

CHAPTER 2

THE PURPOSE AND VARIETY OF MEMORIA

Why was Commemoration So Important to Medieval Man?

On entering St Peter's church, Wenham (Suffolk), visitors cannot but be impressed by the still vividly-painted Doom of c. 1500, on boards formerly fixed as a tympanum to the upper section of the chancel arch. At the Reformation – which took place within about twenty-five years of the making of this Doom – it was whitewashed over, sealing the bright colours beneath, only to be accidentally rediscovered at the 1892 restoration of the church, when it was temporarily placed outside and the whitewash gently removed by rain (Pl. 2).¹ The scene depicts the Day of Judgement, with the dead rising from their graves and being judged. At the top is Christ sitting on a rainbow, accompanied by the Virgin and St John, who bring forward intercessory prayers for the souls of the dead. Below, on the left St Peter is seen receiving members of the social élite; from their headgear it is apparent that they include royalty, a bishop and a cardinal, although they are otherwise naked, to signify that all are equal before God. However, the real centre of action, shown on the right, is between St Michael and the Devil. The former has charge of the scales and weighs each soul against his or her unreconciled sins; the person shown in the scales is found wanting and will be handed over to the Devil, who will speed him on his way to Hell.

This is far from the finest surviving Doom painting in England – justly well-known superior examples include those at St Thomas', Salisbury (Wiltshire), and Holy Trinity, Coventry (Warwickshire) – but what is especially interesting about the Wenham Doom is that, unlike at Dauntsey (Wiltshire) (Pl. 3), the painting has blank areas where the rood beam (locally termed the candlebeam) and its accompanying figures would have been before the Reformation. That only a single carved wooden rood group now survives in England, at Cartmel Fell (Lancashire), demonstrates the extent of Reformation destruction. The outline of the lost figures at Wenham shows just how dominant the image of Christ on the cross would have appeared. Similar scenes would once have been commonplace in medieval England, usually painted directly on the plaster above the chancel arch, with the Rood and its figures below. The message to the Christian faithful was uncompromisingly clear. The image of the crucified Christ would have reminded the congregation that Christ suffered and died to save mankind. The combination of this figure and the Doom painting behind, which reminded Christians of their own inevitable fate, and also that the fate of their own soul lay in part in their own hands, is a crystallisation of the main focus of late medieval piety.

¹ Old Newton (Suffolk) may have had a similar doom painted on board. In 1457 John Jenowr left instructions in his will for 'board to make a reredos at the back of the crucifix in an honest and good manner, to be provided for the carpenters and parishioners of the same town': P. Northeast, 'Suffolk Churches in the Later Middle Ages: the Evidence of Wills', in C. Harper-Bill, C. Rawcliffe and R. G. Wilson (eds), *East Anglia's History. Studies in Honour of Norman Scarfe* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 93–106, at p. 99.

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At the close of the Middle Ages such familiar scenes would have carried a resonance for everyone; all would die and all would be judged. The outcome was ultimately a decision for God, but the medieval faithful strongly believed that an individual's fate could be influenced by his or her own actions. Hence, Dame Katherine Harcourt (d. 1488) directed that her executors dispose of the residue of her goods for the health of her own soul, that of her husband Sir Miles Stapleton of Ingham (Norfolk) and those of their parents, 'as they think best and as they will answer to Allmyghty God at the dredefull day of dome'.² In part this was a warning to her executors to act honestly and implement her will exactly as directed, and in part a reflection of her perception that she should do what she could to tip St Michael's balance in favour of salvation.

It is commonly accepted that late-medieval man was obsessed by death, but what really concerned him was not the act of dying, but the fear of what would follow. Two intertwined cycles of judgment and salvation consumed the medieval imagination. The first was personal: at death, each individual soul would be judged immediately and would receive appropriate punishment in Purgatory until the final judgment that would come with the second coming of Christ and the end of time. This second cycle of judgment and salvation was collective: at the end of time, all humanity would be resurrected and would receive their eternal fate; this is the scene shown in medieval Doom paintings.

The defining doctrine of late-medieval Catholicism was that of Purgatory. This held that even souls who would escape Hell had to be refined or purified before they could enter Heaven after the collective judgement. Purgatory loomed large in lay awareness, and contemporary illustrations show it as a terrifying experience. Naturally, the Christian faithful were anxious to minimise the time spent in such an inhospitable place. They were taught that the best way of achieving this was meek suffering and good works in this world. This is epitomised by a Middle-English prayer addressed to an angel found in a fifteenth-century compilation of texts on religious and other subjects, put together by a learned member of the Yorkshire gentry, Robert Thornton (fl. 1418–1456). The opening lines petition the angel to intercede with the Trinity, citing prayers and good works carried out to atone for past sins:

Haile! holy spyritt, & Ioy be vn-to the!
My keper so swete, myne Aungelle so fre,
In-to thi handis I pray the to take
My fastyng, my penance, my prayers þat I make,
My ympnys, my psalmys, my syngyng for syne,
My knelynge, my louyng, my charite þat I ame ine,
My wakyng, my wepyng & my deuocoun,
My pacience, my angys & my tribulacioun,
My werkes of mercy & my almus dede,

² J. R. H. Weaver and A. Beardwell (eds), *Some Oxfordshire Wills*, Oxfordshire Record Society 39 (Oxford, 1958), pp. 39–40.

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And offere þame to Ihu, & gete me some mede.
And all my gude dedis, gyffe þay littill be,
I pray þe to presente þame bifore þe trynyste,
And to my lorde, Ihu, þu me recomende,
& thanke hym of alle gudnesse þat he hase me sende.
*Hail, holy spirit, and joy be unto thee, My keeper so sweet, my angel so free,
Into thy hands I pray thee to take My fasting, my penance, my prayers that
I make, My hymns, my psalms, my singing, for my sin, My kneeling, my
praising, my charity that I am in, My waking, my weeping and my devotion,
My patience, my troubles and my tribulation, My works of mercy and my
alms deeds, And offer them to Jesus, and gain me some reward And all my
good deeds, though little they be, I pray thee to present them before the
Trinity, And to my Lord Jesu thou me recommend, And thank him for all
goodness that he hath me sent.*³

Medieval man also believed that the refining process could be speeded by the offer of prayers by the living faithful. Late medieval Catholic theology has been described as 'in large part a cult of the living in the service of the dead'.⁴ Prayers for the soul were sought in a wide variety of ways, but this volume will concentrate on *memoria* within a parochial context. The overarching purpose of medieval commemoration was, as expressed by Clive Burgess, 'the increase of divine service'.⁵ Moreover, soul masses were personalised only in a small section of the canon, while the Office of the Dead and commemorative prayers from the Ave and Paternoster down had no provision at all for personalisation: they were all about divine praise. This aspect will not be discussed in detail in this volume; rather I will examine the subject from the much more limited perspective of the donors, although it is important to recognise that the church and parish community also benefitted significantly from their acts. This is true, not only concerning increasing the number of clergy within the parish, but also with regard to other acts of piety. Good works within the community, discussed in Chapter 4, were often aimed at the poor and needy, but some, such as improvements to the parish infrastructure, benefitted local inhabitants generally. Again the building of churches and embellished provision of fittings and ornaments, discussed in Chapters 5–7, included instructive and devotional iconography of value to the entire congregation. Again, this perspective will not be examined in detail, but its importance must be borne in mind as donors certainly would have done.

Those whose responses to the imperative to speed the soul through Purgatory are examined in this volume are inevitably from the strata of society which could afford to

³ BL, Add. MS. 31042, f.101v; C. Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the XVth Century* (Oxford, 1939), pp. 204–5. I owe these references to Eleanor Parker.

⁴ A. Galpern, 'The Legacy of Late Medieval Religion in Sixteenth-Century Champagne' in C. Trinkaus and H. Oberman (eds), *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Leiden, 1974), p. 149.

⁵ C. Burgess, '“For the Increase of Divine Service”: Chantries in the Parish in Late Medieval Bristol', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36 (1985), pp. 46–65.

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carry out material good works. They would have been mindful of the teaching of the Gospels, 'And again I say to you: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven'.⁶ Many of the better-off Christian faithful used a significant portion of their wealth to carry out what Eamon Duffy has aptly characterised as 'post-mortem fire insurance'.⁷ They were, however, a small minority of the population as a whole, another important limitation. One additional caveat must be mentioned. A high proportion of the surviving material culture and also the documentary evidence relates to the century before the Reformation. It may give a fair view of strategies for salvation of the better-off members of society in that era, but it cannot be taken for granted that the picture created is equally valid for the period before then. The impression I have gained from documentary evidence in particular is that from the mid thirteenth century, when the Doctrine of Purgatory was formalised, spending on commemorative practices gained momentum until it reached the peak of spending frenzy in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Yet even this may be a distorted picture. The preponderance of material culture in this later period is almost certainly a factor of the replacement of earlier buildings and their contents.

The Parochial Context

The most lavish provision for eternity was inevitably that of royalty and the nobility, but apart from in Westminster Abbey, Canterbury Cathedral, St George's Chapel, Windsor, and some other cathedral churches, little of this now survives. Throughout much of the medieval period the nobility preferred burial in the churches of religious houses, presumably because there was more certainty of organised intercession, especially for founders and their kin. For example, Henry III's brother, Richard, earl of Cornwall (d. 1271), chose burial in his own Cistercian foundation of Hailes Abbey (Gloucestershire), together with his second wife, Sanchia (d. 1261); his sons, Henry of Almayne (d. 1271), and Edmund (d. 1300) followed his example. It was only in the later fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries that the nobility opted in greater numbers for burial in the parish church of their main manor.⁸ Even then there were many exceptions: Sir Richard Roos (d. 1482) chose burial in the Whitefriars, Fleet Street, London, 'to thentente that the same prior and convent specially pray for my soule in their suffrages and praiers'.⁹ The destruction of the religious houses at the Reformation swept away virtually all of the material culture associated with the pious provision of those who chose burial and commemoration there. However, as this volume focusses on provision in parish churches, the nobility will rarely

⁶ Matthew 19:24, Mark 10:25, Luke 18:25 (Douai-Rheims version).

⁷ E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars. Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (New Haven and London, 1992), p. 302.

⁸ J. T. Rosenthal, *The Purchase of Paradise. The Social Function of Aristocratic Behaviour 1307–1485* (Toronto, 1972), pp. 82–85.

⁹ L. Boatwright, M. Habberjam and P. Hammond (eds), *The Logge Register of PCC Wills 1479 to 1486*, 1 (Knaphill, 2008), pp. 146–49.

be mentioned. For the most part this study will centre on the arrangements made by the gentry, better-off townspeople and small landowners. Similarly, regarding the clergy, while parochial, chantry and guild priests will be mentioned, the monastic and upper secular clergy will rarely feature. It might be thought that the clergy would have regarded themselves as in less need of provision for prayers to speed them through Purgatory, but this does not seem to have been the case. In the parish of All Saints', Bristol, for example, documentary evidence reveals that members of the clergy were notably generous. Thomas Marshall (d. 1434) gave a mass book, an antiphoner, a psalter, a processional, two pairs of vestments, paid for the glazing of two windows and the construction of a third, donated £10 to the church treasury, £10 to be distributed to the poor, and gave a house to be used as a vicarage in payment of a perpetual obit.¹⁰ Probate evidence relating to other members of the clergy confirms this impression.

The Variety of Individual Commemorative Strategies

In this book individual categories of *memoria* are dealt with separately in order that their relative importance to the medieval Christian can be assessed. This approach has the drawback that the specific strategies of individual people can be more difficult to appreciate. To ameliorate this problem, in the rest of this chapter I will focus on individuals from various strata in society, to see the different options for commemoration that were open to them. The type of monument chosen, and the other strategies for salvation open to individuals, varied according to the depth of their pockets. They were also influenced by the behaviour of their peers, as is evident from the cases of two merchants of Boston (Lincolnshire).¹¹

Thomas Robertson (d. 1531), a merchant of the Staple of Calais who lived in Algarkirk (Lincolnshire), provided for his soul on a generous scale. He had two brasses laid down in his memory, one in Algarkirk and another in Boston, both made by the minor Fens 2 workshop based in Boston; neither is likely to have cost more than about £2. His tomb monuments were only a small part of his commemorative strategy. Thomas channelled the bulk of the money set aside for his commemoration into other forms of *memoria*.¹² Immediately following his death he asked that 1000 masses be said for his soul and the arrangements for his funeral were lavish, with attractive inducements for clergy to attend his funeral, their prayers being regarded as especially efficacious. He directed that provision should be made for obits at Algarkirk, in the rood chapel he had built as a form of family chantry chapel, and at nearby Fosdyke. These and many other local churches received money for the upkeep of the fabric and specific bequests of vestments and plate.

¹⁰ Burgess (ed.), *All Saints', Bristol*, 1, p. 8.

¹¹ For an excellent recent study of merchant piety see C. Burgess, 'Making Mammon Serve God: Merchant Piety in Late Medieval England' in C. M. Barron and A. F. Sutton (eds), *The Medieval Merchant*, Harlaxton Medieval Studies 24 (Donington, 2014), pp. 183–207.

¹² S. Badham, 'The Robertsons Remembered: Two Generations of Calais Staplers at Algarkirk, Lincolnshire', in C. M. Barron and C. Burgess (eds), *Memory and Commemoration in Medieval Britain*, Harlaxton Medieval Studies 20 (Donington, 2010), pp. 202–16.

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Significant sums were directed towards the support of the Boston-based religious guilds, all the Boston friaries, and various religious houses, including those as far away as Lincoln, Walsingham, Canterbury and Calais, presumably because he thought that the soul masses that would be said for him would last longer than his memorials. He had good grounds for thinking this; there is ample evidence that old memorials were routinely removed from church floors to make room for new burials.¹³

Charitable deeds would also earn Thomas credit, so twelve poor men were each to receive black garments and a payment of 4d. to bear torches at his 'buryall day, sevynday and thirty day' and 'first yere day' masses. On his burial day and thirty day, every man, woman and child in Algarkirk and Fosdyke were to receive 2d., and £11 was distributed to the poor and bedridden of eleven local villages. Other beneficiaries were poor maidens within the twelve towns of Holland (one of the three parts of Lincolnshire) on their marriage days; poor people willing to take up the priesthood but having no friends to help them; the lazar house in Boston; the orphans of St Katherine's priory outside the walls of Lincoln; the prisoners within Lincoln Castle 'that lyeth for lacke of payments of their feed and hath no frends to helpe them'; and the priests and scholars in the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford to preach and teach the word of God. Finally, he left funds for mending and maintaining the common highways and bridges of Algarkirk and Fosdyke, the repair of Bridgedyke bridge (in Boston), and repairing of the highway there, which would benefit all members of the community, but perhaps especially merchants and tradesmen. Thomas Robertson was clearly thorough in his search for salvation.

The will of Richard Frere of Boston (d. 1424) does not survive, but he was probably also wealthy. He was again commemorated by a relatively modest brass, in his case from the local Fens 1 workshop, set in the floor rather than on a tomb-chest (Pl. 4). His known practical good works were, however, carried out in the context of the local guilds which, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 9, were a strong feature of medieval Boston religious life. Like many other Boston merchants, Frere engaged fully in the local guild culture.¹⁴ On 26 November 1399, he and William Halden, John Gibson, Stephen Baxter and John Skelton received licence to found the guild of St George in St Botolph's, Boston, to acquire lands and rents to the value of 20 marks yearly, and to grant them to the master or warden in mortmain.¹⁵ In fact this was the strengthening of a guild of St George which had originally been founded in 1354. Frere also had a deep veneration for the Blessed Virgin Mary and the guild dedicated to her in Boston. His devotion to this guild is celebrated in

¹³ S. Badham, 'Medieval Greens: Recycling Brasses and their Slabs', *Monumental Brass Society Bulletin* 93 (May 2003), pp. 673–74; P. Lindley, *Tomb Destruction and Scholarship. Medieval Monuments in Early Modern England* (Donington, 2007), pp. 6–8.

¹⁴ S. Badham, "From remembrance almost out erased": The Brasses and Indents of St Botolph's Church, Boston", in S. Badham and P. Cockerham (eds), *The beste and fayrest of al Lincolnshire. The Church of St Botolph, Boston, Lincolnshire and its Medieval Monuments* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 100–22, at p. 110.

¹⁵ CPR, 1399–1401, p. 249.

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the wording of the unusual inscription formerly on his brass, which read in translation:

Here lies prostrate Richard Frere, buried, he loved the guild, which he often promoted with a donation. He died in the year one thousand, four times a hundred, and twelve twice, and on the sixth of July he went to a better place. His wife Alice is also buried together with Johanna. They shunned vices; may they soon taste the manna of Heaven. Whoever hears Mass devoutly, with the antiphon of Mary sung well, as was established by a vote of the guild, may the Pope give him one hundred days of pardon; and may Boniface IX crown him, in truth, that he may worship.¹⁶

By contrast, the more costly strategies by which the medieval gentry generally sought prayers for their soul can be illustrated by the example of Sir William Burgate (d. 1409), lord of the manor of Burgate (Suffolk), and his wife Eleanor, daughter of Sir Thomas Videlou of Shelfanger (Norfolk). Sir William enjoyed the career of a typical county landowner of the time: he served as commissioner of array for Suffolk between 1385 and 1403, was appointed to hold special assizes in March 1396 and represented Suffolk in Parliament in 1388, 1390 and 1395. The couple had only daughters, so he was the last male of his line. There is evidence that Sir William and his wife were sincerely pious and much concerned as to the fate of their souls after death. They procured a papal indult in 1397 so that they might be granted plenary remission by their confessor as often as they pleased. It is possible that they also provided for a chantry or obit in their parish church, although no evidence of this remains. Yet there is evidence of other means by which they sought prayers. On entering the church of St Mary, Burgate, the first artefact to be seen is the font. Although badly damaged by iconoclasts, it was clearly once a fine example. The bowl was originally decorated by symbols of the evangelists alternating with angels holding shields; the charges on most can no longer be distinguished but undoubtedly proclaimed the couple's descent. Of more interest, however, is the base which bears an incised inscription filled with dark colouring matter; it reads: 'Orate pro animabus Willielmi Burgate militis et d'ns Elionore uxoris eius qui istum fontem fieri fecerunt (*Pray for the souls of William Burgate, knight, and Eleanor his wife who caused this font to be made*)' (Pl. 5). It thus marks the font out as being the gift of Sir William and his wife, and seeks the prayers of those who view it.

When we turn towards the high altar, the view is impeded by a fine tomb-chest, which is set immediately in front of the altar and dominates the chancel. The brass which tops the tomb-chest is a very fine product of the London B workshop, the choice of the great and good at this time. The design is economical but impressive, showing figures of Sir William and Eleanor under an elegant double canopy. He is in armour with a lion at his feet, and she is shown with a pet dog nestling in the folds of her gown. Above are indents for shields, now lost, but which Gough recorded as bearing *Paly of six silver and*

¹⁶ R. E. G. Cole (ed.), *Lincolnshire Church Notes made by Gervase Holles A.D. 1634 to A.D. 1642*, Lincoln Record Society, 1 (Lincoln, 1911), p. 154.

blue (Burgate) impaling *Silver three wolves' heads erased gules* (Visdelou). These lost shields and other elements of the composition which are cut back with cross-hatching, would originally have held coloured inlay, adding to the overall impression of splendour of the golden brass set in dark Purbeck marble. Around the chamfer of the slab is a relief inscription with the words separated by foliate scrolls; some sections are missing, but it undoubtedly also included a specific request for prayers. Finally, the couple's arms are also to be seen on the decorative top band of the piscina in the chancel, marking it out as another of their pious donations. Clearly they were labelling everything to secure intercession, with, in their case, the tomb monument as the main focus of devotion.

Although this volume inevitably deals mostly with those who could afford to carry out material good works, some of the options open to individuals cost little. Graffiti might seem a curious means of commemoration but, particularly in churches with interior structures of soft, fine-grained stone such as chalk, prayers can be found scratched into various surfaces. On a pillar at Little Gransden (Cambridgeshire) one reads 'Hic est sedes margaretae Vit. an. d (*This is the resting place of Margarita in the tenth year of her life*)'.¹⁷ Another, at Little Dunmow (Essex) reads 'Hic requiescat corpus Johannis do Monte Caniso, cujus anime propicietur Deus Amen (*Here rests the body of John of Monte Caniso [Italy], on whose body God have mercy Amen*)'.¹⁸ Harlton church (Cambridgeshire) includes amongst its graffiti an inscription beginning 'Orate pro anima ... (*Pray for the soul of ...*)'. At Minster in Thanet (Kent) is another graffiti inscription in a rhyming couplet, roughly scratched on the corbel of an attached column in the chancel, a mixture of Lombardic and minuscule letters. It reads: 'DISCAT qui nescit q(uo)d thom(a)s h(ic) requiescit (*Let he who does not know LEARN that Thomas rests here*)'. After many centuries the person's surname is lost but perhaps it refers to a rector, Thomas Barken (d. 1356).¹⁹

The Varying Perspectives of Individual Donors

Time and again, testamentary evidence reveals lavish expenditure on funerals, on the provision of soul masses, on funding chantries, or on philanthropic gift-giving – among the many contemporary means of ensuring that prayers were said for the soul. Surprisingly, however, not all testators had clear ideas as to how their money might be best invested in order to attract prayers for their soul. Robert Rey (d. 1527) of Dunstable directed merely that the residue of his goods was to be bestowed as his wife considered 'most meritorious for my sowle and the sowle of my sayd wiff with our friends'.²⁰ Similarly, James Iden (d. 1513) of Brede (Sussex) bequeathed to the parish church 40s., 'to helpe the bying of a vestment ... and yf the parissioners will not bestowe yt to that

¹⁷ V. Pritchard, *English Medieval Graffiti* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 44–45.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁹ *Ex. inf.* Jerome Bertram.

²⁰ P. Bell (ed.), *Bedfordshire Wills 1484–1533*, Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 76 (Bedford, 1997), p. 89.

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entente, then I will that xxs thereof be bestowid in reparacions of high weis witin the parisshe of Brede aforeseide, where as moste nede shalbe sene'.²¹ These alternatives may seem startlingly different to modern readers, but to the testator both would benefit his soul. This is made explicit in the case of Alexander Kirk (d. 1528) of Ampthill (Bedfordshire), who directed that money should be distributed 'in meritoriows and charitable dedes as to poore people, mendyng of high ways and otherwise' as should be thought expedient for his soul and those of his wife, parents and all Christians.²²

Such cases are in stark contrast to the example of Avery Cornborough (d. 1480) who established a chantry at Romford (Essex) and had carved on his monument an inscription, now lost, with a reminder of the arrangements he had made to buy prayers for his soul:

The mortall corses buried here behold,
Of Avery Cornburgh and Beatrice his wyff, Sqwire for the body in worscip
manyfold, With Henry and Edward Kings in this lyff; And vndertreasurer
with kings Henry the seuenth full blyff.
Till deth him raft the world as yow may se, And of Master Iohn Crowland
Doctor of Diuinite

Within this Church to sing perpetuell,
They stablysh a Doctor, or Bacheler of Diuinite, Or a Master of Art, for
nede continuell, Ten pound for his salerie and chamber see, And thre pound
more, there as yow may se:
Yerlie xx s. the liuelihode to repare,
For euery yere an Obit, the residue is fare.

Of Preests xii, and Clerks vi, alsoo,
Six pens the Preest, and fowrt pens euery Clerk, For brede, chese, and Ale in
mony there must goo:
To poor folk xl.d. fulfilling this werk:
The Baylie and Wardens of this Church, and employ; And ech of them yerly
for their labour shall xl. d. enjoy:

Moreouer this call to yowr remembrance anon, That in the beadroll of vsage
euery Sonday redd; The sowls of this Avery, Beatrice and Iohn Be prayed
for in speciall; se that owr will be spedd And that the Curate of this Church
curtesly be ledd And for his labor have in reding of that roll Forty pens to
prey for them and every Christian sowl.

The Chantrie Preet in this Church shall bynd him preching, And in other
when he is disposyd Soul helth to avans:

²¹ R. Garraway Rice, *Transcripts of Sussex Wills as far as they relate to Ecclesiological and Parochial Subjects, up to the year 1560*, 1, Sussex Record Society, 41 (Lewes, 1935), p. 201.

²² Bell (ed.), *Bedfordshire Wills*, pp. 91-93.

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Namely at South Okendon, Hornchurch, Dagenham, and Barking At euery
of them twise a yere, or moo to Goddys pleasans, And at two times seuerall
he shall haue to disport, If his disposition require such comfort.

The Baylie and Wardens of the same town; This chantre Preest shall puruay
and prouyd, Within six wekes by ther own election, But aftyr such seyson if
it shall betyd, To stand lenger vacant thei shall it not hyd, The Bishop of
London, and the Archdekon, As is ovr will for that on tym shall haue their
election.

But aftyr six wekes a moneth of vacation, Not elet by them twein, depriuyth
ther liberte For then shall the King ha gift and nomination, Namely for that
on tym; we will that so it be.

A chest in the Church with euidenses se, Concerning the liuelode with
Indenture tripartite:

Remeyning with the Bishop, and Herres of Auery.

The Third with the Wardens trowth to Annuity.

Now Iesu for thy bitter passion,
Reward the sowls with euerlasting blis
Of them, which caused this Foundation;
And of thy mercy let them neuer mis.
And Virgin Mary shew thy grace in this
Eternally, that they may liue with the,
Amen, Amen, amen, for cherite.²³

Two aspects of this deserve highlighting. First, he had clearly known exactly how he wanted to provide for the health of his soul in death. Secondly, he did not fully trust others to fulfil the requirements of his foundation, but left copies of the deed with his heirs, the bishop and in the church chest. The inscription on his monument would provide a further *aide memoire* to the chantry priests and those who appointed them. It was a 'belt and braces' approach.

The Purpose of Tomb Monuments

Even when tomb monuments were modest affairs, as in the case of the two Boston merchants already quoted, they were still a central element of commemorative strategies. Of the various categories of *memoria*, monuments survive in perhaps the greatest numbers. The purpose of commissioning monuments was to enlist prayerful assistance from clergy, friends and onlookers. Thus the will of Robert Toste (d. 1458), provost of the collegiate church of Wingham (Kent), requested 'a marble stone be laid over me with an inscription to induce people to pray for my soul'.²⁴ If those who gazed on tombs could offer prayers

²³ J. Weever, *Antient Funeral Monuments*, pp. 648–49.

²⁴ N. H. Nicolas, *Testamenta Vetusta*, 2 vols (London, 1826), 1, p. 288.

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for the deceased, the latter's soul would benefit. Monuments were thus another vital weapon in the battle for salvation.

Monumental brasses and incised slabs are mostly accompanied by extant inscriptions, but inscriptions survive less frequently on relief monuments and cross slabs. Hence we cannot now always tell who had spent large sums of money to attract prayers for their souls. In the north-west corner of a thirteenth-century chapel in St Bartholomew's church, Much Marcle (Herefordshire) is a high tomb of the early fifteenth century with effigies to a man in armour and his wife. There is no inscription and the shields on the tomb-chest are blank, although they would originally have borne painted arms. It is virtually certain that it commemorates Thomas Walwyn, esquire (d. 1415) and his widow Isabella, who lived at the manor house Hellens in the village. In his will he directed that certain lands were to be sold, with one third of the proceeds being used to build the tower of Much Marcle church, a further third to needy prisoners, a sixth to the poor in several Herefordshire parishes and the final sixth for the marriages of poor young women.²⁵ His request for one thousand soul masses and the establishment of a perpetual chantry at Much Marcle confirm his piety, but were it not for the will his largesse would have been long forgotten, the tower being as bereft of donor identifiers as the tomb monument now is.

However, not all donors were this unworldly or trusting. A significant minority of inscriptions on monuments display a sophisticated approach to the advertising of the deceased's good works, to ensure that those viewing them would be convinced that those commemorated were worthy of prayers. The brass of c. 1405 to Henry Notingham at Holme-next-the-Sea (Norfolk) has an inscription which is unusually large in comparison with the figures (Pl. 6); clearly it was thought important to draw attention to the fact that he and his wife built the church steeple and quire, and gave vestments and bells. Similarly, a late-fifteenth-century incised inscription to John Godard in the south porch at Addlethorpe (Lincolnshire) records of him: 'That thys porch made and many oder thyngi(s) dede ther for Ih(es)u Cryst'. At Emberton (Buckinghamshire), the inscription of the brass of c. 1410 to John Emberton refers to gifts of theological books and ornaments to the churches of Emberton, Olney and Hulleorton.

Over a period of over 100 years five generations of the Stathum family of Morley made generous provision for their souls, including commemoration by a series of prestigious London-made brasses, some with overt intercessory imagery.²⁶ The inscriptions reveal that the Stathums were major benefactors of their parish church and made significant improvements to the fabric, including building the spire and the north chapel. The brass of John Stathum (d. 1454) records his gift of three bells to the church, and a bequest of 3s. 4d. yearly for bread for the poor. John appears to have been genuinely pious; the year before his death he entered into an agreement with the prior of Breadsall

²⁵ F. J. Furnivall (ed.), *The Fifty Earliest English Wills in the Court of Probate*, London (repr. Oxford, 2008), pp. 22–26.

²⁶ Illustrated in W. Lack, H. M. Stuchfield and P. Whittemore, *The Monumental Brasses of Derbyshire* (London, 1999), 147–151.

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Priory for an annual mass for himself, his wife, his parents and his grandparents.²⁷ In addition, another brass in the church dating from the end of John's life lists the prayers to be said for various members of his family. It reads: 'For the souls of Rafe, Godith, Thomas, Elizabeth, Cecill and John and of their successors and for all Christian souls *De Profundis* etc., *Pater Noster* etc., *Ave Maria*, *Tt ne nos*, *Requiem eternam* etc., *Domine exaudi orationem*, with this orison *Inclina domine* etc.' (Pl. 8). Their names were doubtless entered into the parish bede-roll, but the position of this brass above the piscina near the high altar demonstrates that its purpose was to act as a permanent obit reminder to the priest when he celebrated mass – one might say, an autocue in brass. This is not the only striking feature of this example. The text of the inscription concludes 'John Stathum ordained this to be said and more written in other divers books'. Remarkably one of the books referred to survives, as another instance of the diversity of *memoria*. The Stathum Hours in the Derbyshire Record Office at Matlock include prayers from the Office of the Dead with the names of the same members of the Stathum family inserted.²⁸

Amongst the more informative monumental inscriptions regarding lifetime gifts to enrich a church is that on the brass to John Spycer (d. 1437) and his wife Alice at Burford (Oxfordshire), which reads:

Y pray yow all for charite hertely that ye pray for me To oure lord that
syttith on hye Ful of grace & of mercye. The wiche Rode soler in this chirche
upon my cost y dede do wirche wt a laumpe brening bright to worschip god
both day & nyght. And a gabul wyndow dede do make In helth of soule &
for Crist sake. Now Jhu that dydyst on a tre on us have mercy & pite.
Amen.²⁹

Such inscriptions were both prayers and exhortations to prayer. They also served a secondary purpose of enabling charitable gifts to be remembered long after the lifetime of the person and, indeed, after the roods, vestments, books and bells had decayed or been destroyed. Executors were as mindful of the advantage of providing such information in inscriptions on monuments as were those who commissioned their own monument: the inscription on the incised slab at Crundale (Kent) to John Sprott (d. 1466), the parish priest, mentions that in his will he 'left to each of his parishioners, both married and widowed, 40*d.* and to each of those unmarried 12*d.*', while the incised slab at Rothley

²⁷ BL, Additional Charter 5243.

²⁸ A. R. Dufty, 'The Stathum Book of Hours: an Existing MS. Mentioned on a 15th-Century Brass', *Archaeological Journal* 106 supplement (1952), pp. 83-90. Derbyshire Record Office, D5649.

²⁹ For more on the significance of the content and location of this brass, see R. Marks ' "To the Honor and Pleasure of Almighty God, and to the Comfort of the Parishioners": The Rood and Remembrance', in Z. Opacic and A. Timmermann (eds), *Image, Memory and Devotion. Liber amicorum Paul Crossley* (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 211-221, esp. pp. 218-221; re-printed in R. Marks, *Studies in the Art and Imagery of the Middle Ages* (London, 2012), pp. 798-814.

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(Leicestershire) to Bartholomew Kyngston (d. 1486) transcribes the part of his will specifying provision for obits and for inclusion in the bede-roll (Pl. 7).³⁰

Identifiers on Gifts

Monuments with the names of the deceased were not the only means of perpetuating the identity of those who sought commemoration. Wall paintings, glazing schemes, screens and other fittings were all sometimes labelled to ensure that the pious would know for whom to pray. This could be by means of miniature images of the donor, heraldry or merchants' marks, rebuses and inscriptions. Much of such imagery has been lost to us, although antiquarian notes help to fill in the gaps. The church at Elsing, Norfolk, in its pre-Reformation glory, acted as a total art-work celebrating the Hastings family, especially Sir Hugh Hastings (d. 1347) and his wife Margery who were largely responsible for building and furnishing the church. Sir Hugh is commemorated in the centre of the chancel in front of the high altar by what is perhaps the artistically finest and most intrinsically interesting monumental brass to survive in England. It forms part of what Julian Luxford has characterised as the 'salvational axis' formed also by the font, rood and high altar, an alignment also found at Burgate.³¹ The Hastings family enhanced the chancel with a glazing scheme with a significant heraldic element, including in the east window kneeling donor figures of Hugh and Margery holding between them a model of the church. An accompanying intercessory verse is the first recorded use of the English vernacular in a window; it read: 'Pray to yr. Sone made Marye, in whos wirshipp this Chirch haue rowght. Hugh the Hastynge and Marioie my Wif, Lady Forgete us noght'. The couple's son, also called Hugh, gave sometime between 1360 and 1368 a matching choir cope and amice of cloth of gold embellished with the latter's arms.³² These would have provided an added reminder of the founders, even though, being in cloth of gold, such vestments would have only been used on exceptionally solemn occasions, black being the required colour for Requiem Mass, and other colours at different seasons and particular saints days.³³

Many other benefactors did not leave much to chance. In his will, Nicholas de Stowe (d. 1376), vicar of Snettisham (Norfolk), asked to be buried in the chancel of Snettisham church before the image of the Blessed Virgin, and left five marks for making the 'pavimentum' of the chancel.³⁴ The tiles which were used for this pavement at Snettisham were specially commissioned from the local tile factory at Bawsey, near King's Lynn. They

³⁰ The texts are in F. A. Greenhill, *Incised Effigial Slabs*, 2 vols, (London, 1976), 1, p. 324; and F. A. Greenhill, *The Incised Slabs of Leicestershire and Rutland* (Leicester, 1958), pp. 151–52.

³¹ J. Luxford, 'The Hastings Brass at Elsing: a Contextual Analysis', *Transactions of the Monumental Brass Society*, 18 (2011), pp. 193–212.

³² A. Watkins (ed.), *Inventory of Church Goods temp. Edward III*, Norfolk Record Society, 19 (1947–48), 2, p. 70.

³³ Luxford, 'The Hastings brass', p. 201.

³⁴ NRO, NCC, Register Heydon, 135r.

bear the inscription 'Orate pro anima d[omi]ni Nich[ol]ai de Stowe vicari[i] (*Pray for the soul of master Nicholas de Stowe vicar*)'. None of these tiles remains in Snettisham church, probably because the medieval chancel was dilapidated by the early nineteenth century and was rebuilt. Some have, however, been found at other Norfolk churches nearby, at Beechamwell, North Creak, Castle Acre, and at the now-ruined church of Barwick near Stanhoe. Many more surviving examples are now in the collection of the British Museum, and one is at the Society of Antiquaries of London (Pl. 9).³⁵ Equally careful to ensure that his gifts were marked was John Robinson II (d. 1529), probably the wealthiest merchant in Boston (Lincolnshire), an especially devoted member of the guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and alderman of the guild in 1520–22. An inventory of the guild's possessions made in 1533 reveals that gifts made by him included an altar cloth of tawny damask decorated with eagles standing on books and the letter M 'richly wrought' with his arms in the midst of it, and a 'standynge maser [bowl] with cover and shelle, sylver gilt'.³⁶ His arms also adorned another altar cloth and frontal.³⁷ The link between gift and expected benefit is clearly spelled out in the will of Robert Cooper (d. 1523) of Tempsford (Bedfordshire). He gave many pious bequests to various parish churches, including vestments, 'so that by Wrytyng set upon the Vestmentes aforesayd my sowle be prayd for'.³⁸ Many other examples will be found throughout this volume, demonstrating that the advertising of sponsors which marks many a sporting or cultural event today is by no means new, even if the reason is different.

The Broader Context for *memoria*

In this volume I will demonstrate that many parishioners arranged for a wide range of visual mnemonics to be provided in their parish churches. Yet it is important to recognise that these were not intended to operate in isolation. Their effect would have been strengthened by the regular recitation of the donors' names, be it with bede-rolls, annual 'General Minds', obits, other short-term soul prayers or perpetual chantries. The two categories of *memoria*, spoken and visual, thus reinforced each other. It is vital to avoid glibly polarised characterisations of medieval Catholicism as a religion of sacrament and image, as opposed to Protestantism's religion of the word. Text and literacy, Latin and

³⁵ A number of waste fragments of Stowe's tiles were also found when the kiln site at Bawsey was excavated in the 1920s. Some of these tiles are virtually complete and others are damaged fragments.

³⁶ P. Thompson, *The History and Antiquities of Boston* (Boston, 1856), pp. 143–45.

³⁷ K. Giles, "A Table of Alabaster with the Story of Doom." *The Religious Objects and Spaces of the Guild of Our Blessed Virgin, Boston (Lincs)*, in T. Hamling and C. Richardson (eds), *Everyday Objects – Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 265–87.

³⁸ Bell (ed.), *Bedfordshire wills*, pp. 10–12. He also left a bequest to the guild of St Katherine in Tempsford, provided for obits and requested the provision within four months of a marble stone four foot broad or thereabouts with the testator's epitaph engraved on a plate. Unfortunately the brass does not survive.

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vernacular, occupied a crucial place in the medieval parish church – not merely in stone and brass funerary inscriptions, but in indulgence inscriptions, in the labels on rood-screen and stained glass images, in the written and painted ‘tables’ which provided prayers to be said before images, or in the often sophisticated devotional and catechetical texts, such as the painted *manus meditationis* lettered hands, which were to be found in some urban churches. Successive generations of parishioners would thus be regularly reminded both visually and aurally of benefactors, with the aim of ensuring that they were prayed for long after they had passed from living memory.