purchase away her freedom to go on pilgrimage, something Christ, her heavenly husband, persuades her to do, from her actual husband. After having this freedom purchased, Margery goes on with her spiritual journey, and one is hardly going to see her husband interfering ever again, at least through his own volition; his death and disease still damage Margery's reputation in the eyes of Lynn's citizens.[160]

When exploring the metaphors of divine marriage, one should conceive the household as not only the place of affection, but the place of economic activity. Hugh of Saint Victor is engaged with the economic side of the divine marriage at its most explicit, talking about the created universe as a sort of 'bride price' offered to the soul by God. God, as a proper groom,

[160] Margery reports on the gossip around her decision to live separately from her husband and his illness in Book I, 2, 76, 4250-61.

offers gifts and money to the human soul he is engaged to. Margery's example and perceived rival, Bridget of Sweden is using explicitly economically charged language when talking about her mystical union with Christ. Margery's double exchange, thus, is hardly unprecedented in medieval mystical tradition. Rather, she is building upon a well-established lexicon of the spiritual economy when inserting Christ as her provider and master instead of her actual husband, or when reporting quite proudly on the anchorite's assessment of her bondage-payment from heavens.

The attitude towards money is quite paradoxical in the book. On the one hand, Margery is clearly not a novice to the world of commerce, she knows how to utilize money efficiently for her ghostly life. She is not serving two masters by applying her financial means to spiritual goals, rather, she puts the money in the service of the latter. She talks of her arrogance and pride resulting from her father's social standing and her love for dressing up, but she condemns the wrong attitudes coming with wealth and power rather than wealth and power themselves.[161] After conversion Margery does not cease to dress up, but this time her clothing choice is directed by God himself rather than pursuit of fashion. Clothed in shining white gowns, she scandalizes the public, for she is not a virgin, and thus cannot wear white.[162] It is worth noting that shining white dress appears as God's attire in *Revelations of Divine Love* by one of Margery's mentors, Julian of Norwich. While those women most likely knew nothing of each other's writing, I believe that the association can be extrapolated on Margery's choice of attire: white is not only the color of purity but the color of the divine. Interestingly, the acquisition of white gown gets Margery in financial difficulty that she does not hesitate to report to her scribe.[163]

[161] Book I, 1, 2, 190-202.
[162] Book I, 1, 15, 733-5.
[163] Book I, 1, 44, 2439-42.

Yet, she also shows utter distaste for money as physical object and makes herself destitute during a pilgrimage. Christ is guiding Margery in her financial decisions, paradoxically, as unfortunate as those business undertakings before her conversion. Those episodes are occasional and present the urge to get rid of the foul substance as divinely ordained and impulsive. They hardly form the backbone of Margery's economic thinking. It is interesting that aversion towards material wealth that was featured in the conversion of saint Francis of Assisi, coming from a very similar social background and pursuing affective union with Christ, does not have much parallel in Margery's life.

Accused of Lollardy, Margery does not show any interest in the reimagining of the society in her book. It would be quite rash to assume that she had no such interest from its absence in the book. Margery does not make any effort to condemn the Lollards, although she might have been incentivized to do so in order to protect herself from further accusations. In fact, there is a reason to suspect that she could be in favor of at least some Lollard ideas, such as women's study of the scripture. The absence of Margery's views on Lollards, women's preaching or anything else *in abstracto*, when it is not applied to her personally, is likely a careful narrator strategy designed to avoid political suspicion. As a woman barred from political community and as a person living in the wake of persecution, she excels in the spiritual economy instead.

It is in this sense that I would like to apply the term "bourgeois mysticism" to Margery Kempe, without using it as a pejorative. The pursuit of autonomy through multi-level exchange in the life of medieval mystic resembles uncannily modern liberal notion of personal freedom as ownership of oneself. The result of Margery's undertaking is not, however, the empty negative freedom, but full and vivid engagement with God.

Conclusion

By the end of this thesis, I hope there is no need to convince the reader that the discourse on the economy is never self-sufficient. Rather, it is a way to conceptualize one's inhabiting of the world, interwoven with every other manner of reflection. It is the time now to describe the world that certain Late Medieval Christians inhabited as it appears in their writing.

First and foremost, this world is exceptionally individualistic. Margery Kempe, Julian of Norwich and the author of *The Mirror of Discipline* are one-on-one with God in their quest for salvation. In the case of Julian, this isolation is ultimately transcended by the specter of universal salvation that is haunting her work. *The Book of Margery Kempe* and *The Mirror of Discipline* present different poles of the individual's relationship to God. Although her own salvation is guaranteed, it is through the whims of the omnipotent deity that she construes her devotion. Going on pilgrimage or self-imposed squalor, the biddings of Christ take Margery out of her family and out of her community, resulting in both autonomy and disempowerment. *The Mirror of Discipline or Our daily work,* while leaving some space for free divine agency, in the is ultimately a guide to bridling the grace. As such, it offers a markedly transactional view of the salvation exchanged for the hard work and the good deeds.

Hence, it is also the world governed by abstract labor. *Our daily work* makes a powerful case for a Catholic work ethic that makes no distinction between the different occupations provided they are administered properly. If one conceives the capitalist work ethic as valorization of any kind of labor in opposition to idleness, it is impossible to explain the constant devaluation of reproductive labor that has accompanied this system from its birth. The type of human activity that is ideologically valorized under capitalism is productive labor, and this time I am using the term not in its Marxian, but in its common-sense rendering as any kind of human activity that yields money. The composer of *Our daily work* is affirming human industry as a general virtue, and tellingly does not invoke the gender of the potential reader.

The lack of distinct gender marking in this treatise indicates, most likely, that it was primarily addressed to the male audience. Nevertheless, nothing would prevent a female reader from taking the advice, for the generality of the treatise does not exclude their household chores from the advisable work. Neither would a person who did no manual work or an urban dweller who did no work in the field be excluded, since there is no exhortation for *laborare*, but the English "wirk" equally applicable to the actions of Holy Spirit and the mundane business prescribed in this treatise. Indeed, the only criterion of the profitable occupation is its directedness towards God.

However, the silences of a text speak along with its words, and some of the glaring silences of *Our daily work* include its complete disinterest in the results of the labor and the redistribution of those results in the form alms-deed to the poor. The renunciation of even a small portion of the earthly riches is not necessary to achieve the treasure in heaven. The salvific exchange now happens between the Highest Time-Lender and his thralls repaying the debt by relentless industry.

Julian of Norwich uses "werk" more sparingly. Whenever the actual labor is invoked, she resorts to "traveyle" or "labour". "Werk" is reserved to the actions of the Holy Spirit and the Christ's salvific endeavors. The lexical divergence notwithstanding, both Julian and the author of *Our daily work* equate sacrifice with labor. One of the ways to do so is playing up the double meaning of "traveyle" in Middle English—it denotes both suffering and work and connotes one when denoting the other. Thus, one is dealing with the world in which labor, however elevated, does not lose its link with toil and pain.

More explicitly Julian's engagement with work and wealth happens in the parable of the servant and the lord, present only in the longer version of her revelations. The parable narrates a story of a servant who fails to provide "mete" for his master because he is too eager to please him. Falling down on his run to satisfy the lord, servant is not guilty of his fall and

thus he does not require a pardon. Rather, the love joins him back together with the lord, now rejuvenated in the shining white cloak. The parable is used to illustrate the abundance of divine love, the central meaning of Julian's revelation as she sees it. The characters of the story stand in for God the Father (lord) and the humanity of Christ (servant) with the Holy Ghost being the love between them, although Julian initially identified them just as God and Adam.

The conceptual universe we have dealt with through this thesis retains the connection to patristic idea of economy; for every author dealt with employs economic idiom to deal with the history of salvation. The ease with which Julian allegorized Christ's humanity as a separate person, the servant, from the rest of the Trinity, and furthermore, portrayed the human part of Christ as subjugated to the Father, indicates the distance she had from the Trinitarian debates of the fourth century. This is not to say that Julian was indifferent to the Trinitarian dogma. Quite on the contrary, she engages with it in the parable to explore the history of salvation, but she is most surely not concerned with the philosophical intricacies of persons, hypostases and substances. *Theologia*, the inter-relationship of the persons of the Trinity is only relevant to Julian in its engagement with *oikonomia*, the salvific divine dispensation.

The motherhood of Christ, another renown trope of medieval devotional piety present in the works of Julian, comes in dialogue with the lord and the servant parable. The reader is presented with two kinds of labor—productive in the form of Christ-the-Gardner, and reproductive in the form of Christ-the-Mother. The latter, "our swete moder Ihesu", is employed to invoke the endless mercy and the unconditional love of God towards his creation. The former, Christ-the-Gardner, conveys a similar message in spite of the associations with unfree agricultural labor he brings forth. For Christ-the-Gardner, the son of men, partakes with the humanity in its sweat and toil, as he partakes in the misery of death, torture and corporeal suffering. The principle behind the suffering of Christ, however, it not redemption in its original sense. The humanity is not re-purchased through the incarnation, no debts are paid, and no

exchange occurs. The economy of salvation as Julian sees it is one of gift and abundance rather than payment and scarcity, a view that sets her apart from the author of *Our daily work*.

Starting from the same assumption as saint Augustine, Julian arrives at very different results. Both presume the ontological non-existence of evil, but the corruption of human nature that the fall of Adam signifies for Augustine is irrelevant to the *Revelation*. Adam as a stand-in for the human nature of Christ is not gullible, and where there is no guilt, there is no need for life-long atonement and constant self-scrutiny. This is, I believe, the reason why the treasure in heaven that appears several times in Julian's revelation does not stem from the renunciation of earthly goods, or even from a consistent practice of virtues. The first assumption she shares with *Our daily work*'s author, but the second she does not. The heavenly treasure is created by prayers, and it in turn creates pleasure for Christ who beholds it dearly, but it does not have a place in soteriological drama. The "treasure" that Christ-the-Gardner is meant to unearth for his lord is not this celestial deposit, but the simple agricultural produce, circling us back to his nourishing nature as a mother.

It is in this context of Christ's maternal nourishment that Margery Kempe, Julian's younger contemporary, introduces the idea of an earnest penny from heaven. A male anchorite called upon to assess the veracity of Margery's revelations gives her approval, and it is with the earnest payment, i.e., a smaller deposit payment ensuring the bigger transaction, that he equates her revelation. Margery is a different mystic from what Julian was, and Julian's own approval of Margery's revelation notwithstanding, their views discord on the question of spiritual exchange.

If Julian's books are marked by the notable absence of any kind of transactional language, Margery's *oeuvre* is replete with transactions in every aspect. Margery Kempe's social standing as a wealthy burgess of Lynn is a ground and a safeguard of her devotion. In order to set out on pilgrimage she has to purchase her husband authorization by paying his

debts. It is Margery's financial levy over him that ensures her chastity; and her financial means are summoned again when the scribe declines to work on her book in the fear of public contempt. Invoking the trope of divine matrimony, the fifteenth-century mystic was as aware of its economic dimension as some of her predecessors, most notably Bridget of Sweden and Hugh of Saint Victor. Margery purchases her sexual abstinence and freedom of movement away from husband, she substitutes him, then-living, for Jesus. The divine household is not only built on the ruins of earthly one, it is a material transaction that ensures the substitution of one for another.

Keeping this skillful utilization of Mammon in mind, one can comprehend the Margery's contradictory attitude towards poverty. Margery preaches poverty as a virtue and is fascinated with some poor, while her unease with being destitute and other poor is apparent. This contradiction does not unearth any kind of hypocrisy unique to Margery or her social milieu, other than the general paradox of any charitable endeavor—in order to have the needy to help, it is necessary to keep them poor in the first place. The systematic wealth inequality in medieval societies was not Margery's fault, but neither does she show any interest in remedying them. She conceives poverty in the terms of physical deprivation that she endures temporarily for the love of Christ but does not choose as a way of life. Her descriptions of the urban poor are at times compassionate, at times derisory, and often both, for Margery is an outsider to the world of the beggars and the "powr pepil". They are wordless recipients of her charity, and quite often sources of vermin, but they disappear from the story as soon as Margery stops travelling, for in her hometown of Lynn she does not court such company.

The meek and tacit poor in *The Book of Margery Kempe* are consistent with the exchange-based piety of its author. Once urged to disperse her money in compliance with her own exhortations of poverty, Margery does not take it up in the way she does with chastity. She is quite conscious of her wealth as a means of, not a hindrance for her devotion. And whilst

Our daily work says almost nothing of wealth as a result of labor, Margery does not speak of labor as a source for wealth. That is most likely because her wealth had not, indeed, come from labor, at least from her, but passed on to her from her family of origin. Ever since her conversion happens, Margery does not engage in any commercial ventures and step by step she rids herself of the various kinds of reproductive labor she owes to her spouse. We see an echo of *Our daily work*'s condemnation of idleness when the men of Beverly advise Margery to go home and spin some wool instead of roaming around in public and inflicting woes upon herself—it is a misogynistic reminder of woman's place in the household, yet one pin-pointing the idleness of Margery's rebellion.[164]

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The present thesis started with an epigraph from a modern work of fiction and I would like to end it the same way. This time we will jump forward to 1930s Moscow where Mikhail Bulgakov set his last and unfinished novel—*Master and Margarita*. At the start of the novel, an atheist soviet writer Ivan Bezdomny, whose name translates literally as "Ivan the Homeless" renounces his faith in the non-existence of God in the face of demonic powers. Hastily, he grabs a random carton icon hoping that the holy image will protect him from the offence of the fiend. But the holy image does not work in the hands of unfaithful, and the superstitious Ivan falls victim to the devil. The next demarche of the fiend happens in the Variety Theater. The devil knows exactly how to beseech the citizens of soviet Moscow and puts on a magician show with a shower of banknotes and rich clothing. Each of the Muscovites who entered a small-scale covenant for a fancier coat that evening in the theater is stripped naked when the charms wear off. The greed and the moral corruption of those fallen for the bait is exposed,

[164] "Damsel, forsake this lyfe that thu hast, and go spynne and carde as other women don, and suffyr not so meche schame and so meche wo. We wolde not suffir so meche for no good in erthe." Book I, II, 53, 3057–3059.

revealing that the people of the communist empire are willing to surrender themselves in exchange for a little material abundance.

An orthodox Christian, Bulgakov exhibits strangely Protestant attitude towards the material world. The paper icon is but a piece of dull matter in the hands of atheist, and it is the devil, not Christ, scattering the material abundance to the people. Partly this was a critique of the communist project that Bulgakov despised for its perceived vulgarity—in *Heart of a Dog* he puts the following lines in the mouth of once a dog and now a communist activist Sharikov: "We should take everything and divide it." Neurotically preoccupied with material wealth of the protagonist, the canine activist does not offer any alternative to the existing order but the plain redistribution of matter.

As I have attempted to demonstrate throughout this work, the attitudes espoused by Bulgakov as a Christian conservative critique of the Bolsheviks were by no means natural to the devout of the Middle Ages. The relationships to wealth, work and exchange in the three pieces of Middle English devotional writing that were explored in this thesis are quite diverse, but none of them espouses such a straightforward condemnation of the matter, neither it is celebrated consistently. In the world where the fight to prevent the imminent ecological collapse and the desire to reduce animal suffering consistently takes the form of the individual pursuit of purity and renunciation of matter, it is worth reminding ourselves that Mammon has no moral value in itself. Rather, it begets moral value from the people who dispense it.

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