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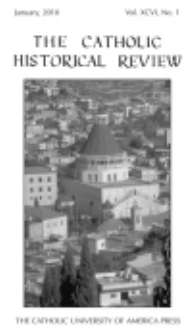
The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England (review)

Becky R. Lee

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Chapter 3 takes the reader inside the schools in order to determine what was taught. Most of it was standard medieval fare found elsewhere in Europe. The teachers and students of Regensburg also used the fifteenth-century text *Es tu scolaris?*, which was an attractive question-and-answer Latin grammar manual. Sheffler finds that teachers taught good morals and religious matter as well as Latin. The most interesting figure to appear in Regensburg was Canon Conrad of Megenberg (d. 1374) who had many comments to make about the local schools. Sheffler's examination of inventories of the libraries of some ecclesiastical institutions reveals that the works of such authors as Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, and Marsilio Ficino were beginning to appear by the end of the fifteenth century. This was evidence of the penetration of Italian Renaissance humanism, although as a committed medievalist Sheffler cannot bring himself to use that awful word "Renaissance." Chapter 4 is an interesting and very detailed analysis of residents, mostly clergymen, from Regensburg who studied at universities. The number increased greatly after 1375, thanks to more university foundations in central Europe and a greater desire for university education. The University of Vienna was the most popular destination for Regensburg students.

In his conclusion Sheffler speculates that Regensburg had a literacy rate of at least 14 percent and probably a little higher, a figure consistent with other areas of northern Europe. He emphasizes the importance of ecclesiastical schools and comments that the mendicant order convent schools offered a curriculum rivaling that of universities. By contrast, Sheffler does not see the growth of "bürgerliche Bildung," i.e., education for the lay middle class, in Regensburg. Nearly 150 pages of biographical and other data on students, teachers, and university students, plus several useful tables and a very extensive bibliography, complete the book. Criticisms are minor. The author does not translate Latin and German quotations, which leaves a reader who is not fluent in late-medieval German at sea sometimes. There are a number of typos in the notes. The book does not advance any startling theses; one would be skeptical if it did. The book is an extraordinarily well-documented study full of detailed information about German education that other scholars will find useful.

University of Toronto (Emeritus) and Chapel Hill, NC

PAUL F. GRENDLER

The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England. By Beth Allison Barr. [Gender in the Middle Ages, Vol. 3.] (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press. 2008. Pp. x, 171. \$95.00. ISBN 978-1-843-83373-4.)

The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England by Beth Allison Barr adds new dimensions to our understanding of the pastoral care of women in late-medieval England. It is also a valuable addition to the developing field of medieval gender studies. Employing the insights and methods of gender analysis, Barr attempts to illuminate women's experiences by recov-

ering male clerics' perceptions of, and attitudes toward, their female charges. To recover those perceptions and attitudes, Barr examines Middle English vernacular pastoral literature, concentrating on John Mirk's sermon compilation *Festial* (c. 1380s) and his manual for pastoral care, *Instructions for Parish Priests* (c. late-fourteenth century), exploring how the sermons, exempla, and advice it contains might have shaped the thinking of the parish priests for whom it was written.

Barr uncovers a much more complex set of perceptions and attitudes than is commonly assumed. Although clerical misogyny is certainly in evidence in these texts, Barr contends that it is attenuated by the practical day-to-day pastoral concerns they were meant to address. To demonstrate this, she carefully combs through twenty-two extant manuscripts of Mirk's *Festial*, which she considers to have been the most influential, the one stand-alone manuscript of Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests* (MS Cotton Claudius A II), and numerous other contemporary sermon compilations and pastoral handbooks. Examining the use of gendered language in those texts, Barr shows that gender-inclusive language is consistently used in the discussion of issues pertaining to pastoral care, such as the administration and reception of the sacraments, thus suggesting "a particular concern for female parishioners to experience spiritual care on a more personal and individual level" (p. 43). Her analysis of the exempla incorporated into the sermons, on the other hand, reveals contradictory images of women. Although they tend to reify the stereotype of woman as the daughter of Eve, dependent upon men and sexually lascivious, Barr also finds evidence of more realistic and positive representations of women and the complexities of their lives. Similar contradictions are discovered in the advice dispensed in the manuals of pastoral care, leading Barr to assert that women are presented in at least some Middle English pastoral literature as "ordinary parishioners who posed extraordinary problems for priests" (p. 96).

This study adds new layers of complexity to our picture of the pastoral care of women in medieval England. Barr convincingly argues that Mirk and some other clerical authors of Middle English pastoral literature not only recognized their responsibilities to teach, preach, and care for women. They also acknowledged women's lifecycle stages and their changing pastoral needs according to those stages. Nevertheless, this awareness was tempered by their limited ability to "perceive women outside of their dependence on men and by their continued portrayal of women as sexually dangerous" (p. 19).

This study is also a valuable contribution to the developing field of medieval gender studies. *The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England* began life as Barr's doctoral dissertation and still bears some of the marks. The reader is walked carefully through the analysis. Each step is thoroughly explained, exhaustively illustrated, and generously documented, and generalizations and bold assertions are studiously avoided. Although that is often considered a weakness in a monograph, here it is a strength, providing

a clear and accessible model of skillful gender analysis. *The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England* will make an excellent textbook for college and university courses in the history of pastoral care, medieval church history, and medieval gender studies and women's studies. It will also be a welcome addition to the libraries of scholars in those fields.

York University, Toronto

BECKY R. LEE

The Good Women of the Parish: Gender and Religion after the Black Death.

By Katherine L. French. [The Middle Ages Series.] (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2008. Pp. xii, 337. \$69.95. ISBN 978-0-812-24053-5.)

The history of the English parish has been studied for more than a century. Toulmin Smith published *The Parish* (London, 1857), and F.A. Gasquet issued *Parish Life in Medieval England* (London, 1906). But it became a fashionable subject only recently. S. J. Wright edited *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350-1750* (London, 1988). This was followed by a volume edited by Katherine L. French, Gary G. Gibbs, and Beat A. Kümin, *The Parish in English Life, 1400-1600* (Manchester, UK, 1997). Then came N. J. G. Pounds with his massive *A History of the English Parish* (New York, 2000), and Clive Burgess and Eamon Duffy's edited collection of fine essays, *The Parish in Late Medieval England* (Donington, UK, 2006).

Katherine L. French established herself as a leading student of the medieval English parish with *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia, 2001). Her new publication *The Good Women of the Parish* looks at various aspects of women's parochial involvement in the light of the traumatic and dramatic social and economic changes of the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The book examines the meaning that women found in the communal activities of all-women's seating, all-women's guilds and stores, female saints, and the transformation of household goods into items of religious and liturgical significance. This kind of collective action undertaken within the context of the parish actively promoted submissive behavior among women. Yet at the same time, it created opportunities for their public visibility and action, giving some of them an official role in the parish's administration. An example of this form of collective action was Hocktide, a fund-raising activity on the second Monday and Tuesday after Easter that provided some women with leadership opportunities. On Monday, women tried to catch the men, tying them up and releasing them upon payment of a forfeit. On Tuesday, they reversed roles, and the men captured and tied up the women. Such activities did not bring about changes in the social order of the parishes. However, collective action created moments of solidarity among women, while raising and spending money for the church created a permanent physical demonstration of the power of this collective action.

In the epilogue French argues that the Reformation changed women's behavior and opportunities in the parish. They found their parish involvement