

Monks, Motives, Markets--The Influence
of the Church on the Medieval Economy

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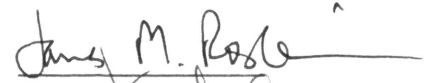
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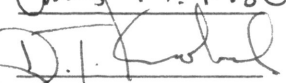
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"I find no terror in the hard mountain steeps,
nor in the rough rocks nor in the hollow places
of the valleys, for in these days the mountains
distil sweetness and the hills flow with milk and
honey, the valleys are covered over with corn,
honey is sucked out of the rock and oil out of
the flinty stone, and among the cliffs and mountains
are the flocks of the sheep of Christ. . . ."

Saint Bernard

Monks, Motives, Markets

England during the Middle Ages relied upon a primarily agricultural economy. Throughout the high Middle Ages and in particular the years 1250 through 1400, England experienced dramatic demographic, technological, and economic change as its feudal economy transformed into a more market-oriented economy. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries witnessed the beginning of the evolution of England's traditionally agricultural economy, one based upon largely self-sufficient manors, into an economy which eventually made England one of the leading trading centers in the medieval world.

Within England and its economy, the medieval church wielded significant authority. Although information concerning specific parish churches is sparse, and historians even differ over whether villagers attended church regularly, evidence shows that the church clearly served vital purposes within feudal communities, as a guide in the daily life of its members, as an institution of massive wealth and power, and as one of the few institutions which survived the centuries and provided continuity. Almost every village had a church and a priest, and "every great event of a poor man's life, everything that raised it above that of the beasts and invested it with beauty or

significance, centred round the parish church." ¹ The church bell marked various times of the day, and crucifixes and shrines were everywhere apparent; the church commemorated man's life stages, including baptism, marriage, and death. Within the village, agricultural production from daily work to harvests followed the church calendar, with labor ceasing on certain saints' days.

In addition to its influence on the rhythms of life, from the time of the early Anglo-Saxons the church possessed significant economic power. In fact, after the Norman conquest in 1066, King William distributed twenty-six percent of English lands to bishops and abbots. ² In his economic analysis of the county of Leicestershire, R.H. Hilton, a noted economic historian, concludes that ecclesiastical estates, including monastic, frequently were the primary influence upon the local economy in the surrounding area. ³ Similarly on the parish level, "quite apart from its primary function as the centre of the community's spiritual and social life, [the church] owned what was, after the manorial demesne, the largest agricultural holding in the village." ⁴ For example, in the community of Terling, sixteen-percent of the fields were owned by the parish as late as the sixteenth century. ⁵ Similarly, one historian concludes that "church lands and buildings predominated in parts of most medieval towns." ⁶ The abbey of St. Mary in the Fields in Leicestershire likewise dominated the area in its landholdings. ⁷

The church became continually more economically powerful, and in fact, the church's "income from landholdings [in the period of the High Middle Ages] would exceed the revenues of any one country in Europe." ⁸ Churches and monasteries in the medieval period were not only characterized by their wealth and power, they also were institutions which perpetuated through succeeding generations. While family landholdings commonly disintegrated as fathers died and left inefficient or no heirs, the stability of churches and monasteries was grounded in united administration and organization. The lands remained consolidated under the religious institutions and persisted even when individual leaders died. It was the church's ability to prevail through times of extreme social change which allowed the English monasteries to become leaders in the sheep, dairy-farming, and grain industries. ⁹

The church as an institution, including monasteries and other branches, from the beginning participated in the economy, albeit one often within the church estate itself. The medieval parish was organized and controlled by the local church or monastery. For example, in monastic boroughs, or towns, the abbot directed trading rights of lay and monastic producers and exacted tolls and taxes. ¹⁰ The local church building served as a town meeting place and center of activity. Additionally, the church frequently served as a marketplace and hosted festivals. Informal trading was common and "had probably been closely associated

with churchyards and churchgoing, and indeed Sunday was apparently the commonest market day in the twelfth century." ¹¹ Parishioners and tenants residing on church lands had to pay tithes, offerings frequently in the form of shares of their crops or livestock, which acknowledged the prestige of the church and its importance in the attainment of personal salvation.

Clearly, the church of the Middle Ages was a multi-faceted institution which was powerful both as a religious and as an economic organization. The church was often the greatest landholder in a region, so notably its role exceeded a religious one. The church was likewise diverse in its structure. Although parish churches, cathedrals, convents, and monasteries are grouped under the whole institution of the medieval church, they at times pursued divergent goals, harboring different economic motives and policies and administrative organization. For one interested in answering the question of why the medieval economy began to exhibit market characteristics, analyzing the actions of individual farmers or parish churches provides limited and inconsistent information. In its response to and possible role in the changing English economy, the church as a financially active and somewhat representative feudal institution can instead be studied through the monasteries.

In modern studies of the medieval English economy, the monastery is the most visible branch of the church. Studies

of monastic communities are widely available (possibly due to more complete written records), while information about individual parishes and their churches are sporadic and involve primarily archaeological examinations rather than economic analyses. Even in detailed historical sources, the parish church is described randomly within the text as a common part of the village, being given no special attention (for example, see Barbara Hanawalt's The Ties That Bound, a study of medieval peasant life).¹² The possible patterns of involvement in the market thus emerge most clearly in studies of specific abbeys.

The response of monastic producers to the transforming feudal economy resembled that of lay landlords. Farmers of the later Middle Ages began to exploit more extensively the profit potential of their land, and local trading networks began to flourish. Perhaps without consciously intending to do so, the English were establishing a sophisticated lifeline--in times of poor harvest, goods might more easily be obtained from more fruitful regions, and when the producers resided in the more fertile regions, they could profit. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a general trend toward commutation (the replacement of labor services by money payments) characterized England. Serfs and villeins, or unfree peasants, began to pay rents rather than offering their labor services on certain days of the week. The monasteries in part were representative of all landlords in their significant participation in the

developing market, for "commercialization (the production of surpluses for sale on the market) may justly be regarded as one index of development in a primarily agrarian society. ¹³ Yet, the monks were distinguished from lay landlords by their religious obligations and ideals and were often innovative in agricultural production and marketing. "Laborare est orare"--"to labor is to pray"--succinctly describes the role of feudal English monasteries, for as the church was a pluralistic institution, the work of monks similarly consisted of various elements in addition to their religious duties. For example, the white monks, or Cistercians, sought a balance between prayer and labor. ¹⁴ The monks, under the abbot's rule, farmed their lands, often alongside serfs and villeins. But were the monastic activities inspired by motives of survival, profit, or piety? Were the monks envisioning a better world and personal profit in cultivating the seeds of a market economy rather than a primarily non-cash one, or were they merely responding to their immediate subsistence needs?

The cenobite religious orders (those housed within the monastery versus wandering friars), in particular the Cistercians, the Benedictines, and the Augustinians, initially produced solely for their own consumption. Production of goods for profit was expressly forbidden by the monastic guide of conduct, Saint Benedict's Rule for monasteries. The House of Citeaux, the first Cistercian monastery, was founded in 1098, primarily under the

influence of Bernard of Clairvaux. The founders of the Cistercian order considered the economic activities of the Benedictine and Augustinian orders contrary to Saint Benedict's rule because they led to the amassing of unnecessary or luxury goods and wealth. ¹⁵ According to Saint Benedict, the monks could not bow to two masters--God and material possessions. It was necessary for the abbey to contain some possessions such as ink, manuscript paper, tables and chairs, eating utensils, clothes, lamps and oil, and tools, but the abbot alone held the right to dispose of crafted or agricultural goods that the monasteries themselves produced. ¹⁶ Saint Benedict warned against avarice, and his Institutes outlined that earnings from "churches, altar-revenues, burial fees, tithes, or victuals furnished by the labor of others, villages, serfs, land taxes, incomes from ovens and mills and similar other things contrary to monastic purity" were forbidden. ¹⁷

The Cistercians were unique in their renunciation of these common monastic sources of revenue, those forbidden by Saint Benedict, upon which the Augustinians and Benedictines had come to rely by the time Bernard of Clairvaux composed his rules for monastic conduct. The Cistercian monks repudiated forms of revenue which were not the result of their own actual physical labor. They believed that the Benedictine and Augustinian monks, who survived upon the work of unfree peasants and the income from mill rents and similar feudal dues, devoted too little time to work and

solitary prayer.

Although the medieval English monks differed from lay landlords in their religious commitments, most monastic estates were physically similar to extensive lay estates in the existence of a manor house surrounded by smaller buildings which were then surrounded by tenant farms, common lands, woodlands, and demesne lands (land possessed solely by the lord of the manor). An abbey consisted of an independent monastery somewhat similar to a lay manor, while a priory, in theory, was a monastery subject to an abbey.¹⁸ In slight contrast to the other orders, Benedictine monasteries were presided over by a bishop, yet the prior actually ruled.¹⁹ In other words, each Benedictine manor was essentially autonomous rather than being united with the surrounding monastic manors by one abbot. The abbot, or prior, commanded the position of lord of his estate, aided by various officers, and held absolute power over the abbey. His lieutenant, the cellarer, typically oversaw directly all of the lands and goods distribution. The bursar served as treasurer for the monastery, and the kitchener supervised food once it was received from the cellarer. Unique to the Cistercians, a grange-master supervised the lay brothers who farmed their lands.

The monastic orders obviously differed in their responses to Benedict's guidelines. The Benedictines and Augustinians failed early in their attempts to follow Benedict's rule closely, while the Cistercians openly

attempted to follow and expand upon the Rule, formulating a vision which attempted to make economics complementary to spiritual ideals.²⁰ They believed that the other orders had corrupted the spirit of the rule by accepting income from non-labor sources. Yet, the Cistercians also failed to keep their vision pure, and all three orders eventually turned to goods production for the market in order to obtain necessary products and luxury items (for example ink, paper, luxury foods, spices, nuts, sugar, honey, wine, and salmon) and also to obtain the cash which was rapidly becoming a vital asset in thirteenth and fourteenth century England.²¹

Unlike the Benedictine and Augustinian monks, the Cistercians relied upon lay brothers, or *conversi*, rather than upon lay servants or peasants, free or unfree, to work their lands. Although the *conversi* were not educated monks who were solely devoted to their religion, they did have a spiritual calling which other feudal laborers did not. The *conversi* farmed another unique aspect of the Cistercian system, the *grange*. As noted, the Benedictine lands originally resembled those of ecclesiastical or lay lords; their manors and demesne lands were worked by laborers as service obligations. The laborers, or *villani*, were men "bound to supply customary labour on the lord's demesne as the holder of one of the recognised tenements on which the village economy was based."²² In turn, the lord often provided the villeins with tools, furniture, and other provisions. With the rise of the Cistercian order, the

Benedictine manors or "cells" which were dispersed across the countryside and individually administered were improved upon by the grange in the areas in which the Cistercians settled.

The Cistercian grange was a large, undisrupted expanse of land, usually in territories considered waste or undeveloped. The Cistercian ideal was "to cultivate independently large, clearly defined blocs of land which in some cases cut across township boundaries."²³ David Knowles, a noted expert on the medieval monastic orders, describes the acquisition of the open grange lands; "it was the habit of the Cistercians, wherever possible, to acquire all rights over a manor or village and then 'reduce it to a grange' by exiling the previous inhabitants and pulling down their cottages."²⁴ The Cistercian monks amassed a great expanse of land, with the abbey commonly at the center surrounded by grange lands. On many granges, a barn, a granary, a sheep-fold, a wool shed, water mills, windmills, dairies, forges, tanneries, and a general storehouse could be found.²⁵ The grange was originally intended as a center of land cultivation near the monastery, so that the monks and lay brothers could travel to and from the abbey's lands each day. Sheep resided on part of the grange, but arable husbandry was originally the main focus of the grange. In Yorkshire, "the grange became a distinctive unit in the countryside, a self-contained demesne farm."²⁶ The Cistercian monks attempted to consolidate lands, replacing

the web of open-field peasant strips which were typical of a feudal manor, and they actively purchased and reclaimed lands.

Despite different origins and methods of agricultural organization and production, Augustinians, Benedictines, and Cistercians alike eventually abandoned their goals of economic self-sufficiency and entered the market. Analysis of monastic farming techniques, agricultural and marketing innovation, and the resulting profits will prove that although the orders differed in their initial motives--the Cistercians had a vision of economic and spiritual harmony, and the Benedictines and Augustinians eschewed participation in the economy beyond necessity--they all entered and prospered in the market. Moreover, after the market boom of the late thirteenth and early to mid fourteenth centuries, the three monastic orders showed their economic sense and ultimately found security and survival in a new strategy, one of leasing their lands rather than in producing agricultural goods.

Obviously, geographical region partially determined the goods that could be produced by any monastery--crops in fertile areas and livestock and wool in other areas. Crop surplus was converted into liquid asset for the monks to survive in the changing economy. The gradual replacement of labor services by cash payments increased the cash flow within the English economy. One historian is quoted as saying, "it is clear that the medieval Latin church was the

seed-bed of the early modern idea of capitalism," and clearly, with the cash monastic landlords and laborers alike possessed increased power to participate in the local market, selling and buying goods.²⁷ Similar to lay landlords, the monks began to accept rents and to lease lands because of the population crisis which resulted from the Black Death and other plagues, famines, and floods of the 1300's. As shall be seen, the diminished population which resulted from the Black Death affected the amount of goods which were produced for market, for consumers and producers were both affected. The monastic orders were also forced to lease their lands in response to changes in the social orders and in the economic system caused by the Black Death. The Cistercians sought wage labor to supplement lay brothers who perished in the plague or became discontented with the unstable economic situation, and laborers were able to demand higher wages for their services. Thus, the Cistercians showed economic sense in leasing their lands instead of hiring men to work them directly.

In order to assess the motives of the medieval monks in leasing their lands, in particular after the 1350's, it is first necessary to analyze their participation in the market by examining their methods of production and the goods which they produced. The monks differed somewhat in their agricultural production and marketing techniques, but historians agree that "the thirteenth century was a period

of rising production and investment of capital in land, accompanied by improvements and innovations in agricultural techniques," and the monks illustrate this trend.²⁸ The monks were often more innovative than lay landlords because their consolidated administration allowed increased efficiency and organization compared to individual lay lords. Although region often determined the types of products that the monastic orders produced, administrative and farming practices were similar within the orders, regardless of the area of England in which they settled. The monastic landlords are known for their innovative business techniques of the late 1200's and early 1300's, as will be shown.

The Cistercians originally had an economic strategy which was incompatible with the growing market economy. They intended to follow strictly the spirit of Saint Benedict's law which prohibited monastic production for profit. From the beginning, there was by necessity some sale of surplus in order to obtain goods which could not be produced on the monastic manors; the monks could never attain total isolation. The Cistercians had to acquiesce with the new economic situation which was marked by a growing money economy, based upon trading and selling within the market, at the expense of the feudal manorial economy. The Cistercians began participating in the exporting trade, in particular with Flanders and Italy in order to market their wool. In 1250, seventy-five of the one-hundred and

ninety-three English abbeys which traded with Italy were Cistercian abbeys, and the rest were other orders.²⁹ For the Cistercians, "the general reason why they organized sheep farming was because their rule demanded they be self-supporting and the wool trade was [during the early 1300's] the best solution to their being economically autonomous," providing a quicker turnaround on their wool investment.³⁰ The abbeys could no longer seek only self-sufficiency; their survival demanded that they enter the market to raise the cash which was emerging as the foundation for the English economy of the High Middle Ages. With the decline of available and interested lay brothers and the increasing reliance upon a money economy, the Cistercians converted agricultural surplus into cash in order to obtain more land; "on the scale on which we find the monasteries buying up lands, their engagement in the market place must indeed have been extensive."³¹

The Cistercians provide the best example of the continuity of administrative and agricultural practices within the monastic orders regardless of region. The typical Cistercian grange usually consisted of five to seven hundred acres which were developed to their full potential, and cultivation was often specialized in areas. Certain fields were devoted to particular crops, such as wheat or corn. The unique Cistercian grange system and use of lay brothers, or conversi, increased their efficiency. The granges were usually located in good geographical areas for

production and transport. ³² The monks were also innovative in the use of credit. According to Snape, over half of Bolton Priory's cash income for the year 1298 came from wool sales, the wool often being sold years in advance. ³³ The Cistercians shunned the traditional feudal income, which included the use of serfs and labor service obligations such as harvesting, carrying goods, ploughing, mowing, and reaping. The Cistercian labor need was met by the lay brothers rather than by the traditional feudal laborers, villeins and serfs. The conversi, so vital to Cistercian prosperity, were organized "to accomplish tasks far beyond the capacity of an ordinary manorial estate." ³⁴ In the beginning, the Cistercians sought isolation from the world and essentially preserved their autonomy. Only a few conversi were in contact with the outside world and were sent to the markets to obtain necessary goods which could not be produced on every manor, such as clothing or spices, writing utensils or tools, for "trading not connected with the needs of the abbey was strictly forbidden" according to Saint Benedict. ³⁵ When they focussed on sheep raising, the Cistercians could not preserve this ideal since "the pastoral economy [or reliance upon animal raising versus crop production] was based on a cash crop principle and was, by its nature, incompatible with a regime of self-sufficiency." ³⁶ The Cistercians therefore entered the market in full-force. As explained earlier, the Cistercians believed that Saint Benedict intended the monks to depend

entirely upon their own labor. While the Augustinians and Benedictines relied extensively upon crop tithes and church dues, the Cistercians intended to rely merely upon their own work, but when they found autonomy to be impossible, they directed their production to survival and success within the market.

Knowles succinctly explains the success of the Cistercians: "decreased overhead costs, simplified administration, [and] economized labour made possible all the transferences of stock and implements, and all the specialization of production necessary for successful large-scale commercial farming."³⁷ The Cistercian houses were more united than other monasteries because of the grange system; the other orders could not achieve the same unity because their lands were often subdivided and were part of a manorial system rather than being united under a single abbey's control. As a result, the Cistercian abbots had more control over their monks and lands. The Cistercians controlled all of their own land in contrast to the other orders which controlled fragmented lands. Additionally, the use of lay brothers who served as shoemakers, tanners, masons, cooks, farmers, herdsman, and other occupations, resulted in greater efficiency. Because the lay brothers' choice of manual labor on the Cistercian estates was motivated by the desire to serve God through work as well as the need for subsistence, they were most likely more committed to their work than the serfs and

tenant workers of the Augustinian and Benedictine houses.

Their efficiency and consolidation allowed the Cistercians to develop an extensive wool-producing system which was often innovative. The Cistercian order was a dominant force in the market, developing "sheep farming for the wool markets, domestic and overseas, on a much larger scale than had been known before. Until about 1300 they were the most powerful single wool-growing group, and they and the regular canons were producing the best fleeces in Europe, outside Spain."³⁸ The abbeys of Tintern and Dore were famous for producing the best wool in the country.³⁹ Similarly, the abbey of St. Edmundsbury has been described as "one of the leading cloth centres in the kingdom" in the mid-thirteenth century.⁴⁰ Biddick concludes that Peterborough Abbey's "single-minded pursuit of wool production marks its sheep management as a single-product economy. Its devotion to a single product enabled it to manage its flock on a considerable scale."⁴¹ Cistercian exports comprised approximately four-percent of England's total export trade, while wool sales in the late 1200's in general comprised ten-percent of the total monastic revenue.⁴²

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Cistercians frequently served as middlemen, centralizing "collecta," or the wool collected from local farmers, and then distributing it to the nearest market. Although this practice was forbidden for the order in 1157, the Cistercian

monks frequently ignored the prohibition and continued to collect their neighbors' wool. "In this manner the abbeys became economically and socially progressive institutions." ⁴³ Malton Abbey must have served as a middleman, for it "made such a large profit from wool sales that it seemed 'utterly impossible for the canons to have obtained the whole of the wool from their own flocks,'" and the monks "organised an immense trade in Yorkshire and collected wool with great success" ⁴⁴

In addition to serving as middlemen, the Cistercians organized their wool into good, medium, and lock classes. This "progressive method of marketing" yielded them greater wool profits; the average price of wool in 1273 was ten marks, while the high-quality wool of the Cistercians often gained fifteen to twenty-one marks. ⁴⁵ A reputable abbey could obtain higher prices for its wool than other area farmers, indicating the monastic dominance in marketing. ⁴⁶

The Cistercians were clearly innovative in their methods of production and marketing, and one author claims "a new 'scientific' agriculture began with the Cistercians." ⁴⁷ The Cistercians in Yorkshire were "good landlords, teaching new methods, introducing new products, finding seed, supervising and instructing on all sides," and "may be said to anticipate the whole subsequent development of English agriculture." ⁴⁸ At Bolton, the Cistercians organized river transportation, sorting, preparation and packing, and credit transactions. ⁴⁹ The Cistercian monks'

innovative techniques and cash revenues allowed them to resist leasing and thus to preserve their goal of self-sufficiency longer than the other orders, for their large-scale wool trading profits overshadowed potential rent profits.

Although some historians claim that there is little evidence that the monks were more technologically innovative, Knowles refutes this claim, praising "the successful and superior methods of the Cistercians, whose domestic organization gave to their enterprises many of the advantages possessed in the modern world by the multiple-branch concern of vertically controlled group-industry over the small manufacturer and trader."⁵⁰ In comparison to nearby lay lordships, the Battle Abbey monks were shown to be superior in their "skilful management of an intensive cropping system."⁵¹ The increased organization, consolidation, and unity of the English abbeys differentiated them from lay landlords and often brought them greater success. Knowles explains that many abbots looked to markets, and this "was the beginning of a move destined to have notable effects upon the life and economy of the religious houses and the organization and technical methods of agriculture throughout the country."⁵² Still, monastic houses began centralizing their production at different times. Until 1289, the manors of Canterbury Abbey were "left to dispose of their own wool," while Westminster did not seriously consolidate its administrative resources

until 1353, and Battle Abbey continued to rely upon manorial production and transportation into the 1400's. ⁵³

The Cistercians were not the only monks to be agriculturally innovative. Finberg describes the Benedictine field systems of Tavistock Abbey, where demesne lands, or those owned by the feudal landlord which were part of the estate, were divided into an infield, or inground, a pasture, or middle grounds, and a moor, or out-ground. ⁵⁴ Although not overtly innovative, the Tavistock monks clearly organized their manor estate as a whole unit in contrast to the generally fragmented lay organization. One historian speaks of the Benedictine "grain fields, gardens, orchards, and fishponds of the monasteries [which] became the proving grounds of new agricultural techniques." ⁵⁵ Traditionally, farmers cultivated one field at a time, leaving one field fallow to rejuvenate the soil. During the "high-farming" era of the 1300's, the three-field system developed. Two fields were farmed during a particular season, while one was left fallow or planted with crops which enhanced soil productivity. In Medieval Technology and Social Change, Lynn White describes the three-field system in detail. The first field was planted with summer crops such as oats, barley, peas, chickpeas, lentils, and broad beans. The second field remained fallow, and the third field was planted with winter crops, wheat or rye. The three-field system enhanced productivity by fifty-percent. ⁵⁶ Joan Thirsk explains that "the change to a three-field

crop rotation is a symptom of land-hunger, population pressure, and the need for more corn to feed hungry men and stock." ⁵⁷ The Benedictines, for example at Battle Abbey, learned to preserve the soil quality and to increase yield through the crop-rotation system and dense seeding practices. They also utilized manure, legumes, and bean husbandry which instilled nitrogen into the soil to rejuvenate the exhausted land. Canterbury Cathedral Priory monks increased the total land under cultivation and changed seed every year to increase quality. ⁵⁸ The use of a three-versus a two-field system and primitive fertilizers showed the "high technical efficiency of the monastic farming" and helped maintain a high level of fertility. ⁵⁹

As exhibited during the late thirteenth century and early fourteenth century, the monks focussed their energies on demesne farming. In this period of the High Middle Ages, the "purpose of direct exploitation was clearly not commercial," and before 1325 at Tavistock Abbey the money gained from crops was used mainly for internal operations: "to this end they used the manors to secure both cash and farm produce, varying the balance between the two according to circumstances." ⁶⁰ According to Lomas, the monks at Durham Priory were not initially concerned with economic exploitation of their lands; Peterborough Abbey likewise focussed primarily on production for its own consumption. ⁶¹ The monks produced for their own consumption, but developing farming techniques enhanced output, so they began selling

the surplus.

The abbeys produced a variety of goods. Grains, crops, and wool were the primary products that the monasteries produced for the market, and there was significant intermanorial trading of timber and grain.⁶² It is in the production of goods for the emerging medieval market that the innovation and economic impact of the monasteries can most clearly be seen: land consolidation, refined production, fertilization, collection, and transportation of goods. Production of goods was facilitated by land consolidation, which Knowles claims was a trend of thirteenth century monks and the result of recognition of possibilities within the market.⁶³ The monasteries began amassing and consolidating significant amounts of land for extensive tilling of the soil, and "cultivation for commercial purposes flourished."⁶⁴ The Cistercians in particular consolidated land into their granges, forming a formidable tool of agricultural production in contrast to individual lay, Benedictine, and Augustinian farms.

Overall, the Cistercian, Benedictine, and Augustinian houses produced similar goods. The Cistercians concentrated on livestock breeding and wool production, supplementing their income with the sales of grains. The Benedictine and Augustinian orders tended to focus on the growing of cereals, but all three monastic orders produced wool to some extent.

During the late thirteenth and early fourteenth

centuries, the Benedictine farming economy at Battle Abbey was based mainly upon corn and sheep with some wheat, rye, oats, and barley production. Tavistock Abbey, another Benedictine house, yielded wheat, rye primarily for domestic consumption, barley, oats, corn, butter, and cheese.⁶⁵ The Tavistock monks also participated in the cattle trade and visited numerous fairs and markets in nearby cities because, unlike the Cistercians, Tavistock "had not the capital required for launching out into sheep-farming on the grand scale" and until the mid- fourteenth century, Tavistock monks relied upon dairy farming as their main production focus.⁶⁶ The Benedictine abbey of Westminster focussed on the production of wheat, rye, oats, and barley, as did the Augustinian Canterbury Cathedral Priory. The Lincolnshire monasteries concentrated on wool production, while Durham priory relied only upon arable agriculture rather than livestock, illustrating the Benedictine tendency to produce grains rather than wool.⁶⁷ At Ely, the monks mainly produced cereals as well as raising cows, sheep, fish, and eels.⁶⁸ The Leicestershire abbey's production consisted of fifty-percent of peas and beans in addition to corn, wheat, rye, and barley.⁶⁹ The Cistercian abbey of Jervaulx bred horses, sold milk products, honey, and mining products, in particular salt.⁷⁰ Meaux abbey produced mainly wool, corn, and horses, and Holderness raised sheep and horses and wheat, exhibiting the Cistercian focus upon livestock

breeding. ⁷¹

Ian Kershaw outlines the percentage of sales from specific products in his analysis of the fourteenth century economy of Bolton priory, an Augustinian house. Twenty-three percent was derived from wool sales, seventeen-percent from grain sales (including grain received as tithe payments from villeins, serfs, and free tenants), and nine-percent from the sale of livestock and hides, thus almost fifty-percent of the priory's total income was derived from market sales. ⁷² Oats comprised approximately seventy-five percent of the monastery's grain production, and Kershaw explains that wool provided the monks with cash, while the produce of arable lands went for household consumption and produced few assets realizable in the market. ⁷³ In other words, cash profits from crops were minimal compared to wool profits, thus because the Cistercians concentrated upon wool production, they more successfully competed within the market.

Because the Cistercians dominated monastic goods production, a plethora of information on the agricultural products of the Cistercians is found in historical studies of the Middle Ages. Many of the goods produced on the abbey lands were consumed by the abbey itself; still, a profitable market beckoned. Despite their decree of retreat from the world, the Cistercians became interested in the market. The heightened need for cash in an increasingly money- rather

than service-based economy, the surplus that the increased efficiency of the monks created, and the ecclesiastical exemption from duties and tolls which was granted by Pope Innocent II in 1132 provided the Cistercians with extra incentive to sell their goods in the market.⁷⁴ The feudal subsistence economy was being replaced, as the Cistercian monks refined farming practices. Their yield began to exceed their need, so they sold the surplus within the market. The monasteries did not have to pay tolls for goods transportation which provided added incentive for entering the market. Approximately one-third of the Cistercian abbeys held rights to host markets and fairs.⁷⁵ The Cistercians raised livestock such as horses, swine, and cattle, poultry, fish, dairy produce, cider, wine, crops, and timber to supplement their income from their sheep, but wool was their primary product.

Monastic success in agricultural production achieved its height at the turn of the fourteenth century. Unfortunately, this success did not survive the century. During the fourteenth century, England experienced a gradual decrease in prosperity. Floods in the years 1315 through 1317 sparked poor harvests and famines. Widespread cattle and sheep disease created havoc during the period 1319 through 1321 and 1360 through 1370 respectively, and these crises combined with a crop failure in 1321 resulted in a significant population decline. Ultimately, "these catastrophes provoked the greatest kingdom-wide agrarian

crisis since the aftermath of the Norman conquest." ⁷⁶ A generally cooler, rainier climate detrimentally affected harvests, and famine, plague, high grain prices, and malnutrition characterized early fourteenth century England and created an "agrarian and commercial depression" which was to affect the structure of the medieval English economy. ⁷⁷

The half-century before the Black Death of 1348 was characterized by an economy increasingly dependent upon demesne farming at the expense of arable farming and of successful agrarian production. The fluctuating population and worldwide depression which resulted from the risky market created by the Hundred Years' War between France and England decreased the export market and made the wool trade uncertain. The war drained laborers from the estates, as well as grain and cattle for the armies. ⁷⁸ The ten years before the Black Death witnessed an increasing trend toward cash rents because of the earlier crises. The combination of low population and subsequently low labor supply and high wages forced the English government to enact the Statute of Laborers in the 1350's which placed a ceiling on wages.

The summer of 1348 marked the arrival of the plague to England. There were two types of plague--the bubonic plague which was carried by the fleas of black rats and the pneumonic plague which was contagious. "Rat-infested grain" from Europe graced England with a century of terror. ⁷⁹ Approximately two million people died, or about one-third to

two-fifths of the population. More specifically, about forty-four percent of the beneficed clergy at York and Lincoln, and fifty percent of the people in the dioceses of Exeter, Winchester, Norwich, and Ely died. At Westminster, twenty-six monks died from the bubonic plague, about half of its monastic population, representing the general trend.⁸⁰ The Canterbury Cathedral Priory population of seventy-three monks in 1315 decreased to forty-six by 1376.⁸¹ Likewise, "in the two counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, at least nineteen religious houses were left without prior or abbot," and "in the house of Augustinian canons at Heveringland prior and canons died to a man."⁸²

The plague returned in 1361, 1369, 1374, 1379, 1390, and 1407. Clearly such a crisis dramatically affected medieval England's economy. Wool trading temporarily decreased as did the grain market because of the diminished population. Additionally, "land profits and land values plummeted," while wages rose as the labor supply decreased.⁸³ Immediately following the Black Death, harvesting wages rose to a level approximately seventy-five percent higher than before its onset.⁸⁴ Prices were contrastingly lower than before the plague.

[In fact, the] decline in prosperity, the reduction in the numbers of monks. . . [and] the conversion to a rentier economy were the work of the thirty-six years that followed the disaster of the Black Death and saw the disasters brought down

upon the southeast coast by Edward's war. ⁸⁵

By 1381, the workers were discontented with unfavorable working conditions and wages, and the Peasant's Rebellion took place. Large landowners could no longer rely upon labor services for stable agricultural production for their livelihood. In 1383, the average monastic income, for example at Battle Abbey was approximately two-thirds to three-fourths of its total before the Black Death.

[Thus], by 1400. . . the cumulative impact of the Black Death, along with the Gray Death of 1361, began to take effect, and England moved into a century of contracting economy; the prevailing economic theme was one of land surplus with seriously curtailed rentals, and labor shortage with consequent high wages. ⁸⁶

During the half-century following the Black Death, "demesne farming became increasingly profitless [due to a shortage of laborers and a fluctuating market] and gradually disappeared almost entirely." ⁸⁷ A severe economic recession forced lay and monastic landlords alike to turn to rents for survival. Tenants, not laborers, were relatively easy to find. W. G. Hoskins describes the environment which followed the crises of the 1300's: "the depression of the first half of the fifteenth century was a combination of both a diminished population, as a result of repeated outbreaks of plague, and of economic stagnation in town and countryside. The latter was partly, at least, the result of

the former." ⁸⁸ Although before the Black Death there was some monastic leasing of lands to lay farmers, the plague's tragic and dramatic effect on the population and consequently on the flow of goods through the market, compelled the monastic orders to join the sweeping movement toward complete reliance upon money-rents. In fact, Thorold Rogers claimed that "the effect of the Plague was to introduce a complete revolution in the occupation of land," the beginning of the total conversion of the medieval economy from dependence upon market profits to leasing. ⁸⁹

While the church shared in the economic decline which resulted from a century of plague and famine, "as an institution it [additionally] faced increasingly shrill anticlericalism." ⁹⁰ The English saw a new God, a God of wrath and feared "mankind had fallen into a sinfulness beyond redemption and the church had lost its right to administer God's grace to man." ⁹¹ Thus, the church's social and economic power declined, obviously affecting the monasteries.

As explained earlier, the economic and social situation in medieval England during the latter half of the fourteenth century forced landlords to cease direct farming and to rely upon the more stable income of money rents. The 1300's heralded a century of natural disasters and plagues, creating a population crisis and in turn an economic crisis. The decreased population resulting from the plagues prompted lower demand and consequently lower product prices, and

because land prices remained fairly level, landlords turned from arable farming to leasing. ⁹²

It is fair to connect the dissolution and leasing of manors with an economic climate in which speculative enterprise could not be conducted with confidence in its profitability and in which landlords were driven to prefer fixed returns to the risks attendant upon fluctuating revenues. ⁹³

In short, direct management of the land was difficult due to the lack of laborers, thus renting became widespread throughout medieval England.

The case of Westminster Abbey, a Benedictine house, reveals the general monastic reaction to the social and economic transformation of Europe as seen in England. As prices began to increase at the close of the thirteenth century due to general prosperity, the Westminster monks commenced the process which would characterize the period 1250 to 1400. The feudal "market" functioned as a means of trading or bartering goods and not as a cash-based market, but a manorial cash economy gradually replaced the labor and reward system, a transformation which is called commutation. Cash became necessary in the buying of goods, thus the laborers preferred to make cash payments rather than to fulfill feudal obligations in order to buy and sell within the market. The serfs found it more profitable to concentrate upon farming their own lands for market and to

pay the lord in cash than to work their lord's lands. The monks discovered the added advantage of leasing in the increased ease of administration and regular profits which resulted from accepting lease payments versus services, for example at Westminster Abbey, "rents of the tenant-land often rivalled and sometimes exceeded the profits of husbandry." ⁹⁴

The monks consolidated their land by repossessing or repurchasing farm lands which had been distributed, thus assuming direct supervision for "large-scale production for the market" in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. ⁹⁵ These large landholdings were gradually leased out, and the monks exploited the dues and rents of tenants, primarily those residing on customary lands. High rents, according to Harvey, kept farmers at subsistence levels and consequently preserved monastic control of extensive landholdings. ⁹⁶ The monks were unwilling to give up control of their land completely. Indeed, the income from rents and from sales profits comprised the thirteenth and fourteenth century abbey's primary income. The three monastic orders began to lease their lands rather than requiring labor services from the peasants residing upon the monastery's lands as early as the mid-1200's, but the monk's conversion from direct farming supervisors to rentiers was primarily the result of the Black Death of the 1350's.

Canterbury similarly abandoned direct exploitation of

land exploitation and market participation to organized leasing. Tavistock Abbey similarly began renting out demesne pastures rather than increasing the size of their sheep flocks; by the mid 1380's, most labour services were dissipated.⁹⁷ Again, Eleanor Searle claims that "given the choice between market production and rentier management of the manor. . . the monks of Battle in the fourteenth century chose to be rentiers. . . ." ⁹⁸ The Abbey of St. Edmundsbury had begun the process of commutation, the replacement of labor or service obligations to a lord by cash payments for the renting of land, by 1264, and in this process, "the monks, as a class, have recently been described as 'capitalists first and churchmen afterwards.'" ⁹⁹ Laborers no longer owed the abbeys "work days," or days on which they labored specifically on the abbey lands but instead offered cash payments for the right to farm their own rented plot of the manor lands. Whitby Abbey was leasing its lands by 1366. ¹⁰⁰ By 1400, all of the demesne lands of Owston Abbey were leased, but Leicester Abbey did not complete its commutation process until 1477. ¹⁰¹ Likewise, Durham Cathedral Priory rented out much of its demesne lands for simplicity of management and for the greater income which competitive rent prices could raise; this trend of leasing peaked in the mid-fifteenth century. E. M. Halcrow writes of Durham Priory,

"competitive leasehold rents were developed and must have been one of the most important factors, which influenced lords to abandon demesne farming in favour of leasing."¹⁰² The Canterbury Cathedral Priory monks also preferred renting pasture land to stock-raising during the late fourteenth century.¹⁰³ In 1400, sixty-percent of Battle Abbey's income was derived from direct farming and tithes, but by 1410 that had decreased to fifteen-percent.¹⁰⁴

Although abbeys specifically began leasing at different periods, the last half of the fourteenth century was the primary leasing era, and by the end of the fourteenth century demesne farming had been almost entirely replaced by leasing. As early as the mid-thirteenth century, Battle Abbey had some fixed, or customary, rents.¹⁰⁵ During the period of 1305 through 1315, Bolton Priory's income from leasing was comprised of approximately twelve percent of its total revenues, but the trend to leasing was most visible in the late fourteenth century.¹⁰⁶ "Every source of income was transferred to the hands of some outsider and the monks simply subsided into the position of men receiving rents."¹⁰⁷ Although some of the abbeys did begin leasing early in the medieval period, the Black Death compelled all of the English abbeys to turn from direct farming to leasing. Most available abbey lands were leased by the 1430's. The abbeys had the choice of bankruptcy or survival through accepting lease payments because the significant population decline which resulted from the plague made

speculation in the market too risky; "it was an act of self-preservation that in order to maintain its net income it withdrew from productive and distributive activity. ¹⁰⁸

At Canterbury, the progressive prior, Henry Eastry (1285-1331), concentrated on "consolidation of estates, re-leases of land at high rent, competitive leasehold rents, [and] commutation of labour services for rent." ¹⁰⁹ At the same time, Eastry organized production and sales, focussing on cheese, corn, and wool. ¹¹⁰ The Augustinian abbeys of Leicester and Owston similarly converted to reliance upon leasing, and a clear trend can be seen. In 1348, rents comprised fifty-three percent of Owston abbey's total income; by 1386, the proportion of rents had risen to sixty-eight percent and soon after soared to seventy-six percent of the monastery's total revenues. ¹¹¹ The Abbey of Ely's rent income comprised seventy-two percent of its total income in the late fourteenth century. ¹¹²

Similar to the Benedictine and Augustinian monasteries, the Cistercians began some leasing as early as 1208, although their pledge of self-sufficiency and the unique methods which they employed to maintain their economic isolation and purity allowed them to resist widespread leasing longer than the other orders. The older orders relied upon a regular income of rents, leases, tithes, and church dues which was prohibited by the Cistercian tradition of conduct. For the Cistercian order, leasing had marked advantages. The lay brothers were becoming more difficult

to control during the 1300's, and leasing diminished the need for these secular brothers. Similarly, the Black Death created a dearth of lay brothers upon which the Cistercians could rely; "[conversil] were numerous enough during the twelfth century, but their number had fallen considerably by the end of the thirteenth century and had reached vanishing point by the time of the Black Death." ¹¹³ Still, the Cistercians in an attempt to maintain control over their lands usually leased the most distant granges first.

Also, for the Cistercians and the other orders, leasing simplified administration and provided a more stable income than that of product sales. In market participation, the storing of crops constituted a significant expense, and the monks began to prefer cash payments for land. As has been shown, the Cistercians were not alone, for "by the end of the fourteenth century rents constituted the bulk of monastic revenues." ¹¹⁴ The well-known Cistercian historian, Lekai, compares the Cistercian trend toward leasing with a general trend within medieval England: perhaps "the disappearance of the lay-brotherhood, the leasing of land and the abbots' preference for fixed cash income were all symptoms of those fundamental changes that led most of Europe from the decaying feudal economy toward early capitalism." ¹¹⁵ Rents often brought higher profits than the sale of products within the market during the later medieval period because of the population crisis which the Black Death sparked. The monks were no longer assured of a

stable profit margin from sales, whereas rent payments were more reliable.

The monks of Battle Abbey and Durham Priory are often criticized for sacrificing long-term profits within the market for the short-term cash gain found in leasing. At Durham, the lease lots usually consisted of one acre or less for approximately one year. "The man who took a lease for a short term was anxious to secure a substantial profit quickly. He was not concerned with the long-term policy of maintaining the holding at the same level of productivity in succeeding generations," thus tenants and monks alike sought mainly short-term leases.¹¹⁶ The monks clearly at first sought merely to weather the economic crisis; they were hesitant to lease all of their lands. The tenants were concerned with their own survival, and the monks did not want to lease for long-term periods in case the market became favorable again. About Ramsey Abbey, Neilson explains, "it is evident that fixed rents formed usually an important part of the profits of a manor."¹¹⁷ During the fourteenth century, the income of 2000 pounds per year at the abbey of Ely was comprised of thirty-percent of fixed, or customary, rents and forty-percent of other rents, including those from manors, demesne lands, villein holdings, mills, fisheries, and others.¹¹⁸

The economy of England in the Middle Ages, especially during the period 1300 through 1350, was diverse and was

comprised of the balanced elements of market production and leasing. The abbeys of Leicestershire had a combined income of rents and sales of grain and wool.¹¹⁹ While the monastic landlords were increasingly turning to money rents to supplement their threatened market profits, their tenants often found new opportunities to market their own products: "In part a commercial asset, [wool] was undoubtedly from sales of wool that the small men secured the cash which they needed to pay rent or commute labour services."¹²⁰

It is generally concluded that after the Black Death, profits from production decreased. Labor and tenants were scarce, and because of the declining population, speculation within the market, the buying or selling of goods, was risky. Ramsey Abbey's plight in the aftermath of the great plague is clear:

after the pestilence the number of workmen was necessarily greatly reduced, the price of labour was raised, and, since the demesne could no longer be cultivated by the villagers, the lord began to let to outsiders or members of the villata the parts for the cultivation of which the reduced customary labour was not sufficient.¹²¹

The monks of medieval England were a dramatic force within the economy. "The monastic farmers dominated their localities, and as a representative of the church as a whole, the monastic institution exhibited a productive and innovative attitude."¹²²

The economic activities of the monks reflect the economic trends of England in the period between 1250 and 1400. The monks were clearly active consumers and producers within the market, even achieving international status in the area of wool trading. As shown, "it was natural that monasteries should be to the forefront of most activities: they were undying corporations with a continuity in policy and administration," and "they had power, organization, and resources which enabled them to acquire monopolistic positions and to act on a large scale." ¹²³ In general, the monasteries achieved greater organization and efficiency and more refined production and marketing methods, allowing them to gain greater success than the smaller lay and ecclesiastical producers. Hilton describes specifically the monastic effect upon the economy; "the abbey followed its own laws of motion as an economic force, as an individual factor in the regional economy, following out in its relations with its tenants the general policy of any landowner, lay or ecclesiastical, in similar circumstances." ¹²⁴

Why did the monks enter the market? According to the rule of Saint Benedict, the monks were forbidden to trade beyond the basic needs of the monastic manors and were to "live from the work of their hands, the cultivation of the soil, and the care of flocks." ¹²⁵ The Benedictines and Augustinians early violated the rule by accepting tithe payments and dues from tenants, mills, and churches.

Initially, the Cistercians formulated a long-term economic strategy to adhere to Saint Benedict's guidelines. They expanded their monastic personnel to include lay brothers, so that their subsistence needs could be met within the monastery itself. The Cistercians established a reputation for efficiency in their development of the grange system and refined centralization policies which the Benedictines and Augustinians could not achieve to the same degree. The Cistercians were motivated by the long-term goals of amassing expansive granges cultivated by lay brothers in order to attain self-sufficiency, only entering the market in order to obtain products which could not be produced upon the monastic demesne lands. Conversely, the Benedictines and Augustinians succumbed to short-term needs in their earlier violation of Benedict's rule. Mate explains that the Augustinian priory of Christ Church retreated from the cloth market whenever profits were down.¹²⁶ In other words, the monks would enter or exit the market when the need for cash or goods for the abbey dictated that they do so, rather than persevering and waiting for the market to once again become profitable. Biddick similarly claims of Peterborough Abbey that "if [the] lords had been rational economic actors, they would have invested more," but instead they sought short-term gain over long-term.¹²⁷ Likewise, Goodwin describes the "shortsightedness" of the monks of the abbey of Saint Edmundsbury in responding to England's economic changes.¹²⁸ While the Cistercians were investing

in land and developing it for cultivation or for animal husbandry, the other orders were already dependent upon regular money payments.

By the early 1300's, all three orders had entered the market with the goal of profit accompanying the goal of survival. The monks' interest in the market stemmed from three major impetuses. First, throughout Europe and with England at the vanguard, a cash economy was rapidly replacing the manorial economy which was based upon labor services rather than wage labor. In order to survive, the monks would eventually have to follow the trend, as they did in the late 1200's and early 1300's. Next, as the monks developed more efficient ways of producing and selling their agricultural goods, they created a surplus and consequently sold it. It was too expensive to store the surplus, and the produce would spoil, so common sense dictated that the monks sell within the market. Lastly, much of ecclesiastical trade was exempt from certain royal trading tolls and duties, thus market involvement promised additional profits. Thirteenth and early fourteenth century monks proved themselves "eager to take the profits from local commerce, and to the degree that they do, they show a progressive economic attitude." ¹²⁹

Because of these three considerations, the monks organized their farming for the market. Eventually, the "highly efficient Cistercian agriculture necessary resulted in a certain amount of surplus production, thus promoting a

gradual increase in commercial activity." ¹³⁰ The lay brothers were motivated by the fact that their survival was dependent upon their own labors. ¹³¹ Halcrow claims that the promise of profits resulted in increased production. ¹³² The monks began looking beyond their domestic needs, as market potential induced them to abandon their decree of retreat from the world.

Necessity forced the monks into the market, but they developed a desire for profits, since their efficiency and innovative farming and marketing techniques produced a surplus beyond what they needed to sell in order to survive. In his broad study, Medieval Technology and Social Change, Lynn White describes the transformation of the feudal economy, the "mediaeval economy with its constant regard to the relations of persons was giving place to modern economy which treats the exchange of things as fundamental." ¹³³ The English economy was evolving, and the monks were forced to respond to its altering monetary basis and structure; "the ideal of isolation from the world of ordinary men, forcefully enjoined in the early statutes soon proved impracticable and was finally abandoned in a growing pre-occupation with commercial affairs." ¹³⁴

Unfortunately, the crises which plagued England throughout the fourteenth century forcibly altered the market economy, as poor harvests, famines, and man and beast plagues made the marketplace a risky basis for survival and survival. Demographically, the presence of consumers and

producers alike became unpredictable. Thus, the monastic focus upon production of goods was converted to a trend toward leasing. Searle offers an example of the situation at Battle Abbey: "high cultivation costs would have been profitable only in districts where the demand for grain was high enough to warrant their intensification of farming and where or when the financial needs of a church institution, such as a great Benedictine abbey like Battle, could be earned by market profits rather than by money-rents." ¹³⁵

In the period immediately following the Black Death, 1350s and 1360s, the monks leased small parcels of land to poor peasants and other lay farmers for more efficient administration. During the 1370s and 1380s, the Battle monks made the "decision. . . to give up demesne management permanently" and hired labor. ¹³⁶ By this time, only nine-percent of the Battle revenues were derived from direct agriculture, while fifty-five percent was derived from rents. ¹³⁷ In particular after the Black Death, labor became scarce, and a stable market could not be guaranteed. In other words, the traditional feudal practices of monastic manors were forced to join the tide of economic changes in order to obtain cash and to compensate for a dearth of laborers. The Cistercian turn to leasing like the other orders "demanded the sacrifice of a distinctive mark of the Cistercian heritage and the refashioning of Cistercian economy to the operational pattern of other estates of the time, lay or ecclesiastic, alike." ¹³⁸ The monastic orders

slowly leased portions of their lands, thus "a drift toward rents and away from the direct management of demesnes could also result from the cumulative action of piecemeal concessions." ¹³⁹ At Westminster, rents collected from tenants were often higher than the profits from farming. ¹⁴⁰

The monks in some respects created their own economic dilemma. Their increased consolidation and efficiency in comparison to other feudal lords resulted in agricultural innovation. This innovation resulted in added efficiency as the monks attempted to preserve their economic autonomy for reasons of piety. The surplus which this innovation created, the necessity of buying some goods, and the need for cash to participate within the economy even as a consumer nudged the monks into the economy. For example, sheep raising was a vital part of the Cistercian plan of spiritual and economic harmony, but success and the profits it yielded created their dilemma--profits and costs of storing surplus and the need for cash in order to raise the sheep spurred them into the market.

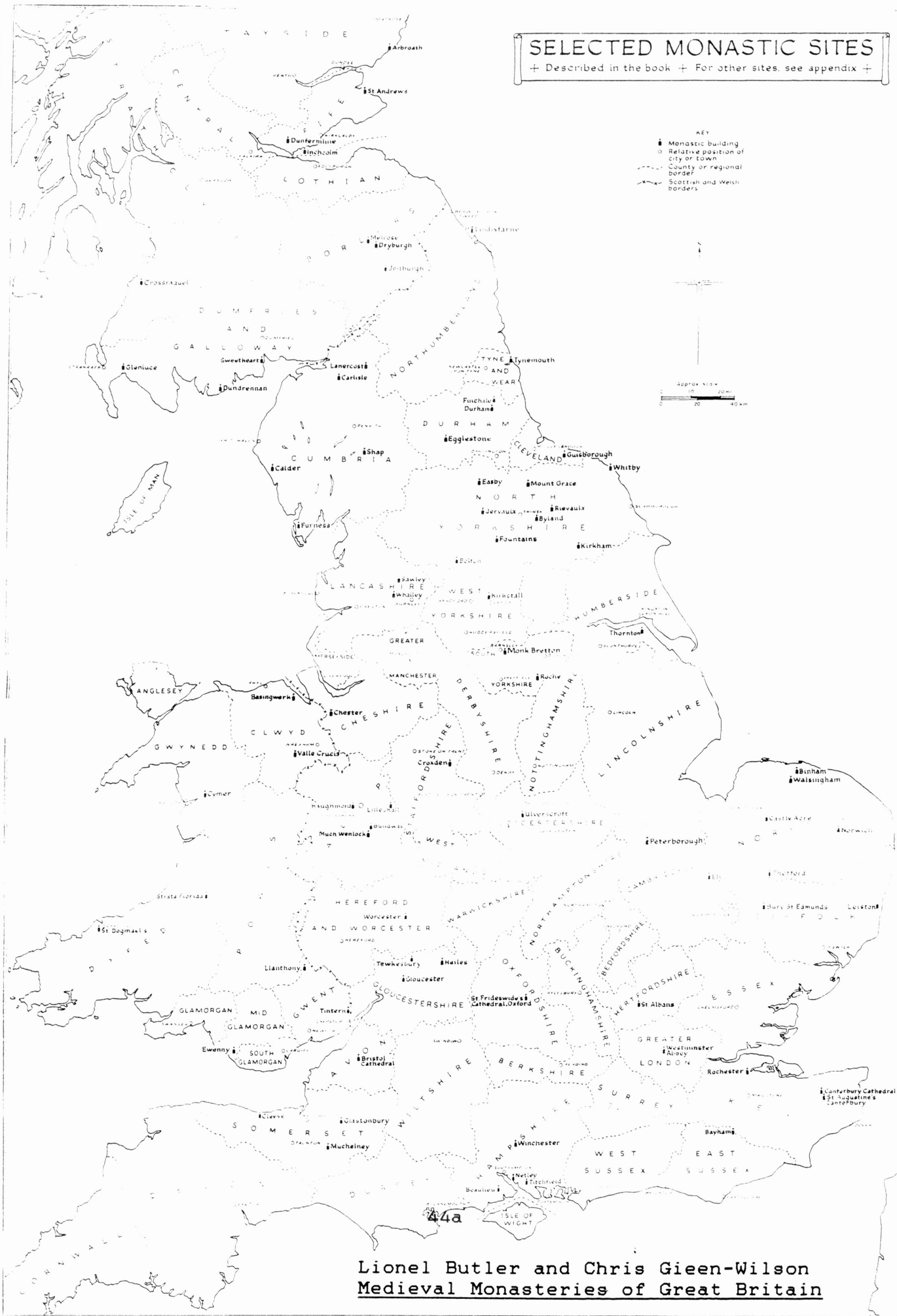
Thus, the monks participated in their own way in the economic changes of England during the period of 1250 through 1400. They entered the market for reasons of survival and later for profit. The crises of the fourteenth century ultimately compelled them to essentially exit the market as producers through the leasing of their lands, again altering monastic involvement in the medieval economy.

They were no longer dominant as producers but continued to act as consumers, returning control of farming activities to smaller producers. At the same time, the monks continued to influence the market economy, indirectly or directly, as they acted as lessors and landlords in England's medieval economy.

SELECTED MONASTIC SITES

+ Described in the book + For other sites, see appendix +

- KEY
- Monastic building
 - Relative position of city or town
 - - - County or regional border
 - Scottish and Welsh borders



44a

Textual Notes

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⁶⁷ Dorothy M. Owen, Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire, ed. Joan Thirsk (New York: G. B. Leeds, 1981) 68.

⁶⁸ John Hatcher and Edward Miller, Medieval England--Rural Society and Economic Change 1086-1348 (New York: Longman Group, Ltd., 1978) 83.

⁶⁹ W. G. Hoskins, The Midland Peasant; The Economic and Social History of a Leicestershire Village (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc.,) 142.

⁷⁰ Lekai, The White Monks 217-19.

⁷¹ Fletcher 131.

⁷² Kershaw 19.

⁷³ Ibid. 39, 148.

⁷⁴ Graves 13.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 12.

⁷⁶ C. Warren Hollister, The Making of England 55 B.C.

- to 1399 (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Co., 1988) 287.
- 77 Ibid. 258.
- 78 Mavis Mate, "Property Investment by Canterbury Cathedral Priory 1250-1400," Journal of British Studies 23 (1984): 350.
- 79 Hollister 288.
- 80 Barbara Harvey, Westminster Abbey and Its Estates in the Middle Ages (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) 144.
- 81 R. A. L. Smith 3.
- 82 L. L. Price, A Short History of English Commerce and Industry (London: Edward Arnold, 1900) 105-6.
- 83 Hollister 290.
- 84 Thirsk 721.
- 85 Searle 266.
- 86 Lacey Baldwin Smith, This Realm of England 1399 to 1688 (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Co., 1988) 30.
- 87 Hollister 290.
- 88 Hoskins 84.
- 89 Philip Ziegler, The Black Death (New York: The John Day Co., 1969) 233.
- 90 R. A. L. Smith 29.
- 91 Ibid. 30.
- 92 R. B. Dobson, Durham Priory 1400-50 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) 275.
- 93 Edward Miller, The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely; The Social History of an Ecclesiastical Estate From the Tenth Century to the Early Fourteenth Century (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 1951) 4.

- 94 Barbara Harvey 148.
- 95 Ibid. 3.
- 96 Ibid. 7.
- 97 Finberg 150.
- 98 Searle 288-9.
- 99 Goodwin 59.
- 100 Waites 15.
- 101 John A. F. Thomson, The Transformation of Medieval England 1370-1529 (New York: Longman Group, Ltd., 1983) 19.
- 102 Halcrow 351.
- 103 Mate 346.
- 104 Searle 250.
- 105 Searle 177.
- 106 Kershaw 19.
- 107 Snape 94.
- 108 R. H. Hilton, Leicestershire 105.
- 109 Gilchrist 41.
- 110 Butler 90.
- 111 R. H. Hilton, Leicestershire 117.
- 112 Miller, Ely 93.
- 113 Donkin 110.
- 114 Lekai, The White Monks 308.
- 115 Ibid. 309.
- 116 Halcrow 349, 354.
- 117 Nellie Nielson. Economic Conditions on the Manors of Ramsey Abbey; A Dissertation (Philadelphia: Sherman and

Co., 1899) 70.

118 Miller, Ely 93.

119 R. H. Hilton, Leicestershire 21.

120 Knowles 41.

121 Nielson 69.

122 Owen 63.

123 Waites 35.

124 R. H. Hilton, Leicestershire 41.

125 Peter King. The Finances of the Cistercian Order in the Fourteenth Century (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1985) 29. This policy of self-sufficiency guided their economic practices during the thirteenth and early fourteenth century.

126 Mate 527.

127 Biddick 135.

128 Goodwin 62.

129 Graves 13.

130 Lekai, White Monks 213.

131 Ibid. 295.

132 Halcrow 347.

133 White 464.

134 Donkin 173-4.

135 Searle 410.

136 Ibid. 337.

137 Ibid. 135.

138 Lekai, White Monks 307.

139 M. M. Postan. The Medieval Economy and Society; An

Economic History of Britain in the Middle Ages (London: Penguin Books Limited, 1972) 95. Significantly, Postan explains that "ecclesiastical landlords did not form a single category" (91). In general, however the ecclesiastical leaders recognized their need for cash and sought income to supplement produce profits, thus they turned to rents and leasing.

¹⁴⁰ Barbara Harvey 148.

Annotated Bibliography

Biddick, Kathleen. The Other Economy; Pastoral Husbandry on a Medieval Estate. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. Unlike most historians studied in this analysis, Biddick focusses on consumption by the abbey, for "much of the worth of the estate rested on consumption and did not flow through the market" (p. 110).

Brandon, P. F. "Cereal Yields on the Sussex Estates of Battle Abbey During the Later Middle Ages." Economic History Review 25 (1972): 403-20. Brandon determines that Battle Abbey is representative of the medieval Benedictine monasteries. The Battle monks were successful due to efficiency in management and in agricultural production. He explains the attraction of leasing when compared to the costs of farming.

Briggs, Asa. A Social History of England. New York: The Viking Press, 1983. Briggs begins by describing feudalism and defines its various elements. He then outlines the evolution and decay of feudalism from the eleventh to seventeenth centuries.

Britnell, R.H. "The Proliferation of Markets in England, 1200-1349." Past and Present 34 (1981): 209-21. The general trend toward a cash economy based upon

markets is highlighted in Britnell's article.

Bryant, Arthur. The Medieval Foundation of England. New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1967. Bryant offers an overview of medieval English society and describes feudal obligations and structure.

Butler, Lionel and Chris Gieen-Wilson. Medieval Monasteries of Great Britain. London: Michael Joseph, 1979.

Most monks were farmers and were particularly noted for their wool production. Butler and Gieen-Wilson point out specific abbots who served significant roles in the daily operations of their abbeys. See map for the location of selected monastic sites.

de Vogue', Adalbert. The Rule of Saint Benedict; A Doctrinal and Spiritual Commentary. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1983. De Vogue' presents Saint Benedict's rule of conduct for monks and interprets its intentions.

Denney, A. H., ed. The Sibton Abbey Estates; Select Documents 1325-1509. Vol. 2. Suffolk: W. S. Cowell Limited, 1960. The documents which Denney selects describe the Cistercian granges as "self-contained agrarian units" (p. 15). The work's usefulness to my thesis is limited, but it did support the significance of monastic economic participation, and in particular monastic participation in the wool market.

Dobson, R. B. Durham Priory, 1400-50. Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 1973. Dobson focusses on Durham's relations with the lay community, also investigating the internal operations of the priory.

Donkin, R. A. The Cistercians: Studies in the Geography of Medieval England and Wales. Toronto; Pontifical

Institute of Mediaval Studies, 1978. Donkin brilliantly describes Cistercian organization, techniques, trends of settlement, farming, and innovation. His work illustrates that the monks had to work within "existing regional framework[s]," yet a pattern across the order is simultaneously discernible (p. 83).

Donnelly, James. Decline of the Lay Cistercian Brotherhood.

New York: Fordham University Press, 1949.

Donnelly affirms the distinction between Cistercian goals and those of the other orders; "the Cistercians, unlike the Benedictines, at first took care of their landed possessions without having recourse to the ordinary widespread manorial system, which involved peasants, services, and dues" (p. v). According to Donnelly, the lay brotherhood declined due to the difficulty of maintaining discipline on the distant granges. Also, the increased land possession by the abbeys made it difficult for lay brothers alone to meet the abbeys' needs. The Cistercian monks

eventually found that "secular leaseholders. . . could and did work the granges to the profit of themselves and of Cistercian abbeys" (p. 70. While the Cistercian use of *conversi* at first was more efficient, the monks discovered that hired labor was later necessary. Of course, the turn to leasing eliminated the need for the lay brothers.

Eckenrode, T. R. "The English Cistercians and Their Sheep During the Middle Ages." Citeaux Commentarii Cisterciensis. 24 (1973): 250-66. According to Eckenrode, the Cistercians improved upon traditional agricultural methods which led to their great economic success. The Cistercians in part were forced to surrender their autonomy in order to keep up with English society in general, yet their decision to sell surplus crops was also one of free choice.

Finberg, H. P. R. Tavistock Abbey; A Study in the Social and Economic History of Devon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951. Finberg describes in detail Tavistock Abbey's organization; each manor functioned as essentially an autonomous economic unit.

Fletcher, J. S. The Cistercians in Yorkshire. New York: The MacMillan Co., 1919. Fletcher analyzes the products which specific Cistercian abbeys in Yorkshire sold. He offers specific examples of the monks' innovation in agricultural production.

Fremantle, Anne. Age of Faith. New York: Time, Inc.,

1965. Fremantle defines the Middle Ages as the period from the fifth through the fifteenth centuries. She focusses upon the laborers, their daily lives and opportunities. She briefly describes the power and wealth of the churches and monasteries. Indeed, the fact that she makes this distinction is noteworthy.

Gilchrist, J. The Church and Economic Activity in the Middle Ages. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969.

The monks were innovative in the period of 1000 through 1500, a period marked by the development of capitalism, according to Gilchrist. The monks' use of credit in wool sales often harmed them financially when sheep disease, called scab, made it difficult to fulfill contracts (p. 103).

Goodwin, A. The Abbey of St. Edmundsbury. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1937. The St. Edmundsbury monks were firmly entrenched within the developing capitalistic economy.

Graves, Coburn V. "The Economic Activities of the Cistercians in Medieval England (1128-1307)." Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis. 12 (1957): 3-62. Like Donkin, Graves describes in detail the progressive economic spirit of the Cistercians and their motives for entering the market.

Halcrow, E. M. "The Decline of Demesne Farming on the Estates of Durham Cathedral Priory." Economic History Review. 7 (1955): 345-356. In his analysis of Durham Cathedral priory, Halcrow provides an excellent

description of the trend from demesne farming to leasing which is the basis of this thesis, claiming "by renting out the demesne the landlord avoided all the problems connected with labour management" (p. 348). Halcrow discusses the needs and reactions of monks and tenants to the changing economic structure.

Hanawalt, Barbara A. The Ties That Bound; Peasant Families in Medieval England. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. Hanawalt's book offers a detailed study of the daily lives of peasants. The church was a lasting institution and thus earned its control over the area inhabitants from marriage to death to regulation of the planting and harvest schedule.

Harvey, Barbara. Westminster Abbey and Its Estates in the Middle Ages. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977. Westminster Abbey controlled approximately 38,000 acres around 1300. Harvey examines the reactions of the monks to the changing economic situation--land consolidation, direct supervision of demesne land, and the turn from a reward to a rent system.

Harvey, P. D. A. A Medieval Oxfordshire Village; Cuxham 1240-1400. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965. Although Harvey does not focus on the church, the work clearly reveals its importance. In an archaeological examination of Cuxham, the church was the only identifiable remaining building (p. 25).

Hatcher, John and Edward Miller. Medieval England--Rural

Society and Economic Change 1086-1348. New York: Longman Group, Limited, 1978. Medieval England is shown to have been a center of mercantile activity. Miller and Hatcher have compiled excellent statistics which document the number of livestock owned by each abbey during certain years and once again the Cistercians stand out among lay and ecclesiastical landlords.

Hilton, R. H. The Economic Development of Some Leicestershire Estates in the 14th and 15th Centuries. London: Oxford University Press, 1947. Lay and monastic estates in Leicestershire are analyzed, and Hilton attempts to determine their relationship to the local and national economy. It is worthy to note that he emphasizes the gradual trend toward leasing as discussed in this paper.

---. "Medieval Market Towns and Simple Commodity Production." Past and Present 109 (1985): 3-23. Medieval market towns were centers of social and economic activity, and Hilton describes their emergence and the primary products which were produced.

Hollister, C. Warren. The Making of England 55 B.C. to 1399. Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Co., 1988. Hollister presents a concise overview of this period which allows for greater understanding of England's development from a primitive to an industrialized nation.

Hoskins, W. G. The Midland Peasant; The Economic and Social History of a Leicestershire Village. New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1965. Using the example of the county of Leicestershire, Hoskins depicts the feudal characters and structure, in addition to the effects of the Black Death upon the feudal system and economy.

Jessopp, Reverend Augustus. The Coming of the Friars and Other Historic Essays. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1910. Jessopp's book is most useful in understanding the internal organization of the monasteries. He also describes in general terms the thirteenth century feudal system and the hostility between monks and clergy which was the result of competition for tithes and resources.

Kamenka, Eugene and R. S. Neale. Feudalism, Capitalism and England. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975. Kamenka and Neale trace the general decay of feudalism and its replacement by capitalism.

Kershaw, Ian. Bolton Priory; The Economy of a Northern Monastery, 1286-1325. London: Oxford University Press, 1973. Kershaw analyzes Bolton Priory's internal economy, breaking it down into sales profits, rents, and tithes and feudal dues. Significantly, Kershaw concludes that the Bolton monks were concerned with short-term needs, "vary[ing] their estate exploitation according to the needs of the moment," including

- short-term leasing and direct demesne farming (p. 35).
- Knowles, Dom David. The Religious Orders in England. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1956. Knowles' work is one of the most comprehensive descriptions of the activities of the medieval monks. For additional information, see his Monastic Orders in England.
- Lekai, Louis J. The Cistercians; Ideals and Reality. Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1977. Lekai focusses on the Cistercians, but in this work he analyzes the forced Cistercian of Benedict's rule. According to Lekai, the Cistercians were in fact compelled to compromise their unrealistic principle of autonomy for survival (p. 283).
- . The White Monks; A History of the Cistercian Order. Okauchee, Wisconsin: Our Lady of Spring Bank, 1953. Lekai outlines the general history and development of the Cistercians, including their goals. He emphasizes the social importance of the monks: "it was through monasticism that religion exercised a direct formative influence on the unfolding character of Christian civilization" (p. 3). On a more local level, Lekai claims Cistercian prosperity also enhanced the prosperity of the cities in which the Cistercians sold their products (p. 221).
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Priory 1250-1400." Journal of British Studies. 23
(1984): 1-21. The Canterbury monks had "great
continuity of policy" (p. 3). As early as the late
1200's, entire manors were leased at fixed rents by
the monks, although this was the exception and not the
rule.

Miller, Edward. The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely; The Social
History of an Ecclesiastical Estate From the Tenth
Century to the Early Fourteenth Century. Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1951. At Ely, demesne
agriculture comprised fifty-percent of the gross
revenue in 1255. Miller describes the developing
system of transporting, buying, and selling. The
motives of the Ely monks were concerned with
consumption and markets

---."England in the 12th and 13th Centuries: An Economic
Contrast?" Economic History Review 24 (1971): 1-14.
The thirteenth century was characterized by a growing

population, the extension of settlement, increased investment, and intensified exchanges," and landlords looking to markets (p. 2). Lay and monastic methods of management were similar, and both were "willing to speculate, were hungry for profits, and were prepared so to organize their estates that profits were won" (p. 7).

Neilson, Nellie. Economic Conditions on the Manors of Ramsey Abbey; A Dissertation. Philadelphia: Sherman and Co., 1899. Ramsey Abbey represents a typical feudal manor, only slightly distinguished by its religious element. The Ramsey monks participated in the local economy, buying mainly from area villagers. Although Ramsey Abbey clearly followed religious tradition, fixed rents comprised a significant proportion of the abbey's income (p. 70).

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Power, Eileen. The Wool Trade in English Medieval History.

London: Oxford University Press, 1941. Power describes the development of the medieval wool trade, and she pertinently claims that "the founding of new monastic orders increased the [wool] supply" (p. 33).

Price, L. L. A Short History of English Commerce and Industry. London: Edward Arnold, 1900. Price examines in detail the transformation of English commerce from a feudal to a market system and then to reliance upon leasing; "in agriculture, the traditional routine of the manor gave way before the irresistible pressure of economic influences" (p. 113). Price shows how land consolidation for market production in turn diminished the need for villein services and led to dependence upon cash payments (p. 103).

Roehl, Richard. "Plan and Reality in a Mediaeval Monastic Economy: The Cistercians." Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History. ed. Howard L. Adelson. vol. 9 (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1972): 83-113. Roehl explains that the Cistercians had a specific economic plan which combined self-sufficiency with their preparation for the next world; the economy was a means to both. They labored to meet their own subsistence needs and also as devotion to God.

Searle, Eleanor. Lordship and Community; Battle Abbey and Its Banlieu 1066-1538. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974. Battle Abbey is seen as a

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briefly traces England's development during the period
1399 through 1688.
- Smith, R. A. L. Canterbury Cathedral Priory: A Study in
Monastic Administration. Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1969. By using the example of
Canterbury Cathedral Priory, Smith exhibits that the
typical Benedictine manor specialized in cereal
farming. Smith describes the motives behind
Canterbury's production: "just as the tempting bait of
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production in the thirteenth and early fourteenth
centuries, so did the same influence powerfully react
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146).
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Vol. 2. ed. H. E. Hallam. New York: Cambridge
University Press, 1988. This work effectively traces
the development of agriculture in England. Thirsk
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trends in prices and production output.

Thompson, A. Hamilton. English Monasteries. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913. Thompson focusses on physical layout of the monasteries.

Thomson, John A. F. The Transformation of Medieval England 1370-1529. New York: Longman Group Limited, 1983. The church was a formidable power in medieval England. The clergy were the "patrons of education" and participated in local merchant guilds (p. 348).

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White, Lynn Junior. Medieval Technology and Social Change Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962. Lynn White's work explains the medieval reliance upon agriculture and innovative techniques. He describes the developing three-field system which constituted the high farming era of demesne cultivation.

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Wrightson focusses on the period following this thesis, however he reveals the continued influence of the church. In Terling, the church dominated as a legal institution; ecclesiastical courts enforced conformity, morality, and church attendance and punished violators (p. 10).

Ziegler, Philip. The Black Death. New York: The John Day Co., 1969. Ziegler describes the plague itself and the social and economic situation which it created.