

Prayer in Peasant Communities

Viktor Aldrin



UNIVERSITY OF
GOTHENBURG



Limited doctoral dissertation edition

for my dear wife Emilia

Abstract

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY DISSERTATION IN RELIGIOUS
STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG, 11 NOVEMBER 2010

Title: Prayer in Peasant Communities: Ideals and Practices of Prayer in the Late Medieval Ecclesiastical Province of Uppsala, Sweden

Title in Swedish: Bön i bondesamhällen. Senmedeltida böneideal och bönepraktiker i den svenska kyrkoprovinsen

Author: Viktor Aldrin

Language: English with a Swedish summary

Department: Department of Literature, the History of Ideas and Religion, University of Gothenburg, PO Box 200, SE-405 30 Gothenburg, Sweden

ISBN: ——— (Limited dissertation edition)

Online full-text: <http://www.viktoraldrin.com>

THE AIM of this study has been to identify, explain and delineate praying among peasant communities in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, Sweden. Four aspects have been examined through the perspectives of ideals and practices, namely the standards of prayer, devotional prayer, prayer in times of need and prayer cultures. The standards

of prayer considered the physical and mental behaviour of the praying peasant woman or man. The most ordinary way to act during prayer was to stand with hands together, palm against palm, and to pray in the vernacular often using mental themes to enhance the devotion. Devotional prayers were foremost the three 'standard' prayers Pater-noster, Hail Mary and Apostolic Creed, and could be used separately or combined. Prayer in times of need was possibly considered a matter of praying to saints, something that cannot be proven to have been either practiced or recommended on other, ordinary occasions where God and the Virgin Mary were considered the proper recipients of prayer. A few authentic prayers exist that were possibly said by peasant women and men in connection with miracles and these show the ability to construct elaborate prayers and to propose businesslike agreements with saints. These three prayers were required knowledge for a peasant woman or man and were put to the test in order to become a godparent, and were therefore made available in the vernacular by the parish priests. Ways to maintain the prayer cultures were through mnemonic techniques, and indulgences stipulating and confirming prayers used or to be used in connection with certain churches, days and places within the churches. Name saints could also be used, since the person and the name saint were considered to have a special bond. Prayer could also be used as protection for the living; since a prayer was considered to generate either merits or favours from a celestial patron to his or her client. The prayer life of those belonging to peasant communities was both elaborate and full of nuances.

Keywords: prayer, devotion, peasantry, medieval, Middle Ages, laity, practical theology, Church history, theology, Sweden, Finland.



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
LITERATURE, HISTORY OF IDEAS, AND RELIGION

PRAYER IN PEASANT COMMUNITIES



UNIVERSITY OF
GOTHENBURG

VIKTOR ALDRIN
PRAYER IN PEASANT
COMMUNITIES

IDEALS AND PRACTICES OF PRAYER IN
THE LATE MEDIEVAL ECCLESIASTICAL
PROVINCE OF UPPSALA, SWEDEN

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY DISSERTATION IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES.
THE DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE, THE HISTORY OF IDEAS AND
RELIGION, UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG. MMX



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Author's preface



HIS STUDY is founded in my strong interest concerning how ordinary laypeople would have expressed their religiosity during the Middle Ages, a quest that started long ago with my first essay on Church History at Lund University. When I began this doctoral thesis, I intended to examine the religious

life, as a whole, of the laity, but I soon realised that one of the intended chapters, that of prayer, was to become the whole book, and that it was the majority of the population that I wanted to focus on – those belonging to peasant communities.

First of all, I wish to thank my two supervisors; my main supervisor Professor Bertil Nilsson and my secondary supervisor Dr Martin Berntson for their thorough reading of my many versions of this study and their critical yet constructive comments. I am also grateful to the Department of Literature, the History of Ideas and Religion at the University of Gothenburg that provided me with a postgraduate scholarship, my colleagues at the department, especially those at the seminar in Religious Studies and Theology, and to Dr. Tobias Hägerland (now at the Centre of Theology and Religious Studies at Lund University). The

staff at Gothenburg University Library has also been of much appreciated aid.

During my postgraduate studies, I have been able to present chapters of this study at the seminar of Church History at the Faculty of Divinity at Uppsala University and the seminars of Church History and Practical Theology at the Centre of Theology and Religious Studies at Lund University. I wish especially to thank the following persons in association with these seminars, namely Professor Emeritus Alf Härdelin, Dr Stina Fallberg Sundmark, both at Uppsala University; and Professor Stephan Borgehammar at Lund University.

In September 2007, I was guest scholar at the University of Helsinki in Finland, through a scholarship from the Nordic Centre of Medieval Studies and was mentored by Professor Tuomas Lehtonen, director of the Finnish Literature Society, who also invited me to present my study at their seminar, and Assistant Professor Jyrki Knuutila at the Faculty of Theology (and I also wish to express my gratitude to his wife Sirpa) who has given me invaluable information on the Finnish half of medieval Sweden. During my stay in Helsinki, I met a number of scholars who through their comments on my research project added many valuable thoughts, namely Assistant Professor Helena Edgren, director of the National Museum of Finland, Assistant Professor Mia Korpiola at the Faculty of Law, University of Helsinki, Assistant Professor Jussi Hanska at the Department of History and Philosophy, University of Tampere and Assistant Professor Juha Malmisalo at the Faculty of Theology, University of Helsinki.

In November 2008, I was able to visit the Faculty of Divinity at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom, through scholarships from Göteborgs Universitets Jubileumsfond, Kungliga Gustav Adolfsakademien för svensk folkkultur and Adelbertska stiftelsen as guest postgraduate student, under the mentorship of Professor Eamon Duffy, and was also invited to the seminar on Church History. During my stay in the United Kingdom, I also visited other scholars, who provided me with most valuable comments on my research, namely Professor Miri Rubin at the Department of History, Queen Mary, London University, Profes-

sor David d'Avray at the Department of History, University College of London and Professor Robert Swanson at the Department of History, University of Birmingham.

I also wish to thank Professor Jonas Carlquist at the Department of Contemporary Literature and Scandinavian Studies, Umeå University, who acted as an opponent at the penultimate version of this study, and Reverend Alistair Littlewood in Nottingham, UK, for his guidance in the English language and his many proofreadings of this study in its different stages and to Dr Laura Napran who proofread the manuscript in its final shape.

I wish to express my gratitude to my parents, Anders and Inger Johansson, and my brother Ludvig Johansson for their unyielding support during my many years of study and research. Finally, I wish to thank and dedicate this study to my dear wife Emilia whom I met because of my moving to Gothenburg to begin my postgraduate studies, and who has never failed to make me believe in the achieving of the impossible.

Soli deo gloria,
Gothenburg 16 June 2010

PART

I

The endeavour

CHAPTER I



THE PRAYER life of the peasantry in the Middle Ages is a subject few, if any, have written about, albeit this group of people constituted the vast majority of the population, and even though prayer constituted one of the most important features of its religiosity. This may have to do with a conclu-

sion often made on the subject: the lack of sources and thereby the impossibility of examination.

It is true, there are no first-hand sources by peasant women or men about their life in prayer, but there are no such first-hand sources from almost any other lay group of society either (except for a few surviving sources, such as private prayer books owned by the nobility or rich townspeople). A study on the prayer life of merchants would be equally complicated to do, as would probably also that of the nobility. In fact, the very nature of prayer life seems to be not to document it at all, or at least not by oneself. A study of lay prayer in the twenty-first century would be equally complex, since there would be practically no primary sources.

Through careful examination and analysis, fragments of the prayer life of those belonging to peasant communities can be found, but made by others than themselves, and combined they can present glimpses of this prayer life, albeit with an impressionistic touch and not in glaring detail.

One of the places in Europe where there are several sources surviving that can be used to study the prayer life of people living in peasant communities is Sweden and the area in the Middle Ages known as the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala. What makes this area suitable for such study is not mere chance, since certain sources have been preserved there, but also by the fact that those able to write considered it important to note information of the life in prayer of peasant women and men.

It is my hope that this study will make the religious life of the laity, and especially of the ordinary peasant women and men, come to life again.

Aim, definitions and delineation

The aim

The aim of this study is to identify, explain and delineate praying among peasant communities in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, Sweden.

What is prayer?

To begin with, how can prayer be defined, and especially the kind of prayer that was associated with the Christian Middle Ages?

Although prayer has a central role in Christian religion, it is still debated as to what it is, and how it can be defined. Many scholars have tried to make a 'final' definition of prayer, but it seems that the need to define prayer is a never-ending quest. Still, Christian people, all over the world, in all ages, have considered themselves praying and with some kind of conception of what it was that they were doing. A passage from Jean-Louis Chrétien exemplifies the complexity of understanding prayer:

Prayer is the religious phenomenon par excellence, for it is the sole human act that opens the religious dimension and never ceases to underwrite, to support, and to suffer this opening. Of course, there are other specifically religious phenomena, but to their conditions of possibility prayer always belongs. If we were unable to address our speech to God or the gods, no other act could intend the divine. Thus sacrifice is an act that is essentially distinct, at least at first glance, from prayer, but one could not imagine sacrifice without prayer in some fashion or other accompanying it and consult it as such. With prayer, the religious appears and disappears.¹

According to Chrétien, prayer is the cement of religion, since it is the language of communication between humans and the divine. Though worship and sacrifice are distinct features of the Christian religion, these cannot be used to express the intention of the doer without prayer. The

1 Chrétien, 'The Wounded Word', p. 147.

term prayer is, in this sense, both something explicit and implicit, something that makes other religious actions work and function.

A possible solution to the problem of definition of prayer is to create a pragmatic definition, in order to outline the boundaries of prayer. The definition, or ideal-type I use in this study is, therefore, strictly focused on prayer within the medieval, Christian context: *Prayer is the conscious effort of people to communicate with non-physical powers believed to be good, such as God, angels or saints.*² It is important to remember that this understanding of prayer is constructed from a modern point of view, and could therefore be understood as a concept of the medieval concepts of prayer.³ The focus of the pragmatic definition is communication, at least the effort of communicating. But one should not be misled by this definition and consider only words as communication. According to Philip and Carol Zaleski:

[P]rayer is action that communicates between human and divine realms, prayer is speech, but much richer than speech alone. That is to say: Prayer is speech, but much richer than speech alone. It is a peculiar kind of speech that acts, and a peculiar kind of action that speaks to the depths and heights of being. Much of the time, prayer seems to be nothing but talk: praising, cajoling, or pleading with God; sending messages to guardian angels or tutelary spirits; appealing to benevolent cosmic powers. But to pray is also to act. [...] Prayer is at once spiritual and visceral: it stems from heart and gut as well as head. Prayer is a state of being – when we pray, we are ‘in prayer’, and when we communicate with spiritual beings, we are ‘in communion’ with them – but prayer is also empathetically a state of becoming, a dynamic movement, an incursion into spiritual realms [...] Prayer has been compared to a siege, a storm, a conflagration, a nosegay, a picnic in paradise. We may also liken it to an athletic event, such as the hurling of a javelin: a shaft of praise, petition, or penance aimed at a higher power. [...] And those who pray must try their hardest, so that prayer can make them fit.⁴

2 I wish to express my gratitude to Professor David d’Avray, for his help in constructing this ideal-type of prayer.

3 The definition of prayer is also in line with Encyclopædia Britannica’s definition of prayer: ‘Prayer: an act of communication by humans with the sacred or holy – God, the gods, the transcendent realm, or supernatural powers’ (Hamman, ‘Prayer’).

4 Zaleski and Zaleski, *Prayer*, p. 6.

Whether or not God exists – and answers – is not within the boundaries of this study to consider. It should, however, be remembered that those who are being examined believed in the existence of God, and that God answered prayers. In their view, the connection was mutual.

Praying as communication can be performed and understood in several aspects. Although no complete list of different kinds of prayer exists, lists to show the broad variety of prayer can be produced. One of the many who has tried to describe the different kinds of prayer is Thomas Aquinas, appropriate not only for his ambition to structure matters on faith but also for his being medieval and contemporary with this study, who, according to Ludvig Schütz, speaks of prayer in interlinking ways, making it difficult to distinguish different types of prayer, separate from each other.⁵ A possible solution to differentiate different aspects of prayer is to construct yet another pragmatic definition, or, as Philip and Carol Zaleski put it: ‘Conventional wisdom divides prayer into a number of categories: petition, confession, adoration, sacrifice, intercession, contemplation, thanksgiving, vows and so on. But these classifications

5 ‘c) Gebet: [...] Hierher gehören als Arten: **1. oratio bona** sive perfecta (loan. 16. 6 b; Eph. 6. 5) = das gute oder vollkommene (vgl. o. perfecta *sub b*) Gebet. **2. o. communis** & o. singularis (th. II. II. 83. 12 c) = das gemeinsame oder allgemeine und das Einzelgebet (communis quidem oratio est, quae per ministros ecclesiae in personas totius fidelis populi Deo offertur, . . . Oratio vero singularis est, quae offertur a singulari persona cuiuscumque sive pro se sive pro aliis orantis, ib.; vgl. o. privata). **3. o. dominica** (orat. pr.; comp. 2. 3) = das Gebet des Herrn. **4. o. expressa** & o. interpretativa (4 sent. 45. 3. 3 c) = das in Worten ausgedrückte Gebet und das als Gebet Ausgelegte. **5. o. exterior** sive vocalis & o. interior sive mentalis sive mentis (th. II. II. 83. 12 c; 4 sent. 15. 4. 1. 1 ob. 4 & ad 2 & 2. 1 c) = das äußere oder mündliche und das innere oder geistige Gebet. **6. o. impetrativa**, o. meritoria & o. satisfactoria (th. II. II. 12 c, 15 c & 16 ad 2; 4 sent. 15. 4. 7. 1 ob. 1 & 2 ob. 1 a; pot. 6. 9 ad 5) = das etwas erlangende, das verdienstliche und das genugtuende Gebet. **7. o. interior**, → o. exterior. **8. o. interpretativa**, → o. expressa. **9. o. mentalis**, → o. exterior. **10. o. mentis**, ≈ . **11. o. meritoria**, → o. impetrativa. **12. o. perfecta**, → o. bona. **13. o. privata** & o. publica (th. II. II. 187. 3 ad 3; 4 sent. 15. 4. 2. 1 c; 1 Cor. 14. 3) = das private und das öffentliche Gebet (una est privata, quando scilicet quis orat in seipso et pro se, alia publica, quando quis orat coram populo et pro aliis, 1 Cor. 14. 3; vgl. o. communis). **14. o. publica**, → o. privata. **15. o. satisfactoria**, → o. impetrativa. **16. o. singularis**, → o. communis. **17. o. vocalis**, → o. exterior.’ (Schütz, *Thomas-Lexikon*, s.v. ‘Oratio, c) Gebet’, (bold and italics by Schütz)).

disguise the complexity of the world of prayer.⁶ The differentiation of prayer types can therefore make a study of prayer more simple than it should be, since different types of prayer can be used simultaneously and sometimes also go beyond the boundaries of classification.

Peasant communities in late medieval Sweden

The examination is qualitative in nature, and the laity in peasant communities is the focus for this study.⁷ The vast majority of the population (between 90% and 95%) in late medieval Sweden lived in family households, tilling the soil.⁸ This group (if such a heterogeneous category can be understood as a group) of people has commonly been studied, but their religious sentiment has only rarely been studied. It has left very little behind for researchers to examine, whereas groups such as the nobility or the townspeople have left not only traces of their religious life but also prayer books and descriptions of their own thoughts concerning this matter. If one was to include all lay groups of medieval society, the groups with the majority of sources would be well-examined, and the majority of the population, with only few sources remaining, speaking about them, would barely not be audible. That is why I have chosen to focus on the peasantry.

What constituted this group – if it was a group or category at all during the Middle Ages? According to Phillip R. Schofield, a fruitful definition could speak only of peasant communities as a contrast to urban communities. Schofield concludes that these so-called village or peasant communities had great variations within, from poor farmers unable to

6 Zaleski and Zaleski, *Prayer*, p. 6.

7 In order to avoid repetition and to enhance the readability of this study the term 'person belonging to a peasant community' will be the correct term to use, but will be varied by the terms 'peasantry', 'peasant person' and 'peasant women and men', but these terms are intended only to be used as literary replacements.

8 This is an estimated figure for the beginning of the sixteenth century, made by Eva Österberg (Österberg, 'Swedish Peasant Society', p. 541). The 'real' figure should, however, have shifted, due to the effect which the agricultural crisis and plagues had on the population between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. For a broader analysis of these shifts, see: Vahtola, 'Population and settlement'.

travel to wealthy small-holders, making pilgrimages and visiting markets outside the local area.⁹ A decent definition or ideal-type of peasant community would be *a community of households whose menfolk do full-time manual agricultural labour*.¹⁰ This includes not only the peasant families but all those working in connection with these household communities. It is also important to remember that one person could belong to different communities within the large community, such as guilds and joint harvest groups.¹¹

The label 'peasant' is seldom used in the sources examined, when people associated with peasant communities are described. This has to do with norms, and that the 'peasant occupation' is understood as the ordinary, and thus, only deviations from this are explicitly mentioned. This lack of such sources makes a study of the peasantry complicated, since one has to make approximations as to whether a person was a peasant or not, if no description is made. Such approximations could be descriptions of the person or people associating them with farms or other rural contextualities. Nonetheless, I am of the opinion that the use of approximations (as to whether a person belonged to a peasant community or not) might be the only way of creating an examination of a peasantry or peasant communities.

In order to set the context of those examined in this study, some elucidation is needed about the special conditions of the peasantry of medieval Sweden that differ from those applied to other peasantries throughout Europe at this time. A common generalisation of different agricultural principles is to separate the peasantry east of the river Elbe from that west of the Elbe. In the western regions, the peasantry worked on small farms and they often owned the land they used, but there were also large groups of peasants who rented their land or worked directly for a landowner. Even if peasants were free, they did not control their

9 Schofield, *Peasant and Community in Medieval England*, pp. 5–8.

10 I wish to express my gratitude to Professor David d'Avray, for his help in constructing this ideal-type of peasant communities.

11 For an overview of the late medieval Swedish peasantry, see: Myrdal, *Jordbrukets historia*, ii, pp. 111–201.

own land completely, but were under the rule of the local aristocracy. East of the Elbe, including Denmark, farming was often organised in large farming communities under the rule of rich landowners such as the aristocracy. Peasants were not free to move, and worked together on larger farms than their western counterparts.¹²

This was, however, not the case for Sweden during the Middle Ages. In Sweden, the local aristocracy was small in number and, mostly, peasants controlled their own land. Most of the peasants owned their own farms, and were known as freehold peasants (Swedish: *skattebönder*).¹³ They paid tax to the king and not to the aristocracy. Those who did not own their own land were known as tenant peasants (Swedish: *landbor*), and rich farmers or the nobility owned their land. Still, they were free to move. Often, in medieval texts, peasants did not define themselves as either taxed peasants or tenant peasants, but simply as peasants (Swedish: *bönder*), and no general differences can be found in the size of freehold and tenant farms.¹⁴ Moreover, in law at the local things (Swedish: *ting*), all peasants were treated alike; no differences were made between tenant and taxed peasants. Since, as mentioned previously, many peasants owned their own land, while the aristocracy was weak and small in Swe-

12 Rösener, *The Peasantry of Europe*, pp. 104–24.

13 According to Eljas Orrman, in the 1520s and 1530s, the estimated distribution of landed property in Scandinavia, could be described as follows (in per cent):

Realm and region	Freehold	Crown	Nobility	Church
Danish realm	c. 15	10–12	35–40	35–40
Norwegian realm				
<i>Norway</i>	30	7	15	48
<i>Iceland</i>	53	2	–	45
<i>Føroyar</i>	c. 50	–	–	c. 50
Swedish realm*	(62)	(4)	(17)	(17)
<i>Sweden</i>	45	6	24	25
<i>Finland</i>	93	1	3	3

* The Swedish Kingdom as a whole.

(Table from: Orrman, 'The Condition of the Rural Population', p. 583).

14 Orrman, 'The Condition of the Rural Population', p. 589; Harrison, *Uppror och allianser*, pp. 12–14.

den, taxes to pay wars were acquired directly from the peasantry by the crown. The peasantry in their turn wanted to participate in the ruling of the country in exchange for their taxes. Therefore the peasantry was part of the governance of the country in a direct way, and had a major influence on their situation.

This was a major difference compared with the situation of the peasantry elsewhere in Europe.¹⁵ According to Paul Freedman, the European peasant was most often imagined as ‘filthy, subhuman, and comical, the reverse of the civilized and courtly’ by the writing élites, although their simple living standards and hard labour were sometimes considered to be in line with the Christian ideals of poverty.¹⁶ This does not seem to have been the image of peasants in Sweden during the Middle Ages. In the sources from this ecclesiastical province, peasants were the normality, and therefore seldom described. In miracle stories, where peasants are explicitly depicted, they are described in ‘respectful’ manners and without any comments on their possible subhuman behaviour. Whether this reflects a major difference between the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala and continental Europe, or whether the belittling was practised in these geographical areas as well, but not in the surviving sources, is beyond this investigation to grasp.

15 Orrman, ‘The Condition of the Rural Population’, pp. 600–5.

16 Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant*, pp. 157, 208–23.

The ecclesiastical province of Uppsala



Figure 1. The ecclesiastical province of Uppsala¹⁷

¹⁷ Illustration by Viktor Aldrin.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the concept of the geographical entity known as Sweden shifted. It is unwise to use later inventions such as 'nations' to define the country of Sweden before the reign of Gustav Eriksson (Vasa) in the sixteenth century. From the year 1397 until the first half of the sixteenth century, the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Norway and Sweden were united in the Kalmar union.¹⁸ Nonetheless, during this period, people did define themselves as Swedish, Danish or Norwegian, partly in a nation-state sense, but more in a regional sense.¹⁹ The instability of the Kalmar union and the several wars during the medieval period, creates the need for a more stable geographic delineation for this study, and it will therefore be delineated by the borders of the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala.

The Western Church was organised into ecclesiastical provinces and these provinces tended not to change due to wars between countries. The ecclesiastical provinces came, therefore, to have the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of areas belonging to different countries. This is the case of the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala.

It consisted of the archdiocese of Uppsala, with six suffragan bishoprics (here listed in alphabetical order): Linköping, Skara, Strängnäs, Turku (Åbo), Västerås and Växjö. The dioceses were all founded between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries and were first under the primacy of the archbishop of Lund in Denmark. The ecclesiastical province's borders were static and did not change throughout the Middle Ages, although several geographical areas changed nationality due to the many Nordic wars. For example, parts of the geographical provinces (Swedish: *landskap*) of Jämtland and Härjedalen were under Norwegian rule, but were in the diocese of Uppsala, and the geographical province of Gotland, which was under the diocese of Linköping, came under Danish rule in the fourteenth century, but remained in the diocese of Linköping

18 The Kalmar union was a personal union, where the three kingdoms of Sweden, Denmark and Norway appointed one royal regent for all the countries, but each country was ruled, in practice, by a council. Cf. Olesen, 'Inter-Scandinavian relations'; Schüćk, 'The political system'; Guřtafsson, *Gamla riken, nya stater*.

19 Cf. Guřtafsson, *Gamla riken, nya stater*, pp. 275–320.

and the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala. When this study begins, in the middle of the fourteenth century, the seven dioceses of the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala were fully established.

Although it is complicated to speak of major language differences between Danish, Norwegian and Swedish the period of time under study throughout the ecclesiastical province, one geographical area stands out: the diocese of Turku (Åbo) with its population of Swedish- and Finnish-speaking groups (some of them were probably also bilingual).²⁰ While Swedish, Danish and Norwegian were languages used in writing, both for juridical purposes and to create a literature, Finnish remained a non-literary language, as far as we know, until the sixteenth century and even then, the transformation into a fully literary language as well as a spoken language took several centuries. The first written text in Finnish is *ABCkiria* [an *ABC-book*], created by the Finnish Lutheran reformer Michael Agricola in the year 1543. This situation may have been because the ruling elite of the diocese of Turku (Åbo) was Swedish-speaking, and because all official documents were written in either Latin or Swedish, rather than Finnish. The ecclesiastical province of Uppsala was bordered in the south by the ecclesiastical province of Lund, in the west by the ecclesiastical province of Nidaros (Trondheim), and in the east by the Russian branch of the Greek-Orthodox Church in Karelia. The majority of the Finnish-speaking population lived, probably, in the northern and eastern parts of the diocese of Turku (Åbo), while the Swedish-speaking population lived in the southwestern parts of the area.²¹

The late Middle Ages

This study focuses on the late medieval period and begins with the arrival of the Black Death in Sweden in the year 1349/1350. It ends in the

20 The border between the dioceses of Uppsala and Turku (Åbo) was never defined during the Middle Ages and Finnish-speaking people might also have existed within the diocese of Uppsala, although no evidence of such exists today.

21 The territory around the city of Turku (Åbo) was mostly bilingual, while the north was only partially inhabited at all.

middle of the 1520s, with the election of Gustav Eriksson Vasa in the year 1523 as king of Sweden and the beginning of a new era, the process of transforming medieval Sweden into an early modern state with a Lutheran confession.

The reason I specifically chose the late Middle Ages is that my study is focused on people living in a Christian context that was relatively stable. Mental frameworks (French: *mentalité*) are, however, known to change only slowly, and people living in this period did not label themselves as early modern (or medieval) and it was long time before the Lutheran reformation began to affect the mentality of the parishioners. But before the end of the period will be discussed further, the beginning of the time delineation will be explained.

In Scandinavia, the Middle Ages are usually defined as having 'begun' in the tenth or eleventh century, with the early Christian missionaries (in the ninth century) and the baptisms of the Scandinavian kings and the Christianisation of the region. This categorisation has recently been criticised by scholars of history and archaeology, such as Dick Harrison who argues that the four centuries before the millennium shift should be understood as medieval, and part of European medieval society, albeit less organised and under pagan faith.²² The process of Christianisation took, however, a long time and it was not until about the thirteenth century that the whole society, from top to bottom, was Christian. There are, however, few sources left from this period, especially sources describing the religious life of the laity. From the fourteenth century, the source material expands and this period is often categorised as the late Middle Ages of Scandinavia, where the culture, theology, art and science flourished and prominent individuals, such as St Birgitta and Magister Mattias (the father confessor of St Birgitta), had major influences on the religious ideas of Scandinavia and possibly even beyond. Several churches were built during the fourteenth century, and the population expanded.

22 Harrison, 'Författarens förord'.

But in the years 1349 and 1350, everything changed. The Black Death struck Scandinavia for the first time.²³ The Scandinavian population was reduced by almost 40 percent (60 percent in Norway) in the twenty years following the first pandemic and almost all church constructions stopped that year (and were resumed decades later). This 'decline' was, however, not only due to the Black Death but also to the agricultural crisis that began before the Black Death. What made the most impact on this major change in the mid-fourteenth century is still debated, but all scholars agree that something major occurred around the 1350s, with enormous consequences for the population of the Scandinavian countries.²⁴

I have chosen to start my investigation from about the year 1350 and the drastic change in population and culture.²⁵ There are almost no sources for this study available earlier than the year 1350, whereas sources after this year become more common. It can also be assumed that, the Black Death had an influence on the religious life of the peasants and the content of prayer.²⁶ Thus, this year can be used as a time marker for my study.

My examination of the prayer life of the peasantry ends in the middle of the 1520s with the election of Gustav Eriksson (Vasa) as king in the year 1523. From the early years of his reign, Sweden was transformed into a Lutheran, early-modern state. Still, his coronation in the year 1528 was according to Catholic customs. It is, however, still debated among

23 For an overview of the Black Death and Scandinavia, see: Myrdal, *Digerdöden, pestvägor och ödeläggelse*; Harrison, *Stora döden*; Benedictow, *Plague in the Late Medieval Nordic Countries*. Norway in the year 1349, Denmark in the year 1350, and Sweden in the year 1350. Strangely, there is no evidence that the diocese of Turku (Åbo) was infected in the first pandemic, although the later plague, in the fifteenth century, occurred several times Vahtola, 'Population and settlement', pp. 561–8.

24 Myrdal, *Digerdöden, pestvägor och ödeläggelse*, pp. 243–5; Vahtola, 'Population and settlement', pp. 572–6.

25 The initial idea was to study the period between two great changes: the Black Death and the Lutheran reformation (beginning in the sixteenth century), but as my examination continued, I have realised that these changes were minor in the religious life of the laity.

26 Cf. Hanska, *Strategies of Sanity and Survival*, pp. 18–23.

scholars as to when the reformation took place and how long this process took. The Diet in Västerås in the year 1527 has been regarded as the first, formal step towards a Lutheran confession in Sweden²⁷ and the formal decision was made at the grand synod in Uppsala, in the year 1593. The process of reformation began earlier, however, and took long time to end before the population as a whole was Lutheran in its confession.²⁸

It is plausible to speak of a few reformed members of the élite and a Catholic majority from about the middle of the 1520s in Sweden, according to Magnus Nyman.²⁹ After Gustav Eriksson was elected king in the year 1523, he appointed Laurentius Andreae as secretary of state. Andreae was, at the time, known for his Lutheran-influenced ideas, although it cannot be concluded that he, in the year 1523, was fully Lutheran in his confession. Another promoter of Lutheran-influenced ideals was Olavus Petri, who studied with Martin Luther in Wittenberg, appointed in the year 1524 as secretary of the capital city of Stockholm, and admitted to preach in the city's largest church, St Nicholas, where Nicolaus Stecker, a German with Lutheran sympathies, was made parish priest through the actions of the king. Gustav Eriksson (Vasa) also appointed Olaus Petri's fellow student from Wittenberg, Olov Bröms as being responsible for state finances, and the German Wulf Gyler as his personal secretary. To fight this supposed spread of Lutheran ideas, the bishop Hans Brašk started to print books in the city of Söderköping in the year 1523 with the aim of promoting Catholic faith as a response to the increasing influence of Lutheran ideas.³⁰ Bishop Brašk was forced by the king in the year 1527 to close down his printing house, and printing became a royal monopoly. It should, however, be remembered, that the cause of the king's actions were probably not primarily religious, but economic, since he had borrowed large sums of money from the Hanseatic League to finance his struggle for the regency of Sweden. Accord-

27 Andrén, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria*, iii, pp. 17–58.

28 Cf. Malmstedt, *Bondetro och kyrkoro*.

29 Nyman, 'Den tidiga reformationen i Sverige'.

30 Nyman, 'Den tidiga reformationen i Sverige', p. 69.

ing to Magnus Nyman, Olaus Petri, Nicolaus Stecker, Wulf Gyler and Olov Bröms formed a small, incoherent group of Lutheran sympathisers, close to the king.³¹

This study focuses on the lower strata of the population and it is well known that this strata was not always keen to adapt to the new religious ideals of the Lutheran reformers. It is, however, not my intention to study the shift to Lutheran Protestantism. In order to strive for a consistent perspective, this study will end at the time when groups or influential individuals in the society adopted the Lutheran confession, and also the formation of an early-modern state by the king. For the sake of coherence, it seems better to end the study just before these changes began to occur.

The main questions

My four main questions that will be analysed and answered from the perspectives of both ideal-prayer and practices are:

- 1. What were the standards of prayer?*
- 2. What prayers were used for devotional purposes?*
- 3. How was prayer expressed in times of need?*
- 4. What prayer cultures existed?*

Earlier research

Constructing an overview of earlier research in the prayer life of the peasantry in the Middle Ages is easy so far as Scandinavia is concerned, since relatively few books and articles focus primarily on the issue of lay prayer (most studies of medieval religiosity that deal with prayer concentrate on the clergy). Of prayer among the peasantry, no examination of such a kind exists at all to my knowledge. This overview of earlier research is therefore lacking depth due to the scanty research on lay prayer

³¹ Nyman, 'Den tidiga reformationen i Sverige', p. 69.

in general, and will only focus on lay prayer, first in a broad European context, and then in a narrower Scandinavian context.

It seems that lay prayer life, in general or for the elite of the population, has been most investigated in Anglo-Saxon countries, but there are also several examples of studies from continental Europe, such as France and Germany. First, two studies of prayer in general may be mentioned, as a background to the subject of prayer studies. The first, and oldest, is Friedrich Heiler's *Das Gebet: Eine Religionsgeschichtliche und Religionspsychologische Untersuchung* [*The Prayer: A Study in the History and Psychology of Religion*].³² It has been followed by several similar studies, of which one of the most recent is Philip and Carol Zaleski's *Prayer: A History*.³³ These two studies compare and examine the nature and role of prayer in human cultures generally. Since this examination is focused on lay prayer life in the Middle Ages, I will mainly concentrate here on examinations which are similar to this doctoral thesis.

Among the few books that deal with lay prayer along the same lines as my own study, albeit on the higher stratum of lay society, for other countries, are the doctoral dissertation *Popular Prayers in Late Medieval and Reformation France* by Virginia Reinburg,³⁴ and *Marking the Hours: English People and their Prayers 1240–1570* by Eamon Duffy.³⁵ Reinburg's study focuses on four aspects of lay prayer life, namely: the books of hours and their owners; prayer to the Virgin Mary and saints; liturgy and the laity; and the relationship between superstition and orthodoxy in the use of prayers. Her sources are mainly from the nobility and townspeople, and her results, therefore, focus on the religious life of these groups, although she certainly maintains that several of her conclusions can be applied to the whole laity and not just to the elite.

32 Heiler, *Das Gebet*. All translations into English within [square brackets] are made by me, if no other citation is mentioned. For Latin passages, a Latinist friend whom wishes to remain anonymous has aided me.

33 Zaleski and Zaleski, *Prayer*.

34 Reinburg, *Popular Prayers in Late Medieval and Reformation France* (Virginia Reinburg's doctoral dissertation is not published and is not held by any libraries. I have, however, been granted a copy by the author, through ProQuest publishers).

35 Duffy, *Marking the Hours*.

Duffy's examination of the prayers of the English people is a study of prayer books, mostly owned by the nobility, and derives from a series of lectures he has given on the subject. Though the study concerns the elite, several conclusions made by him will have consequences for this study, as will be shown later in the following chapters here. Two important books, also to be mentioned in this presentation are *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* by Ronald C. Finucane³⁶ and *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* by Don C. Skemer.³⁷ Finucane's study focuses on the relationship between prayer and miracles. The need for healing at one of the many relic shrines in medieval England was a major feature of the religious life of the laity, and prayer was the method of communicating this need. Skemer's book is a study of how texts were used on amulets, to make these amulets more powerful. The most common texts to use were parts of prayers and the names of the Trinity. These amulets were understood as a means to receive the favour of God as a protection against evil.

The subject of prayer among peasant communities is, as previously mentioned, non-existent, and the prayer life of the laity in general has drawn only a little attention in the Scandinavian countries, and no monograph has been devoted to the subject,³⁸ although the religious life of the laity (in general, and not the peasantry in particular) is treated in chapters and small essays every now and then. Often, the perspective is from above, of the priests and ordained, and not from below, from the laity itself. Examples of such essays and chapters can be found in the essay *En mässa för folket? [A Mass for the People?]* by Sven-Erik Pernler,³⁹ who writes of the lay participation during mass, and in Stina Fallberg Sundmark's doctoral thesis *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse: Sockenbudet i svensk medeltida och reformatorisk tradition [Visits for the Sick and Preparation for the Death: The Visitation of the Sick in Swedish*

36 Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*.

37 Skemer, *Binding Words*.

38 Two studies have been made on the prayer books that belonged to nuns at Vadstena Abbey: Hedström, *Medeltidens svenska bönböcker*; Estborn, *Evangeliska svenska bönböcker*.

39 Pernler, 'En mässa för folket?.'

Medieval and Reformation Traditions]⁴⁰ where the laity's prayers when visiting the sick are analysed.

Studies focused on the prayer life of the peasantry or the lower stratum of society are, up to this point, non-existent. This doctoral thesis is intended to fill that gap.

Disposition

This study is structured into three parts. *Part I* focuses on the framework, tools and sources for the study. In the first chapter, *The endeavour*, the aim, definitions and delineations of the study are presented along with the main questions and earlier research. The second chapter, *The realisation*, is devoted to the perspectives, theoretical framework and methods constructed and used for detection, examination and analysis. The third chapter, *The sources*, presents and looks into the sources used for the study, both non-written and written. *Part II* concentrates on the examination and analysis of the sources. In the fourth chapter, *Standards of prayer*, the right postures followed by the right words, intentions and occasions are examined. The fifth chapter, *Devotional prayers*, focuses on the three 'standard' prayers, the Paternoster, Hail Mary and the Apostolic Creed, and additional prayers such as the name of Jesus as prayer, Marian devotion and prayers to say during mass, lauds and vespers. In the sixth chapter, *Prayer in times of need*, saint as recipients of prayer, individual and personal prayers cited in miracle stories are analysed together with context and comparison, and questions on authority and authorship of these cited prayers. The seventh chapter, *Prayer culture*, examines the transmission of and the maintaining of prayer culture, continues with the issue of prayer vs. magic and ends with an excursus on possible prayer postures in graves. *Part III* binds the study together with the final, seventh chapter, *Summary*, and ends with an *epilogue* concerning the conditions for studies of prayer in peasant communities. For the Swedish readers, a brief *Sammanfattning på svenska* [*summary in Swedish*] is provided after the epilogue.

40 Sundmark, *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse*, pp. 91–126.

The realisation

CHAPTER 2



THE WAYS in which this study is made are treated in this chapter. Since this is the first time a study such as this has been made, the focus should be on the perspectives, theories and methods which make it possible. Old ideas have been re-organised and used in new ways and new methods have been

developed to find information in sources often considered exhausted. I have also used a theoretical framework both to explain how the process of research has been done, and to explain the use of traditional theories in a seemingly unorthodox way.

The aspects of realisation treated in this chapter are ideals and practices as perspectives, reflexive methodology as theoretical framework, and methods.

Ideals and practices as perspectives

In order to organise the examination of the prayer life of the peasantry, I have divided the analysis into two perspectives or approaches, namely ideals and practices. Through these two perspectives, not only the intention is examined but also that which surrounded and constituted the context in which prayers were said and thought. What then are ideals and practices of prayer, and how can these two perspectives be used to enhance a study of prayer in the Middle Ages?

The ideal of prayer was the thought of perfection, the perfect prayer performed by a layperson such as a peasant woman or man. *Via perfectionis* [*The road of perfection*], as an ideal for lay religiosity during the Middle Ages, was to imitate monastic life in the ordinary life. This could, according to Bengt Ingmar Kilström, be achieved by practising and following the ten commandments, the seven acts of mercy, the seven sacraments, the seven virtues, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and the eight blessings.¹ Two levels of ideals can be chiselled out among prayer ideals, namely achievable ideals and ideals beyond realisation. Belonging to the first category are all ideals that the praying peasant could anticipate and make his or her own, such as how to say the words of a prayer, and what prayer to say on which occasion. To the latter category belong the monastic ideals that influenced the ideals for the laity. True perfection could possibly be achieved only through the religious orders and their way of living, and were thereby somewhat distant for the peasantry. Still, these ideals could sometimes be rendered into something achievable, such as to pray the Lauds and Vespers each holy day instead of praying all of the seven monastic hours each and every day, and with 'standard' prayers in the vernacular instead of the Psalter in Latin.

The practices of prayer were not only the adaptation of prayer ideals, but also the construction of ways to act and behave during prayer. It is

¹ Kilström, *Den kateketiska undervisningen*, pp. 235–311.

important not to speak of one practice or praxis that can be examined, but of several parallel and often overlapping practices. These practices can be seen as arrays of action, made not only by peasants but also by the surrounding environment and catastrophes that the people had to react and adapt to. At least three aspects of practices can be identified in this study, namely: the relation between individuals and the collective in creating and maintaining practices; the way in which practices were embodied; and the relation between humans and ‘nonhumans’ (such as diseases, catastrophes, accidents, the seasons of the year, the harvest and livestock) as agents of practices.² Considered together, these aspects of a practice perspective can bring vital information about prayer practices. Some of these practices were shared by the peasantry only, while others were shared by all living in the peasant communities (both peasant women and men, and the parish priest) and some were even shared among the whole population regardless of social status or religious status. Practices of prayer are therefore often complicated to define and examine, but as will be presented later, these can be found and constituted as a major part of the prayer life of the peasantry.

Although it is my intention to separate these two perspectives as much as possible in order to achieve contrasts and models of interpretation, it must be remembered that neither ideals nor practices can exist without the other and they interact with each other through arrays of action. Berndt Hamm and Thomas Lentjes have pinpointed this relation in the late medieval context:

It is in the interplay between ideal and practice, between intention and reality, that the distinctive character of late medieval devotion reveals itself: ideals draw towards practice, practice changes the ideals, ideals shape the practice and practice makes ideals break apart.³

2 Cf. Schatzki ‘Introduction: Practice Theory’; and also Hanska, *Strategies of Sanity and Survival*.

3 ‘Im Wechselspiel von Ideal und Praxis, von Intention und Wirklichkeit zeigt sich so die Eigenart spätmittelalterlicher Frömmigkeit: Ideale drängen zur Praxis, Praxis verändert die Ideale, Ideale gestalten die Praxis und Praxis lässt Ideale scheitern.’ (Hamm and Lentjes, ‘Vorwort’, pp. vii–viii).

Reflexive methodology as a theoretical framework

Theories shape the way research and interpretation is done, and has been a vital part of historical research in recent decades. There is, however, a major problem with historical studies and modern theories, since these theories most often were constructed to reflect contemporary issues. This is a problem for research done on periods other than that for which the theory was constructed. Theories are confined within their date and context of construction, and within these boundaries they work, as they should. The problem arises when these theories are used on times and contexts different from those initially intended. This should, however, not be understood as a rejection of theories for historical research, but as a critique against limitations of the examination in order to 'fit' within the borders of the theory and its presuppositions.

A solution to this complexity, is to use theories from a different angle; as tools to enhance interpretation, but not as grand theories determining the study as a whole. This makes theories tools in a toolbox for the historical researcher to use, but not limited by them. Doing this requires careful examination and reflexion concerning the process, in other words, a meta-theory of how theories can be used. If applied to a study, this approach is never explicitly mentioned as the reason for certain conclusions, but the implicit reason behind the research process.

One such meta-theory is reflexive methodology or reflexive research, a pragmatic approach to abstract theories, developed in the late twentieth century and the early twenty-first century by scholars such as Mats Alvesson, Joanne Duberley, Cynthia Hardy, Bill Harley, Phil Johnson and Kaj Sköldbörg.⁴ The main purpose of this approach is to bring the power of abstract theories, combine these with careful empirical qualitative research and to bring the reflexive, interpretative role of the researcher ex-

4 Alvesson and Sköldbörg, *Reflexive Methodology*; Alvesson, Hardy, and Harley, 'Reflecting on Reflexivity'; Johnson and Duberley, 'Reflexivity in Management Research'.

plicitly into the process of research. Reflexive research has mostly been used in management studies and social sciences, but the approach can also be applicable to research in the history of Christianity. Common to most theoretical frameworks, reflexive methodology has a number of statements or dogmas of how research can be done. Alvesson and Sköldb erg list two basic characteristics:

Reflective research, as we define it, has two basic characteristics: careful interpretation and reflection. The first implies that all references – trivial and non-trivial – to empirical data are the *results of interpretation*. Thus the idea that measurements, observations, the statements of interview subjects, and the study of secondary data such as statistics or archival data have an *unequivocal* or unproblematic relationship to anything outside the empirical data, is rejected on principle. Consideration of the fundamental importance of interpretation means that an assumption of a simple mirroring thesis of the relationship between ‘reality’ or ‘empirical facts’ and research results (text) has to be rejected. Interpretation comes to the forefront of the research work. [...] The second element [...] can, in the context of empirical research, be defined as the *interpretation of interpretation* and the launching of critical self-exploration of one’s own interpretations of empirical material (including its construction).⁵

The way in which reflexive methodology can be applied in research varies, depending on who is describing it. Alvesson and Sköldb erg speak of four elements in reflective research: systematics and techniques in research procedures; clarification of the primacy of interpretation; awareness of the political-ideological character of research; and reflection in relation to the problem of representation and authority.⁶ I have chosen Alvesson’s and Sköldb erg’s four elements as the main definition of reflexive methodology for this study since these have proven to provide a broad and deep methodological and theoretical framework in the study

5 Alvesson and Sköldb erg, *Reflexive Methodology*, p. 9. Italics by Alvesson and Sköldb erg.

6 Alvesson and Sköldb erg, *Reflexive Methodology*, pp. 10–11, 262–82. Johnson and Duberley categorise reflexivity in research as methodological, deconstructive/hyper, or epistemic (Johnson and Duberley, ‘Reflexivity in Management Research’). Alvesson, Hardy and Haley present four forms of reflexive practices, namely: multi-perspective practices; multi-voicing practices; positioning practices; and destabilising practices (Alvesson, Hardy, and Harley, ‘Reflecting on Reflexivity’).

of the prayer life of the medieval peasantry in the late medieval ecclesiastical province of Uppsala. Alvesson's and Sköldbberg's understanding of reflexive methodology is a reflection of the different levels of interpretation in the research process. To connect their methodology with my own research, I have chosen to use their four levels of interpretation:⁷

The first level: Interaction with empirical material, that is, systematics and techniques in research procedures. The choice of empirical material is of utmost importance, since reflexive methodology rejects the idea of objectivity and neutral data. The empirical material is instead considered to be constructed from close examination of the material, and according to Alvesson and Sköldbberg, selected in connection with the interpretation of the subject of study. A theoretical approach in this level of interpretation is grounded theory with the aim of constructing interpretations close to the examined data, and with little or no applicability to other data (that is, a lack of grand theory).⁸

The second level: Interpretation, that is, clarification of the primacy of interpretation. What is being constructed on an interpretative level is the establishing of connected interpretations (that is, to connect grounded theories to larger schemes of interpretation). It is of greatest importance to establish representativity and primacy of the interpretations. This can, according to Alvesson and Sköldbberg, be made through the use of hermeneutic reflection. Previous research on the subject of study constructs the pre-understanding of the constructed data, and the interpretation leads to a new, broader and deeper understanding.⁹

The third level: Critical interpretation, that is, awareness of the political-ideological character of research. What is being interpreted must be critically examined in order to find underlying tendencies of how the

7 Alvesson and Sköldbberg use different terms to describe their model of reflexive methodology, hence the difference in terms between the four elements and the four levels of interpretation (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, *Reflexive Methodology*, p. 11 (the four elements), 273 (Table 8.1, the four levels of interpretation)). Due to practical reasons, I have chosen to use the terms of the four levels to describe my own methodological work.

8 Alvesson and Sköldbberg, *Reflexive Methodology*, pp. 11, 53–90.

9 Alvesson and Sköldbberg, *Reflexive Methodology*, pp. 11, 91–143.

interpretation is made. This can, according to Alvesson and Sköldberg, be examined through the aid of critical theory.¹⁰

The fourth level: Reflection on text production and language use, that is, reflection in relation to the problem of representation and authority. The fourth, and final level of interpretation is the reflection upon the creation of the research text. Here the claim to authority is of concern, both of the author and of the text, according to Alvesson and Sköldberg.¹¹

The reflexive methodology as presented by Alvesson and Sköldberg is, in this study, interpreted as a meta-theory to aid the critical reflection of the writer and researcher, that is, a theory on the construction and analysis of an examination, and not the results themselves. By the inclusion of this meta-theory, I have had the intention of showing the theoretical reflection through the toolbox of theories, namely gender, and agency. I have chosen to define these two theories pragmatically (well aware of the many different definitions and theoretical discussions that exist within these theory complexes). These two theoretical tools will, however, not explicitly be labelled in this study, but instead will have influence on the analysis, and where applicable, these tools will be used to highlight particular phenomenon or aspects of the study.

Gender is interpreted, using the definition of *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* by Simon Blackburn, as: 'Sex is the biological category, whereas gender is the culturally shaped expression of sexual difference: the masculine way in which men should behave and the feminine way in which women should behave.'¹² It has been used in the study to highlight the similarities and differences of the genders in the examined material, where such relations are applicable.¹³ One such feature is the gender roles in miracle stories, where both men and women are mentioned and their behaviour is explicitly mentioned. It should, however, be noted that most of the ideals and practices analysed were ascribed to

10 Alvesson and Sköldberg, *Reflexive Methodology*, pp. 11, 144–78.

11 Alvesson and Sköldberg, *Reflexive Methodology*, pp. 11, 179–261.

12 Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. 'gender'.

13 Cf. Alvesson and Sköldberg, *Tolkning och reflektion*, pp. 363–6.

both women and men, since religiosity was much to do with their souls, and souls are gender-neutral in a Christian context.

Agency is understood, in accordance with the *Standard Dictionary of the Social Sciences* by Wolfgang J. Koschnick, as: 'The collectivity or individual who, as a prime agent of challenge in a given situation, becomes the focal point for the study of modes of orientation toward the situation and of action processes.'¹⁴ Both ideals and practices are closely linked with agency, since these influenced and existed in relation to each other through different agents. The perspective of practices is especially associated with and affected by agency.

Methods

How can the prayer life of those belonging to peasant communities in the late Middle Ages be examined? Since no sources from peasant women or men themselves exist, the solution to the problem is therefore to examine sources where they are visible, that is, in sources written by others than themselves, such as priests and religious living in the same time and most often in the same areas as those peasant women and men. The unfortunate lack of sources for this vast majority of people constitutes one of the reasons why this subject has never been examined before. It is my firm conviction that, through these fragments, a story hitherto untold can be unfolded and the long-forgotten ideals and practices concerning the prayer life of those belonging to peasant communities. But how can such fragments be found and examined, compared and generalised?

In order to avoid previous conceptions of the prayer life, I have chosen to begin with empirical evidence (that is, constructed data according to reflexive methodology) from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala and the period of time under examination. Then, in order to contextualise this fragment, earlier research from Scandinavia as well as from continental Europe and the British Isles has been used. For example, the

¹⁴ Koschnick, *Standard Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, s.v. 'Akteur/actor'.

ideals concerning how to physically act during prayer have been examined through instructions for peasant women and men and depictions of praying laypeople in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala. The postures found have then been compared to studies made on the western European medieval postures the laity was to use, or is depicted as having used during prayer. The European material is, in this case, larger than that from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, and postures not found in the ecclesiastical province could have been recommended or practised but never noted down. If I were first to construct a general picture of prayer postures made from the western European studies, later to compare these with findings from the ecclesiastical province, the analysis of the prayer postures for the peasantry could perhaps be less true, since there are so few fragments to confirm these postures. What is found in the ecclesiastical province can possibly confront the generalisations made for western Europe as a whole, since it is possible that all prayer postures were not used by everyone and everywhere. This method gives accuracy and vivid colour to the empirical traces, with lots of black space between them, instead of a vague and pale structural pattern, and has been used where applicable in the study.

Prayer ideals

Most of the ideals that can be found concerning the prayer life of those belonging to peasant communities were aimed at the laity in general. As far as I have found, only a few passages in the catechetical manuals were explicitly aimed at peasants, and a study of those instructions of ideals only would not give a concrete idea of the prayer life of the peasantry. A study of prayer ideals for the peasantry will therefore be a study of prayer ideals for the laity in general. I will, however, continuously evaluate the ideals to exclude those specifically aimed at the nobility or townspeople. The results can therefore only be approximations of the ideal prayer life of the peasantry. Accordingly, I have chosen only to speak of people belonging to peasant communities and not of the laity, although the examined ideals applied most often to all of the laity. It is the peasantry that this study concerns, and this group will therefore be focused on

when analysing ideals. I note this because this position is much visible in this study, and could lead to the wrong conclusions, that these ideals only applied for the peasantry and not the laity as a whole, when in fact the ideals applied to all laypersons. But when an ideal is presented that is said in the sources explicitly to apply to peasant women and men, then it will be visible in my presentation.

Through these estimations, some of the fundamental features of their prayer life can nonetheless be established. The same method needs to be used for all subgroups of the laity, due to the general lack of specified instructions for these groups. Wherever I have found specific examples of ideals aimed at those belonging to peasant communities, these have been used as the primary examples. This might be as close as one can get to the ideals of prayer that the peasantry was confronted with, based on extant sources and current research.

The disparate and sparse findings of prayer ideals for those belonging to peasant communities in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala lead to a methodological decision of how to interpret these ideals. When ideals have been found, I have then tried to create a deeper understanding of the phenomenon through examples taken from other situations and countries, since the empirical data found have often been only fragmentary. The mediator of these written instructions and translated prayers was often the parish priest, and it was he who chose what to teach the parishioners concerning the choice of prayers. The ideals of prayer aimed high, possibly too high for a layperson unable to devote his or her entire time for elaborate prayers. The surviving sources are also tightly linked to the Abbey of Vadstena and as such, influenced by Birgittine spirituality. It was one of the most important religious centres in Northern Europe and the vast majority of translated literature in Old Swedish in the fifteenth century was produced at the abbey. Which of these prayer ideals came to be presented to the actual people belonging to peasant communities is unfortunately impossible to grasp, since no sources remain telling of this. Were the parish priests adopting the ideals for their parishioners or did they present the high ideals with the hope of fulfilment? Perhaps, the answer to this question is not general-

ised, but depending on the parish priests' own individual ideas of how the peasant parishioners were to be educated in order to have a good prayer life.

Prayer practices

How can one find practices of the prayer life of people who never recorded their own religious thoughts and actions? As mentioned earlier, practices such as those concerning prayer can be found in the shape of small fragments in the surviving sources of the late Middle Ages. But how can these fragments be found and how can these be analysed?

The search for fragments, in the case of this study, the fragments of prayer practices of those belonging to peasant communities in the late medieval ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, can be made in a number of ways:

- ¶ *Look between the lines*, where the writer implies something without explicitly mentioning it. This method is, however, complicated, since there is the possibility of implying things and thoughts never implied by the author, and thereby allowing preconceived notions to lead the examination. In order to avoid such errors, one needs to be aware of one's presuppositions and try to read the text as it was written and read by those in the contemporary situation. Was something implied, that was so obvious, that it was not necessary to mention? The ordinary working days of the peasantry are such a thing, seldom mentioned in favour of the less common holy days and what one should say and do during these days. Without reading between the lines, almost nothing will be known of the ordinary days.
- ¶ *Look in the periphery* of a story or picture, where small things can remain unnoticed, such as how prayers were said or if shoes were to be taken off before prayer. These fragments can bring accurate information, since they were probably not intended to be noticed other than as regular features for the particular story or motif.

- ¶ *Look for problems and their solutions* that are presented in the sources. One such situation is the choosing of saints to pray to in miracle stories, where the person in need for a miracle is unable to make up his or her mind for the recipient of prayer. One such solution was to cast lots.
- ¶ *Look for criticism against practices* of prayer, such as instructions about how one should not behave or act during prayer. These precautions were often founded in experience and one effective way to avoid such practices was to present an alternative. For example, praying to saints when in trouble is criticised in a catechetical manual. This criticism is presented as others doing this, but the author is not in favour of this and wishes another solution to the problem. In the case of the catechetical manual, readers are told that people sometimes pray to St Justin when on a journey, albeit the author himself speaks more of the protection by the Virgin Mary or Jesus Christ than that of saints.¹⁵
- ¶ *Look for modes of procedure* where the peasantry in general or a peasant woman or man is described in connection with prayer. One catechetical manual, for example, speaks of the inability of the peasantry to remember to follow the seven canonical hours, and therefore instructs them to say only Lauds and Vespers on holy days together with attendance at mass.¹⁶ This passage speaks of an ambitious priest, and about hard-working peasant women and men, unable to pray on specified times each day.

When these often small fragments have been found, problems of analysis occur. How can one know, what these fragments represent and how to combine them with others in order to construct patterns for generalisations?

Fragments can be seen as clues, and it is through these clues that the greater questions can be answered. Carlo Ginzburg interprets these clues

¹⁵ The passage can be found in *Sjællinna thrøst*, p. 212.

¹⁶ The passage can be found in 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', pp. 218–19.

as possible to draw conclusions from, when most of a source cannot give such information. He likens the identification of a painter through small things on a painting, such as earlobes and fingers, and not through the motif itself, with the historian trying to find information on something not spoken of explicitly. This information can be found in clues such as unimportant descriptions and comments, details often noted down spontaneously and without reflection by the author, who instead focuses on the major story and often uses self-censorship to control the outcome. These clues therefore give more relevant answers.¹⁷

When found, fragments (or, as Ginzburg labels them, clues) can be put together in order to construct a pattern, for example by repeated information or modes of procedure. Each fragment often lacks vital information, but when put together a more vivid picture emerges. The fragments themselves also cannot be regarded as representative of other situations and times, since it is often in the 'nature' of such fragments to speak of one single situation. But sometimes these fragments were part of something practised by many people over great geographical areas. It is up to the researcher to determine the border between these two, through careful examination, but generalisations made on these circumstances can never be understood as absolute. This can be related to the nature of the practice and its mode of procedure through a number of questions:

- ¶ Is the practice described as common?
- ¶ Is the practice presented as evident and natural to the situation?
- ¶ Is the practice reoccurring in the sources, in time and in similar situations?

A consequence of the often sparse fragments is the great difficulty in analysing changes over time and regional differences. The study of practices is the quest for fragments of practices and the effort to combine these fragments into impressionistic pictures, valid only for a certain geographical area, population or even certain persons,¹⁸ interpreted as a

17 Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, pp. 96–125.

18 Cf. Swanson, *Catholic England*, p. 40.

concept of how it might have been. But, without these few fragments, the ideals will never be questioned and the picture of the prayer life of those belonging to peasant communities will not be painted in any colours other than black and white, and all other colours and nuances will be lost.¹⁹

19 Cf. Swanson, *Catholic England*, pp. 40-2.

The sources

CHAPTER 3



N WHAT sources can these fragments of ideals and practices of prayer be found? What advantages and disadvantages do these sources have in connection with this examination? In order to present and critically study these sources, generalisations through categorisation such as genre and character of the source are needed.

I have therefore divided the sources, and this chapter, into two major sections: non-written sources and written sources, and then into subsections or categories under these two sections.

Non-written sources

The following non-written genres of sources, here presented in alphabetical order, have been used: archaeological finds, church art such as reredos carvings and drawings, statues and wall paintings.

Archaeological finds

This group is disparate in this study, where beads from Paternoster strings and rosaries and burial postures have been examined. These archaeological findings have been used in the study of practices, as in the case of prayer beads that confirm the use of rosaries or Paternoster strings, but cannot in themselves speak much about the prayer life of the peasantry.

Church art, such as reredos carvings and drawings, statues and wall paintings

This genre of source is used mostly to investigate ideals of prayer. The way praying persons were depicted shows a large amount of variation, and these images were, among several purposes, also used as inspiration for worship and prayer. In a dark church, the need for symbols and simplifications is emphasised, since the motifs had to be recognisable. This effect was achieved by the use of strong lines on wall paintings, outlining the figures in the motifs. It is, however, important to remember that a picture of a praying person, for example, needed to be identified as a praying person, and therefore, certain symbols and conventions needed to be used. Still, without these pictures, much about the non-verbal information about prayer activities would be invisible. Wall paintings and other religious paintings from the medieval period can therefore be used as sources for this investigation.¹ There are, however, concerns about the use of wall paintings as a historical source. Paintings

¹ Cf. Sundmark, *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse*, pp. 36–7; Myrdal, 'Medeltida konst som källa till realia'; Piltz, 'Kalkmålningarna som retorik'; Edgren, *Mercy and Justice*, pp. 180–6; Nilsén, *Program och funktion i senmedeltida kalkmåleri*, pp. 507–12.

and statues were seldom altered and the same painting or statue was used for several centuries, and the use and understanding of such paintings can therefore have been subject to change, something impossible to grasp from the look of these pictures. What can be analysed is how these pictures and statues were painted at that particular occasion, and thereby speak mostly of ideals but, as mentioned earlier, small details, considered unimportant for the motif as a whole, could bring vital clues to practices.

Written sources

The following written genres of sources, here presented in alphabetical order, have been examined: ars-moriendi books, ballads, bible paraphrases, catechetical texts, confession manuals, guild statutes and verses, indulgence letters, liturgical breviaries and manuals, miracle collections, official letters by the peasantry as a collective, penitentiaries, personal names (lists of these), private prayer books, provincial laws, runic inscriptions, sermons, synodal statutes, tabulae, visitation protocols and wills. Unfortunately, not all of these written sources have been used, since some of them do not include any information on prayer regarding peasant women and men. Since, however, this study is the first of its kind, I have chosen to present all sources examined in these genres, both used and disregarded. First, sources with information available are presented, then the sources without such information will be presented along with the arguments concerning why these sources do not contain clues to the prayer life of people belonging to peasant communities.

Catechetical texts

Texts that were intended primarily for the clergy in their religious education of the laity, or possibly intended for educated literate laypeople to enhance their devotion can be labelled as catechetical texts. This category of sources has been used mostly for prayer ideals, but also for practices, and is one of the most commonly used categories of sources, but

is impaired by several critical difficulties. Who used these catechetical manuals, and who wrote them? It is not certain that all of these extant catechetical manuals (or fragments of these) were intended for those belonging to peasant communities. But, one should not treat all alike in this manner, but one needs to examine each and everyone of these individually to value their importance for this study. At least five catechetical manuals in the vernacular exist, of which three are used (the other two can be found in the section of sources not used), here arranged alphabetically:

(i) *Dagens sju tidegärder jämte apostoliska credo, tolfödmjukhetens trappor m.m.* [*The Seven Hours of the Day, together with the Apostolic Creed, the Twelve Stairs of Humility and so on*] (hereafter abbreviated as *Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera*) is part of a collection (Cod. Holm. A 54) of manuscript fragments written in Old Swedish, in the fifteenth century, probably between the years 1431 and 1469. The text exists in two versions, one older and fragmentary and one complete, more recent version, both bound into the same collection, and is the first part of a religious tract, and probably used by a parish priest.² Both its author and title are unknown. The text consists of three parts, namely a presentation of the seven canonical hours, an introduction and translation of the Apostolic Creed and an instruction consisting of twelve steps towards humility. A unique feature of the manual is that it speaks explicitly of the peasantry (Old Swedish: *almoghen*) and its inability to remember the seven canonical hours (though it is informing the reader of them). Due to this, the text is one of the most important sources for the practices of prayer among people belonging to peasant communities.

(ii) *De sju sakramenten* [*The Seven Sacraments*] is also part of a collection of manuscript fragments (Cod. Holm. D 4), and consists of an exposition of the seven sacraments to a lay reader. Although there exists a Latin text, *De septem sacramentis* [*Of the seven sacraments*], due to its

2 Carlquist, 'Birgittauppenbarelserna i Cod. Holm. A 54'; Geete, 'Förord', pp. xv, xxvii–xxvix (the transcribed edition, cited in this study, is made from the older manuscript, with additions from the younger manuscript, according to the transcription principles made by Robert Geete).

Latin language it cannot be assumed to have addressed laypeople. These two versions cannot be understood as dependent on each other, but rather are parallel and independent, following a tradition of expositions of the seven sacraments.³ Both these texts were written in the first half of the fifteenth century.⁴ Only the Old Swedish edition has been used, since it can be assumed to have been intended for people unable to read Latin and therefore possibly also for the peasantry.

(iii) *Siælinna thrøst* [*The Consolation of the Soul*] was written in the mid-fifteenth century at the Abbey of Vadstena, probably in the 1440s, and is a handwritten manuscript in Old Swedish (*yngre fornsvenska*).⁵ It is a compilation of different texts, most of which are from the Lower German *Der grosse Seelentrost*. Added to the original were a number of Latin prayers, Bible quotes and a few other passages in Swedish, making the text something between a translation and a new work.⁶ The Swedish writer is anonymous, but could have been the Birgittine monk Olaus Gunnari, later bishop of Västerås (1454–1461).⁷ It was probably intended for the Birgittine monastery of Naantali (Nådendal) in the diocese of Turku (Åbo), and probably not for peasant women and men. *Siælinna thrøst* is an exposition of the Decalogue in the shape of instructions, hagiographic stories, *exempla* and prayers. The book exists in only one copy, made from the original book (which is now lost), and consists of 166 folios (332 pages).⁸ It was copied by one hand, but corrected by another.⁹ It was probably intended both for a reader and a teacher, and is simple and educational in its style. The writer leads the reader, usually referred to as ‘my friend’, through the commandments, and translates Latin texts and prayers for the reader/audience. Whether or not it was used or intended to be used in parish churches as a catechetical aid is dif-

3 Andrén, *De septem sacramentis*, pp. 97–101.

4 Andrén, *De septem sacramentis*, pp. 88–90, 97; Geete, ‘Inledning’, pp. vi, xviii.

5 *Siælinna thrøst*.

6 Henning, ‘Källorna till *Siælinna thrøst*’.

7 Thorén, *Studier över Själens trøst*, pp. 176–86.

8 Henning, ‘Utgivarens förord’; Thorén, *Studier över Själens trøst*, pp. 154–88 (date and provenance).

9 Cf. Andersson-Schmitt, ‘Ein Seelentrost-Exzerpt aus Vadstena’.

difficult to say. The reader/audience is recommended to participate in all seven canonical hours, and could therefore be understood as preferably ordained, but at the same time, the reader/audience is told of numerous *exempla* where the agent is a layperson, acting in a rural environment. Although it can be assumed not to have been aimed at the peasantry, the manual is too important as a source of information to be omitted from this study, bringing much information on the religious life of the laity. This is one of the few exceptions from my otherwise strict rules of delineation. It has, however, only been used where other information exists as a further example.

One exemption from the otherwise vernacular catechetical manuals is the Latin *Homo conditus* [*~The creation of the human*]¹⁰ by Magister Mathias (c. 1300–1350), canon at the cathedral of Linköping and father confessor to St Birgitta. The book is a systematic exposition of Christianity written in the 1340s, and was intended for the laity belonging to the lower stratum of society, through a Latin literate priest to use in the religious education and it ends with easy-to-use model sermons in Latin for the priest.¹¹ Although it was written before the time limits of my study, it is too important to disregard since it provides a theological framework for the catechetical education of the laity, used far beyond the actual date of creation, and its intended use is also in line with my examination.

Guild statutes and verses

Parish (or rural) guilds constituted an important part of the religious life of the peasantry, and four guild statutes in Old Swedish that also include instructions of prayer remain. These are, here presented alphabetically (since most of the statutes are of unknown date):¹²

10 The title consists of the first two words in the first sentence: '*Homo conditus in omnibus bonis habundabat.*' [*At his creation, the human enjoyed an abundance of all good things.*] (Magister Mathias, *Homo conditus*, p. 1 (§1.1))

11 Piltz, *Vägen till Jerusalem*, pp. 7–23; Piltz, *Prolegomena*, pp. 31, 47–52.

12 The spelling of these statutes in Swedish has been modernised for the sake of coherence in this list, since the transcripts of these guild statutes have been made with

(i) *Stadgar för ett Jungfru Mariegille* [*Statutes for a Virgin Mary guild*], date and provenance unknown.¹³

(ii) *Stadgar för ett Sankt Eriksgille* [*Statutes for a St Erik guild*], written at the beginning of the sixteenth century, somewhere in the vicinity of the city of Uppsala.¹⁴

(iii) *Stadgar för ett Sankt Göransgille* [*Statutes for a St Göran guild*], written at the beginning of the sixteenth century, of unknown provenance.¹⁵

(iv) *Stadgar för ett Sankt Karinsgille* [*Statutes for a St Karin guild*], written in the year 1443, in the parish of Björke on the island of Gotland.¹⁶

Three guild verses (Swedish: *skälvisor*) have also been used due to their references to saints as protectors of a newly wedded couple. These verses are of an unknown date and provenance, and written in Old Swedish.¹⁷ Both statutes and verses constitute vital information about prayer practices, since these were not written to present an ideal but to regulate different practices and stipulate common ways to behave and act in the guild.

Indulgence letters

Only letters directed to specific churches have been examined, since numerous indulgence letters remain from the medieval period, and these particular indulgence letters provide specific information on prayer, something other indulgence letters seldom do. These letters gave visitors to a particular church an indulgence when entering or doing something more specific, such as praying in front of an image, and can be considered not only part of the construction of prayer ideals (that is, to stipulate how things should be done properly) but also as a confirmation of practices already in use, justified by the bishop or bishop collegiate.

different spelling systems. When referred to later in the study, the transcribed names will be used, and therefore, these names will be presented in the footnotes here.

13 'Stadga för ett Jungfru Mariæ gille'.

14 'Stadga för ett S:t Eriksgille nära Upsala'.

15 'Stadga för ett S:t Görans gille'.

16 'Stadga för ett s. Karins gille'.

17 'Gillevisa och skälverser'.

Most indulgence letters can be found on the website *Svenskt diplomatariums huvudkartotek över medeltidsbrev* [*The Index of the Medieval Letters of Sweden*], and bear the signature SDHK. Each letter referred to in this study will be presented briefly upon occurrence.

Liturgical breviaries and manuals

Here two liturgies have been examined, namely the mass and the baptism since these include prayers for the layperson to say (something the other liturgies, such as for wedding and confession, did not, at least according to the written texts). The liturgy of the mass has only been used as reference to descriptions of prayers or behaviours during the mass for the laity, and a reconstruction of a medieval mass as it was probably held in the fifteenth century somewhere in the diocese of Linköping, made for a TV-production has been used for this kind of reference.¹⁸ The liturgy of baptism has been examined to understand the use of the prayers of the Paternoster, Hail Mary and the Apostolic Creed to control the laity's knowledge of these prayers and confession. Examined baptismal liturgies are in chronological order:

(i) *Manuale Upsalense* [*Liturgical Manual of the archdiocese of Uppsala*], a manuscript from the year 1487.

(ii) *Breviarium Scarense* [*Breviary of the diocese of Skara*], a manuscript from the year 1489.

(iii) *Manuale Aboense* [*Liturgical Manual of the diocese of Turku (Åbo)*], printed in the year 1522.

(iv) *Manuale Lincopense* [*Liturgical Manual of the diocese of Linköping*], printed in the year 1525.

Miracle collections

All miracle collections tell of some kind of prayer to a saint (or a person venerated as such), to God for the sake of a saint or to a physical object associated with miraculous powers either of a saint or of God. For the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, ten such saints (or in one case, a physical object) have miracle collections attached to them, namely (in

¹⁸ 'Mässan i Linköpings stift omkring år 1450'.

chronological order): (i) *St Henrik of Finland* († c. 1160), bishop and martyr, 9 miracles, occurring in late 1200–c. 1300; (ii) *St Erik of Uppsala* († c. 1160), king and martyr, 54 miracles, occurring in two separate periods, first in the 1270s–1311, then in the years 1403–1411; (iii) *St Birgitta of Sweden* (c. 1303–1373), noblewoman, 154 miracles, occurring in the years 1374–1390; (iv) the *Blessed Nils Hermansson* (†1391), bishop, 91 miracles, occurring in the years 1401–1417; (v) *Ingrid of Skänninge* (†1282), prioress, 5 miracles, occurring in the years 1404–1417; (vi) *Petrus Olavi of Skänninge* (c.1307–1378), monk, 5 miracles, occurring in the years 1408–1435; (vii) the *Blessed Brynolf of Skara* (c. 1230–c. 1290), bishop, 34 miracles, occurring in the years 1404–1417; (viii) the *Image of the Deposition of Christ on the Cross* at the Dominican church in Stockholm between the years c. 1350–c. 1527, 87 miracles, occurring in two separate periods, first in the years 1408–1424, then in the years 1439–1471; (ix) the *Blessed Katarina of Vadstena* (1331–1381), first leader of the Abbey of Vadstena, 205 miracles, occurring in two separate periods, first in the years 1416–1455/6, then in the years 1470–1477; (x) *David of Munktorp* (eleventh century), monk and missionary, 7 miracles, occurring in the late fifteenth century.¹⁹ Five of these miracle collections have been used in this study due to one of two reasons: they include cited prayers attributed to peasant women or men, or they include information about lot casting performed by the peasantry. The remaining five have no such information, and have therefore been omitted from this study. Albeit miracle collections were collected and noted down by the clergy, they bring information on prayer among the peasantry.²⁰ The miracle collections used, here presented in chronological order, are:

(i) *Saint Birgitta of Vadstena*. Birgitta Birgersdotter was born around the year 1303 and belonged to the top level of high nobility in Scandinavia. Among her eight children, was Katarina who came to be venerated as the Blessed Katarina of Vadstena. Birgitta died in the year 1373, and

19 For a presentation and overview over all miracle collections from the ecclesiastical province, see: Myrdal and Bäärnhielm, *Kvinnor, barn och fester i medeltida mirakelberättelser*, pp. 133–56. For presentations on these saints, see: Lundén, *Svenska helgon*.

20 Cf. Krötzel, *Mittelalterliche Mirakelberichte*.

was transferred to a shrine in the year 1374. She was canonised in the year 1391 and her days in the calendar are 7th of October (the day of her canonisation) and 23rd of July (the day of her death). During her lifetime, Birgitta received several religious revelations. Her influence on the religious life in Scandinavia during the late Middle Ages can hardly be overestimated, especially through the founding of a new religious order, the Order of the Most Holy Saviour (Latin: *Ordo Sanctissimi Salvatoris*). In the protocols of the process of making Birgitta saint, 154 miracles are recorded, the second largest number from medieval Sweden.²¹ These miracles occurred between the year 1374 and 1390.²²

(ii) *The Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson of Linköping* (he is often also known by his Latin name, Nicolaus Hermanni) was appointed bishop of Linköping in the year 1375, and remained bishop until his death in the year 1391. During his time as bishop, he became known as protector of the lower strata of the diocese, often in opposition to the nobility. He lived a simple life, even as bishop and was, during the last years of his time as bishop of Linköping, spiritual guardian over the newly founded Birgittine Abbey of Vadstena, creating, for example, its constitutions in the year 1384. After his death, reports of miracles begun to spread, especially among the laity of the diocese, and the bishop together with the Abbey of Vadstena, organised the cult by collecting these miracle stories and by promoting him as saint to the papal curia. In the year 1499 he was beatified, and transferred to a shrine in the year 1515. Since the year 1499, his day of celebration is the 4th of February. The miracles associated with Nils Hermansson occurred between the year 1401 and 1417 and are 94 in total.²³

21 The largest collection of miracles is from her daughter, the Blessed Katarina of Vadstena.

22 Lindgren and Nyberg, 'Birgitta'; Fröjmark, *Mirakler och helgonkult*, p. 31. For a list of miracles associated with St Birgitta of Sweden, see: Myrdal and Bäärnhielm, *Kvinnor, barn och fester i medeltida mirakelberättelser*, pp. 135–41.

23 Fröjmark, *Mirakler och helgonkult*, pp. 44, 129–43; Gallén, 'Nicolaus Hermanni'. For a list of miracles associated with the Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson of Linköping, see: Myrdal and Bäärnhielm, *Kvinnor, barn och fester i medeltida mirakelberättelser*, pp. 141–4.

(iii) *Petrus Olavi of Skänninge*, born c. 1307, was the father confessor of St Birgitta, director of the hospice (Swedish: *Helgeandhus*) in Skänninge, composer of *Cantus sororum* [*The Song of the Sisters*],²⁴ an office for the Birgittine nuns in Vadstena. Some years after his death in 1378, a small number of miracles (fifteen) were reported to have occurred for people praying for his intercession, and a *vita* was written on his behalf, finished in the year 1435.²⁵

(iv) *The image of the Deposition of Christ on the Cross* (Latin: *Defixio domini*; Swedish: *Helga lösen*) at the convent of the Dominican order in Stockholm was an image associated with miraculous powers. Praying in front of this picture was considered to lead to great miraculous powers, and a Dominican friar, Gregorius Holmiensis, collected miracles associated with the image to use in pastoral care. It is unclear when the image was deposited in the convent, but the earliest mention of it is from the year 1350, when the teacher and father confessor Magister Mathias was said to have been buried next to an altar holding the image of the Deposition of Christ on the Cross. Similarly unclear is what happened to the image during the reformation, but after the year 1527, the image seems to have vanished. 87 miracles associated with the image were said to have occurred between the year 1408 and 1471 (miracles existed from earlier than the year 1408, but the collection of these was destroyed in a fire at the Dominican convent before making the miracle collection).²⁶

(v) *The Blessed Katarina of Vadstena* was daughter of Birgitta Birgersdotter (later St Birgitta of Sweden) and Ulf Gudmarsson, and part of the high nobility in Sweden. She was born around the year 1331. Katarina became the first leader of the Abbey of Vadstena, although not officially appointed abbess, and she died in the year 1381. She was transferred to

24 For a presentation and an analysis of *Cantus sororum*, see: Hårdelin, *Kult, kultur och kontemplation*, pp. 249–73.

25 Fröjmark, *Mirakler och helgonkult*, pp. 73–7. For a list of miracles associated with Peter Olavi of Skänninge, see: Myrdal and Bäärnhelm, *Kvinnor, barn och fester i medeltida mirakelberättelser*, p. 145.

26 Lundén, 'Om defixio Domini eller Helga Lösen i Stockholm'. For a list of miracles associated with the image of the Deposition of Christ on the Cross, see: Myrdal and Bäärnhelm, *Kvinnor, barn och fester i medeltida mirakelberättelser*, pp. 146–8.

a shrine in the year 1489, but her beatification was never finished, due to the reformation in Sweden. Her day of celebration is the 2nd of August. The collection of miracles associated with the Blessed Katarina, reported to have occurred between the years 1416 and 1477, is the greatest among the collections of miracles that remain from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, and consists of 195 miracles.²⁷

Official letters by the peasantry as a collective

Groups of the population in a particular area could write letters to high officials and the king concerning different matters, sometimes local, sometimes national. In none of these letters sent by the peasantry are prayers presented, but saints are, however, referred to and therefore these letters are included in this study. The letters used (six in total) in this category are texts where the peasantry (as a collective) either alone or together with other groups of the local communion, such as the townspeople or the mayor of a city, is the sender and where saints are referred to in the letters.²⁸ Since these letters can be found from the beginning of the reign of Gustav Eriksson (Vasa) and therefore are outside my study, these are only used to confirm the use of saints through invocations or as arguments for a cause.

Personal names (lists of these)

Lists of medieval personal names exist in two groups: medieval contemporary scrolls, such as membership scrolls of guilds and tax lists; and modern statistical lists of the popularity of certain personal names. The latter is however often complicated to use in a study such as this, since there has been a tradition among onomastic scholars in Sweden not to name their explicit sources. Therefore, only a few lists can be used in this study, where the sources and the full statistical data are presented. At

27 Fröjmark, *Mirakler och helgonkult*, pp. 50–1; Lundén, 'Katarina av Vadstena'. For a list of miracles associated with the Blessed Katarina of Vadstena, see: Myrdal and Bäärnhjelm, *Kvinnor, barn och fester i medeltida mirakelberättelser*, pp. 148–53.

28 *Diplomatarium dalekarlicum*, pp. 246 (#244), 248 (#245); *Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia*, pp. 6–7, 9, 17–20.

the time of writing this study, a database of all medieval personal names is being constructed, *Sveriges Medeltida Personnamn (SMP)* [*The Medieval Personal Names of Sweden*], but is not yet finished and has therefore been omitted.²⁹ Lists of personal names have been used in the study of prayer practices and are one of the few things that remain of most of the people living in the Middle Ages – their names written in some kind of document. The statistical nature of these lists, both medieval and modern, lacks, unfortunately, the ability to discern peasant persons from other people. But, since the vast majority of the population belonged to the peasant communities, as previously shown, these lists give some clues to the prayer life of the peasantry.

Sermons

Thousands of sermons from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala remain, either in Latin or in Old Swedish.

The majority of the Latin sermons are still unpublished and therefore an examination of these would have taken a much longer time than I have had available in order to transcribe and analyse these, and have therefore been omitted from this study. Some Latin sermons are, however, published and one such sermon with unique information on the prayer life of the peasantry is the *Ad sacerdotes* [*To the priests*], a sermon given at a priestly synod in the fifteenth century, and was given in Latin (whereas most sermons were spoken in the vernacular regardless of the language of the manuscript).³⁰ The preacher speaks of the people on the countryside and of their religious practices in order to describe and possibly also to prescribe prayers and when to say these. This sermon can

29 Institutet för språk och folkminnen, *SMP*. The two main reasons for omitting this source are (1) no statistical data is provided in the database, only the names are listed in alphabetic order, and (2) at the time for publication of this study (2010), the database only consists of names from A to Holmger, and since other similar studies show some of the most popular male names to be ones like Johan (Latin: *Iohannes*) and Peter (Latin: *Petrus*), the statistics of the currently published parts of the database will not provide accurate statistics for the medieval period. When completed, the database will most probably give new insights to several aspects of the Middle Ages where personal names are used.

30 'Ad sacerdotes'.

be understood as one of the few close descriptions of the religious life of peasant women and men in the fifteenth century.

Sermons in Old Swedish were probably intended as model sermons and were produced in or in connection with the Vadstena Abbey. These sermons, of which there are several hundred, are collected and published in *Sveriges medeltidspostillor i–viii*, and are thereby easily accessible for research. In order to examine these sermons, I have chosen one category of sermons and added others found in connection with these. The category is sermons which were given on the fifth Sunday after Easter, that is Rogation Sunday, and are four in total.³¹ In addition to these, I have found one sermon including vital information on prayer, that is in a sermon to be given on the dedication day of the church, where information is provided on where one should pray, especially for the dead and what prayers to use on that occasion.³²

Synodal statutes

These official juridical documents were used to control and organise the church on all structural levels, from the whole church down to dioceses. Statutes issued within the examined period, for the ecclesiastical province and for the seven dioceses have been used to identify not only ideals but also practices, since the decisions sometimes were the results of something previously occurring, or as justification of already established practices. These documents can be found in two collections: *Statuta synodalia veteris ecclesiae Sveogothicae* [*Synodal statutes considering the old church of Sweden*], printed in the year 1841 and *Synodalstatuter och andra kyrkorättsliga aktstycken från den svenska medeltidskyrkan* [*Synodal statutes and other juridical ecclesiastical official documents from the medieval church of Sweden*], printed in the year 1902 to complement the older edition with new findings.³³

31 *Svenska medeltids-postillor*, i, pp. 149–55; *Svenska medeltids-postillor*, ii, pp. 95–101; *Svenska medeltids-postillor*, iii, pp. 158–60, 160–3, 191–8; *Svenska medeltids-postillor*, iv, pp. 31–8.

32 *Svenska medeltids-postillor*, vi, pp. 122–32.

33 Reuterdaahl, *Statuta synodalia*; Gummerus, *Synodalstatuter*.

Tabulae

As an occasional didactical method to explain a series of complex connections, tables were used (in Latin: *tabula/tabulae*). One such kind of table used in this study is the exposition of the Paternoŝter and how it can be connected to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven virtues and the seven mortal sins.³⁴

Wills

In the previously mentioned *Svenskt diplomatariums huvudkartotek över medeltidsbrev* [*The Index of the Medieval Letters of Sweden*],³⁵ wills can be found. These wills were often formulaic in their structure and it is doubtful whether or not any of these extant wills were written by peasant women and men.³⁶ Nonetheless, regardless of testator or testatrix, wills can provide information on, for example, the use of Paternoŝter strings and rosaries. Wills mentioning these stand as proofs of their existence and are used as such, although such proofs cannot be linked to anyone else than the person writing the will and their heirs.

Sources examined without information on the subject of study

A majority of the sources examined have, after careful investigation, been proven to include no information regarding the prayer life of those belonging to peasant communities. These sources are, therefore, only presented briefly in this study. The reasons for omitting these sources can roughly be categorised through four arguments:

Sources without any information of prayer

The first argument is that no information of prayer exists in the examined sources. These genres are here presented in alphabetical order:

34 The table is presented in: Kilstrom, *Den kateketiska undervisningen*, p. 181 (footnote 3).

35 *SDHK*.

36 Lejon, *Askeby kloster*, pp. 140–1.

Bible paraphrases, confession manuals, penitentiaries and provincial laws.

Sources used by others than peasant women and men

The second argument is that information of prayer exists, but that it was not aimed at peasant women and men and that no connection can be established (or proven) between the intended readership and those belonging to peasant communities. These genres are here presented in alphabetical order: ars-moriendi books, the catechetical text *Gudelig snilles väckare* [*The Awakening of the Godly Genius*] by Henry Suso (c. 1295–1366)³⁷, private prayer books, and runic inscriptions (medieval runes and not Viking-age runes).

Sources with Lutheran influences

The third argument against the use of certain genres (or more specifically, sources within genres presented earlier) is that these are influenced by the Lutheran reformation of the sixteenth century. These sources are here presented alphabetically: the private prayer book *Nådig Fru Kristinas andaktsbok* [*The devotional manual of the honourable Lady Kristina*],³⁸ ballads and the catechetical text *ABCkiria* [*ABC-book*] by Michael Agricola.³⁹

Sources that do not exist

The final argument against the inclusion of a source concerns the total lack of information. This is the case with visitation protocols, where no such report remains.⁴⁰

37 Suso, *Gudelig snilles väckare*.

38 'Nådig Fru Kristinas andaktsbok'. A prayer book used by the noblewoman Kristina Nilsson Gyllenstierna (1494–1559) which reflects the transformation of the religiosity into a Lutheran confession and remaining Catholic devotion in the first half of the sixteenth century, though from a Catholic perspective.

39 Agricola, *ABCkiria*.

40 Cf. Inger, *Das kirchliche Visitationsinstitut*.

PART
II

Standards of prayer

CHAPTER 4



N ORDER to perform the act of prayer, certain tools are needed. These tools should, however, not be confused with objects such as books or crucifixes, but instead these tools consist of the positioning of the body of the praying person, words, intentions and the choice of occasion for prayer.

Prayer is thereby not independent of external objects, but the praying person must pay attention to his or her own actions and nurture good prayer behaviour. These behaviours or actions can be described as the standards of prayer and can be viewed from a perspective both ideal-prayer and practices. What is to be achieved is efficiency in prayer; ideals present ways to develop as a praying person, and practices are the ways in which prayer were usually performed.

The late medieval people belonging to peasant communities were part of these ideals and practices, and it is their standards of prayer that this chapter will focus on.

In this chapter, I will examine four features of the standards of prayer according to the abovementioned tools of prayer, namely the right postures, the right words, the right intentions and the right occasions.



Praying laypeople. Wall-painting in Tensta Church, Uppsala diocese. Painted in the year 1437 by Johannes Rosenrod.

Right postures

To express the intention of the praying peasant woman or man, there should be a correspondence between body and mind.¹ The importance of this correspondence cannot be underestimated in terms of medieval culture and society since, according to Jean-Claude Schmitt, it 'was a fundamental feature of all the medieval ideas about mankind, space, social order and cosmos'.² Schmitt also concludes that gestures were never performed alone, but always in communication towards someone (such as God).³ Emotions felt during prayer were, according to Dom Louis Gougaud, often transformed into physical actions and those actions were visible to God, connecting the physical behaviour with prayer.⁴

In the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala among those belonging to peasant communities, this was as true as everywhere else in medieval Europe. At least two earlier studies by Sven-Erik Pernler and Stina Fallberg Sundmark, both mentioned above in the introduction to this study, have been made on the right postures of praying lay persons in medieval Sweden: the first focusing entirely on the behaviour of lay visitors in parish churches during mass according to the instructions in *Sialinna thröst*, and the latter focusing on the visitation of the sick and how the laity was to behave as bystanders during the transportation of the host to the place where the ill person was, as well as how lay people should behave during the visitation itself.⁵ Fallberg Sundmark's conclusions are based mostly on earlier continental research and also on a few domestic sources. In which case, these two studies do not focus on prayer in particular (only in connection with other issues), nor particularly on of the

1 Sundmark, *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse*, p. 113; Schmitt, *La raison des gestes dans l'Occident médiéval*, pp. 301–2; Trexler, *The Christian at Prayer*, pp. 35–53.

2 Schmitt, 'The Rationale of Gestures in the West', p. 60.

3 Schmitt, 'The Rationale of Gestures in the West', p. 61.

4 Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices* p. 1.

5 Sundmark, *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse*, pp. 106–7, 112–22; Pernler, 'En mässa för folket?'

peasantry and their prayer life. A thorough examination and systematisation is therefore needed.

This section will focus on three aspects of the right postures, namely the legs and torso, the arms and hands and the clothes.

The legs and torso

Prayer behaviour can be understood as a formalised way to use one's ordinary physical behaviour in a religious purpose, and prayer could therefore be performed in accordance with everyday postures.⁶ In the examined primary sources, four different praying postures can be found for those belonging to peasant communities, being a part of the laity. These are: standing, walking, kneeling and lying.⁷ These four correspond to what Michael Argyle calls the three natural postures of human beings: standing, squatting or kneeling and lying.⁸

First to be examined is the standard way to pray, that is to stand during prayer, and then deviations from this standard will be studied.

To stand during prayer

What made standing (and walking) a recommended prayer posture? According to Richard C. Trexler, Peter the Chanter described kneeling as submissive, and standing as 'natural' in terms of the erect human and powerful, since the Bible spoke of such a prayer posture.⁹ The posture can therefore be understood as a natural way to behave, and as such, to

6 The following section will not examine and present every existing occurrence of prayer postures of the legs and torso, since there are so many similar fragments of these ideals. Instead, I will make a delineation of prayer postures, in order to construct a schematic systematisation.

7 There was a fifth posture, prostration (that is to lay down on the ground with arms outstretched in the shape of a cross), but it is not mentioned in the sources, and is, when referred to, only associated with priests and religious. I will therefore not examine this posture further.

8 Argyle, *Bodily communication*, p. 203. Cf. Davlin, 'Devotional Postures in Piers Plowman B', p. 177.

9 Trexler, *The Christian at Prayer*, pp. 36–7. The Bible passage is, however not mentioned by Peter the Chanter explicitly in the text.

be used in prayer, but it probably did not signify anything in particular in contrast to the position of kneeling (that will be examined later in this section),¹⁰ and can be understood as the standard form of prayer. Explicitly mentioned situations when standing during prayer is recommended are, for example, during participation in mass in the parish church. *Siælinna thrøst* instructs the reader/audience that during the singing of *kyrie eleison* [Lord have mercy], one could either stand or lie down in the pew, and say one's own prayers.¹¹ When the Paternoster was sung, the laity should also stand,¹² making the position even more standard behaviour, since the Lord's prayer was considered the prayer *par excellence* in the Middle Ages. Although the laity is not instructed to participate in the saying of this prayer in Latin during mass, it was however to be said during baptism by the godparents,¹³ and thus it can be assumed that the laity did of course know what was said, and when they stood, they said or sang the prayer themselves, either in Latin or in the vernacular.

To walk during prayer

A few passages in surviving sources explicitly tell of walking in connection with prayer for the laity.

During the communion, if one wanted to receive the sacrament, *Siælinna thrøst* instructs the reader/audience to say the cited prayer for the communion when walking to receive the host.¹⁴

This position occurs also in indulgence letters to define how prayer for the dead should be performed in churchyards. One such example can be found in an indulgence letter from the year 1465, issued by Bišh-

10 Cf. Garnier, *Le langage de l'image au Moyen Âge*, i, pp. 82–8.

11 'Tha man syonger kyrieleyson ma thu šta vm thu wilt / eller liggia offwer benkin oçh læsa thina bøno' (*Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 139–40). The passage can also be interpreted as either to (a) stand [and not pray] or (b) lie down and pray. I have deemed this interpretation less likely, and thus only presented it here as a footnote.

12 *Siælinna thrøst*, p. 144.

13 See Chapter 7, and section 'Transmitting prayer culture' for prayers to be said during baptism by the godparents.

14 'Thessa sama bøn math thu ok læsa tha thu gaar til gudz bordh oc wilth gudz lykama taka' (*Siælinna thrøst*, p. 144).

op Johannes of Skara to the church of Kyrkefalla, where he states that indulgences will be given to those who wander around on the graves in prayer for the buried, especially for those wandering around the graves of strangers and there saying the prayers Paternoster and Hail Mary for the souls of these pilgrims.¹⁵

It can be assumed from these passages, that walking was both a way to transport oneself during prayer (in the case of walking to receive the sacrament of Eucharist under prayer) and to walk as a way either to contemplate during prayer or to say prayers for various deceased persons (at the cemetery). Walking is thereby closely connected with the position of standing during prayer, but more specific in use.

To kneel during prayer

According to the sources, a commonly occurring way to pray was to kneel.¹⁶ But why was a peasant woman or man to kneel during prayer? The habit of praying on bent knees has since long been connected with prayer and Origen (c. 185–c. 254) describes the posture in his tractate *Prayer*, where he traces it back to both the Old and New Testament, and declares kneeling in prayer as a necessary action when one wants to confess one's sins to God and ask for healing and forgiveness for them, since it is a sign of humbleness and submission.¹⁷ Kneeling was thereby a way to show submission and humility during prayer.

What kinds of kneeling constituted this ideal and practice? This question is complex to answer, since the sources often speak of kneel-

15 '... eius cymiterium pro defunctis orando circumierint et specialiter circumientibus locum sepulture peregrinorum ibidem et Pater noster ac Ave Maria pro animabus dictorum peregrinorum deuote dicentibus...' ('Avlatsbrevet från Västgötadelen av Skara stift', p. 116 (#23) = SDHK, #28491).

16 Cf. Sundmark, *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse*, pp. 107, 114–15; Schmitt, *La raison des gestes dans l'Occident médiéval*, pp. 301–2; Reinburg, *Popular Prayers in Late Medieval and Reformation France*, p. 197.

17 Origen cites Isaiah 45.23: 'I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, And shall not return, That to Me every knee shall bow, Every tongue shall take an oath.' and Paul's letter to the Ephesians 3.14: 'For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...' (NKJV ed.). Origen, *Prayer*, pp. 131–2.

ing with the same words (Latin: *flexis genibus*, Old Swedish: *a knæ*), but most probably intend one of two things: either the transforming action of kneeling, that is to bend ones legs and fall on the knees, or the static action of standing on knees. Often both of these actions are intended, and the actual time of standing on knees could be short (just for a few seconds) or longer (several minutes). What it does not indicate, is genuflexion (although the same Latin words are used to form the English word), that is to drop a curtsey with the right knee touching the ground and rise again. According to Sven-Erik Pernler, this habit of genuflexion was developed later, after the medieval period, and should therefore not be confused with the medieval habit of bending both knees.¹⁸ Although these two actions, that is to rest on both knees or quickly kneel with both knees and rise again, are seemingly different, they can be understood as one and the same, since they demanded a transforming action to go down on one's knees, and the time of static kneeling could be as short or as long as the situation needed.

The bending of knees in prayer can be categorised into two groups according to where the prayer was to be said: in the church building or at home.¹⁹

In the church building praying peasants, as part of the laity, are instructed to bend their knees when praying in front of certain holy images that were specified in indulgence letters. This instruction seems to have been one of the many standard phrases that occurs in indulgence letters for churches, and one such example of praying on one's knees in front of images can be found in an indulgence letter issued in the year 1418 by the bishop of Linköping for the Abbey of Vadstena, where visitors are instructed to fall on their knees in front of an image of St Anne to venerate her.²⁰

18 Pernler, 'En mässa för folket?', p. 105.

19 There could of course, have been other places where knees were to be bent during prayer, but no empirical evidence remains of such possible occasions.

20 '...vt ymago in memoriam sancte Anne, matris Marie virginis, [...] que in monasterio Watzstenensi existit constituta, congruis honoribus frequentetur et vt tanto deuocius christifideles ad predictam ymaginem confluant, [...], qui ante dictam ymaginem se prosternentes flexis genibus, ob veneracionem eiusdem sancte...' (SDHK, #19064).

Expositions of the mass for the laity also instruct the lay visitors to bend their knees during the saying of prayers in the vernacular parallel to the liturgy (that is, during offertory, the elevations of the host and chalice and during the priest's communion) and also when the Nicene Creed is sung when, according to *Sixlinna thrøst* also, one should stand, and upon the words 'ex maria virgine / Et homo factus est' [from the Virgin Mary, and was made man] kneel and with one's whole heart thank God, that is to pray for this (the passage in Latin is also translated into Swedish for the reader/audience).²¹ The intention of the kneeling is, according to *Sixlinna thrøst*, to show gratitude towards God for the salvation of humankind through his incarnation.

In wall paintings, the posture of praying on one's knees commonly occurs. One example is the motif of Christ praying in Gethsemane. Two of the most prominent associations of the motif were to give the viewer the historical story of how Christ suffered for all humanity, and how this suffering shaped the way mass was celebrated.

This is the story of what happened just before Jesus was captured. He had gone to a garden known as Gethsemane in Jerusalem and asked his disciples to keep watch while he prayed in privacy. When Jesus prayed, he said to his Father the famous words 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will' (here, in the words according to the Gospel of Matthew).²² The physical prayer behaviour differs between the Gospels: in Matthew Jesus is throwing himself to the ground, in Mark he is falling to the ground and in Luke he is falling on his knees (John does not mention this part of the story). Jesus is frightened, knowing what to come, and is in stress sweating blood. When he returns to the disciples he finds them asleep, and he reproaches them for this. Jesus then walks away to pray a second time

21 'Ther æptir fólgher / Credo tha skal thu staa / Tha som siongx ex maria virgine / Et homo factus est / thz thydher swa mykyt at gudh hafwer for wara skuld mandom vntfangit / aff the renašto iomfrune sancta maria / Tha skalt thu falla a knæ / oc skalt aff allo thino hiærta gudhy ther fore thakka' (*Sixlinna thrøst*, p. 141). For the entire mass introduction, see *Sixlinna thrøst*, pp. 139–44. Cf. Sundmark, *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse*, pp. 117–20; Pernler, 'En mässa för folket?'

22 Matthew 26.39 (NKJV ed.). Cf. Mark 14.36; Luke 22.42.



Christ in Gethsemane. Wall-painting in Dannemora church, Uppsala diocese. Painted in the first quarter of the sixteenth century by the Tierp group.

and upon his return the discip̄les have yet again fallen asleep. Having commented on this, he walks away to pray for a third time and when he returns, the discip̄les have fallen asleep again. When he reproaches them for this, those sent out to capture him arrive and Jesus is taken away and all his discip̄les flee.²³ In the medieval motif of this story, at least according to depictions in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, the discip̄les are sleeping within fences, since gardens, fields with crops and kitchen gardens in medieval times in Scandinavia were fenced in order to keep animals away. In front of Christ is a chalice, sometimes empty, sometimes filled with paintings of the instruments of his coming passion or a host.²⁴ The chalice symbolises both the mentioned cup of pain and death, and also the Eucharistic Sacrifice. In most pictures of Christ in Gethsemane, God the Father is visible above Christ's head in the shape of a cloud with a hand outstretched in a blessing gesture, indicating the presence and will of God.²⁵ To emphasise the posture of kneeling in prayer (the description of Luke is used in all the existing motifs of this story), most martyr saints depicted in either prayer or in their moment of death are pictured with bent knees. This kind of prayer is heavily influenced by the *imitatio Christi* ideal, martyr saints were suffering the same kind of death as Christ and since they prayed in the same manner as Christ before his martyrdom. Even if viewers of these wall paintings probably never had to face the same situation, they had this prayer ideal imposed upon them. During the mass peasant visitors

23 Matthew 26.36–46; Mark 14.32–42; Luke 22.39–46; John 18.1–11.

24 According to the database *Medeltidens bildvärld [The Medieval World of Images]* (Statens historiska museum, *Medeltidens bildvärld*), the motif occurs in 52 Swedish medieval churches (Finland is omitted from the database). Anna Nilsén mentions five churches with this motif in Finland (Nilsén, *Program och funktion i senmedeltida kalkmåleri*, p. 34 (F. 10.)).

25 The cloud of God exists only in one other motif in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala; the martyrdom of St Valentinus, pictured in the Helga Trefaldighetskyrkan in Arboga. A similar motif, Gideon asking for the will of God can, according to pictures found in Garnier, *Le langage de l'image au Moyen Âge*, i, (plate 93), be associated with the hand of God the Father. This could indicate that the hand of God the Father shows the will or voice of God. For a study of how God is presented as a cloud in the churches of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome and St Catherine in Sinai, see: Loerke, 'Observations on the Representation of Doxa'.

could imitate Christ (probably by bending their knees like Christ and the martyr saints) and view the miracle of the transubstantiation right in front of their eyes, just like in the wall paintings.²⁶

Martyrs are often depicted kneeling in prayer. For example at the Helga Trefaldighet church in Arboga, St Valentinus is depicted kneeling before his execution. Above him is a cloud symbolising God and the hand of God is visible and blesses St Valentinus, similar to Jesus Christ in the Gethsemane motif.

If a peasant person was unable to visit the church during a holy day, he or she could, according to *Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera*, kneel and say the prayers at home, with the mind directed towards the parish church.²⁷

To lie in the pew during prayer

In one source, *Siælinna thrøst*, yet another way to position oneself during prayer is presented, the abstruse '*liggia ofwer benkin*', literally translated into English as 'to lie over the pew'. But before examining this phrase and possible prayer posture, one needs first to understand the use of pews during the Middle Ages.

Did peasants use pews when praying during the Middle Ages? Did they sit in them, or were they not even allowed to use them? *Siælinna thrøst* tells of pews (Old Swedish: *bänker*) in connection with attendance at mass in churches.²⁸ The existence of pews in churches from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala is known, and both pews of stone attached to the walls of the church building and wooden pews have survived from the medieval period. It is, however, uncertain if wooden pews were used by the laity or only by the clergy in the chancel since the remains of these have been detached from their original position. According to Monica Rydbäck, the laity seems to have known of the concept of

26 Sundmark, *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse*, pp. 114, 173, 185.

27 'the som ey gyta komith til kirkio fore langhan wegh lesi hemma ij syno herberghe a kneum ok wände sik til sinne soknakirkio medh godhe tro the bönör ware litla stundh lesna hwo som timan wildhe wakta' ('Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', p. 219).

28 *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 139–44.

pews (both of stone and wood), but it is unclear whether the author of *Siælinna thrøst* implied the use of wooden pews in medieval Sweden or only acknowledged the existence of such pews in low Germany, where the original text was written.²⁹ For the diocese of Turku (Åbo) no evidence of wooden pews remains from the medieval period according to Erik Cinthio.³⁰ Sven-Erik Pernler assumes that wooden pews could have been arranged in the aisle of the church, with female and male sections (women on the right side of Christ on the crucifix (that is the North side on a East-West oriented church), and men on the left side, that is the South side), although there is a possibility that families were not separated by gender, but married people could sit together in the centre of the church aisle. Remains of medieval pews also suggest, according to Pernler, a practice of separation between higher status on wooden pews and lower-status people on stone pews.³¹ According to Birgit Stolt, the households using them probably made the wooden pews.³² Virginia Reinburg notes that in medieval France, pews were not generally intended for lower-status persons to use, but could be used by pregnant women regardless of social status.³³ It is impossible to tell whether or not this was the case in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala since no record of this matter has survived.

Now back to the phrase '*liggia ofwer benkin*' [to lie or rest over the pew].³⁴ How was this done, and what did it mean? Was one supposed to lie in the pews and if so, in what way? It cannot be understood as sitting in the pew, since sitting is explicitly described later in the text, as an alternative to lying. The word '*liggia*' could also mean rest, but how does one rest in the pew without sitting in it? This difficulty in understanding

29 Rydbeck, 'Kirkestole: Sverige'.

30 Cinthio, 'Korstolar', col. 209.

31 Pernler, 'En mässa för folket?', pp. 106–8.

32 Stolt, 'Kyrkorum och kyrkoskrud', p. 149.

33 Reinburg, *Popular Prayers in Late Medieval and Reformation France*, p. 180.

34 *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 139–44; cf. Pernler, 'En mässa för folket?', pp. 106–7. A example of the phrase is: 'Thu skalt ey altidh staa / eller liggia ofwer benkin...' (*Siælinna thrøst*, p. 139).

has troubled several researchers,³⁵ and in the original, Lower German original of *Siælinna thrøst*, *Der grossen Seelentrost*, the words are similar: ‘liggen ouer de bank’, therefore sharing the same difficulty of interpretation, since the words seem easy to interpret, but can hardly mean what they appear to say.³⁶ The German text proves, however, that the posture was not an invention by the Swedish translator of *Siælinna thrøst*, but something existing and obviously intended for German-speaking areas as well.³⁷ Sven-Erik Pernler suggests that in *Siælinna thrøst* it would indicate some kind of bending the upper part of the body to a horizontal position.³⁸ David d’Avray argues that resting could have meant to rest on the pew in front.³⁹ If d’Avray’s proposition is true, then the habit implies a multitude of pews (or at least two in a row). This could have been the case, but can hardly be proven, since wooden pews have survived only in a fragmentary manner and the later uses of pews could have altered the medieval organisation of them. What it meant, in terms of attitude towards God, is equally difficult to grasp, and no previous interpretation has been made. Perhaps it could be understood as a submissive and a contemplating way of behaving.

The question of when it was to be used as a position of prayer is somewhat easier to grasp, since *Siælinna thrøst* speaks of lying or resting in pews during the *kyrie eleison* [Lord have mercy] and the collect, as mentioned earlier, and that one could then either stand or lie and say one’s prayers.⁴⁰

35 Pernler, ‘En mässa för folket’, p. 109; Rydbeck, ‘Kirkestole: Sverige’, p. 409; Brilioth, *Svenska kyrkans historia*, ii, p. 710.

36 *Der grosse Seelentrost*, p. 95.

37 I have searched for this way of using pews in sources other than *Siælinna thrøst*, both Scandinavian and European, and I have found no other example.

38 Pernler, ‘En mässa för folket’, p. 109. Cf. Schmitt, *La raison des gestes dans l’Occident médiéval*, pp. 301–2 (the posture is labelled in Latin as *plena*).

39 I wish to express my gratitude to Professor David d’Avray for this suggestion.

40 *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 139–40.

The arms and hands

The ways of positioning one's hands can be seen in wall paintings of Christ in prayer, of martyr saints and of lay folk in prayer (although no written text describe this).

The way the arms and hands were positioned mattered during prayer, since positions could indicate the intention of the praying person through the different prayer practices, according to Dom Louis Gougaud.⁴¹ He lists seven different medieval prayer attitudes,⁴² with special focus on how hands and arms were used during prayer:

(1) 'The arms raised towards heaven.' This position is the oldest of the seven attitudes, deriving from the Jewish tradition preceding the beginning of Christianity.⁴³ (2) 'The arms extended in the form of a cross.' This was developed in the early Church as a way to identify oneself with Christ on the cross, first practised standing in public later to be used in private prayer during the Middle Ages. The position was also used together with kneeling and lying on the floor outstretched as an act of submission in the Middle Ages.⁴⁴ (3) 'The attitude of the Orans (this position has certain variations, according to whether the arms, more or less away from the body, form with the forearms obtuse angles, right angles or more or less acute angles).' This attitude was a consequence of the increasingly crowded churches in Late Antiquity, and meant that the praying person needed only to move parts of the arms to indicate prayer, and was popular from the ninth century onwards.⁴⁵ (4) 'The hands open in front of the breast with the palms in various positions.' First depicted in the fourth century this attitude can indicate both prayer and awe.⁴⁶ (5) 'This arms crossed over the breast with one wrist resting on the other.' The attitude is used from the twelfth century, but could possibly be

41 Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices* p. 1.

42 Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices* p. 2. Gougaud has observed these seven attitudes through the study of statues, carvings, pictures and descriptions from the medieval period in Europe (as a whole).

43 Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices* pp. 3–8, citation from page 2.

44 Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices* p. 8–16, citation from page 2

45 Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices* pp. 16–17, citation from page 2.

46 Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices* pp. 17–19, citation from page 2.

much older. It indicated supplication and was mostly used by priests during the mass in the prayer *Supplices te rogamus* [*Most humbly we implore Thee*].⁴⁷ (6) ‘The hands joined and placed one against the other with the tips of the fingers turned upwards.’ This attitude began slowly to be used in the eighth century, but has thereafter become the most commonly associated position with prayer, and symbolises submission like a vassal towards the king.⁴⁸ (7) ‘The hands clasped with the fingers of one hand locked between the fingers of the other.’ The first evidence for this attitude used in prayer is from the ninth century, but it was only rarely used to indicate prayer until the early modern period.⁴⁹

These postures were used by both the ordained and laity. The positions of arms and hands during prayer were commonly occurring ideals, not only in the examined geographical area, but throughout the Western Church, and the examples found show their popularity as prayer postures.

In the examined surviving sources from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, only attitude 6, the hands in front of the chest with joined hands, palm against palm and fingers pointing either upwards or forward, can be directly linked with the ideals for those belonging to peasant communities, as part of the laity as a whole.⁵⁰ The position was probably the most common way to use one’s hands during prayer, according

47 Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices* pp. 19–21, citation from page 2.

48 Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices* pp. 21–8, citation from page 2.

49 Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices* pp. 28–31, citation from page 2.

50 There is, however, no other way to examine prayer postures in wall paintings and sculptures than to look at each picture and artefact. Attitudes 4–7 can all be found in this ecclesiastical province in the church art, but 4 and 5 are never depicted for a lay person or any other person and 7 is depicted only once, on a scene of Rubens looking for his presumed dead brother Joseph, and the position of Ruben’s hand cannot be explicitly interpreted as in prayer, but more likely shows great feelings of fear according to the Bible story that is referred to in the citation above the picture ‘*Rubs sublatur pueru ee necatum*’ [*Ruben fears that the young boy is beaten to death*] (Cf. Genesis 37). The picture of Rubens can be found in Dannemora church, diocese of Uppsala, and was painted in the late fifteenth century). The attitudes 1–3 could possibly have been practices in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, but if so, no evidence has survived and these attitudes can therefore not be proven by empirical data.

to images from the Western Church and also more specifically, in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, and can be found on wall paintings, sculptures, grave decorations and altar screens.⁵¹

But what did this position indicate? According to Gougaud, this posture was used not only as a prayer gesture, but also as a submissive gesture between vassal and overlord. The vassal knelt; the overlord took the joined hands of the vassal in his own when the vassal was to swear the oath, confirming the bond between the two. Praying in this way therefore indicated the bond between vassal and lord, God and servant, according to Gougaud.⁵² The rich variety of depictions of this position indicates that this posture was most probably the posture to use during prayer, no matter when or how the prayer was to be said.

The clothes

Was there a dress code for prayer for the peasantry? The mode of dress was supposed to indicate the intention of the prayer and to show the devotion of the praying person.⁵³ But how was one to show this intention through the clothing and what parts of the clothes were used?

The motif 'The sacrifice of Cain and Abel' is helpful in understanding the ideal link between prayer behaviour and clothing. In Genesis chapter 4 we learn of Cain and Abel and their efforts to sacrifice to God and choose suitable gifts to burn. Whereas Abel, the younger brother of Cain, sacrificed the most precious thing he had – a lamb – Cain chose to burn some of his crop – a gift that God did not appreciate as much. Cain became angry with God and in his anger and envy he murdered his brother and was subsequently banned from his home, albeit under the protection of God through his mark of Cain.⁵⁴

51 Sundmark, *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse*, pp. 115–16; Schmitt, *La raison des gestes dans l'Occident médiéval*, pp. 295–301; Garnier, *Le langage de l'image au Moyen Âge*, i, pp. 212–13; Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices* p. 21.

52 Gougaud, *Devotional and Ascetic Practices* pp. 21–9. Cf Garnier, *Le langage de l'image au Moyen Âge*, i, pp. 212–13.

53 Cf. Melin, *Fäfängans förgänglighet*, pp. 157–8.

54 According to Anna Nilsén, the motif occurs in at least 33 churches in modern Sweden (Nilsén only examined churches from Mälardalen (that is, the area surrounding

The motif of ‘The sacrifices by Cain and Abel’ can, according to my opinion, be interpreted as a motif of prayer, since sacrifice is a way of communicating with God, and communication with God is prayer, according to the definition used in this study. This motif was not primarily meant to encourage the physical sacrifice of goods, but probably chiefly to encourage those praying to communicate with God in a proper manner.

This story was used in catechetical instruction to educate parishioners in prayer and worship. A worshipper should always offer the best he or she could, with proper intention and devotion. The motif of the offering to God by Cain and Abel is symbolised by two men, often painted on each side of an arch, with fires burning in front of them and looking at God who is depicted at the point of the arc. According to tradition in Christian art, the good Abel is always on God’s right side (that is, on the left side from a viewer’s perspective) and Cain is on God’s left side. Both Cain and Abel show several signs of prayer postures that are either good or bad. Abel demonstrates the way good prayer should be performed: to remove one’s shoes,⁵⁵ remove one’s hat, bend the knees, hold the palms together in the direction of God and offer the very best one can offer (whatever that might be), with chins close-shaven.⁵⁶ The opposite, bad prayer, is depicted by Cain’s behaviour during his sacrifice. He is wearing shoes and a hat and neither bends his knees nor presses his palms together, but often holds one of his hands on his belt as a sign of pride and arrogance. He also wears a large beard.⁵⁷ Above all this, he is not offering God his best, only the second best. The flames and fumes of the fires burning next to Cain and Abel give the viewer God’s understanding of their worship. Abel’s good prayer makes the flame and fumes go straight

Stockholm and Uppsala) and 3 in Finland. (Nilsén, *Program och funktion i senmedeltida kalkmåleri*, p. 29).

55 Not all depictions of this motif have the feature.

56 Cf. Melin, *Fåfångans förgänglighet*, pp. 181–2.

57 Cf. Melin, *Fåfångans förgänglighet*, pp. 181–2, 185–6. The holding of one hand on the belt, with the elbow outstretched is known as *akimbo* (from the words ‘a kenbow’, *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. ‘akimbo’).



The sacrifice of Cain (right) and Abel (left). Wall-painting in Bromma church, Uppsala diocese. Painted in the last quarter of the fifteenth century by Albertus Pictor.

to heaven, whereas Cain's bad prayer gives a weak fire with flames and fumes going in all directions but heaven.⁵⁸

One should, however, not confuse the exterior with the interior of the praying person. It was the intention of the praying person that mattered, and the way clothes were used indicated the intention. Arrogance in mind was shown in the motif, in the shape of arrogance in clothing and posture, whereas devotion was also expressed with humble dress. But still, a dress code existed in which these inner intentions could be expressed to God.

The motif shows not only general ideals in prayer, but also specific details, such as the removal of hats by men when encountering God, as well as the removal of shoes on such occasions.

Head-gear

To begin with, we note the removal of hats by men when encountering God in the motif of the sacrifices by Cain and Abel. This behaviour is not only depicted, but also described in at least one catechetical manual: in *Sjælinna thrøst* men in the church congregation are asked to remove their hats or caps during the Gospel reading.⁵⁹ This behaviour corresponds with practices from the entire Western Church. For example, Jean Gerson instructs all men to remove their hats when listening to the Gospel reading.⁶⁰ In a study of how hats and veils were used in a religious context, Gabriela Signori concludes that the habit of raising the hat (as she describes the phenomenon) can be traced to the 'expression of relationship, of deference towards he who held the highest rank'. God was above humanity, and consequently, when listening to the Gospel, receiving the word of the Lord, all men should behave according to greeting customs between superiors and subordinates and therefore

58 Cf. Nilsén, *Program och funktion i senmedeltida kalkmåleri*, pp. 284–7.

59 *Sjælinna thrøst*, p. 140. Cf. Pernler, 'En mässa för folket?', pp. 110–12.

60 'When the Gospel is said, you must listen to his sweet word, which comes truly from mouth and heart. And men should rise and remove their hats when they hear it.' (Gerson, 'Comment on se doit maintenir à la messe c. 1400', p. 322). Translation by Virginia Reinburg in Reinburg, 'Liturgy and the Laity', p. 531.

remove their hats on this occasion.⁶¹ Here a major difference between the sexes is visible, something seldom occurring in the sources; the use of head-gear during prayer.

Whether or not women were to remove their veils (since all married women wore veils) is complex to answer. The instruction in *Siælinna thrøst* is directly followed by a short example, where Saint Elisabeth is said to have removed her crown (Old Swedish: *krono*) during the reading of the Gospel when she was a virgin.⁶² This passage can therefore be understood as that all young, unmarried women were to remove their head-gear during the Gospel reading. But is this interpretation and instruction plausible? Most nuns were virgins and never married (except for widows who entered the orders later in life), and I have never come across an instruction for them to remove their head-gear during the Gospel reading.

Notable in these instructions is the omission of admonition for married women. They are not instructed whether or not hats may be worn during the mass, albeit they, at least in Scandinavia, wore headdresses (and most often veils). According to Gabriella Signori, the veil was never considered the female counterpart of the male hat in medieval Europe, and should therefore not be interpreted with the same kind of symbolism as the male hat.⁶³ Whether women were in church or not did not matter, since women were always to remain veiled (at least married women), when in prayer or not. The use of veils for women in medieval Europe could be a result of Paul's comments in his first letter to the Corinthians, where he orders men to uncover their heads during prayer and prophecy (to avoid shame), and women to veil their heads when praying or prophesying. Since men are the image of God, they have the freedom to speak with God bareheaded, whereas the woman is the image of the man, and should therefore cover her hair for the sake of the angels.⁶⁴

61 Signori, 'Veil, Hat or Hair', p. 38.

62 'Sancta elizabeth tha hon war iomfru / plæghadhe altid taka sina krono aff sino hofdhe / tha man las ewangelium' (*Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 140–1). Cf. *Der grosse Seelentrost*, p. 96.

63 Signori, 'Veil, Hat or Hair', p. 27.

64 1 Corinthians 11.2–16. Cf. Sundmark, *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse*, pp. 116–17.

The fact that the apostle Paul (in the Middle Ages often referred to simply as the Apostle) himself made these regulations concerning veils for women should not be underestimated.

The removal of hats should, however, not be interpreted as the way to be during prayer. Prayers could be said with the head-gear removed, but *Sixelinna thrøst* speaks of all prayers to be said during the mass either before or after the removal of hats during the Gospel reading, that is, laypeople are supposed to wear their head-gear when saying the cited prayers in the vernacular. Most of the church art also depicts people in prayer both with and without head-gear. Prayer could be said with without head-gear, although further emphasis on rank and submission could be indicated through the removal of hats during prayer.

Footwear

The removal of shoes during prayer was also part of a common association between praying and dressing, probably throughout western Europe. But what did this indicate in terms of prayer? Klaus Schreiner concludes that the religious habit of being barefoot (Latin: *nudis pedibus*) was practised and recommended throughout the Middle Ages. It was an action expressed with the body, to show emotions, attitudes and activity goals.⁶⁵

Among the most notable uses and ideals of barefoot walking was to indicate penance. One could perform pilgrimage barefoot, and restore confidence in conflicts.⁶⁶ One day in particular was associated with barefoot walking: Good Friday, when both ordained and laypeople were recommended, according to Schreiner, to walk barefoot.⁶⁷

In the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, being barefoot is especially visible on wall paintings depicting Cain and Abel, and 'the devout prayer and worldly prayer',⁶⁸ where the ideal praying person has removed his shoes when in prayer. Barefoot prayer is also mentioned in a fifteenth-

65 Schreiner, 'Nudis pedibus', p. 121.

66 Schreiner, 'Nudis pedibus', pp. 85–89, 99–102, III–15.

67 Schreiner, 'Nudis pedibus', pp. 61–2.

68 Melin, *Fäsfängans förgänglighet*, p. 131.

century model sermon in Swedish for Rogation Sunday, and could be interpreted as an ideal of penance.⁶⁹ Barefoot prayer is also mentioned in the same sermon, in an *exemplum* where the bishop of a diocese plagued with illnesses, bears and wolves, recommends everyone to visit their churches barefoot, with crosses, fasting and almsgiving three days in a row and say their prayers to God. Immediately after this, God removed all threats and hardships.⁷⁰ Another sermon in Swedish speaks of barefoot prayer, similar to the sermon for Rogation Sunday, but in connection with the feast of St Mark (25 April).⁷¹ In the year 1374 a German Squire was described as barefoot upon his arrival at the Abbey of Vadstena, as part of his pilgrimage.⁷² Anders Fröjmark interprets this custom in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala as a choice by pilgrims to express their devotion, in order to strengthen their cry for help as described in miracle stories.⁷³

The ideal was also emphasised in telling the story of Moses when he encountered God in the burning bush or when it was or used as a motif in wall paintings.⁷⁴ Moses is then asked by God to remove his shoes, since the ground that he is standing on is holy.⁷⁵ This motif recurs in wall paintings, often with a focus on the removal of shoes. Wearing shoes on holy ground was supposedly inappropriate in the story of Moses. This episode could, however, also be interpreted as putting focus not on the removal of shoes, but on the immediate presence of God. When encountering God, one should behave properly, and at least in Late Antiquity, one was supposed to enter the holy church building barefoot.⁷⁶ However

69 'Ther fore skule wj j thre dagha komma til kirkio. fasta. giffwa almuza, ganga mz kors vlne oc barfotte, bidhe gudh giffwa os helsso, badhe til lifff oc siäl...' (*Svenska medeltids-postillor*, iii, p.159).

70 *Svenska medeltids-postillor*, iii, pp. 158–9.

71 *Svenska medeltids-postillor*, iii, pp. 152–3.

72 Fröjmark, *Mirakler och helgonkult*, p. 107.

73 Fröjmark, 'Per viam asperam et valde longam', under Topic 4) 'Expressions of Piety'.

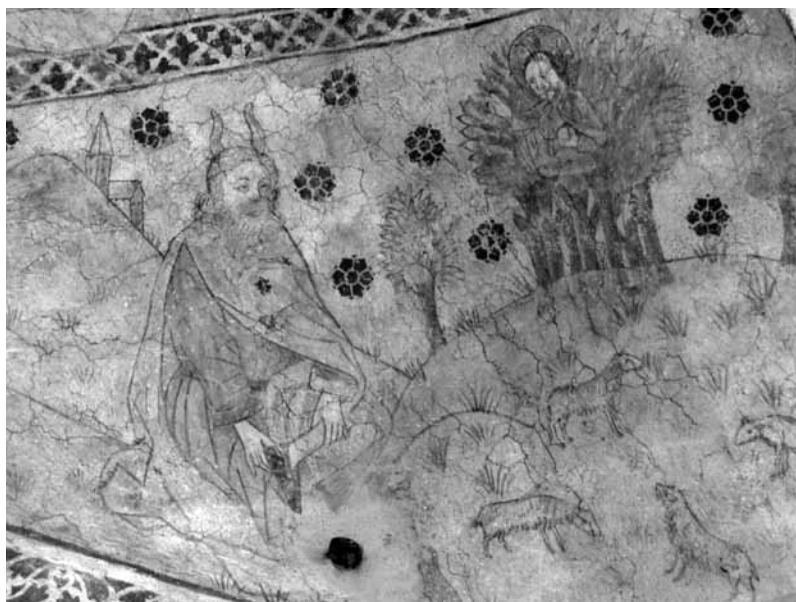
74 The motif can at least be found in 19 Swedish churches and 3 Finnish churches according to Anna Nilsén (Nilsén, *Program och funktion i senmedeltida kalkmåleri*, p. 30, G. 1.).

75 Exodus 3,5. Cf. Schreiner, 'Nudis pedibus', pp. 53–4.

76 Schreiner, 'Nudis pedibus', p. 55.

whether this was practised in the Middle Ages or not is questionable, but it remained at least as a sign of submission and penance.

The connection between what happened to Moses in the Old Testament, and encounters with God in the Middle Ages, was visible, and an example of how a peasant should behave when encountering God in holy places.



Moses and the burning bush. Wall-painting in Gryta church, Uppsala diocese. Painted in the year 1487, probably by a disciple of Albertus Pictor.

Right words

Knowing how prayers should be pronounced was important to the praying peasant. In order to achieve the most efficiency in prayer, the praying laity needed to pay close attention both to careful pronunciation and to the understanding of what one was praying.⁷⁷

In this section I will focus on two aspects of the right words, namely the enunciation and the language for prayer.⁷⁸

The enunciation

The dilemma of quality versus quantity in prayer was of concern to people belonging to peasant communities, since several instructions exist where the reader or audience is encouraged to pray several prayers in a certain order, but also to keep focused on each prayer.⁷⁹

Among the sources from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, *Siælinna thrøst* stresses that it is important to be careful with enunciation during prayer. It states that one should pray slowly and not hasten, and to say only whole words. The reader is then told that it is better to read one Paternoster slowly with kindness than to read ten at full speed, because the devil is collecting all half finished and omitted words as evidence against the praying person on Judgement Day.⁸⁰ Magister Mathias goes even one step further in his *Homo conditus*, arguing that not even words are necessary in prayer, since Mary Magdalena (sic!) wept in silence and washed the feet of Jesus Christ with her tears, and that Jesus forgave her sins.⁸¹

77 *Siælinna thrøst*, p. 118.

78 The results of this section are mainly based on a single source: *Siælinna thrøst*, since no other source examined has information about this matter.

79 *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 117, 119.

80 Cf. Cawsey, "Tutivillus and the 'Kyrkchaterars'"; Jennings, "Tutivillus"; Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, #1630.

81 Matthew 26.6–13; Mark 6:36–50; John 12:1–8. Magister Mathias, *Homo conditus*, p. 112 (¶ ix:33).

It seems, that in order to say as many prayers as possible, the author of *Siælinna thrøst* implies a decreasing carefulness in the enunciation. The prayers addressed are the Paternoster and Hail Mary, two ‘standard prayers’ and no other prayers. This implies that the praying person knew how to enunciate these prayers and leads to the language for prayer.

The language for prayer

Was the peasantry to use Latin in their prayer, even if they did not understand what they were praying? *Siælinna thrøst* concludes that the understanding of a prayer is most important in order to gain efficiency – one should pray in a language that one understands. Although a prayer keeps its power regardless of the person saying it, it can however be used more efficiently and forcefully when said by a person who knows the language of the prayer. Prayers should, therefore, be said in a language understood by the praying person, and the prime example of this interpretation according to *Siælinna thrøst*, is Jesus Christ who taught the Jews the Paternoster in their own language.⁸² The clergy understood Latin, as *Siælinna thrøst* describes it, and should therefore pray

82 ‘Nu math thu spøria om Pater noſter ær swa godh oppa wart maal som oppa latino / Thz wil iak thik berætta / eet got swærdh thz ær swa goth ok hwaſt j eens krøplingx hand som [j] eens kempa hand / Tho ær thz nyttoghare kæmpanom som ther kan nokot mz gøra / Een book ær swa godh / j eens barns hand som j eens meſtara / Tho kan meſtarin gøra sik hona nyttoghare som bokena forſtaar / Eet lyus brinder swa klarlika j eens blindz manz hand som j seande manz hand / Thz ær tho nyttoghare them seande æn them blinda / Swa ær oc pater noſter oppa latino j eenz lekmanz mun swa godh som j preſtins mun / En preſtin som hon forſtaar // magh mer gudhlikhet faa aff henne æn lekmanin som hona ey forſtaar oc wet ey hwat han sigher / Thy radher iak thik at thu læs the bøn som thu wel forſtaar at thu maghe faa ther aff thes mera gudhliketh j thina ſiel / Thu ſkal ok vîta at war herra lærdhe ikke ſinom diſcîpulis Pater noſter oppa latino / Vtan oppa thz maall som folkî taladhe oc forſtodh j thy landeno som han tha war ſtadder / Oc thz war j iudha lande / Oc thy lærdhe han thøm pater noſter oppa thera maal / Thy ær thz mît radh at thu læs pater noſter som thu hona beſt forſtaar / Tho ſtraffar iak ikke eller auîter at thu læs hona oppa latino / Thz ær badhe goth Hwilkî thik beſt behaghar thz les gudhi til hedher’ (*Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 236–7). *Nota bene*, the writer of *Siælinna thrøst* understands that the Lord’s Prayer was not originally said in Latin, but in the language of the Jews.

in Latin. The laity who did not understand Latin should pray in the vernacular instead, although it can be assumed that at least some of the laity did know commonly used Latin phrases and prayers, simply through osmosis. Therefore, it was not necessary, or required, to learn prayers in Latin without understanding them. *Siælinna thrøst* concludes that the relation between Latin as language for prayer is a matter of understanding, and makes, for example, the parallel to prayer books, which can be held by a child and by a master, but it is in the hands of the master who understands the words that they become more useful. Therefore, a priest educated in Latin should pray in Latin, and an uneducated person should pray in the language known to him or her. It is, however, not punishable for laypeople, states *Siælinna thrøst*, to say the Paternoster in Latin, if it is said to honour God.⁸³

Since prayer is about communication, comprehension is vital to the praying person. But for the laity their way of praying is understood as being equally acceptable as the clergy's prayer.

Prayers in Latin were translated into the vernacular in order to enable the laity to understand all prayers.⁸⁴ As a result of this trend, prayers were translated into both Swedish and Finnish, and Swedish translations of prayers exist in great numbers. However, Finnish was just an oral language until the Reformation in the sixteenth century, so one can only suppose that the Finnish versions of the Paternoster, Hail Mary and Creed that appeared in print in the year 1543 were preceded by oral versions. Since the purpose of a prayer was to communicate with God, and hopefully with some efficacy, the 'best' language to pray in had to be used in order to achieve good communication. According to *Siælinna thrøst*, for the clergy who often understood Latin, this was understood to be a good language for prayer,⁸⁵ and it was used through-

83 *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 236–7.

84 Prayers translated from other languages existed as well, at least in books translated from one non-Latin language to another. For example, the many prayers in the low-German original of *Siælinna thrøst*, appear also in Swedish translation. Cf Hårdelin, *Världen som yta och fönster*, p. 135.

85 '...Swa ær oc pater noſter oppa latino j eenz lekmanz mun swa godh som j preſtins mun / En preſtin som hon forſtaar // magh mer gudhlikhet faa aff henne æn lekmannin som hona ey forſtaar oc wet ey hwat han ſigher...' (*Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 236–7).

out mass and other clerical religious situations such as the sacraments and in the main ecclesiastical administration.

Right intentions

The secret of prayer was the concentration of mind. God looked to the intention of the praying peasant man or women, and concentrated prayer was a key to proving this to God. In order to examine how the mind could be focused, it is necessary to understand what constituted good focus, and how it could be maintained.

In this section I will focus on three aspects of the right intentions, namely depicting attentiveness, the impact of attentiveness, and methods of maintaining attentiveness.

Depicting attentiveness

One way to introduce the importance of intention and thought during prayer can be found in the wall-painting motif 'the devout prayer and the worldly prayer' (Swedish: *Den frommes och den världsliges bön*), a motif occurring in churches all over Europe.⁸⁶

It depicts two men praying on each side of a crucifix. The crucifix sometimes also carries the instruments of Passion (Latin: *arma Christi*). The one praying devoutly is situated on the good, right side of Christ, and the one in worldly prayer on Christ's left side. Both bend their knees, wear no hat and hold their palms together, looking at Christ. The devout person may be depicted either as a layman, monk or priest whereas the worldly one is always a layperson. The purpose of the motif is to show the intention of the praying person, using small lines that come out of the praying person's mouth. The devout person's lines lead to Christ's five wounds, indicating a proper way of thinking and praying. Christ is in focus in the devout man's prayer and Christ is looking towards him in return. The lines of the worldly person lead either to a house with all

⁸⁶ Jaritz, 'Das schlechte Gebet zu den Schätzen der Welt'; Wildhaber, 'Gebet, gutes und schlechtes'; Odenius, 'Rätt ånger'; Wildhaber, 'Das gute und das schlechte Gebet'. The motif exists in what is today's Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland, and was developed in the second half of the 15th century (Jaritz, 'Das schlechte Gebet zu den Schätzen der Welt', p. 85).



The devout prayer and the worldly prayer. Wall-painting in Dannemora church, Uppsala diocese. Painted in the first quarter of the sixteenth century by the Tierp group.

its possessions, to a cupboard filled with delightful food, or to different possessions piled next to him. What looks almost similar when viewing the two people in prayer is, in reality, one person praying to God, and another thinking of worldly things. God knows about all this and it is only the devout person who is regarded by God. Intention is therefore rewarded, and this would probably lead to greater effect in prayer.⁸⁷

The inwards focus is further emphasised in several Old Swedish sermons for Rogation Sunday, where the praying person is told of the foundations of good prayer, especially bidding prayer.⁸⁸

Since these instructions are most similar in their structure, one example is perhaps enough for these foundations, in which the praying person is provided with three pieces of advices concerning prayer: (1) Not to pray for earthly richness but for what is useful for life and soul, since what is prayed for in health to God is given health in return; (2) Not to seek gold or silver in prayer, but spiritual understanding to do God's will; (3) Continually to call God and be noisy (Old Swedish: *knabba*) towards him since it will lead you to heaven. The one who calls God with a humble heart will be carried by God, saved from all perils, and led into eternal joy in heaven.⁸⁹

These instructions tell the praying person to focus not on earthly things, but on spiritual matters and on God, but still with the awareness that earthly things can be asked for, if these are necessary for the praying person.

The impact of attentiveness

Images could also be used to maintain focus during prayer, and act as stations of devotion in the churches, to show the impact of prayer.⁹⁰

87 Jaritz, 'Das schlechte Gebet zu den Schätzen der Welt'; Melin, *Fåfångans förgänglighet*, pp. 122–33.

88 *Svenska medeltids-postillor*, pp. 149–55; *Svenska medeltids-postillor*, i, pp. 95–100; *Svenska medeltids-postillor*, ii, pp. 152–3, 158–60, 160–3, 191–8.

89 *Svenska medeltids-postillor*, p. 160.

90 Lentès, 'Die Gewänder der Heiligen', pp. 143–5; Reinburg, *Popular Prayers in Late Medieval and Reformation France*, pp. 120, 122, 293–5. Reinburg also speaks of pictures in prayer books as visualisation aid for the praying person.

Pictures of the Virgin Mary surrounded by flowers on a string, referred to the Rosary and the flowers could, according to Thomas Lentjes, represent the individual prayers to be said.⁹¹ If no picture existed, it could be constructed in the shape of a mental image during prayer. For example, a particular number of prayers might construct clothes for the saints in heaven (the mantle of the Virgin Mary took everything between 30,000 to 300,000 prayers to construct, depending on what instructional manuscript was used).⁹² Praying then, meant the construction of these images when praying, hoping for their realisation in heaven, and the reward to be collected by the praying person in return.⁹³

The author of *Siælinna thrøst* informs the reader/audience that he knows of many who say one Paternoster after another, speaking so speedy that it gains nothing. This is not the way to pray, but instead one should pray with devotion of all the heart.⁹⁴

An *exemplum* in *Siælinna thrøst* further implies the careful enunciation, speaking of a woman to whom the Virgin Mary appears. The Virgin Mary thanks the woman for her many Hail Marys since they are very pleasant to her, but corrects the woman's all-too-hasty saying of the prayer and recommends that she say the words a little bit more slowly, something that would please her [the Virgin Mary] even more.⁹⁵

As prayer, the Paternoster could be said several times a day and especially on holy days in preparation for lauds, mass and vespers, and then often prayed in groups of three, ten or thirty Paternosters. In a society where few, if any, clocks existed, repetitive prayers could be used to measure time.⁹⁶ But the repetitive praying of the Paternoster in groups

91 Lentjes, 'Die Gewänder der Heiligen', pp. 121–8.

92 Lentjes, 'Die Gewänder der Heiligen', pp. 135–41.

93 Lentjes, 'Counting Piety in the Late Middle Ages', pp. 54, 56; Lentjes, 'Die Gewänder der Heiligen', pp. 125–6, 145–6.

94 *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 117–18.

95 *Siælinna thrøst*, p. 119.

96 In the *Officium custodiet ecclesie Aboensis* [Office observed by the church of Turku (Åbo)], probably written in the late fifteenth century, instructions are given to parish organists (Old Swedish: *klokkere*) regarding the length between certain bell-ringing: 'Item tha siæx slaar om morgonen skal han ringia tre resor til primsmessone mz prymsklokkone

had one major problem – the risk of a lack of heartfeltness. Instructions are given regarding how to pray each Paternoster and these instructions focus on clearness, patience and that one should finish each prayer before starting anew. As mentioned earlier, all unfinished prayers were thought to be collected by the devil and saved as evidence for the Last Judgement.⁹⁷ It was therefore better to pray one single Paternoster with devotion than to pray a whole Psalter or a thousand Paternosters without godliness.⁹⁸

An *exemplum* in *Siælinna thrøst* marks the importance of this ‘principle’: A godly woman often prayed with heartfelt intention to God. When confessing to a ‘brother’, he asked her how she prayed. She told him that she knew no other prayer than the Paternoster, said in her own language. The reason why she prayed it in the vernacular was, she said, to be able to understand the words of the prayer, something she would be unable to do if said in Latin. The friar then asked her how many times a day she said the prayer. She told him, that if all was well, she prayed only one, or a quarter of a Paternoster during the mass, but if she felt uneasy, she could pray up to fifty or sixty Paternosters during the mass. The friar was intrigued by this answer and asked her to explain why. The woman then told him, that when she begins the Paternoster with the first two words (the woman used both the Latin words ‘*pater noster*’ and the Old Swedish words ‘*Father war*’ [*Our Father*]), she thinks of how the God of heaven is, as father to her, and she his child and heir. She continues to think of the great love and friendship (Old Swedish: *throskap*) he has shown her, greater than any other earthly father is able to, and of the great pain and poverty he had suffered for thirty-three years, and of his bitter and harsh death. When she considers this, God sometimes gives such a godly feeling and sweetness in her soul and heart, that she can continue the whole mass with just these two words. Then she says

oc dwålias swa længe mellom hwarie ringelse at een ave maria maa læsas.’ (Reuterdahl, *Statuta synodalia*, p. 211). The passage can, in my opinion, be interpreted as a means to measure time.

97 *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 118–19.

98 *Siælinna thrøst*, p. 235.

'*Thu ther est j hymerike*' [You, who art in heaven], she begins to think and observe the joy and happiness that is in heaven, coming from the delightful bright beauty of God's countenance, and of the inconceivable virtue and concern of the Holy Trinity. She continues to consider the honourable company in heaven, and of these things God sometimes lets her see, so godly and sweet that she dwells there hour-long. Then she takes the next phrase '*hælakt wari this namn*' [hallowed be thy name], she contemplates it with a godly feeling, so also all the other phrases that are in the Paternoster. Doing this, she can hardly finish one Paternoster during one mass, and this she finds appropriate for her. On occasions when she feels no godly sweetness in her heart, she reads one Paternoster after another, and she does not even know what she is saying. Therefore she sometimes reads fifty or sixty Paternosters without a godly feeling, and she feels like it is not going well for her. The *exemplum* ends with an exhortation by the author to the reader, explaining that the woman had true love and could pray well. This is how one should pray godly, and not neglect even the smallest prayer being godly said.⁹⁹

Methods of maintaining attentiveness

But how was the praying peasant woman or man able to remain focused during prayer? Several instructions describe prayers that would have taken a long time, and include constant repetition of certain prayers such as the Paternoster and Hail Mary.¹⁰⁰ These instructions therefore combine a repeated use of these prayers, together with mental themes and images. The Paternoster could be connected to different parts of the life of Christ, for example one Paternoster for his torture, either from Jesus' own perspective or through the eyes of the Virgin Mary, making it part of the Rosary, perhaps the most widespread combination of repeated prayer and mental imagery.¹⁰¹ When praying this group of prayers, one could imagine Christ in his life and suffering from the perspective of the

99 *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 235–6. Cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, #3616.

100 Examples of this usage, can be found in: *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 119–21; and 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', p. 219.

101 Cf. Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, p. 3.

Virgin Mary, and therefore focus not only on enunciation and behaviour but also focus on the object.¹⁰²

Intention was needed and *Siælinna thrøst* concludes that the praying person would feel devotion, godliness (Old Swedish: *gudhlikheth*) and spiritual sweetness when saying prayers, if the praying person tried not to think unnecessary or vain thoughts. An imagined person who tells of his or her inability both to read and to pray explains this to the reader in the shape of a question. The writer then tells the person that when one begins to pray, one should be calm in heart and not concern oneself with vain or unnecessary thoughts. One should pray one's most favourable prayer which gives the most godly feeling. It could be the Paternoster, the Hail Mary or any other prayer. One should then say this prayer carefully and with devotion, justly and heartfelt. One should also be careful not to hinder anyone else praying and to feel some godliness and spiritual sweetness. The instruction ends with the saying: better one heartfelt Paternoster said with devotion, than one whole Psalter read without devotion.¹⁰³ The intention of the praying peasant man or woman was expressed by staying focused when in prayer, and by doing so, the praying person could feel devotion and hopefulness, which also made the prayer more effective.

102 An example of this is the Seven Joys of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 149–74).

103 *Siælinna thrøst*, p. 117.

Right occasions

Where were prayers said or supposed to be said and when was the activity of prayer to take place? The time and place for prayer were significant. Prayers, as such, could be said everywhere if they required no one else but the praying person. This understanding does, however, not exclude the concepts of sacred and secular space. There were places holier than others, and the most common sacred place during the Middle Ages was the parish church graded with holiness from the surrounding churchyard up to the high altar, the place most holy. It was the central place for worship for the peasantry.¹⁰⁴ This applied, of course, not only to parish churches, but also to cathedrals and monastery churches.¹⁰⁵ The parish church was the place where one was introduced to the society and congregation by the sacrament of baptism, and it was there one received the communion as adult, and confessed to the parish priest. At the end of one's life the place to be buried was the consecrated churchyard. The laity was to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least one time each year, at Easter, but for the one devotedly impatient, it was also favourable to receive it at Pentecost and on Christmas Day, according to the catechetical text *De sju sakramenten*.¹⁰⁶

The church building and its crucifixes, images and statues of holy persons were also part of the indulgence system, since bishops and cardinals, granting indulgence, from time to time paced conditions on it in relation to the inventories of the church, special feasts, and to certain prayers. Saying a prayer was thereby linked to the place and time on a major and important scale.¹⁰⁷

104 Cf. Hårdelin, *Kult, kultur och kontemplation*, pp. 183–7.

105 For a further examination on the cathedral as a place for prayer and worship, see the forthcoming doctoral thesis by Hanna Källström (at the Centre of Theology and Religious Studies, Lund University).

106 'Thy är skíþath thz hwar crístin mánniskia skal gudz líkama tagha et sín om aaríth thz ár om páscha[...] Ok sále warda the som fore gudz skuld faða mot píngíz dagha oc mot iwl om | aduent oc tagha gudz líkama at there hugh matte thás meer optändas í guds kárlek' ('De sju sakramenten', pp. 38–9).

107 Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, pp. 224–77; Swanson, 'Praying for Pardon'; Paulus, *Geschichte des Ablasses im Mittelalter*, ii, pp. 175–82.

This section will focus on three aspects of the right occasion, namely places for prayer, times for prayer and the role of prayer in parish guilds.

Places for prayer

The importance of sacred space, when in prayer, is especially visible in two kinds of situations: that of receiving indulgence and that of visits to relics of saints.

Important places for worship in connection to prayers were those associated with saints. People came to these places in order to pray and to participate in the cult. The reason why space mattered in the cult of saints was that visitors hoped for answers to their prayers. Visiting a special place gave a physical connection between the living person and the saint, since the holiness of the saint would radiate from the relics to the praying person.¹⁰⁸ But saints could also be prayed to far away from these places; the miracle collections are full of such prayers. Several miracle stories also speak of votive offerings to be delivered to the place associated with the holy person, as a token of gratitude. The importance of space in connection with the cult of saints cannot be over-estimated. The place where the remains were, was the central place for worship. It is, however, important to bear in mind that while most peasants lived their lives far away from the cathedral sites and major cult centres, the habit of doing pilgrimage journeys was widespread, and was performed not only by the clergy and nobility, but also by peasants.

Sacred space was not in contrast to secular space in the Middle Ages, but were spheres intersecting each other according to Will Coster and Andrew Spicer. The holiness of sacred space was also graded, from the high altar and relics as the centre the sacred space, and certain places were holier than others, such as important pilgrimage centres.¹⁰⁹ Although little information has survived of religious practices in domestic, agrarian spaces, some conclusions have been offered by Diana Webb. She has found evidences of places dedicated for worship in ordinary

¹⁰⁸ Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁹ Coster and Spicer, 'Introduction', pp. 3–10.

houses. In these places, small objects considered holy or important were collected, such as miniatures of statues and small crosses. These places were mimicking the sacred places inside churches. Perhaps the most common place to pray in domestic spaces, according to Webb, was the bedroom (often being the largest room), but she has also found evidence of the garden as a place for worship, especially enclosed gardens symbolising the holy virginity.¹¹⁰ In the surviving sources from the ecclesiastical province, three passages, two in *Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera* and one in a Latin synodal sermon for priests, *Ad sacerdotes*, mention prayer in domestic places.¹¹¹ The first passage in *Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera* instructs the peasantry to pray the Hail Mary and Paternoster in their beds.¹¹² The second passage instructs people unable to visit their parish churches on holy days, to pray in their homes, on their knees and direct their prayers (or thoughts during prayer) to the parish church.¹¹³ These could thereby be used as places for prayer, even to replace the parish church if necessary. In *Ad sacerdotes*, the priests are encouraged to inform their parishioners that those that cannot hear the priest's song [during mass, lauds or vespers] if they are unable to visit the parish church, should instead in their homes or wherever they are pray something instead of lauds and other canonical hours.¹¹⁴ These texts fit well with Webb's conclusions.

The relation between time and place in prayer ideals applied, most probably, to the laity in general, and therefore also to those belonging to peasant communities. In contrast, what was intended as important time to pray, and special places at which to say prayers, differed between those ordained as clergy or religious and the laity. The amount of work for a layperson affected the time to pray and the distance to travel in order to pray at certain places. If one lived in a city, several churches were available, and if one was wealthy, one could perhaps also choose

110 Webb, 'Domestic Space and Devotion in the Middle Ages', pp. 29–32, 47.

111 Cf. Härdelin, *Världen som yta och fönster*, p. 112.

112 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', pp. 215–16.

113 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', p. 219.

114 'Ad sacerdotes', p. 410. Cf. Härdelin, *Världen som yta och fönster*, pp. 112–13; Härdelin, *Kult, kultur och kontemplation*, pp. 432–3.

avoid work in favour of time to pray. This was, however, most likely not the case for the peasantry. Still, there were several holy days, and work was not to be performed on those days, so that one could visit the parish church to pray. Pilgrimage centres were many, and in miracle stories, numerous peasants visit these places to experience their miracles. Peasants did travel to holy places, and the conditional indulgence applied to them as well as to everyone else. It seems that most churches had some kind of indulgence associated with them, and therefore, a visit to the local parish church gave such rewards.

The parish priest visited the homes of his parishioners on at least two occasions, namely the blessing of the marital bed and the extreme unction.¹¹⁵ Instructions and liturgical texts for these occasions were included in the liturgical manuals, but nothing is said of what prayers the layperson should say (unlike the case of baptism). The parish priest travelled through his parish also, blessing not only people, but also things important to those belonging to peasant communities, such as cattle, fields and buildings.¹¹⁶ These occurrences indicate that the priest was important in this role of defining and bringing blessing to the place, but in these cases, the laity was only to participate as audience, and not to say prayers of their own.

Some prayers were more associated with certain places while other prayers could be prayed regardless where one was. For example, daily prayers such as the Paternoster, Hail Mary and *Salve regina* could be prayed everywhere.

In a number of late medieval indulgence letters, a practice of prayer in cemeteries can be found. An example of this can be found in an indulgence letter by Bishop Lars of Växjö for the church of St Helena in Götene in the year 1462, where a passage refers to this custom: *'et cimiterium pro defunctis orando circuierint'* [those who go around the cemetery

115 Cf. Knuutila, *Avioliitto oikeudellisena*, pp. 541–92, 726 for the blessing of the marital bed, and Sundmark, *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse*, pp. 131, 173, 207, 233 for the extreme unction in medieval Sweden.

116 Franz, *Die kirchlichen Benediktionen im Mittelalter*, Vol. 2. pp. 124–75.

praying for the dead].¹¹⁷ The cemetery is described as a place for prayer for the dead, and as a burial place for strangers and visitors. This recommendation for visitors to pray for the dead, when wandering in the cemetery, occurs in other indulgence letters.¹¹⁸

Why were peasant women and men to pray at the cemetery, what kinds of prayers were said, and when was this to occur?

A church's cemetery was consecrated land, and people were sometimes buried outside of it as a way by the church indicated that the person was no longer a part of the earthly community (if this had any effect on the afterlife it was not in the jurisdiction of the Church).¹¹⁹ This, together with the understanding that the living could pray for the dead and thereby help the deceased during their time in Purgatory, gave the proper foundation for the habit of connecting the cemetery with prayer.

117 'Avlatsbrevet från Västgötadeln av Skara stift', p. 118 (#24) = SDHK, #40914.

118 The majority of indulgence letters having this passage about wandering at the cemetery in prayer for the dead, can be found issued for the diocese of Skara, in 'Avlatsbrevet från Västgötadeln av Skara stift', examples #7, 12-14, 16, 23-7, 29-30, 34, 36-40, 42, 44-50, issued between the years 1415 and 1528. Only two other indulgence letters with the same passage can be found from other dioceses in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala: one for the church of St Nicolai in Jönköping, issued by the archbishop of Uppsala in the year 1401 (SDHK, #15576); and one for the monastery church at Vadstena Abbey, issued by the cardinals Petrus, bishop of Sabina, and Jordanus, bishop of St Alban *et alia*, in the year 1412 ((SDHK, #17911). In one indulgence letter (for St Helena church in Götene, issued in the year 1462, by Bishop Lars of Växjö ('Avlatsbrevet från Västgötadeln av Skara stift', p. 118 (#24.)), a passage, '...vbi circuitus apte in eodem cimiterio ad hoc fuerit deputatus orauerint...', can be interpreted as if a circuit had been constructed for this purpose. The passage is, however, complex to interpret, speaking of the place as something general, or specific. Anna Fredriksson Adman, who has transcribed the letter and also translated it in the above publication, interprets this passage as '*där en plats för rundvandring på ett passande sätt har avdelats till detta på en kyrkogård*' [where a place for walking around has, in a suitable way, been detached for this on a cemetery]. If this interpretation is correct, then it can be suggested that there was a specific place for this prayer, but if so, that would make this church unique since no other indulgence letter remains with similar instructions. This was probably not the case, and therefore, this passage will continue to be dim, and unfortunately not possible to interpret further.

119 For a presentation and analysis of Scandinavian burial places during the Middle Ages, see: Nilsson, *De sepulturis*.

Still, prayers for the dead were said in churches, especially in masses for the dead. Praying for the dead did not have to be performed at the cemetery, but the indulgence letters do tell of such customs. Prayers said in cemeteries were most probably part of the remembering and mourning of the dead, and this was rewarded with indulgences. Robert Swanson argues that in England, like Sweden, indulgences were given to those praying for deceased in cemeteries. These prayers could, according to Swanson, possibly have been said near the grave of the person the prayers were intended for.¹²⁰

One Old Swedish sermon tells not only of prayer in churchyards but also what to pray and at what place in the churchyard, and is therefore in line with Swanson's arguments. It instructs the audience to pray on their parents' graves through an *exemplum* story. It is about a small boy who, unlike his friends that fish in the river for food, visits his parents' graves and upon their graves says the prayers Paternoster, Hail Mary and the Apostolic Creed. A priest sees this, and asks himself of the consequences of this action. A voice from heaven then tells him that the parents are already in heaven due to the boy's prayers. The story ends with a most illustrative metaphor for all who hear the sermon. As the boys that fished for food, the boy in the churchyard fished for souls; the Paternoster is like the fishing rod, the Hail Mary is like a fishing-line, and the Creed like a fishing-hook. With these tools, souls can be drawn from Purgatory to heaven.¹²¹

The sermon explicitly mentions the standard prayers Paternoster, Hail Mary and Apostolic Creed as good prayers to say for deceased persons, and also mentions the place to say these prayers: on the grave of the deceased.

The habit of praying in cemeteries was not unique to the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala – it was practiced elsewhere. Indulgence letters exist from Norway, Denmark and Hannover and Avignon (though the latter was intended for a monastery in England), where people are given

120 Swanson, 'Ghosts and Ghostbusters in the Middle Ages', p. 167; Swanson, 'Indulgences for Prayers for the Dead'.

121 *Svenska medeltidspostillor*, iv, pp. 125–6.

indulgences for walking in cemeteries praying for the dead.¹²² The words *cimiterium circuerunt pro [...] exorando [those who go around the cemetery to pray]*¹²³ seem to have been close to a standard formula, describing and giving indulgence for this practice. All of these indulgence letters, however, were issued in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and seem to be spread more in the diocese of Skara, Sweden, than anywhere else. Robert Swanson has examined indulgences for prayer said in cemeteries in England and argues that prayers for souls were rewarded with indulgences, for the sayer that is, and such prayers could also have been said in cemeteries in order to link the prayers with the deceased buried there.¹²⁴ What was phrased in indulgence letters from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala was part of a widespread practice used all over western Europe.

122 Norway: Indulgences are given by Archbishop Vinald of Nidaros and Bishop Eysteinn of Oslo, for those praying at the cemetery of St Mariæ Hospital on Hofvin in Oslo (*Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, #522, dated 1395). Denmark: (1) Bishop Nils of Odense issues indulgences for those praying at the cemetery of Lund cathedral, with the demand that prayers shall be said for Archbishop Peter and Sir Nils (*SDHK*, #4975, dated 1344). (2) Bishop Jens of Odense gives indulgence for those praying at the cemetery of the church of St Andreas in Snøde (*Diplomatarium Danicum*, #193, dated 1403). England: in the year 1328 six bishops in Avignon, issued an indulgence letter for Wombridge Priory, with indulgences given for those praying at the cemetery at the priory. (Cheney, 'Illuminated collective indulgences from Avignon', pp. 362–3, dated 1328).

123 The words for the dead alternate between *defunctis* and *animabus corporum*. So also does the word *exorando* with *orando*.

124 Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, pp. 251–2; Swanson, 'Indulgences for Prayers for the Dead', pp. 208–19.

Times for prayer

Time was of great significance when praying. Certain prayers were to be said at specified hours, such as the Divine Office, at least as far as the clergy were concerned. But a catechetical manual, *Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera*, does instruct the peasantry explicitly to say the Lauds, mass and Vespers on holy days.¹²⁵ The Latin synodal sermon *Ad sacerdotes* also explicitly mentions these three occasions on holy days as proper times for prayer.¹²⁶ According to Will Coster and Andrew Spicer, time was a key character of understanding the relation between sacred and secular. Places could shift from sacred to secular, depending on the day and even the hour of the day. For example, relic shrines were centres on their own feast days, but not on other days and feasts.¹²⁷

The day when a prayer was to be said was important, especially prayers associated with particular holy days, of which there were many during a calendar year.¹²⁸ This connection between time and prayer has been well-established throughout the history of Christianity. The year was divided into various important time periods, such as Lent, and Advent, and the most important day of the week for worship was Sunday with the weekly mass. The day was also organised into different time periods, in the shape of the seven canonical hours. Michael Mitterauer also stresses the importance of time and holiness. Saints were considered to be extra powerful in their ability to contribute to miracles during their feast days. Naming a child after a particular saint on his or her feast day was recommended in order to create a bond between child and saint. By doing so, the child was protected more carefully on that day, for the rest of his or her life.¹²⁹

Throughout the examined period, holy days were considered the most proper days to pray in churches, more so than working days, and this understanding seems to have been shared over the entire Western

125 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', pp. 218–19.

126 'Ad sacerdotes', p. 410. Cf. Härdelin, *Världen som yta och fönster*, pp. 112–13.

127 Coster and Spicer, 'Introduction', p. 13.

128 For an introduction to the medieval holy days in late medieval Sweden, see: Malmstedt, *Helgdagsreduktionen*, pp. 13–53.

129 Mitterauer, *Ahnen und Heilige*, p. 334.

Church. *Ad sacerdotes*, for example, tells the laity to say more prayers on holy days than on working days.¹³⁰ For holy days, the praying peasant women and men, if unable to attend the mass, Lauds or Vespers should pray thirty Paternosters during Lauds and meditate over the capture of Christ, ten or thirty Paternosters during mass and consider the death of Christ on the cross, and the same number of Paternosters during Vespers and meditate over the burial of Christ. Regardless of the ability to visit the church or not, laypeople should say three times thirty or only thirty Paternosters in honour of Christ and in remembrance of the thirty silver coins for which Judas sold Christ. On ordinary workdays, *Ad sacerdotes* adds, the peasantry should only say five Paternosters in the morning before they eat, and five in the evening before they go to bed.¹³¹

The ideal prayer life was the life of monks and nuns in a monastery, living a life in constant prayer (Latin: *via perfectionis*). But this was, however, not possible for the vast majority, such as the peasantry, and therefore, adaptations were made in order to enhance the devotional life of the laity. One such issue was the ambition to encourage laypersons to pray the Lauds, Vespers each holy day, either at home or in church.¹³² On one occasion, a catechetical instruction goes even further, and instructs the peasantry to pray the Matins in their beds, in order to be prepared for the second coming of Christ.¹³³ If laypersons wanted to, they could participate in the canonical hours, at least to some extent. *Siælinna thröst* mentions all canonical hours to the reader and explains the reason why they are prayed, and prayers in Swedish are provided. These prayers were supposed to be prayed parallel to the Latin liturgy, and were to be prayed inside the church, and at the same time as the monastic hours, and not by oneself outside the church. Time and space were made necessary in order to practice this kind of prayer. This focus on special holy days, such as saints' days is not seen in surviving catechetical manuals

130 'Docete populum plus legere in festis quam ferialibus diebus. Quare enim tenent festum, nisi vt seruiant Deo in lectura et oracione?' ('Ad sacerdotes', p. 410). Cf. Hårdelin, *Kult, kultur och kontemplation*, pp. 432–3.

131 'Ad sacerdotes', p. 410.

132 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', pp. 218–19.

133 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', pp. 215–16.

from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala. Instead, these instructions focus on ordinary holy days and what to pray on those days.

Holy days were divided into two major categories during the Middle Ages, namely feasts of precepts (Latin: *feſta fori*), that is, feasts for everyone and with an explicit ban from work for the whole day and sometimes also the evening before, and feasts ‘only’ for the clergy and religious (Latin: *feſta chori*).¹³⁴ There were also four annual fasting periods of the Ember days (Latin: *quatuor tempora*, Swedish: *kvatemberdagar*), that is, fasting on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday in the weeks after 13 December (St Lucia), Aſh Wednesday, Whiſt Sunday¹³⁵ and 14 September (Exaltation of the Cross),¹³⁶ where half of the day was forbidden for work so that the required mass attendance could be fulfilled.¹³⁷ Local saints could also be celebrated with a feaſt, and the peasantry was probably recommended to viſit the pariſh churches on those days. For the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, there were several ſuch local ſaint feaſts, never officially included in the calendars of the dioceses.¹³⁸

The days with prohibition againſt work depended on when the feaſt days occurred. Several of the feaſts had a fixed date ſuch as ſaints’ days, whereas some feaſts were regulated by the date of Eaſter ſuch as Ascension Day and Pentecoſt causing the actual date to ſhift. This makes the number of day, free from work depend on how many feaſt days occurred on Sundays. According to Göran Malmſtedt, about 53 annual holy days (Latin: *feſta fori*) were celebrated in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala Sundays, Eaſter Sunday and Whiſt Sunday excluded.¹³⁹ When combined, the days when work was forbidden in order to viſit the pariſh church to participate in the mass, that is holy days, were about 107 days of the year, including the inauguration days of the cathedral and the

134 Malmſtedt, *Helgdagsreduktionen*, p. 14.

135 i.e. Pentecoſt Sunday.

136 The feaſt of the Exaltation of the Cross commemorates the discovery by St Helen (the mother of Emperor Conſtantine) of the Holy Cross in the year 326, 14 September.

137 Malmſtedt, *Helgdagsreduktionen*, pp. 16–17; Merſham,.

138 Malmſtedt, *Helgdagsreduktionen*, p. 17.

139 Malmſtedt, *Helgdagsreduktionen*, pp. 17–18.

parish church, and special indulgence-, and relic feasts at the cathedral and nearby monasteries.¹⁴⁰

The most common mention of time in connection to prayer is the daily prayer, often Paternosters, Hail Marys or *Salve reginas*. Several *exempla* tell of the positive outcome of prayers on a daily basis. When praying each day, either the Blessed Virgin Mary or God protects the praying person for that day from perils or gives the possibility to confess and receive the communion before dying, no matter what the situation may be.¹⁴¹

The role of prayer in parish guilds

The most important institutions for the religious life of the laity in the British Isles in the late Middle Ages were the parish and the guild.¹⁴² This was probably also the case with the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, as will be seen in this examination. According to Peter Reinholdsson, about 120 medieval guilds are known from the ecclesiastical province, of which half remain anonymous. Compared to the about 900 medieval guilds from the diocese of Norwich, this figure is relatively small.¹⁴³

Different kinds of guilds existed in the Middle Ages, and for the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, four kinds of guilds can be found, according to Sven Ljung, namely general- (Swedish: *allmänna gillen*), fraternity- (Swedish: *präst-/broderskapsgillen*), merchant- (Swedish: *köpmannagillen*), and craftsman guilds (Swedish: *hantverkargillen*).¹⁴⁴ Reinholdsson describes the first of these four as a rural guild, a term favourable to this study and therefore used here.

One should, however, not assume that these four guild types were particularly different from each other. According to Christoph Anz, the

140 Cf. Andersson and Borgehammar, 'The Preaching of the Birgittine Friars', pp. 220–3.

141 *Sixelinna throßt*, pp. 112, 148–9, 174–5.

142 Duffy, 'The Dynamics of Pilgrimage in Late Medieval England', p. 165.

143 Reinholdsson, 'Landsbygdsgillen – en förabsolutistisk organisationsform', p. 373. Cf. Tanner, *The Church in the Late Medieval Norwich*.

144 Ljung, 'Gilde: Sverige', col. 302. Cf. Reinholdsson, 'Landsbygdsgillen – en förabsolutistisk organisationsform', pp. 376–7 for alternative categorisation models of guilds.

practices of these different guilds shared the same structure, regardless of the social status of their members.¹⁴⁵ Lars Bisgaard shares Anz's view, but with the difference that fraternity guilds differed from other guilds in having several members from the clergy.¹⁴⁶ Reinholdsson extends these arguments and states that the use of these guilds was in fact one and the same: 'to act for the glory of God, Christian purposes and for the spiritual and material well-being of the members', labelling them as companies for the alleviation of souls in Purgatory.¹⁴⁷

The focus in this section is, of course, those rural guilds where people belonging to peasant communities could have been members, or perhaps also labelled as parish guilds since these were often organised in connection with the parishes and the parish churches. According to Reinholdsson, these rural guilds developed in the late Middle Ages and were abolished in the sixteenth century during the Lutheran reformation.¹⁴⁸ The main purposes of these guilds were two, namely to pray for the living and the deceased members, and to arrange an annual feast with drinks in remembrance of the patron saints of the guilds.¹⁴⁹ For the craftsman-, and merchant guilds, the organisation into guilds also had a third purpose: to organise the work and protect their business interests.

An important role for guilds was, according to Phillipp R. Schofield, the opportunity for individuals to express their own religiosity.¹⁵⁰ Being a member of a guild meant that one was included in the prayers of all

145 Anz, *Gilden im mittelalterlichen Skandinavien*, p. 180. Cf. Bisgaard, *De glemte altre*, p. 28 for Lars Bisgaard's interpretation of Anz's similar conclusion for the country of Denmark.

146 Bisgaard, *De glemte altre*, pp. 27–8.

147 'De verkade för Guds ära, kristna ändamål och för medlemmarnas andliga och materiella värlfärd.' (Reinholdsson, 'Landsbygds-gillen – en förabsolutistisk organisationsform', p. 377); 'aktiebolag i skärseldslindring' (Reinholdsson, 'Landsbygds-gillen – en förabsolutistisk organisationsform', p. 379).

148 Reinholdsson, 'Landsbygds-gillen – en förabsolutistisk organisationsform', pp. 374–5.

149 Cf. Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', for an analysis the social importance of guild feasts.

150 Schofield, *Peasant and Community in Medieval England*, pp. 201–7.

the present and past members. The role these guilds played in terms of securing eternal prayers for each individual member cannot be underestimated, and membership was an investment in the afterlife, shortening the time in Purgatory towards Heaven.¹⁵¹ Reinholdsson describes this function as giving spiritual credits to the already deceased and expecting something in return. Prayer in guilds was not only for the protection of souls, but also for the securing of a connection between patron saint and the praying person in this life, through the system of credits.¹⁵² A member of a guild could even hope for aid in difficult times by the patron saint, according to Ken Farnhill.¹⁵³

Required prayers for living members

The use of prayers in parish guilds is hidden by the lack of sources. There are a few sets of statutes remaining from other guilds, that prescribe the religious habits of the guild members.¹⁵⁴ If Anz's statement is true, that the practices of the various guilds were similar to each other, then these few extant statutes can be used to present an approximation of the prayer practices in parish guilds.

Two of the main religious demands of the guild were the cult of patron saints and the remembrance of the dead, according to Anz.¹⁵⁵ Both these features included the saying of prayers, and prayer was therefore a vital part of the guilds' religious function. Paying for votive masses and participation in mass were important ways to secure prayers for the dead. Instead of mainly only encouraging guild members to participate during mass, attendance was required for both participation and the paying of fees of masses funded by the guilds. In the statutes of a St Erik guild from the beginning of the sixteenth century, situated close to the

151 Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, pp. 79–98; Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, pp. 112–18; Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà*, pp. 266–87.

152 Reinholdsson, 'Landsbygdsgillen – en förabsolutistisk organisationsform', p. 379.

153 Farnhill, 'Guilds, Purgatory and the Cult of Saints'.

154 Anz, *Gilden im mittelalterlichen Skandinavien*, pp. 78–80.

155 Anz, *Gilden im mittelalterlichen Skandinavien*, pp. 166–72. Cf. Bisgaard, *De glemte altre*, pp. 83–4.

city of Uppsala, three masses and Vigils are paid for each year by the guild as long as the guild exists. Reluctance to participate is fined with one *Örtug* to the guild, and one *Penning* to each member of the guild.¹⁵⁶ In the statutes of a St Göran guild, also from the beginning of the sixteenth century (but of unknown provenance), the guild members are required, on the Tuesday before the actual gathering, to participate at the Vigil, and on the day of the gathering, a Wednesday, every member had to attend the mass of the dead souls before feasting. No penance was, however, required for lack of attendance.¹⁵⁷ In the statutes of a Virgin Mary guild (date and provenance unknown¹⁵⁸), members of the guild were required to attend two masses every week of the year. If a guild brother or sister was unable to do so, they had to pay four *Penningar*. Similarly, on Annunciation Day, candles were to be lit during the mass, and the members of the guild had to provide gifts (possibly money or wax) on both Annunciation Day and the second day of Pentecost. If a guild brother or sister failed to do so, they were fined one *Öre*.¹⁵⁹ Finally, the statutes of a St Karin guild in Gotland, from the year 1443 states that the brothers of the guild were to follow dead members to their graves, whereas sisters of the guild had to attend mass and give offerings at this occasion. The guild was required to do so after the death of each member. Each year, the guild members were also to contribute for five masses for the guild, and if a guild brother or sister was unable to participate, the participation could be exchanged for (an unspecified amount of) *Örtugar*.¹⁶⁰

Mass attendance was, according to these statutes considered an important obligation for guild members. Different situations are presented, each with punishments or instructions of how to behave, such as how vomiting on the stones outside the guild house was to be fined. The instructions for religious activities seem to have been no different, since all

156 'Stadga för ett S:t Eriksgille nära Upsala', p. 118.

157 'Stadga för ett S:t Görans gille', p. 131 (§ xix).

158 Probably written somewhere between the second half of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century.

159 'Stadga för ett Jungfru Mariæ gille', pp. 145 (§ 34), 147–8 (§§ 57–8).

160 'Stadga för ett s. Karins gille', pp. 149–51.

of the cited statutes require presence, and omission is fined with various amounts of money, depending on the situation and day of mass (from the highest, one Öre to the lowest, one *Penning*). It seems, that the days of Annunciation and the second day of Pentecost were considered more important than saying the mass on any other day, since the penalty was far higher on these days, according to the St Göran guild.

Lists of guild members were sometimes used for intercessory prayers. Only two such intercessory lists have been found, both from the cathedral city of Strängnäs, one from the St Knut guild (St Canute of Denmark), and one from the St Nikolai guild (St Nicholas of Myra¹⁶¹). Although both of these lists remain from city guilds, these lists can be understood as examples of what such lists could have looked like in parish guilds in the countryside. These lists consist of instructions, in Old Swedish, to pray for the listed persons' souls, and then numerous names are listed.¹⁶²

Guilds or societies founded for praying the Rosary existed in parallel to the ordinary guilds, and were introduced in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala around the 1490s.¹⁶³ Although no statutes remain, research indicates that these guilds had a religious function similar to the ordinary guilds, that is, to include the members, both living and dead, in continuous prayer. Rosary guilds were, however, not similar to the 'normal' guilds, since Rosary guilds were open to all, and members were required to pray the Rosary each day. The membership consisted, most often, of the name on a scroll of names that included those to be prayed

161 The name St Nikolai does not refer to the local Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson of Linköping (d. 1391), since he died after the founding of the guild around the mid-fourteenth century (Wiktorsson, *Två förbönslängder*, pp. 12–5).

162 Both these lists can be found in an article by Toni Schmid. She has, however, omitted the information of when these scrolls might have been written. Pictures of the scrolls and transcriptions are attached in the article (Schmid, 'Förbönslängder', pp. 219–23). Per-Axel Wiktorsson has re-examined these scrolls, and published them in: Wiktorsson, *Två förbönslängder*. Similar lists from England have been analysed by Robert Swanson in: Swanson, 'Books of Brotherhood'.

163 Carlsson, 'Jungfru Marie psaltares brödraskap i Sverige', p. 4.

for.¹⁶⁴ These lists could consist of thousands of names. For example, the scroll of the Rosary guild in Vadstena, from the year 1522, contains about 2,350 names, both female and male names.¹⁶⁵ When praying the Rosary, one could gain merits not only for one's own soul, but for other people as well. Being part of a Rosary guilds were therefore not only about saying the Rosary but also for having it said for you when being in Purgatory. Membership in a parish guild or Rosary guild was part of a religious insurance system for laypeople, where the able helped the less able, and all gained the merits and credits of continuous prayer.

Being a member of a guild was, however, not only about paying for votive masses, participation in mass and lightning candles for the dead members, but also about feasting and celebration. It is, therefore, of interest to continue the examination of religious guilds with the practice of drinking to the memory of saints and other holy persons.

Drinking as a way of prayer

One of the most visible features of the guild statutes is the drinking of beer and mead during guild congregations. Among these paragraphs on drinking and all its consequences, such as fights and vomiting, are sometimes instructions for drinking to someone's memory.¹⁶⁶ This would not have been of interest for this study had it not been for the drinking to the memory of saints, the Virgin Mary or God.

Two of the abovementioned guild statutes include paragraphs concerning this matter. The first example can be found in the statutes of the St Görän guild, where members of the guild were, during the feast, to drink nine cups in remembrance (Old Swedish: *mynnes kar*).¹⁶⁷ The second example of guild statutes which includes instructions about whom one should drink in memory of is from the St Karin guild, where the guild members are to drink in honour of three persons: Our Lord, Our

164 Laušten, 'Rosenkransbroderskab'.

165 Carlsson, 'Jungfru Marie psaltares brödraenskap i Sverige', pp. 12–16, 32–49 (the latter pages consist of a transcription of the scroll, C 449).

166 Cf. Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast'.

167 'Stadga för ett S:t Görans gille', p. 132 (§ xxj).

Lady and St Katarina. When this had been done, and the entire remaining beverage was drunk, the guild feast was dismissed.¹⁶⁸

Why were guild members drinking to someone's memory and what did it mean? In both examples, the name saint of the guild is given a drink of remembrance, and only saints or God are honoured in this way. No one else is given a drink of remembrance, and therefore it can be assumed that the remembrance was not only to remember a deceased person such as a saint, but also to remember to revere someone, such as God.

An example of how the drinking to a saint could have sounded, can be found in the perhaps only remaining guild verse (Swedish: *skålvers*) to a saint: St Anne. It was found in a collection of manuscripts from the fourteenth century.¹⁶⁹ In the verse, St Anne is said to be the grandmother of Jesus Christ, and that she helps the one who prays to her, and the verse continues with a call for her prayer for all married couples so that they will do God's will both day and night. It ends with a short note to end the verse with gratitude in a prayer-like manner to St Anne.

If it meant to revere God or these holy persons, it could be interpreted as communication, and thereby prayer. This possibility and its consequences are far too important to be ignored.

168 'Stadga för ett s. Karins gille', p. 150. Cf. Bisgaard, *De glemte altre*, pp. 92–103.

169 'Aff Sancta Anna mynnä / Sancta anna moder moder christ / bidhiom vy til hånne tha hialper hon oss visth / at hon nadhe sik at bidhia för alt hionalagh / at the göra gudz vylia badhe nath oc dagh, / Sancta anna &c.' ('Gillevisa och skålverser', p. 512 (#30)).

Conclusions

The following conclusions can now be drawn concerning the aspects of the standards of prayer regarding those belonging to peasant communities.

¶ *First*, the right postures: the body was used in prayer to show proper intention. Legs, knees, arms and hands were used to form prayer postures, and the way these were positioned mattered. Different ways of using the legs, for example, indicated different meanings, and the praying person would then indicate different attitudes during his or her prayer. The most common way to use the body during prayer was probably to stand, with hands together, palm against palm. This indicated submission under God and reverence, and the hope of answered prayer. Clothes were also used to indicate the intention of the praying person. Men and possibly also unmarried women could remove their head-gear when praying. This indicated reverence and the hierarchical relation between God and human and can be seen as an ideal in depictions of praying persons. Married women were not supposed to remove their veils in similar manners. One more special form of dress code during prayer was to be barefoot, a behaviour indicating penance, and pilgrimages were sometimes performed barefoot.

¶ *Secondly*, the right words: in order to avoid negligence during the constant repetition of prayers such as the Paternoster and Hail Mary, the enunciation of the words in prayers was of importance, especially since all prayers were to be said aloud. All words had to be said, and not just parts of words. The words were not only to be pronounced properly, but also to be understood. Therefore, each praying person should pray in a language they understand, that is, in the vernacular for peasant women and men.

¶ *Thirdly*, the right intentions: the intention of the praying person was the most important feature of prayer. In order to enhance the intention, mental themes were used to keep the praying person focused. These themes were often taken from the lives of Jesus Christ or the Vir-

gin Mary, and prayers such as the Paternoster or Hail Mary were to be said when thinking of these themes. Mental visualisation techniques focused on mental images, such as motifs of the life of Jesus or the Virgin Mary, or on garlands surrounding images of the Virgin Mary. If the praying person was focused during prayer, he or she would not only communicate with God in appropriate ways, but also feel devotion and sweetness during the prayer.

¶ *Fourthly*, the right occasions: prayers could be said both everywhere and in particular places. The prayers Paternoster, Hail Mary and *Salve regina* were universal in the sense that they could be said everywhere and at all times. Still, the same kind of prayers was specifically recommended to be said as preparation for mass, Vespers and Lauds on holy days. The relation between place and prayer was of significance, since the intention of the praying person could be emphasised by the choice of place for prayer. The church building and the surrounding cemetery were considered most holy, and prayers for the dead could be performed in the cemeteries, and this was sometimes justified and recommended in indulgence letters, where the words *cimiterium pro defunctis orando circueunt* [*those who go around the cemetery praying for the dead*] occur and can be understood as a standard formula. Standard prayers were then to be used, such as the Paternoster, Hail Mary and Apostolic Creed, and probably to be said standing on the grave of the deceased. Similar to the relation between place and prayer, time could be used to enhance the effect of prayer. The ideal prayer life for the laity was strongly inspired by the monastic life and its habit of praying several times a day. The Divine Office is explained to the lay audience and parallel prayers in the vernacular are presented, so that the laity could participate. Still, the life of a peasant woman or man differed from the life of an ordained person, since most of their time consisted of hard work during ordinary days. The instructions given in catechetical texts are aware of this situation, and recommend therefore that ambitious lay people imitate parts of the monastic prayer life (Lauds, mass and Vespers) during holy days. The most frequently recommended prayers (the Paternoster and Hail Mary) could be said at all times, and on all days.

Devotional prayer

CHAPTER 5



IT IS beyond any doubts, that peasant women and men prayed, but what they prayed is most complex to grasp. Beside the 'standard' set of prayers, that is the Paternoster, Hail Mary and Apostolic Creed, almost nothing remains of their prayer life, neither their ideal prayer life nor the practices of prayer.

There are numerous prayers extant from the medieval period, other than these three prayers, but whether or not these prayers were actually used or intended for those belonging to peasant communities is doubtful. Were the standard prayers enough to express all emotions and thoughts to the Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary, angels and saints, or were other prayers used, no longer extant in the written sources?

In this chapter, I will first examine the recipients of these devotional prayers, then analyse two categories of devotional prayers, namely the three 'standard' prayers, and additional prayers.

The Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary and angels as recipients of prayer

Who was the recipient in prayer? The choice of whom to address in prayer was a choice between the Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary, angels and saints (or deceased persons worshipped as saints, but unrecognised by the papal curia). The study of the choice of recipient in prayer is, however, above all a study of those addressing rather than the recipient, and therefore this examination will be somewhat impressionistic in style and aims to be used as an introduction to this chapter on devotional prayer.

This section focuses on the Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary and angels as recipients of prayer. (Saints will be treated in chapter 6).

God the Father, God Jesus Christ, God the Holy Spirit

Being the centre of Christianity, God was the most important recipient of prayer for all, and thereby also for those belonging to peasant communities. God as God the Father is seldom addressed, other than the most popular *Pater noster*. Instead, most prayers seem to have been addressed to God through Jesus Christ. Jesus is looked upon as a saviour, lending aid to the sinful humans. In the examined sources, the names of God and Jesus Christ are often mixed, and it is seldom easy to grasp whether God the Father or God Jesus Christ is the intended recipient. According to Josef Jungmann, the liturgical formula of prayer in the early Church was to pray to God the Father through the Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.¹ This practice continued into the Middle Ages, but was partly changed into prayer 'only' to Jesus Christ in the liturgy. In vernacular prayers to say during the mass for those able to read the *Sixtina*

¹ Jungmann, *Die Stellung Christi*, p. 130.

thrøst, all the prayers are directed to Jesus Christ and not the Trinitarian formula used in the early Church.²

The Virgin Mary

Prayers directed either to God or the Virgin Mary in the sources studied from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala are most frequent and were therefore major parts of the ideals and practices of the prayer life for the peasantry. The Hail Mary was particularly common among prayers directed to the Virgin Mary, not just in the examined geographical area, but also all over Western Europe. Numerous other vernacular prayers, directed to the Virgin Mary, have survived from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala,³ but it is difficult to know if those belonging to peasant communities knew and used these prayers.

God is always referred to as being above the Virgin Mary in hierarchy, but with a tendency to be influenced by her in important decisions. The Virgin Mary is, however, explicitly described as being above everyone else in heaven, and the queen of heaven. She is the mother of God, and Jesus cannot refuse her wishes.

It is because of this that people, according to *Siælinna thrøst*, look to the Virgin Mother for aid. They are told to lean on her when in trouble, and numerous prayers were provided for laity, and thereby also for the peasantry, to say in order to communicate with her. The prime example of prayer directed to her was the Hail Mary. In the descriptions and prayers of *Siælinna thrøst*, the role of the Virgin Mary as mediator is clearly visible. She is the protector of all humans, against the sometimes-angry God. She is always on their side, and she demands nothing, since she is full of grace (Latin: *gratia plena*), a grace that could be asked for by the praying peasant woman or man.

The prayers to the Virgin Mary were part of the continental cult of the Virgin Mary, and the prayers to be said to her are translations of

² *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 142–4.

³ These prayers occur in prayer books owned either by Birgittine nuns or the nobility and have thus been excluded from this study. The prayers can, however be found transcribed in: *Svenska böner från medeltiden*, pp. 211–348 (prayers #94–146).

already existing prayers. Although the Birgittines were thoroughly involved in the continuous development of this cult in Sweden, it seems that the prayers recommended for laypeople were replications of the continental cult of the Virgin Mary.⁴

Angels

Peasant women and men could, as for all Christians, turn to angels in prayer.⁵

The cult of angels in general and guardian angels in particular was widespread in Western Europe during the Middle Ages.⁶ The belief in angels as guardians over humans can be traced back, at least to pre-Christian antiquity, and among the apostles their role as mediators and protectors, sent by God is evident (for example in Acts 12.6–11 where St Peter is released from prison by an angel). The biblical foundation for guardian angels, according to Hugh Pope, can be found in Hebrews 1.14, where angels are described as spirits in the service of God to serve the saved humans.⁷ What angels, then, were the guardian angels? According to Pope, Thomas Aquinas argued in his *Summa theologica* [*~Theological summary*], that the guardian angels were those of lowest rank in the angelic hierarchy and that these served only Christians, whereas Johannes Duns Scotus and William Durandus argued that any angel could be sent

4 For the medieval continental cult of the Virgin Mary, see Rubin, *Mother of God*, pp. 191–282; and for the cult in medieval Sweden in general and the Birgittine spirituality regarding the Virgin Mary, see Härdelin, *Kult, kultur och kontemplation*, pp. 38–61, 249–93 and Härdelin, *Världen som yta och fönster*, pp. 395–425.

5 No such prayer remains, however, from the peasantry. But one such example can be found in a nun's prayer book: 'En godh bönen til thin hælga ängil / Jak bidher tik min hælge ängil, hwilkin gudh haffwer skïpadh mik til gömo / At thu wärdoghas mädh kärlek oc atwakt göma oc bewara mik, soffuande oc wakande, nath oc dagh, sithiande, standande ällir gangande / Oc j alla tima oc stwunder bewara oc göm mik fför allom wadha oc dröf-fuilsom, badhe til liff / oc siäl / Oc antwardha mik gudhi swa rena oc skära, som thu tok mik j thina gömo / Oc skïpa mik äwärdhelika äro oc glädhi, mädh tik j hymerike' (*Svenska böner från medeltiden*, p. 356 (Prayer #152)).

6 Keck, *Angels & Angelology in the Middle Ages*, pp. 163–5; Duhr, 'Anges', cols 586–98 (Les anges gardiens).

7 Pope, 'Guardian Angel'.

as guardian angel to humans, and that everyone had a guardian angel regardless of baptism or not.⁸

According to Joseph Duhr, the spiritual role of the guardian angels for humans could be categorised into four roles: protector against danger, supporter when in trouble, guide in faith towards Jesus Christ, and ambassador in God's presence for the praying person.⁹ In the Middle Ages, the cult of angels developed into special feast days, giving the cult official status. For example, the archangel Michael was celebrated on the 29th of September.¹⁰ Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham argue that the guardian angels protected not only human beings from earthly dangers, but also against the devil and his demons in the ongoing spiritual battle between good and evil.¹¹ The cult of angels began, however, to disappear at the end of the fourteenth century according to Peter Brown, replaced by the cult of saints and the power of physical relics (something the angels obviously lacked).¹² Against this can be argued the emergence of the Feast of Guardian Angels in the late sixteenth century.¹³ Regardless of the popularity of angels as guardian angels, they were an important feature of the religious life in the Middle Ages.

Only three angels were known by their names in the medieval Church, and those were the archangels, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, but these angels were above guardian angels in hierarchy.¹⁴ Angels other than the three archangels were most often nameless, since their names were considered to be incomprehensible for humans. According to David Keck, the medieval devotion to angels was personal and the angels

8 Pope, 'Guardian Angel'. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, 'The Guardianship'.

9 Duhr, 'Anges', col. 589.

10 Marshall and Walsham, 'Migrations of Angels in the Early Modern World', pp. 11–12; Keck, *Angels & Angelology in the Middle Ages*, pp. 179–80; Duhr, 'Anges', cols 614–15.

11 Marshall and Walsham, 'Migrations of Angels in the Early Modern World', pp. 11–12.

12 Brown, *The Cult of Saints*, pp. 55, 60–1. Referred to in Marshall and Walsham, 'Migrations of Angels in the Early Modern World', p. 12.

13 Gilmartin, *Feast of Guardian Angels*.

14 Marshall and Walsham, 'Migrations of Angels in the Early Modern World', pp. 11–12.

were understood as bringers of divine aid. These supernatural beings stood for continuity and security in a world that was fragile, dangerous and changing. It was, therefore, a continuous hope to establish a personalised relationship with these supernatural beings.¹⁵

15 Keck, *Angels & Angelology in the Middle Ages*, pp. 133–5.

The three ‘standard’ prayers

The Paternoster,¹⁶ or the Lord’s Prayer, is most probably the oldest prayer used in Christianity and was, together with the later developed Apostolic Creed,¹⁷ to be learned by all catechumens before the baptism. In the baptismal rites of the early Church, these two texts were to be said aloud by the baptisee in order to control this knowledge. This practice transformed later into the use of these passages in the medieval baptismal liturgy, where the godparents were to be controlled in the same manner as earlier the catechumens had been. The Hail Mary¹⁸ developed into a prayer in the thirteenth century and was added to the Paternoster and Creed as the three fundamental catechetical texts to know, for all Christians (that is, all Christians in western Europe).¹⁹

This section will focus on the three prayers, the Paternoster, Hail Mary and Creed, and on combinations of these three prayers.

The Paternoster

The most important prayer of all prayers in the Christian context is the Lord’s Prayer. It was, together with the Hail Mary, the most commonly used prayer and all adults in the Middle Ages were required to know it.

According to several synodal statutes from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, written in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Paternoster, Hail Mary and the Apostolic Creed were required to be translated (into the vernacular languages Swedish and Finnish) and taught by all parish priests, and several translations remain, although only in Swed-

16 I have chosen to write the name of this prayer in Latin and in one word due to common practice, although different ways to write the name of this prayer exist.

17 If the word Creed is used in this study, without further specification of whether it is the Apostolic, Nicene, (or the Athanasian Creed), then it is always the Apostolic Creed that is implied. The English spelling is used in this study due to common practice.

18 Due to common practice, I have chosen to write the name of this prayer in English and not in Latin.

19 Cf. Tanner and Watson, ‘Least of the Laity’.

ish.²⁰ The oldest surviving translation of the Paternoster into Swedish, is from the mid-fourteenth century and the later medieval translations differ only minimally from each other, and they all follow the Latin wording and end with the passage ‘*sed libera nos a malo*’ [but deliver us from evil] translated into Swedish, followed by an ‘Amen.’²¹ No medieval translation of the Paternoster into Finnish has survived, apart from Michael Agricola’s translation in *ABCkirja* [ABC-book] from the year 1543.²² However, several translations into Finnish must have existed, since the synodal statutes require translations of the prayer into the mother tongue, a statement implicitly demanding the priests translate the prayer not only into Swedish, but also into Finnish. According to a syn-

20 Statuta concilii Sudercopensis a:o 1441: ‘13. Item quod transferatur Pater noster, Ave Maria et Credo in linguam maternam, que translatio per curatus singulis diebus dominicis et festivis coram populo recitetur.’ (Reuterdaahl, *Statuta synodalia*, p. 127); Compendium statutorum provincialium Upsaliensis provinciae ab archiepiscopo Nicolao Ragvaldi factum. A:o 1438–48: ‘Membrum quartum. Punctus CCCCI. Item *Pater noster, ave Maria, Credo*, in linguam maternam translata legantur coram parochianis, ut ea addiscant.’ (Reuterdaahl, *Statuta synodalia*, p. 163. Italics by Reuterdaahl.); Summa canonorum variorum concilium: ‘De Laicis vagis in cimiteriis stantibus. [...] *Pater noster, Ave Maria, Credo* in lingua materna per curatos singulis diebus dominicis et festivis coram populo recitentur, sub poena trium marcarum.’ (Reuterdaahl, *Statuta synodalia*, pp. 187–8. Italics by Reuterdaahl.); Statuta Lincopensia 1339–51: ‘[5.] De his, quæ ad Salutem animarum pertinent subditis suis prædicent, exponendo eis singulis diebus dominicis Orationem dominicam et Symbolum apostolicum, cum Ave Maria...’ (Reuterdaahl, *Statuta synodalia*, p. 45); Statuta synodalia Nicolai Hermanni, episcopi Lincop., a:is 1374–91: ‘De doctrina sacerdotum. [...] que ad salutem pertinent animarum, subditis vestris predicetis, exponendo eis diebus dominicis orationem dominicam et Symbolum Apostolorum cum Ave Maria...’ (Reuterdaahl, *Statuta synodalia*, pp. 57–8); Articuli synodales domini Swenonis episcopi Scarensis, 1436–48: ‘[3.] Item docentur layci orare pater noster, aue Maria et credo in suo lingwagio.’ (Gummerus, *Synodalstatuter*, p. 71. Square brackets by Gummerus.); Undated statutes for the diocese of Strängnäs, from a manuscript from the mid-fourteenth century: ‘[9.] Parentes et patrini filios doceant oracionem dominicam et symbolum apostolorum cum salutatione beate Marie uirginis et exortentur eos sepius et iuste uiuere.’ (Gummerus, *Synodalstatuter*, p. 88. Square brackets by Gummerus.); Officium Visitationis per Episcopum fiet hoc modo, 1480: ‘Item de Pater noster, Aue Maria et Credo ac confessione generali in wlgari lectis, Que si omissa fuerint, eciam est pena III marcarum.’ (Gummerus, *Synodalstatuter*, p. 95).

21 *Svenska böner från medeltiden*, pp. 3–5 (prayers #1a–e).

22 Agricola, *ABCkirja*, pp. 11–12.

odal statute from the year 1492, made by Bishop Magnus Stjernkors of Turku (Åbo), written translations of the prayers Paternoster, Hail Mary and Creed were to be available in all parish churches, and the priests had to teach the parishioners these translated versions of the said prayers.²³ The ‘problem’ with the Finnish language was that the language was oral only, as far as we know, until the sixteenth century and Agricola’s publications. The statement in the statute has, however, been interpreted by Aarno Maliniemi, as a proof of existing translations into Finnish of these prayers, although none of these have survived.²⁴

Synodal statutes instructed the parish priests to translate and teach their congregations these prayers. The surviving translations, and statutes point in this direction. Could it even be, that the different parishes used old local translations, and that new priests had to adapt to these translations, or did the priests bring their own translations? The synodal statutes only mention the need for such translations, and that the priest should teach these prayers.

The Paternoster was a prayer intended to be prayed in the vernacular by the laity, and the abovementioned statutes and vernacular translations of the prayer indicate strongly that the vernacular use of the Paternoster was an important part of the prayer ideal for those belonging to peasant communities.

How and when did the peasantry use the Paternoster? Magister Mathias, in his *Homo conditus* expounds the Paternoster to priests in order for them to use this knowledge in their catechetical education of the laity. He tells that the Paternoster should be the most frequently said prayer since it was taught by Jesus, and that the prayer embodies all

23 ‘De pater noſter, aue Maria et credo ex ambone. Preterea ſtatuiſmus et ordinamus, quod quilibet curatorum per ſe uel per alium capellanum in qualibet dominica legat in wlgari ex ambone pater noſter, aue Maria, credo et modum confitendi, ſub pena ſex marcarum tociens quociens, et quod habeat omnia predicta in wlgari conſcripta, ita quod vniſormiter ſemper doceat ſuos parrochianos et facilius diſcant.’ (*Finlands medeltidsurkunder*, p. 345 (#4415)).

24 Maliniemi, ‘Pater noſter: Finland’, col. 131 (the Paternoster); Maliniemi, ‘Aue Maria: Finland’, col. 286 (the Hail Mary (Maliniemi has, in this article made an error when referring to the synodal statute, which should be (}, 1928 #320 and not #4915 as is written by him)).

that is necessary, both bodily and spiritually.²⁵ Catechetical manuscripts provided the priests with expositions of the Paternoster, dividing the prayer into seven parts or prayers, with connections to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven virtues and the seven deadly sins.²⁶ According to Bengt Ingmar Kilström the surviving catechetical commentaries in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala of the Paternoster derive from Thomas Aquinas who in a sermon from the year 1273 formalised and finalised the connection of the mortal sins and the prayer.²⁷ One of these manuscripts has, according to Kilström, most probably been used by a parish priest named Carolus Andreae and is found on a page in his collection of manuscripts.²⁸

25 Magister Mathias, *Homo conditus*, p. 113 (¶ ix.36).

26 Kilström, *Den kateketiska undervisningen*, p. 180 (footnote 9). There also exist three similar expositions in the C-collection at the Uppsala University Library, not mentioned by Kilström, namely C204, fols 27v, 63v and 81v–83r (fifteenth century).

27 Thomas Aquinas, 'Expositio deuotissima...'

28 The Latin text is cited in: Kilström, *Den kateketiska undervisningen*, p. 181 (footnote 3).

vij petitiones	vij dona spiritus sancti	septem virtutem	vij mortalia peccata
sanctificetur nomen tuum	huic peti- cioni datur	spiritus sapientie ducit	Castitatem que est contra luxuriam
adueniat reg- num tuum	huic peticioni datur	spiritus intellectus ducit	que est contra gulam
fiat voluntas tua sicut in celos et in terra	huic peticioni datur	spiritus consilii ducit	que est contra Auariciam
panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie et dimitte nobis debi. n. s. et nos di. de nostris et ne nos indu- cas in tempta- cionem	huic peticioni datur	spiritus fortitudinis ducit	que est contra accidiam
Sed libera nos a malo	huic peticioni datur	spiritus timoris domini ad	que est contra Superbiam

[seven petitions	seven gifts of the Holy Spirit	seven virtues	seven mortal sins
hallowed be thy name	to this	the spirit of wisdom	that leads to Chastity and is just
	request is granted		and is against
thy kingdom come	to this	the spirit of understanding	that leads to Abstinence and is gluttony
	request is granted		against
thy will be done, in heaven as in earth	to this	the spirit of counsel	that leads to Compassion and is greed
	request is granted		against
give us this day our daily bread	to this	the spirit of fortitude (or courage)	that leads to Good deeds and is sloth
	request is granted		against
and forgive our debts, as we forgive our debtors	to this	the spirit of knowledge	that leads to Patience and is wrath
	request is granted		against
and lead us not into temptation	to this	the spirit of piety	that leads to Charly and is envy
	request is granted		against
but deliver us from evil	to this	the spirit of the fear of the lord	that leads to Humility and is pride
	request is granted		against

The Paternoster was in terms of this exposition not only a prayer to submit to God, but also to explain that God answered each prayer through the seven virtues and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Praying this prayer was to change the praying person using virtue and the gifts of the Holy Spirit and rejecting the deadly sins.

The Hail Mary

Next to the Paternoster, the Hail Mary was the most popular prayer of the late medieval period in the Western Europe, and the use of it would therefore give vital information for this study about praying to the Virgin Mary. It evolved before the period studied (especially in the thirteenth century), and in the fourteenth century the form was therefore already chiselled out. It was also translated into the vernacular. The Hail Mary was also among the prayers spoken by synodal statutes from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, as previously mentioned for the Paternoster, as required for priests to teach their parishioners and for parents to tell their children, making them part of the ideal knowledge of prayer.²⁹

When was the Hail Mary to be said? The prayer was considered possible to pray on all occasions. Married couples among the peasantry, for example, were, according to *Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera*, instructed to pray the Hail Mary and think of the Annunciation and the birth of Jesus, and to say the Paternoster together with the Hail Mary with the hope of a pure life, that is, to withstand sinful temptation, wanting children in marriage. These prayers were to be said during the night, as a lay alternative to Lauds (Old Swedish: *otosangher*).³⁰ The Hail Mary was also, together with the Paternoster, recommended to be used as protection against evil and the devil in situations dangerous in the peasant environment, since repeated prayer gave continuous protection.

Magister Matthias speaks in *Homo conditus* of the Hail Mary as the salutation to the Virgin Mary, whom one should pray to daily, since she

29 Cf. Undated statutes for the diocese of Strängnäs, from a manuscript from the mid-fourteenth century: 'Parentes et patrini filios doceant oracionem dominicam et symbolum apostolorum cum salutatione beate Marie uirginis et exortentur eos sepius et iuste uiuere.' (Gummerus, *Synodalstatuter*, p. 88 (§ 9)).

30 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', p. 215–16.

is the protector of all humans and because Jesus Christ fulfils all her wishes. The prayer is also protective, since the Virgin Mary protects everyone that prays to her, according to Magíster Mathias, from evil, punishment and guilt. The one praying to her, using this prayer, can therefore be certain that he or she will not be eternally lost, but protected by her as their mediator and confidante.³¹

The Hail Mary was to be prayed every day of the week in general, but particularly during the holy days and then before Lauds, mass and Vespers.³² A common usage, according to *Siælinna thrøst*, was to pray the Hail Mary in groups of three, ten, thirty or fifty,³³ but praying a single Hail Mary each day was also encouraged.³⁴

The Apostolic Creed

Usually, the Apostolic and Nicene Creeds of the early Church were considered confessional documents, and was also used in the liturgy to confess the faith. The Nicene Creed was mainly used as part of the mass and was sung in Latin by the priest and the cantor. The Apostolic Creed, however, was used in a wider context and was, together with the Pateroster and Hail Mary, required, as mentioned previously, to be taught in the vernacular to all Christians, and was to be said during baptism by the godparents. It also occurs regularly with the Paternoſter and Hail Mary as a ‘package’ of prayers in order to gain indulgence.

Bengt Ingmar Kilström, speaks of the use of the Creed as a part of preaching in medieval Sweden.³⁵ Still, sermons could also be used as instructions of what to do, and the fact that the Creed was used in ser-

31 Magíster Mathias, *Homo conditus*, p. 127 (§ ix.148–9).

32 ‘Wars herra dagher skal koma vm nattena swa som thiwfwer ok skal man thenkia her vppa oc thy tha almogen ligger ij sinne sengh thenke hwrw jomfru maria var helsath aff änglenom ok affladhe barn wtan syndh, ok föddhe gudz son vtan sorgh medh otalighe glädhi ok läsi pater noſter ok aue maria ok helse maria at hon gifwe os reent lifwerne ok ſta mothe ſkörlimnadhz fräſtilsom at hionalaghith matte faa thä barn som arfdeel ſkulu taka ij himerike...’ (‘Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera’, pp. 215–16).

33 E.g. *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 119–21.

34 E.g. *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 174–5.

35 Kilström, *Den kateketiska undervisningen*, p. 173.

mons does not contradict its possible use as prayer. The Creed was, together with the Paternoster and Hail Mary, one of the most common texts or prayers to be said, all over Western Europe, and it can be held as likely, that in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, it was also used as prayer, since confessing one's faith could be understood as worship and communication towards God, hence its status as prayer. The border between confessional articles and prayers was probably not as wide for the lower stratum of the laity, as it might have been for the ecclesiastical elite.

Sixelinna thrøst includes the Creed in a list of useful prayers that also includes such prayers as the Paternoster, Hail Mary and prayers to the Five Sacred Wounds³⁶ of God (Old Swedish: *gudz fæm vndum*), and could possibly thereby indicate its use as prayer to God.³⁷ Two sermons in Swedish also mention the Creed and speak, with almost the same phrases 'to read the Creed' (Old Swedish: *läsa credona*³⁸ and *credonna läse*³⁹). Reading and saying was in these situations the same, since all that was read was said in a loud voice, and the same kind of verb 'read' (Old

36 Cf. Holweck, *The Five Sacred Wounds*.

37 'Thu skalt læsa pater noſter / Oc ther mz ſkalt thu ey lata thik nøghia vtan ſkalt oc ther æpter læsa aue maria Credo oc ſyu ſalma mz letaniis psaltarin om thu kant / Oc andra gudhlika bønø aff gudz føzlo oc hans pyno / Aff gudz fæm vndum / Oc aff thy hælgha korsse / Ther neſt aff ware fru / af thinom ængil / oc thinom apoſtol / Oc bidhia for allom them thu hafwer nutidh ath badhe lifwandis oc dødhum / Oc for allom criſtnom ſiælum Kan thu enga andra bøn / Tha læs gudhlika oc trolika / Pater noſter / oc Aue maria Oc ſkal thik wæl dughæ' (*Sixelinna thrøst*, pp. 237–8).

38 'Swa tilbör oc hwarie criſtne menniſkio at bidhia til war herra ihesum chriſtum mz ſtadogha tro, the ſamma ther hon loffuadhe at halda, tha hon tok widher criſtindom oc döpilſe, hwilka tro ther wars herres ihesu chriſti apoſtoli giordho j tolf ſtykkie, Oc hwarie criſtne menniſkio til bör at kunna læsa credona, gudh till hedher oc ſinne ſyäl til gaghn, hwilken tro ſom ſwa är ludande oppa wort maal...' (*Svenska medeltids-poſtillor*, p. 103. Cf. Kilſtröm, *Den kateketiſka underviſningen*, p. 173.)

39 'Swa tilbör ok hwarie ſindoghe männiſkio ath bidhia til wan herra, medh ſtadughe thro the ſama hon loffwade ath halla, tha hon tok vidh criſtindomenum, ok döpilſe, ther wars herra jhesu chriſti apoſtla gjordo, j tolf ſtykkiom, ok hwarie männiſkio tilbör ath kunna j credonne läse gudhi til hedhir ok ſyälinne til gagn, Hwilkin ſwa / är ludhande oppa wart maal...' (*Svenska medeltids-poſtillor*, p. 207. Cf. Kilſtröm, *Den kateketiſka underviſningen*, p. 173.)

Swedish: *läsa*) is mentioned in *Siælinna thrøst* with prayers such as the Paternoster and Hail Mary. In these instructions, the word prayer is also mentioned in connection with the Creed, as well as the instruction to read it. But the verb 'read' is not only mentioned concerning the Creed, but in the first example, that from *Siælinna thrøst*, is also associated with prayers such as the Paternoster and Hail Mary. It is, at least in the first example, clear that the writer does not differentiate between the Creed and prayers such as the Paternoster, and therefore treats the Creed as some kind of prayer.

In *Homo conditus*, Magister Mathias speaks of the Creed as a description and declaration of faith, but connects the articles of faith with prayer. For example, the first passage of the Creed, '*Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem, creatorem celi et terre*' [*I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth*] encourages the bringing of everything (in prayer, that is) to God, since he is the good father and the good God, since he is neither strict nor cruel. Seemingly harsh punishments by God are explained because God in his paternal benevolence is hindering his children from harming themselves and thereby become lost and losing their patrimony.⁴⁰

Combinations of the three 'standard' prayers

Praying the Paternoster together with the Hail Mary was probably the most common practice, being two of the standard prayers for the laity, and then often in certain numbers, such as ten Paternosters and Hail Marys. The Creed is also connected to the Paternoster at the baptismal rite, where the priest and godparents are to say the Paternoster and Creed together, and sometimes also the Hail Mary.⁴¹ The prime reason for these particular prayers to be used in such combinations should be their status as fundamentals of Christian knowledge: commonly known prayers, used in various situations and combinations.

In extant sources from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, this is evident in lists of devout things to consider, such as the death and

40 Magister Mathias, *Homo conditus*, p. 22 (§ iv.1–8).

41 Kilström, *Den kateketiska undervisningen*, pp. 64–78.

crucifixion of Christ, where the Paternoster and Hail Mary are used as accompanying prayers to say.⁴² According to Bengt Ingmar Kilström, this combination of Paternoster and Hail Mary together with the Creed shaped the centre of lay religiosity.⁴³ These prayers should, in terms of use, therefore be understood in relation to each other.

Under the rubric of *'Hør nu huru thu skalt thina bøn befala'* [*Hear now, how you should say your prayers*], *Siælinna thrøst* gives a long list of things to be considered, each accompanied by a given number of Paternosters and Hail Marys.⁴⁴

42 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', pp. 219–20.

43 Kilström, *Den kateketiska undervisningen*, p. 188.

44 'Hør nu huru thu skalt thina bøn befala / Thu skalt først læsa thre pater noster the hælgha threfalogheth fadhrenom oc sonenom oc them hælgha anda til loff oc æro oc thakka gudhy at han thik skapat hafwer æpter the hælgha threfaloghetz spēghils belæte / Oc bidhia han thik gøma oc bewara / at the hælgha threfalloghetz belæte eller liknilse wardhe alregh / æ winnelika fran thik skild / Ther næst ena pater noster oc aue maria hans hælgha budhan som war tha han kom aff hymerike hit til werldena / oc tok mandom aff iomfru marie renašto iomfruliko lifwe / Ther næst ena pater noster oc aue maria hans wælsighnadha fødzlo at han oss allom war føddir til thrøst oc glædhy / Ther næst hans hælgha vmskærilse tha han // första sin sith hælgašta blodh vthgøt mz werk oc swidha for wara synde / Oppa thz hans dyra blodh aldregh wardhe oppa thik fortapat Ther næst for thz hatidh han ledh aff sinom fyandom tha han matte fly mz sinne wælsighnadhe modher aff sith fædhernis land Oc in j egiptoland / Thz ledh han for wara synde skuld / Ther næst for hans frestilse ther han ledh aff diæflenom oppa thz han komi thik til hielp j alle thinne nødh oc frestilsom / Ther næst fore thz stora ærfwodhe oc mødho han hafde her j werldinne for wara helso skuld / tha han wandradhe vm landit predikadhe oc lærdhe wæghin til hymerikis rike Ther næst hans fængilse at han war fangadher oc bunden for wara skuld / Ther næst for thz han war bundin widh študhena oc grymmelika gisladher oc flængder swa at enkte bleff helt a hans hælgašta lykama / Ther næst for hans hwassa thornkrono som trykt war a hans werdhoghašta hofwdh / Ther næst hans hælgha fæm vndum som han a korseno tholde / Ther næst hans biterlikašta oc hardhašta dødh som han a korsseno for thina skuld ledh / Ther næst thy hælgha korsse som han tholde dødhin oppa / Ther næst spyuteno som ingig gynom hans sidho / Ther næst naghlomen som gingo gynom hans hænder oc føter / Ther næst grafwinne j hwilka han war laghdher / Ther næst hans werdhoghe vpståndilse aff dødha / Ther næst hans hælgašta vpfærdh til hymerikis rike at han wili thik hielpa / at thu matte æpter honom koma j hans æwinnelika glædhy oc blifwa for vtan ænda / Alla thessa forscrifna puncta oc hwan serdelis skalt thu hedhra mz ene pater noster oc Aue maria eller mz twa vm thu format oc hafwer ther tyma til / wilth thu mera

The instruction begins with three Paternosters and Hail Marys in honour of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, since God has created the praying person and one should also pray for God to defend and protect the praying person, never to be separated in the likeness of God. Then, a list of Christ's life is presented in sixteen themes, where one should pray one Paternoster and Hail Mary for each and every theme and also visualise it. (1) That God took manhood in the Virgin Mary; (2) Jesus Christ's birth, that he was born for comfort and joy; (3) The circumcision, when Jesus shed his blood for the first time; (4) The suffering when Jesus was forced to flee as a child; (5) The devil's temptation in the desert; (6) Jesus' great hardship when he preached and taught us the way to Heaven; (7) His imprisonment; (8) That Jesus was bound and scourged; (9) The sharp crown of thorns; (10) Jesus' five holy wounds; (11) Jesus' bitter death on the cross for our sake; (12) The spear that penetrated his side; (13) The nails that went through his hands and feet; (14) Jesus' grave in which he was placed; (15) The resurrection from the dead; (16) Jesus' ascension to Heaven, so that he may help you and that you may come to his eternal joy and exist for eternity. The instruction ends with a recommendation, that if one consider these themes too long to pray, one can settle for less and say only five Paternosters and Hail Marys for the five wounds of Jesus Christ and any optional prayers or themes, and if one still considers this to be too much, one can also say only one Paternoster and Hail Mary a day to God in honour.

The use of a number of Paternosters and Hail Marys to confirm each theme, gives the impression that these prayers were used as worship and thanksgiving. The themes all share a focus on the consequences of Jesus Christ's life for the praying person, and the praying person is recommended to thank Jesus and the Virgin Mary for this. The praying person is to consider Jesus through the Virgin Mary, in the way she might

til sæthia tha mat thu thz gora / æpter thy gudh gifwer thik nadhena til / Thykker thik thz wara offlankt / tha læg een deel aff ok hedhra wars [herra] hælgha fæm vnder mz fæm pater noster oc fæm Aue maria oc læg ther til hwat thu wilt / oc før æn thu alzenkte læs eller bidher tha skal thu helder vm daghin læsa innelika gudhy til hedher ena Pater noster oc aue maria / (*Sixlinna thrøst*, pp. 119–20).

have done during her life, and thereby mentally imitate not only Jesus Christ (Latin: *imitatio Christi*) but also imitate his mother (Latin: *imitatio Mariæ*). Praying one or three Paternosters and Hail Marys, when thinking of the central themes of the Christian faith, could be done at the same time. This implies that when praying these prayers, combined with themes, it was not the prayers themselves that were to be focused on by the laity, but the mental themes.

The instruction in *Sizelinna thrøst* about how to pray, is also accompanied by an *exemplum* to give a further understanding of how effective the Paternoster and Hail Mary are when prayed together every day. The story is about a knight that robbed and stole a lot of things. He was captured by Emperor Frederic, and hanged from a tree. Several days later, a group of men passed the place where the knight had been hung. They heard a voice and realised that it was the hanged knight who shouted to them, not being dead as they had thought. They heard the cry and came to him, asking him how he could still be alive. He told them that he lived through the mercy of God – a mercy so great that no heart can understand it fully. He continued, and told them that everyday he prayed ten Paternosters and Hail Marys. They asked how he prayed, and he told them that he prayed three Paternosters and three Hail Marys for the Holy Trinity that created him in their image; five Paternosters and five Hail Marys for God's five wounds that redeem; one Paternoster and Hail Mary for the promise that he must not die without having the body of Christ as his last piece of bread in life; and one Paternoster and Hail Mary to his angel, that is, his protector (Old Swedish: *gømare*), so that the knight would not die without having made confession and received our Lord's body. The men took the knight down and brought him to the city. After having confessed and received the Lord's body, he gave up his spirit.⁴⁵

Even an evil person, such as the fictional robber knight is rewarded for his repeated prayer of the Paternoster and Hail Mary. The *exemplum* is most pedagogical, since it uses an instruction connected to a story (the knight gets the chance to explain how he prayed and the audience

45 *Sizelinna thrøst*, pp. 121–2.

will then know how to pray ten good Paternosters and Hail Marys and be rewarded just like him). The first eight Paternosters and Hail Marys are associated with God, the creation of humans and God's suffering for humanity. For this, the praying knight shows his gratitude. But the prayer group does not end with this, but also includes an exhortation that the praying person will retain a place not in Hell but in Purgatory as a reward for his daily prayers. Thus, even if the praying person has lived a sinful life, as long as absolution and communion is received before death, the praying person feels satisfaction. If a peasant hears of this prayer instruction, and if the knight was rewarded not according to his way of life, but according to his daily prayers, then what can a good person achieve with the same kind of prayers? Hopefully, just as much, or perhaps an even greater reward for the same kind of prayer. That could have been the intended conclusion for the audience, hearing the *exemplum*.

The combination of Paternoster and Hail Mary was also intended as preparation during holy days. According to *Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera*, the peasantry was instructed to pray thirty Paternosters and Hail Marys before Lauds, mass and Vespers.⁴⁶ Further on in the text, the same recommendation is repeated, but with mental themes to go along with the prayers – a way of praying during holy days labelled as '*en väggher til store guz nath*' [a way to God's great mercy]. It starts with thirty Paternosters and Hail Marys in the morning, combined with the mental theme of the birth of Jesus and his compassion. Before mass, one is to pray thirty Paternosters and Hail Marys, and think of the pains and death of Jesus. In the evening, one is to pray yet again thirty Paternosters and Hail Marys, and think of the funeral and resurrection of Jesus. Then, one is to read the Lady Paslter, 150 (threefold fifty) Hail Marys and think of the Virgin Mary's joy at the Annunciation. The group of prayers ends with a recommendation to pray fifty Hail Marys dedicated to her sadness at the cross, and fifty Hail Marys thinking of her Assumption.⁴⁷

46 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', pp. 218–19.

47 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', pp. 219–20.

As stated earlier, the use of mental themes during prayer, especially for the Paternoster and Hail Mary, was intended to maintain and even strengthen the focus on God and the Virgin Mary and their mercy towards humans. Other prayer groups with the Paternoster and Hail Mary co-existed at this time, and since several similar instructions exist, it could instead be understood as part of a trend or movement at this time. The use of the Lady Psalter might prove that this instruction was not meant for those belonging to peasant communities, since it can be interpreted as to the use of prayer books. If this was the case, then the instruction cannot be used to understand the ideals for those unable to read or own prayer books. Still, if the Psalter explicitly points to the Rosary, these instructions could be liable for even the poorest peasant woman or man, since it combines the use of standard prayers such as the Paternoster and Hail Mary combined with mental themes. This demanded no other aid than a good counting ability and good memory.

Why were the peasantry to pray the Paternoster and Hail Mary combined? Probably, the answer lies in the simplicity. Everyone knew these prayers, probably since they had been children, and these prayers could therefore be used in all situations, with no help provided in terms of texts or books. Both prayers were associated with great comfort and protection, so that the person praying these prayers would not be harmed by evil or the devil. Since both God and the Virgin Mary were worshiped with these two prayers, only good things could come out of a daily use of them: not just in heaven, but also here on earth. Praying the Paternoster and Hail Mary together with mental themes also helped one to remain focused on important religious situations such as the Laud, mass and Vespers. Being prepared with thirty Paternosters and Hail Marys and having thought of the suffering of Christ, when beginning participation in the mass, could be crucial to the afterlife.

Additional prayers

One of the most complex tasks in the study of devotional prayers from the perspective of peasant women and men is to examine whether or not additional prayers were used – prayers other than the Paternoster, Hail Mary and Creed. Such prayers certainly existed, and were included in prayer books, and catechetical texts for townspeople and nobility. But did those belonging to peasant communities in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala use these prayers? Since almost nothing remains of such ideals or practices, if these ever existed, only approximations can be made. Still, these might shed light on the complex matter.

All estimations in this section are founded on the probability and likelihood of use, and derive from the only two extant texts that explicitly tell of peasant women and men and their prayer life, both on holy days and on working days. Both these texts are intended for priests working in peasant parishes: one synodal sermon, *Ad sacerdotes*, and one catechetical manual, *Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera*.

In the first text, *Ad sacerdotes*, the audience is told only of the two prayers Paternoster and Hail Mary for saying in different situations and in different quantities, with the final comment by the anonymous preacher:

‘Predictas lecturas posui et scripsi pro simplicibus et rusticis, quia aliqui parum vel nichil orant.’

[I have presented and noted down the abovementioned instructions for the simple rustic people, some of which pray little or nothing.]⁴⁸

The second text, *Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera*, tells:

‘nw medhan almoghen minnjs ey the fornämdha siw tidhagerdhenna, tha är radheliket at the hörin otosangh ok mässo ok aptosangh vm helgha dhagha...’

48 ‘Ad sacerdotes’, pp. 408–12, citation from page 412.

[Now, since the peasantry does not remember the previously mentioned seven hours of the Divine Office, then it is recommended that they hear the Lauds, mass and Vespers on holy days...]

The reader is then instructed what to say during these offices, and that is the repeated Paternosters and Hail Marys.

I have found no other passages that addressed in this explicit manner the issue of peasant women and men and their use of named prayers. In my opinion, these passages can be interpreted in the sense that the writers of these two texts understand the practices of the peasantry as not praying any other prayers than the Paternoster and Hail Mary in connection with holy days in particular and possibly also on working days. These two texts are, as mentioned earlier, written for the situation in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, and were probably written in the fifteenth century, and these speak of the actual situation and how to handle it.

Still, this conclusion should not be extended to the belief that peasant women and men did not participate in the Divine Office or mass, but can only be applied to what they were thought to say, and instructed to say. These texts speak of peasant participation in mass, Lauds and Vespers on holy days, and that the prayers Paternoster and Hail Mary were to be used on these occasions.

Other kinds of prayers or practices could, however, have been introduced among people belonging to peasant communities; at least additional prayers existed for the laity to use, and in the vernacular for those unable to speak or read Latin. These prayers need to be examined in relation to their appropriateness and applicability for peasant women and men.

This section will examine three additional prayers or groups of prayers, namely the name of Jesus as prayer, the Seven Joys of Our Lady and the Lady Psalter, and prayers to say during mass, Lauds and Vespers.⁴⁹

49 The Marian antiphony *Salve regina* is omitted from this presentation, since it cannot be proven at all that it was in use among the peasantry. Cf. Johansson, 'Maria-antifoner'.

The name of Jesus as prayer

The name of Jesus was used as prayer, and since it was only the name that was used, it was a most practical, yet powerful, prayer to say.

Saying of the name of Jesus as a prayer occurs in a passage of the catechetical education of *Siælinna thrøst* and is described as lending the praying person feelings of sweetness in the mouth, just like honey, and rejoicing the heart, when using the name of Jesus as prayer. It continues to present the positive effects of the name as prayer, stating that it strengthened the martyrs in their pains and may be used as a shield against temptation.⁵⁰

This instruction is, however, not the only example of this ideal. An *exemplum*, also in *Siælinna thrøst*, tells of a woman who is having recurring nightmares about the devil in the shape of a man. The woman could not rid herself of the recurring dreams, and she spoke to a holy man called Camundus. He told her to create a whip, with name of Jesus carved on one side and the Virgin Mary on the other side. When the devil returned, the woman was to whip his body with it. She did so, and the devil never returned.⁵¹ The name of Jesus is also, in another *exemplum*, said to have helped the martyr saint Ignatius during his torment to avoid pain, both when calling upon that name, and as inscribed into his heart (the tormentors took out his heart and found the name of Jesus on it).⁵²

50 'Mít kæra barn wil thu thz andra gudz budhordh wel halda / tha skal thu thz wælsighnadha nampnit ihesus christus altidh j thino hiærta hafwa / Oc thz gerna hedhra oc æra / oc idhkelika nempna / Ffor thy at gudz nampn som ær ihesus thz ær j munnenom [at] smaka som søth honagh / thz ær eeth lyudh j øromen som søtaste harpo oc leka sanger / Thz ær j hiærtano een andelikin hiærtans frøgðh oc glædhly / Thz ær een kraptugh makt gifwande hielp j nødhum / Thz ær lifwandis mater och fōdha siælinna som gernas gudz nadha widher qwekilse / Thz ær alla werldinna helsa En glædhly alla ængla / Thz ær alla cristna mænnskio kænedom oc læra / Eeth hop oc thrøst alla syndara Een sigher och stærker alla martilera / Een skiolder oc boklare j allom frestilsom / Thz ær wahn oc wæria moth owinenom dieflenom / Een ledhe stiærna allom ellendum oc fræmadhom / Oc een rætter wæggher ledhande til æwerdhelikit liiff / Thetta wælsighnadha nampnit ihesus skal thu a kalla j allom thinom nødhum oc thrangum / aff thy mat thu thik thrøstelika hielp wenta' (*Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 57–8).

51 *Siælinna thrøst*, p. 63.

52 *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 62–3. Cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, #2498.

In the *exempla* it is not only the name of Jesus that is described as powerful against evil, but also the name of the Virgin Mary. Often, both the names were used to give extra power to the invocation.⁵³ In *Sixlinna thrøst* both names are described as a most powerful prayer against evil and pain.⁵⁴

This ideal of using the name of Jesus (and the Virgin Mary) as prayers shows striking similarities to the devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus, developed in the later Middle Ages, but can more likely be understood as a parallel movement, founded in traditions older than that particular devotion, such as St Ambrose of Milan (c. 340–397), St Augustine of Hippo (354–430), St Paulinus of Nola (c. 354–431), St Peter Chrysologus of Ravenna (406–450), St Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109), St Bernard of Clairvaux (c. 1090–1153) and Richard Rolle of Hampole (c. 1300–1349), all writing of the name of Jesus and the positive effects of saying the name.⁵⁵

There are striking similarities between Rolle's and *Sixlinna thrøst*'s description of the Holy Name.⁵⁶ They both use honey and sweetness to refer to the positive feeling of using the Holy Name, a joyful song, and comfort in one's heart. The *Sixlinna thrøst* shows, at least in my opinion, that adoration of the Holy Name existed in late medieval Scandinavia, similar to the devotion developed by Rolle in the British Isles.

The adoration of the Holy Name and the use of the name of Jesus as prayer could certainly have been spread to the peasant population in the

53 Skemer, *Binding Words*, pp. 107–15.

54 *Sixlinna thrøst*, pp. 63, 67–71.

55 Cf. Kallistos of Diokleia, 'The Holy name of Jesus in East and West', pp. 171–2; Holweck, *The Feast of Holy Name*. The Feast of the Holy Name was established in the 1530s (Holweck, *The Feast of Holy Name*), and was probably not included in the Scandinavian calendars, due to the beginning of Lutheran reformations at the time.

56 'Ah! Ah! that wonderful Name! Ah! that delectable Name! This is the Name that is above all names, the Name that is highest of all, without which no man hopes for salvation. This Name is sweet and joyful, giving veritable comfort to the heart of man. Verily the Name of Jesus is in my mind a joyous song and heavenly music in mine ear, and in my mouth a honeyed sweetness. Wherefore no wonder I love that Name which gives comfort to me in all my anguish.' (In modernised English: Heseltine, *Selected Works of Richard Rolle Hermit*, pp. 81–3).

ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, since it was easy to say and was considered to have such powerful effects for the praying person.

Marian devotion: the Lady Psalter and The Seven Joys of Our Lady

The two groups of prayers directed to the Virgin Mary by the names the Lady Psalter and 'The Seven Joys of Our Lady' were part of the Marian devotion and could consist of anything from Hail Marys and Paternosters to be said repeatedly with mental themes, to special prayers to say in the vernacular. The organised use of repeated prayer, called the Lady Psalter (Latin: *Psalterium Marie virginis*) in the synodal sermon *Ad sacerdotes*,⁵⁷ is also known as the Rosary, although the name is never mentioned in the extant sources.

The Lady Psalter as referred to in *Ad sacerdotes* is, according to Alf Härdelin, an early stage of the Rosary.⁵⁸ The praying person is told to say fifty Hail Marys and consider the joy of the Virgin Mary giving birth to Jesus Christ, fifty Hail Marys for the pain she suffered when her son was on the cross, and fifty for the joy she had for Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Together these prayers are 150 in number, and according to *Ad sacerdotes*, this matches the number of psalms by David, thereby making an implicit connection between the Psalter of the Bible said by the religious and the Lady Psalter said by the laity. The Lady Psalter is also said to reward an indulgence of fourteen years, thirty-three weeks and three days, with reference to Pope John XXII.⁵⁹ *Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera* is most similar in its instructions of the Lady Psalter, also providing the praying person with the three mental themes of the Virgin Mary connected with fifty Hail Marys (times three). No parallel is, however, made to the psalms of the Bible, and no reference to indulgences. The praying person is only told that it is recommended to read the Lady Psalter (Old Swedish: *radhelikt at läsa ware fru psaltera*).⁶⁰ These instructions made it

57 'Ad sacerdotes', p. 412. Cf. Härdelin, *Kult, kultur och kontemplation*, pp. 434–7.

58 Härdelin, *Kult, kultur och kontemplation*, pp. 434–7.

59 'Ad sacerdotes', p. 412.

60 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', pp. 219–20.

simple for those knowing the Hail Mary (and that was everyone) to say this group of prayers or combination of prayers, and mentally to consider important themes of the lives of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. It should not have taken long to learn this, and it was easy to practice, and can therefore be understood as an important additional prayer (or combination of prayers) for those belonging to peasant communities regardless of reading skills or not.

A more elaborate version of the Lady Psalter is presented in the *Siælinna thrøst*: the Seven Joys of Our Lady. This prayer focused on seven important moments in the life of Jesus as seen through the eyes of the Virgin Mary; (1) the Annunciation, (2) the visit to Elisabeth, (3) the birth of Jesus, (4) the adoration of the Magi, (5) the presentation at the temple (and the songs of praise by Simeon and Anna), (6) Jesus found in the temple, (7) the assumption and coronation of the Virgin Mary to heaven.

The seven joys were, during the Middle Ages, not a fixed set of stations, but altered according to the focus of that particular group of seven joys, according to Anne Winston-Allen, and the focus on the early years of Jesus and the big leap to the assumption of the Virgin Mary is reflected in the many pictures of the seven joys.⁶¹

In *Siælinna thrøst*, the seven joys are all presented with the Biblical themes, with their meaning to the praying person thereafter explained to the reader/audience, and followed by a prayer rhymed in pairs, in the vernacular.⁶² The prayers all begin with the words 'Glædz maria...' [*Rejoice, Mary...*], and continue with paraphrased versions of the presentations, making the praying person thank the Virgin Mary for both her joys and the power she has in heaven, and ends with an invocation of help and aid for the safe delivery to heaven for the sake of her joy (the number of the joy is always mentioned here in the prayer). The words are unbound by earthly contexts such as farming, births and pains, but

61 Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, pp. 34–46.

62 *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. (1) 150–2, (2) 152–4, (3) 154–6, (4) 156–8, (5) 158–9, (6) 160–4, (7) 164–73.

focus purely on the celestial relation between the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ.

The prayer paraphrasing of the introductions to each joy is in the shape of continuous lists of things that the Virgin Mary is in relation to her son Jesus and her powerful role. The first joy, the Annunciation, tells of the purity of the Virgin Mary as a vessel of Jesus, similar to the buckets that carried the heavenly manna.⁶³ The second joy, the visit to Elisabeth connects the *Magnificat* [(My soul) magnifies...] with this meeting, said by the Virgin in joy at her son and the son of Elisabeth, and the Virgin Mary is then compared with both a vessel of balm, in its cleanliness containing the most precious balm, and with a burning bush, unable to be consumed by the flames of God.⁶⁴ The third joy, the birth of Jesus, tells of the prophecies in the Old Testament about Jesus, referring to King David as the forefather of Jesus, and also claiming that the Virgin Mary was unharmed by the birth, without contamination (Old Swedish: *smitto*) and harm (Old Swedish: *meen*).⁶⁵ The fourth joy, the adoration of the Magi, where the Magi are described to have provided Jesus with gifts, is explained to have been just like visitors to King Solomon, sitting on his throne. That throne is the Virgin Mary, lifting Jesus higher than everyone else, only the Virgin Mary is without sin.⁶⁶ The fifth joy, the presentation at the temple, tells of the two elderly people meeting the child in the temple. The first person, Simeon, said the *Nunc dimittis* [Now, let...].⁶⁷ The second person, described as a prophetess in the prayer (named Anna in Luke 2.36), is also said to have begun the first

63 *Siælinna thröst*, pp. 151–2.

64 *Siælinna thröst*, pp. 153–4.

65 *Siælinna thröst*, pp. 155–6.

66 *Siælinna thröst*, pp. 157–8. The introduction to the fourth joy tells that she is herself lifted (in descending order) higher than the angels, the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the evangelists, the martyrs, the confessors, the holy virgins, the holy widows, the holy married couples, the good pure-living (*reenlifwis*) and spiritual (*andelikit*) people, and finally, all good people of the world. Of all the holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and holy people there are none without sin, only the Virgin Mary (*Siælinna thröst*, pp. 156–7).

67 The words 'Nunc dimittis' are omitted in the prayer, but exist in the introduction, where the prayer is translated into Swedish.

Candle mass (Old Swedish, *kyndilmesso*).⁶⁸ The sixth joy, Jesus found in the temple, focuses on the relationship between God and the Virgin Mary; of how God is like wild and angry animals (vividly presented in the introduction), all tamed and controlled by the Virgin Mary, through her purity. God is explained to be obedient to the will of the Virgin Mary, similar to how she tames these animals.⁶⁹ The seventh joy, the assumption of the Virgin Mary, proclaims her as empress, and crowned by God with an honorary crown. She is likened to two women from the Old Testament. The first is Queen Abigail married to King David for her wisdom.⁷⁰ The second Biblical person is Queen Esther, married to King Ahasuerus, who made her queen over all of his empire.⁷¹ These relationships are explained to be similar to the relationship between God and the Virgin Mary, sitting on the thrones of heaven.⁷²

The seven joys and the prayers to be said with these joys in mind have a dual purpose: to revere the Virgin Mary with appraisals of her power over Jesus as her mother, and to make the praying person aware of her special status and thereby her power to lend mercy to the living and her ability to make God willing and able to hear and answer prayers.

Was the Seven Joys of Our Lady to be said by peasant women and men, or only by the likely-intended readership (townspeople or religious)? *Siælinna thrøst* speaks of the prayer as good for the devout and ambitious, for the one who wishes to say even more prayers than just the basics.⁷³ Perhaps, the vernacular prayers were intended for a somewhat educated audience, but not necessarily literate. This fits more into the description of townspeople than of peasants, but the latter group

68 *Siælinna thrøst*, p. 159.

69 *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 163–4.

70 Cf. 1 Samuel 25.

71 Cf. The Book of Esther.

72 *Siælinna thrøst*, p. 173.

73 'Swa skalt thu halda æpter thinne makt thina bønir oc læsning / som iak hafwer thik nu lærth / giter thu mera gïorth / tha skalt thu thz gerna gøra / Oc tha thu hafwer læsith warom herra thz thu wilt / Tha skal thu ther neð hedhra wara // fru mz thinne læsning / oc andra hælgha men / Thu skalt gerna hedhra syu iomfru mario frøghdher thz ær hæenne mykyt thekkelikit' *Siælinna thrøst*, p. 149.

should, however, thereby not be omitted. The seven moments are easy to remember and were part of the standard knowledge of Jesus Christ and of the Virgin Mary. If one was to consider these seven situations combined with some kind of prayer, for example the Hail Mary or Paternoster (although not mentioned in the instructions of *Sixlinna thrøst*), this group of prayers would have been easy to adopt and practice.

Prayers to say during mass, Lauds and Vespers

Peasant women and men were to attend three church services on holy days according to both *Ad sacerdotes* and *Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera*, namely mass, Lauds and Vespers.⁷⁴ The five remaining hours in the Divine office – prime, terce, sext, none and compline – were only intended for the clergy and religious. Both *Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera* and *Sixlinna thrøst*, however, describe all of the seven hours for the reader/audience.

Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera describes the different hours and explains why they are said, but concludes that the peasantry does not remember all of these and should therefore concentrate on the Lauds and Vespers of the Divine Office, and the mass.⁷⁵ This indicates a will to inform about the Divine Office, but with a difference between knowing and participation. Why and what is said is apparently of some importance for peasant women and men, hence the presentation, but actual participation is not implied since the author of the text either does not think it is necessary, or wants to, but knows that it will not happen. During the Lauds, Vespers and mass, the peasant attendee should instead pray thirty Paternosters and Hail Marys – as preparation.⁷⁶

Sixlinna thrøst, on the other hand, provides the reader/audience not only with brief presentations of the Divine Office and mass, but also includes instructions for lay visitors on how to behave during these occasions, and prayers in the vernacular to say parallel to passages said by the clergy. Yet again, the difference between intended readership of *Dagens*

74 'Ad sacerdotes', p. 408; 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', p. 218.

75 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera' pp. 215–19.

76 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', p. 219.

sju tidegärder et cetera and *Siælinna thrøst* is visible. The first speaks explicitly of peasant women and men, and the latter implies that the reader/audience is able to read and equipped with plenty of time for prayer. A plausible conclusion to make, therefore, is that the instructions in *Dagens sju tidegärder* and *Ad sacerdotes* are more closely connected to the peasantry under examination, than those of *Siælinna thrøst* and other similar catechetical texts.⁷⁷

77 The ambitious instructions and vernacular prayers provided in *Siælinna thrøst* (and also the vernacular prayers in the Old Swedish translation, *Gudeliga snilles väckare* [*The Awakening of the Godly Genius*], of Henry Suso's *Horologium æternæ sapientiæ* [*The Clock of Eternal Wisdom*]), should therefore be understood as aimed at other people than those belonging to peasant communities, and therefore are omitted in this examination.

Conclusions

The following conclusions can now be made concerning the aspects of devotional prayers regarding those belonging to peasant communities.

¶ *First*, God, the Virgin Mary and angels as recipients of prayer: God and the Virgin Mary were the most commonly addressed recipients of prayer, according to the sources. Angels could also be addressed in prayer, especially the guardian angel since it was considered a mediator between God and human, and an advocate of the individual human being.

¶ *Secondly*, the three 'standard' prayers: being the foundations of Christian knowledge of faith during the Middle Ages, the three prayers Paternoster, Hail Mary and Apostolic Creed were required to be known by everyone. Vernacular translations of these three prayers were to be available to all, and together these three prayers, especially the Paternoster and Hail Mary, were used as standard prayers. Often, the Paternoster and the Hail Mary were combined, and to be repeated together with mental themes. Such prayer could be said at all times and on all occasions.

¶ *Thirdly*, additional prayers: prayers other than the three 'standard' prayers existed during the Middle Ages, but to what extent were these intended for or used by peasant women and men? Three kinds of additional prayers can possibly be linked with this group of people, both by explicit mention and approximation. The first kind is the name of Jesus used as prayer. This way of prayer was recommended for all the laity to use, and its simplicity makes it possible to conclude that the peasantry probably used it also. The second kind is Marian devotion in the form of the Lady Psalter and The Seven Joys of Our Lady. These prayers could be said as repeated Hail Marys together with mental themes deriving from the lives of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. Although specific vernacular prayers exist for these devotions, these can also be used without any other prayer knowledge than the standard prayers and the biblical stories of Jesus Christ and his mother. The third kind is prayers to be

said during mass, Lauds and Vespers – the minimum requirement of peasant participation during holy days. Also here, the Paternoster and Hail Mary were recommended prayers to be said, although special vernacular prayers existed for those higher up in the social structure than peasant women and men.

Prayer in times of need

CHAPTER 6



SAINTS AS recipients of prayer and all aspects of saints and prayer has a chapter of its own devoted to it, since this differs from all other prayers examined in one most important aspect.

The previously studied prayers were prayers available for different situations and purposes, prayers there for use by those belonging to peasant communities. But these prayers were not the only ones to be used. Peasant women and men created and put their own individual thoughts into prayers. However speculative this might sound, this particular feature of prayer among peasant women and men existed, and can be found in miracle stories, where the prayer of the praying person is cited, or at least intended to be understood as such by the one saying it (but more of the authenticity later). In six out of over six hundred miracle stories from the ecclesiastical province, such prayers can be found.¹ Following is the examination of these few, and possibly unique, prayers.

1 There are a few occurrences of such prayers by others than those belonging to peasant communities, but due to the limitations of this study, these will be omitted from the examination.

In this chapter, I will first examine the aspect of saints as recipients of prayer, then analyse prayer in times of need, namely, the individual and personal prayers in miracle stories, the context and comparison of the cited prayers, and questions of authenticity and authorship.

Saints as recipients of prayer

The habit of praying to saints was widespread during the Middle Ages. Saints were being asked for services and prayers and a large number of the year's calendar days were devoted to saints. Churches were also associated with the cult of saints, not only as patron saints, but also through relics, wall paintings of saints and their lives, and statues of saints were being prayed before.² In the Nordic countries, some cults of saints were more associated with specific countries than other saints, such as the patron saints for Denmark: St Knut of Odense; for Norway: St Olof of Nidaros; and for Sweden: St Erik of Uppsala (revered as patron saint after the 1430s) and St Henrik of Finland, but more local saints also existed, such as the Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson of Linköping, Elin of Skövde, Abbess Ingrid of Skänninge and Bishop Brynolf of Skara, only to name a few.³

This section will focus on how peasant women and men came into the acquaintance of saints, lot casting to reveal God's will in the choice of recipient, and when they were to pray to saints.

The acquaintance of saints

Information spread of powerful saints to address in prayer, possibly by hearsay or by recommendation. According to Ronald C. Finucane, places with shrines were considered 'faith-healing centres' and word spread quickly of the healing-efficiency of certain relics. The prime mover of these cults of saints was not the good living of the deceased, but the healing power of the relics.⁴ Still, this study is not of the saints, but of those praying to saints, and therefore, the context in which both the cult places of the saints and the peasants who addressed these saints.⁵

2 Kåspersen, 'Wall-Paintings and Devotion', pp. 190–6.

3 For presentations of local saints of medieval Sweden, see: Lundén, *Svenska helgon*.

4 Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, p. 59.

5 Cf. Geary, *Furta Sacra*, pp. 6–7.

Practices found in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala can shed some light on the question of choice. How did people belonging to peasant communities come into acquaintance with saints to address in prayer? It seems that when a peasant was to pray, the recipient was, in the majority of situations, already selected. How this process occurred, can be concluded through focusing on the rumours of powerful relics, in sermons and in indulgence letters. The precise nature of miracle stories was intended to prove the holiness of the deceased person, and miracles in the Middle Ages were, according to Ronald Finucane, considered miraculous acts by God either on behalf of the saint or through the saint towards the praying person.⁶ Miracle stories give an important possibility as a source of medieval lay religiosity and prayer, since they all represent situations where a person prayed and received a miracle. Few other sources give this closeness to the laity and their religiosity, although it must be remembered that they were all collected with a specific purpose: to glorify and promote a deceased person (or a holy object).

According to André Vauchez, the local clergy and nobility played a vital part in the spreading of saints' cults in Western Europe.⁷ Anders Frøjmark has shown that this was also the case in Sweden.⁸ A possible method of transmission was sermons and indulgence letters (although indulgence letters could also be interpreted as acceptance of already existing habits, lending the cults more power through indulgences). The lack of information about the praying to saints is, however, of significance in catechetical manuals.

The cult of saints changed during the Middle Ages, as William Christian and Virginia Bainbridge have shown.⁹ Prior to the eleventh century, local cults of saints flourished, primarily through the veneration of their relics. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries these local cults came to be overtaken or complemented by the cult of 'universal' saints such as

6 Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, pp. 51–5.

7 Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 218–45.

8 Frøjmark, *Mirakler och helgonkult*, pp. 102–4.

9 The idea was introduced by William Christian (Christian, *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain*, pp. 20–1), and later developed by Virginia Bainbridge (Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, pp. 62–3).

St Paul, St Peter and the Virgin Mary. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the universality of cults of saints changed yet again, this time into special bonds between particularly saints and groups, such as St Clement and St Erasmus as patrons for sailors.¹⁰

These changes are hard to trace in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala. A possible explanation for this is that the Christianisation of Scandinavia (from around the tenth and eleventh centuries) created a different development in this region, where the religious ideals from the second phase in the European context developed at the same time as Christianity began its influences in Scandinavia. It seems instead that all of these phases were co-existing in the province, and throughout the examined time period. Phase one, the cult of local saints, began in the Scandinavian Middle Ages through the veneration of, for instance, Henrik of Finland, Sigfrid of Växjö, Eskil of Södermanland, Botvid of Rågö, David of Munktorp, the three kings St Olav of Nidaros, St Knut of Odense and St Erik of Uppsala, and women such as Elin of Skövde, Ingrid of Skänninge and Rangnhild of Tälje. Phase two, that of universal saints was, however, the dominant trend in particularly catechetical manuals, where almost all recommendations are directed to either God (and Jesus) or the Virgin Mary. Phase three, the cult of specific saints for particular groups and situations, is hard to trace, since almost no such instructions exist (or remain), although there exist several guilds devoted to particular saints such as St Göran (St Gregorius), confirming the existence of this third phase.

Lot casting to reveal God's will in the choice of recipient

Saints were considered supernatural friends, relatives and patrons.¹¹ It was therefore possible to manipulate them in order to get results. New saints were considered particularly easy to affect, since their position in heaven was understood as low.¹² Miracle collections are, by nature,

10 Christian, *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain*, pp. 20–21, Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, pp. 62–3.

11 Reinburg, *Popular Prayers in Late Medieval and Reformation France*, pp. 151–3.

12 Reinburg, *Popular Prayers in Late Medieval and Reformation France*, pp. 153–5.

filled with people praying to deceased persons venerated as saints. But how were these holy persons selected? Most often, these stories only tell of the praying person having already made the decision about the recipient, and the reader is therefore unaware of the decision-making. But there are exceptions to this pattern. Thirteen miracle stories (of a total of about six hundred miracle stories), all but one from the fifteenth century and regardless of social status and occupation, speak of the casting of lots (Latin: *sortes mittere/submisere*) as a way of ending the confusion as to whom prayers were to be addressed.¹³ Ronald C. Finucane describes lot casting as a way to discern the will of God, when entering a church with different shrines and not knowing which one to pray in front of.¹⁴

The casting of lots was not uncommon in the 'secular' world as a way of making a decision in delicate matters. Provincial laws from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries speak of lot casting in connection with civil cases, when two or more persons were claiming the rights to own a certain area. The one winning was to choose first.¹⁵ In situations like this, lot casting was considered a way to understand the will of God. It was God who caused the lots to point in a certain direction and, since this method was not used to predict the future, it was not considered

13 One from the miracles of St Birgitta: *Acta et processus canonizacionis beate Birgittæ*, p. 70 (miracle number, according to Myrdal and Bäärnhjelm, *Kvinnor, barn och fester i medeltida mirakelberättelser* Series C #3). Six from the miracles of the Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson of Linköping: Schück, 'Två svenska biografier från medeltiden', pp. 355–6, 357, 372–3, 377, 382–3, 384–5, 386 (miracle numbers, according to Myrdal and Bäärnhjelm, *Kvinnor, barn och fester i medeltida mirakelberättelser* Series A #16, 36, 43, 53, 56, 58). Three from the miracles of the image of the Deflection of Christ on the Cross in Stockholm: Fr. Gregorius Holmiensis O. P., 'Miracula defixionis Domini', pp. 8, 54–6, 66–8 (miracle numbers, according to Myrdal and Bäärnhjelm, *Kvinnor, barn och fester i medeltida mirakelberättelser* #5, 72, 80). Three from the miracles of the Blessed Katarina of Vadstena: *Vita Katherine*, unnumbered facsimile pages, printed pages 70–1, 86–8 (miracle numbers, according to Myrdal and Bäärnhjelm, *Kvinnor, barn och fester i medeltida mirakelberättelser* #38, 62, 64). All numbers can be found in Myrdal and Bäärnhjelm, *Kvinnor, barn och fester i medeltida mirakelberättelser*, pp. 133–54.

14 Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, p. 85.

15 Granlund, 'Lutkastning: Sverige och Danmark'.

divination. Casting lots in order to predict the future, similar to the *sortes sanctorum* [the lots of the holy] method (by reading random passages of religious books),¹⁶ was, however, understood as divination and evil and was banned in canon law from the high Middle Ages onwards.¹⁷ To seek the intention and will of God in a particular situation, by the use of lot casting was, in contrast to divination, an accepted and practiced custom, according to miracle stories where the custom is described.

Lot casting in the latter sense is, however, seldom mentioned in the miracle collections from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala. Does this indicate that lot casting was rare, or that it was simply never mentioned when writing a miracle story down except for a few times, when it is noted in a collection? The miracle stories speak of lot casting as a common practice (Latin: *ut moris est vulgi*).¹⁸ If it was practice to cast lots when choosing a recipient, then the custom could be understood as common or at least occurring among those belonging to peasant communities. Finucane concludes, in his study of pilgrimages to shrines in medieval England, that lot casting occurred, but is seldom mentioned in the miracle collections.¹⁹

Performing lot casting

How was lot casting done? Three miracle stories, two from the miracle stories of the Deposition of Christ on the Cross, in Stockholm, and one from the miracle stories of the Blessed Nils Hermansson of Linköping, can shed some light on this matter.

A miracle story about the image of the Deposition of Christ on the Cross, in Stockholm, from the year 1402 or 1422, gives a rare insight into how lot casting was done. In the parish of Hedemora, in the diocese of Västerås, a couple living on the farm Pershyttan, Anders and Valborg,

16 This method was also known as *sortes biblicæ* (i.e. to use bible verses as part of divination) and *sortes apostolorum* (i.e. to use verses of the saint's *vītæ* as part of divination).

17 Cf. Klingshirn, 'Defining the Sortes Sanctorum', pp. 104–14.

18 The miracles of Nils Hermansson: Schück, 'Två svenska biografier från medeltiden', pp. 355, 384; The miracles of the Deposition of Christ on the Cross at the Dominican church in Stockholm: Fr. Gregorius Holmiensis O. P., 'Miracula defixionis Domini', p. 68.

19 Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, p. 85.

lost their only surviving son to the plague (they are described as having already buried four sons). They thought of giving a votive offering to the image of the Deposition of Christ on the Cross, in Stockholm, but they were uncertain. In order to gain knowledge of how to act, they asked five laypersons to contribute in lot casting. The men cast three lots with faith in God, that God would give them an answer in return. The one that won the lot took three times in a row the lot with the mark of the image of the Deposition of Christ on the Cross. Having witnessed this, the parents made the votive offering to it and the boy came to life.²⁰

According to the description, lot casting required five laypersons. The story tells: that all of them were needed to cast the three lots three of them cast the lots, one held a container into which the lots were cast (one miracle story, from the year 1424, speaks of a bowl or a fold (Latin: *in sinum*)²¹), and the fifth person drew the lot. It is not certain whether the parents participated in the lot casting. Having drawn one of the lots, the lots were probably cast again, since the story tells of three drawing of lots in order to be certain. The drawing of three lots in a row is also mentioned in other miracle stories and could therefore be understood as part of the ritual.²² But, it seems, that fewer than five persons could perform lot casting if necessary. In a miracle story, one man is asked by his wife to cast lots and does so,²³ and nothing is said as to whether this was ordinary or extraordinary.

20 'Post quia dubij quo peregrinatum pro ipso peregerent, tres sortes, ut solent, quinque layci submiserunt, diuino vtque nutu, ut per miraculum subsequens euidentius claresceret, quod ad dominicam defixionem foret destinandus. Deinde vocatus quidam ut sortem casu leuaret, tribus continuis vicibus sortem siue signum dominice defixionis subleuauit, propter quod firmiter votum statuentes temptabant videre defunctum, et statim aduerterunt in genis eius ruborem paruum, paulatim succrescere ad magnitudinem pise quasi signum vite.' (Fr. Gregorius Holmiensis O. P., 'Miracula defixionis Domini', p. 56).

21 Fr. Gregorius Holmiensis O. P., 'Miracula defixionis Domini', pp. 66–8. The mentioned miracle story, of Lucia from the parish of Näs, diocese of Uppsala, is presented and analysed in the next section.

22 Whether this method was the only one practiced, or if there were other methods of casting lots, is not possible to tell from evidence in the miracle stories.

23 Schück, 'Två svenska biografier från medeltiden', pp. 370–1.

The description gives several clues as to how the selection of recipients of prayer was made, but still some questions are unanswered. What happened if the lots fell on different persons each time? What other recipient besides the successful one were noted down on lots? When was this method used: always, seldom or under certain conditions? How common was it? Unfortunately, these miracle stories do not tell of unsuccessful prayers and situations, only 'success stories' are noted. It seems that lot casting occurred especially when the praying persons were uncertain of whom to address in their prayer. If a person was not uncertain, no lot casting was needed.

The system of choosing three different alternatives to direct one's prayers leads to the question of who these were. The abovementioned miracle stories do not tell the other two selected recipients, but there are four miracle stories that do mention the three selected recipients for lot casting (here presented in chronological order).

The oldest example of peasants casting lots comes from a miracle story from the year 1376, where a man in the parish of Burträsk, diocese of Uppsala, cast lots in order to know what holy person to pray to, and he chose between St Olav of Nidaros, St Theobald and the lady Birgitta. The lots fell on Birgitta.²⁴

A second example of explicit choices of recipient is the miracle story of Katarina from Västerås, and probably living in the city, who in the beginning of the fifteenth century cast lots between St Birgitta, David (of Munktorp in Västmanland) and the image of the Deposition of Christ on the Cross in Stockholm. The lots fell three times on the cross that symbolised the image in Stockholm.²⁵ Although this story is not of a peasant woman, it is in line with the other examples examined and can thereby shed more light on the custom of casting lots.

The third example is in the miracle story of the Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson of Linköping from the year 1408, where a woman by the name of Ragnhild, from the parish of Rinna in the diocese of Linköping, is described as having suffered from a terrible headache for over twen-

24 *Acta et processus canonizacionis beate Birgitte*, p. 70.

25 Fr. Gregorius Holmiensis O. P., 'Miracula defixionis Domini', p. 8.

ty years. She asks her husband Magnus Joarsson to cast lots regarding whom to address in prayer concerning the issue. A friend who used the method most successfully had made the use of lot casting known to her in a similar situation. The husband, together with his two brothers Olov and Nils, cast lots between the holy persons St Birgitta of Vadstena, Ingrid of Skänninge and the Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson of Linköping. The lot fell three times in a row on Nils Hermansson, and having prayed to him in tears and made a votive offering, the woman was cured. The miracle text ends with a comment that the woman was often encouraged by others to use incantation to overcome the pain, but she rejects the idea since her parish priest has told her in sermons that one should not use such things. Instead she puts her faith and hope in God.²⁶

The fourth, and latest example (chronologically) of explicit mention of three competitors, is in a miracle story from the year 1424. This lists the choices of a pilgrimage to the abbey of Sko where it is told that the blood of Christ causes miracles, a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Erik, and thirdly, a pilgrimage to the image of the Deposition of Christ on the Cross. The last choice became the woman's choice.²⁷

These examples are special since I have found only four stories of this kind (out of about five hundred miracle stories in total) that actually tell the reader what holy persons were considered, and not just the successful one. Three local persons venerated as saints, all from the diocese of Linköping, were used in the lot casting, and the woman came from the same diocese herself. The miracle story of Ragnhild from Rinna reveals even more: a sharp distinction between lot casting and incantation. Lot casting was, in the story, considered an accepted way of making God's will known, and the woman is rewarded with healing due to her choice of the Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson of Linköping as addressee for her prayers. The woman and her parish priest, on the other hand, considered incantations as a way of healing through bad action. Incantation was therefore not from God, whereas lot casting could give divine answers. It is, however, noticeable that it is only after twenty years of pain

26 Schück, 'Två svenska biografier från medeltiden', pp. 370–1.

27 Fr. Gregorius Holmiensis O. P., 'Miracula defixionis Domini', pp. 66–8.

that she tries lot casting. This could indicate the power of the pain and the corresponding power of Nils Hermansson to break this bond.

Together with the other examples of explicit choices of whom to address in prayer, a pattern emerges. When praying in a critical situation, not only holy persons were considered as possible to pray to. Places to visit and the pilgrimage itself were considered an equally powerful choice as relics of a holy person. Local saints and their *loci* were, according to the few examples of lot casting, popular to use as possible candidates of addressees.

A custom only for the laity?

How did the clergy react to this custom of lot casting? Since a priest, or a monk, wrote down the miracle stories, he had opportunities to comment on the story. In miracle stories where lot casting was used, the editor describes the habit as either according to lay custom or as an act of divine inspiration, but most often without a comment. Not one example of lot casting is criticised, and it can therefore be concluded that the custom of lot casting in order to select an addressee for prayers was an accepted action. The only kind of disassociation from lot casting is the often-occurring comment, that it was common practice among the uneducated, that is laypersons illiterate in Latin.

One example exists of an ordained person using lot casting as a way of choosing an addressee for prayers. It comes from a miracle story of Erik Tyrgilsson, canon in the collegiate church of Our Lady (Latin: *ecclesia beate virginis collegiata*) in Oslo city and diocese, and occurred in the year 1412. He suffered a heavy nosebleed for over a day, and gathered his colleagues among the canons in order to set his will. The canons then decided to cast lots to decide whom to address in prayer for the sake of Erik. They chose between St Olav of Norway, St Birgitta of Vadstena and the Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson of Linköping. The lots fell on Nils Hermansson. Having made a votive offering, the nosebleed stopped instantly and all people witnessing this scene praised God and saints for this miracle.²⁸

28 Schück, 'Två svenska biografier från medeltiden', p. 357.

Even though this miracle took place outside the studied ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, the ecclesiastical province of Nidaros (to which the diocese of Oslo belonged) was the closest neighbour. What happened in Oslo could also have happened in Stockholm or in Turku (Åbo). The miracle story shows that lot casting was not considered sensational even among the clergy (at least among the clergy of the city of Oslo, and those citing the miracle in Linköping). Even if there are no other examples of ordained persons casting lots in order to select a recipient for prayers, this text shows that the custom was not only known among the ordained, but also used. This miracle story is also interesting due to the fact that it tells the names of the three different recipients.

When to pray to saints and when not to

Strangely, the vast numbers of saints are only seldom represented in the catechetical manuals and other sources used to inspire and create an ideal way of prayer for the peasantry, though they are presented in litanies, and numerous images of saints from the examined period remain. But before examining this complexity, the few existing recommendations for praying to saints ought to be presented.

In *Siælinna thrøst*, the only explicit instruction of praying to saints is a story about the lodger St Julian and his encounter with Christ. The story ends with a recommendation for travellers to pray to him when looking for shelter, since others seem to do so.²⁹ The translator/writer of *Siælinna thrøst* seems reluctant to say more. Since he is not referring to any other saints in this manner, it can probably be concluded that he was reluctant to pray to saints in this manner. In other passages the writer, however, recommends prayer to the personal apostle (Old Swedish: *thinom apostol*), possibly interpreted as a personal saint, and to the guardian angel (Old Swedish: *thinom ængil*), though no specific apostle/saint or angel

29 'Somlike plægha gerna tha the wandra / bidhia thenna hælgha herran sanctum Julianum om goth herberghe / Ffor thy han forthiænte hymerike mz thy at han gerna lante fatikom herberghe' (*Siælinna thrøst*, p. 212). This comment is added by the translator/writer of *Siælinna thrøst*, since it does not occur in the Lower German original, where the story of St Julian is told, but without any recommendations for the reader/audience afterwards. Cf. (*Der grosse Seelentrost*, pp. 139–41).

is mentioned.³⁰ Miracle stories, collected in order to promote the cult of a certain holy person to the Holy See with the ambition to make that person a saint, due to their nature, contain numerous situations where people prayed to persons considered saint-like.

Perhaps the most common way to promote or confirm the ideal for peasant women and men to pray to saints was, at least according to extant sources, indulgence letters. The typical indulgence letter in this case encourages people to visit a special location where the remains of a holy person are situated. On doing so, the visitor is granted a number of days of indulgence. The visitor is thereby encouraged to participate in the worship of certain saints, but mostly, nothing is said of what to pray on these days, except for visiting the church and thereby probably also listening to the feast liturgies of those days. Only occasionally, indulgences had conditions of certain explicitly mentioned behaviour (in contrast to the more typical general demands), such as to pray in front of a specified image, or to say a noted prayer in the local church on a special feast day.

Even if there exist several indulgence letters associated with particular saints and their devotion, the lack of similar instructions in the catechetical sources is striking. Why so? The catechetical manuals often speak of prayer, but only in connection with God and the Virgin Mary. God is mentioned as good to pray to, and the Virgin Mary as a good patroness for the praying person, having the ability to persuade Jesus to answer all prayers.

This reluctance to associate saints with certain special abilities in the catechetical texts is omnipresent and could possibly be understood as an intended theology and ideal prayer: the peasant woman or man, eager to pray, should primarily pray to God or to the Virgin Mary.³¹

Was such information unnecessary, since the oral tradition was to pray to saints? Or was this something else, a new ideal, against the praying to saints, and for praying only to God and the Virgin Mary? The lat-

³⁰ *Siællinna thröšt*, p. 238.

³¹ I have unfortunately not found any previous research on this matter, which can be interpreted as being to the disadvantage of this conclusion.

ter interpretation is more likely according to the sources, but since the writer of *Siælinna thrøst* belonged to the order of St Birgitta, and the Brigittine monks and nuns asked her to speak in favour of them in heaven, the habit of praying to saints was normal in his context. The fact still remains that almost nothing is said in the period under examination of good saints to pray to, even if people prayed to saints. Prayers to saints survive, at least those in prayer books, owned by either religious or the nobility,³² and saints were depicted on wall paintings and as statues, and altars were blessed in their names.³³

Were these saints to be prayed to? Probably so, but the lack of correspondent prayers or instructions of how and why to pray to saints in surviving catechetical manuals also leads to the conclusion that perhaps a previous common understanding of the widespread custom of praying to saints could be questioned.

Contrary to these conclusions are six 'official' letters where the peasantry is the writer (together with other representatives of the peasant communities and nearby cities). In these letters, the patron saints of Sweden (often unnamed, but sometimes named: St Erik of Uppsala and St Henrik of Finland) are referred to, sometimes at the end of the letter as a conclusive invocation, or included as an argument (for the sake of the patron saints...) among the many arguments in the letter.³⁴ The use

32 Cf. *Svenska böner från medeltiden*, pp. 358–437 (prayers #155–224).

33 For a list of saints in pictures, statues, altars and churches devoted to saints in contemporary Sweden (2006), see: Pegelow, *Helgonlegender i ord och bild*, pp. 272–326.

34 A reference to patron saints in the middle of a letter to the people of Dalecarlia in favour of the newly elected regent (*riksföreståndare*) Gustav Eriksson (Vasa), dated 14 July 1522, written in the city of Jönköping: '...hulket som ær clagandhe ffor gudh i himmerik alla swerges helge patroner...' (*Diplomatarium dalekarlicum*, p. 246 (#244)). A reference to patron saints at the end of a letter with the same intent as the previous, dated 20 July 1522, written in the cathedral city of Växjö: '...Eder her mz azmechtiigh gwd och alle Rikesins patroner befallendes...' (*Diplomatarium dalekarlicum*, p. 248 (#245)). A reference to patron saints, of which St Erik is named, in a letter from the people of Dalecarlia ('Alle edhers nades wndersaather szon byggja och boo i jalalaghen altiidh tiil wilie och thiensth') to the king, written sometime between the years 1523–5: '...Heer medh eder nadhe gudt befallendis sancte Erich och alle suerigis patroner.' (*Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia*, pp. 6–7). A reference to the patron saint Erik, in a letter to the king from the peasants of

of patron saints of the countries was developed in the late Middle Ages, at least in Scandinavia, and therefore was a relatively late addition to the religious culture.³⁵ The purpose was probably to make the messages more powerful, and show the importance of these saints as patrons for the people. These letters show that there was probably not a reluctance to appeal to saints for prayer, but an accepted practice, albeit the seemingly careful instructions of the catechetical manuals.

Another example against this conclusion can be found in two guild verses, where St Anne is referred to as the protector of the bride and bridegroom.³⁶

A possible interpretation of this complexity is that God, the Virgin Mary (and possibly also angels) were the recipients of prayer on holy days and working days and thereby constituting the norm. This is what the catechetical texts speak of. But what to do with the miracle stories, filled with prayers to saints in times of need? These stories seemingly contradict the previous statement, and speak of saints as providers of help in specific situations. But these two do not have to oppose one another, and can be understood in terms of general and specific aid. My hypothesis is, therefore, that God and the Virgin Mary were to be addressed directly in terms of normality and everyday life, and in times of specific needs saints could be addressed either directly or indirectly through God.³⁷

the parishes of Orsa, Mora and Lexand ('Sockneböndher aaf mora orsza lexandh'), written some time between the years 1523–5: '... och yttersthe gudt alszmeztugh och sancte erich konungh gifuer oss naadhen till' (*Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia*, p. 9). Although after the limits of this study, one example from a letter dated 1 May 1525, written by the people of Dalecarlia (several different groups are mentioned) to the king, dated 1 May 1525, at the end of the letter the saint King Erik, and all the patron saints of the kingdom are referred to: 'och yttersthe sancte Eriich konungh och alle riikitzens helge patroner gifuer oss nadher tiil...' (*Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia*, pp. 17, 20).

35 Helander, *Ansgarskulten i Norden*, pp. 142–6.

36 The verses are analysed and presented more thoroughly in Chapter 4, section *Right occasions*, subsection *The role of prayer in parish guilds*.

37 I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Stephan Borgehammar for his aid in the construction of this hypothesis.

Individual and personal prayers in miracle stories

One of the most extensive collections concerning peasants in prayer can be found in medieval miracle stories. These miracles are said to have happened to people regardless of social status and often in extreme situations. Those wanting to promote a certain deceased person, considered to be in heaven, recorded miracles in miracle collections. The typical miracle story begins with a short presentation of whom the miracle happened to and when. Then the story of what happened is told, including the information concerning whom the person addressed in prayer with the promise of a votive gift (often in wax in the shape of the person saved by the miracle). It ends with the information that the praying person fulfilled the promise and names of witnesses who can testify to the authenticity of the miracle.³⁸

Very seldom, the prayer of the person is cited in the miracle story, and sometimes that person is explicitly or implicitly referred to as belonging to a peasant community. These prayers can be found in miracle stories, where the reader is usually told that the praying person prayed and made a votive offering as a gesture of intent.³⁹

Prayers such as these were not unique to the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala. On the contrary, André Vauchez has found similar cited prayers in Italian and French miracle stories.⁴⁰ He treats these prayers as explicit examples of the invocations made to saints. According to Vauchez, these cited prayers followed a standard 'formula' beginning with an invocation by name to the recipient of prayer ('*sancte or beate X, adiuva me...*'

38 Cf. Myrdal and Bäärnhjelm, *Kvinnor, barn och fester i medeltida mirakelberättelser*, pp. 95–7.

39 Not only prayers by peasants exist, but also prayers by the townspeople and nuns. But since this study is aimed at the lower strata of the population of the late Middle Ages, only prayers specifically associated with peasants are included.

40 Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 444–62.

[*saint or blessed X, help me...*])⁴¹ and ending with a mutual commitment clause, where the praying person is offering something in return for a miracle. The prayer can therefore be understood as a contract between human and saint, and according to Vauchez, the formula can be traced back to earthly commitments between lords and vassals.⁴² This connection is further emphasised by the late medieval perception of heaven or paradise as a court with saints as courtiers, God as king and the Virgin Mary as queen.⁴³

Although Vauchez raises no questions of authenticity to the prayers cited in miracle stories, the very reason as to why these few cited prayers exist has not yet been fully examined, and perhaps, the authenticity of these prayers is even in question. Were these prayers actually said and constructed by the peasants, or were they fictional constructions by the collectors? Before these questions of authenticity and authorship are examined, the prayers themselves need to be presented, organised by recipient in chronological order and the context of the miracle stories in which these prayers were cited.

This section will focus on the six miracle stories in which cited prayers are included and where the praying person belonged to a peasant community, and will be presented here chronologically.

A miracle by Saint Birgitta of Sweden

Three prayers can be found among the miracle stories of St Birgitta, all contained in one miracle story and related to each another. It is the first time a prayer ascribed to a peasant person is cited in a miracle story from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala.

Situation and cause of events

The miracle is reported from the parish of Folkärna, diocese of Västerås, included in the proceedings from the year 1375 by the archbishop to the

41 Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 453 (example and italics by Vauchez).

42 Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 453–62.

43 Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 461–2.

Holy See. A father of two sons got up, before his wife, early in the morning to deal with some necessary matters. The two infant children rested in their bed, but after a while, they both cried out in a frightful sound and were thereafter as if they were dead, and their bodies were covered in bruises and smelled horribly. The father suspected them to be dead, and was filled with tears and grief, and began to wrap them up in cloth for their funeral. The mother of the children had, however, faith in the lady Birgitta, and as a consequence of all the famous miracles that the mother had heard, associated with lady Birgitta, she gave a votive offering and prayed to her. First she prayed for one of the sons (prayer 1), and as soon as she had prayed, the spirit of that boy returned to him, little by little, and the mother then exclaimed in praise of the lady Birgitta (prayer 2). Three or four hours after this prayer, the woman prayed for her second son (prayer 3), and immediately he came to life.⁴⁴ After the miracles, the woman visited Vadstena together with her sons.

The prayers

(Prayer 1.) O reuerenda domina, si reddideris michi istum viuum, portabo eum ad locum tuum Waſtenam cum oblatione.

(Prayer 2.) Laus omnīpotenti Deo et tibi, o domina Brigīda, iam vadam ad parrochiam ecclesiam faciamque in honore Dei cantari missam.

(Prayer 3.) O gloriosa domina, scio, quia potens es apud Altissimum, et iſtum adhuc iacentem mortuum redde michi viuum, sicut reddidiſti alium.⁴⁵

[1. O most revered lady, if you return this boy to me alive, I will carry him to your place at Vadstena with an offering.

2. Praise be to the all-powerful God and to you, O Lady Birgitta, now I will go to the parish church and I will have a mass sung in honour of God.

3. O glorious lady, I know that you are powerful with the most high, and return to me this boy who is still lying here dead, as you returned the other one.]

44 *Acta et processus canonizationis beate Birgitte*, p. 157.

45 *Acta et processus canonizationis beate Birgitte*, p. 157. The texts within brackets are inserted by me to indicate the chronological order of the prayers.

Analysis

Noticeable in this miracle story, are two different reactions from father and mother when their two children die. The father is described as filled with grief and he considers the children dead and ready to be prepared for burial. The mother, on the other hand, is described as putting all her faith in the aid of St Birgitta and God, hoping for a recovery of the boys. It is she who says the prayers, and also she who visits Vadstena together with the two sons. Here one can see gender differences in the interaction between the father and the mother, since it is the man who is unable to act due to grief, whereas the woman is the one acting.

The first prayer begins with a short description honouring Birgitta and ends with a hope for consent, since the mother is asking Birgitta to bring the boy back to life, in exchange for the mother's votive offering. The second prayer starts with a grateful praise to God and Birgitta and informs her that the mother intends to visit the parish church and arrange for a mass in honour of God. The third prayer begins like the first prayer, with a description revering Birgitta, and the mother tells Birgitta that she knows of her power (in heaven) with the Almighty, and ends with a cry for healing of her second son, who lies dead on the floor, in the same manner as she has healed her first son. These three prayers should be viewed in their context, as the mother goes from sorrow to hope in the return of her sons from death. The first prayer has a votive promise; the second prayer shows gratitude; and the third prayer has a direct invocation to return the second boy to life.

The three prayers also include the contrasting elements of pilgrimage *versus* locality. The first time St Birgitta is called upon, the praying person utters a promise to visit the place of St Birgitta, which is named as Vadstena (that is, the location of her shrine).⁴⁶ In the second prayer, the woman tells St Birgitta of her intention to have a mass said in God's honour at the parish church in gratitude of the first miracle. The spread of the cult of St Birgitta was, in the case of the said prayer, most prob-

⁴⁶ Folkärna is situated in the province of Dalecarlia, and about 250 km north east of Vadstena. This distance would have taken several days to travel, and the traveller had to pass several large forests, making the pilgrimage even more difficult.

ably a way to honour her even more, in hope of her aid. The third prayer speaks of the power of St Birgitta, speaking of her powerful influence in heaven, and thus she can bring her son back to life. Although the *locus* of St Birgitta is at Vadstena, her cult could be spread to other places, and the rumours of her powers make her a desirable candidate to pray to.

*A miracle by
the Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson of Linköping*

Among the miracles of the Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson of Linköping one miracle story cites a prayer, said by a peasant man.

Situation and cause of events

The cited prayer comes from a miracle that is said to have taken place in the year 1407, when a man known as Halsten, in the parish of Hägerstad, diocese of Linköping, was cured of thirty years of toothache. He is said to have heard about the bishop and the miracles associated with him, and said, therefore, an intercessory prayer to him, that included a votive offering for a certain holy day. The pain was removed instantly, but since the man forgot to fulfil his promise, it returned fourteen days after the said holy day. He was terrified by this and made another promise to the deceased bishop, that if he were to live the next year, on the same holy day he would fulfil his promise (this prayer is not cited in the miracle story). God is said to have had mercy on the man and relieved him of toothache yet again. In the year 1408, Halsten fulfilled his promise and never suffered from toothache again.⁴⁷

The prayer

O sancte Dei si tibi placuerit, mihi eciam sicut ceteris misereri et michi remedium aliquod conferre contra dolorem dencium, quem triginta annis et vltra continue passus sum vehementem, sepulchrum tuum cum oblatione mea vtique peregrinando visitabo in festo apostolorum Petri et Pauli proxime futuro.

[O saint of God, if it pleases you to have mercy on me too, as on others and give me some remedy against the terrible toothache that I have suffered for thirty

47 Schück, 'Två svenska biografier från medeltiden', p. 372.

years and more, I will visit your tomb with my offering, as a pilgrim, on the next feast of the apostles St Peter and St Paul.]

Analysis

The story of Halsten, and his toothache shows the power of votive promises, and also of what could occur if such promises were neglected. The cited prayer in the miracle story is connected with his first prayer and votive offering (that is, the unfulfilled promise), whereas the second promise is not cited in the story. Why this was the case cannot be fully explained, and is possibly interlinked with the seemingly random appearance of cited prayers in the miracle stories. Sometimes prayers are cited, but most often not.

The seriousness of the first toothache was possibly emphasised by the long time it had haunted the man. The power of the deceased bishop can be understood as even stronger than decades of terrible pain, and two powers are thereby presented: one good (the saint) and one bad (the ache), and the saint is stronger than the pain. The praying person failed, however, to fulfil his votive offering, and the same kind of serious toothache struck him yet again. This time, the ache is described as hard as if he feared not to survive another year, and the powers are thus visible – saint *versus* pain. Still, the power of Nils Hermansson was stronger than the ache. Whatever the reason there was for informing the reader of the miracle of the length of the ache, it was the miracle that made the story fit for the miracle collection.

The cited prayer is structured like an agreement and a battle between saints and the evils of the world. If God, through the mercy of the Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson, would heal him from his thirty years of extreme pain, he in return would visit the grave of the bishop and offer a gift there.

It is also important to note that the specific day of the visit to the grave is mentioned: the feast of the apostles St Peter and St Paul. The first promise is to visit the grave on this particular day in the year 1407, but since he failed to do so, he asked for yet another chance to visit it, on the same occasion, but the following year. The grave or shrine at

the cathedral in Linköping is described as the place for worship, making it the holy person's *locus*. Since the man failed to visit the shrine, the power in the holy person's *locus* could be further focused. It was not just the promise that gave healing, but the actual physical visit and pilgrimage. The feast of St Peter and St Paul was celebrated in western Europe on June the 29th, and an annual market (Swedish: *Persmässomarknad*) was held in the city of Linköping on that day, the same day as the annual priestly synod for the diocese of Linköping.⁴⁸ According to Anders Fröjmark, the connection between the cult of the Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson, the annual market and the annual priestly synod was not a coincidence, but was emphasised by the canons of the cathedral of Linköping.⁴⁹ The peasant Hallsten's promised pilgrimage to the cathedral of Linköping was thereby calculated to coincide with the annual market – a date associated with the city and cathedral of Linköping and with its deceased bishop Nils Hermansson.

A miracle by Petrus Olavi of Skänninge

Among the miracles of Petrus Olavi of Skänninge, one cited prayer is found.

Situation and cause of events

The prayer is cited in a miracle, associated with a woman,⁵⁰ most probably a peasant (although the label peasant is not used for the person, it can be assumed, since if she was something else, it would probably have been mentioned). The miracle occurred sometime between the years 1408 and 1435,⁵¹ and the miracle story tells of a married woman from the province of Närke who suffered from a terrible ache in her eyes and was

48 Fröjmark, *Mirakler och helgonkult*, pp. 141, 143.

49 Fröjmark, *Mirakler och helgonkult*, pp. 140–1.

50 'Quedam mulier de nericia...' ('Fragmentum de vita et miraculis magistri Petri Olavi', p. 14).

51 The miracle story includes no information of when the miracle occurred, but Janken Myrdal and Göran Bäärnhjelm date all miracle stories of Petrus Olavi of Skänninge to the years 1408–1435 (Myrdal and Bäärnhjelm, *Kvinnor, barn och fester i medeltida mirakelberättelser*, p. 145).

blind for two years, when she prayed to Petrus Olavi of Skänninge and promised him a votive offering.⁵²

The prayer

Domine mi in te est tota spes mea, supplico ergo tibi, ut lumen oculorum meorum mihi restituas.

[My Lord, in you is all my hope, therefore I beseech you, that you restore to me my sight.]

Analysis

The woman asks Petrus Olavi for aid, since she is suffering from blindness and ache in her eyes. Why she did not pray to him earlier, or if she prayed to other holy persons before, is not mentioned in the record, though such questions sometimes are answered in miracle stories. The fact that the woman's name and the name of the parish are omitted is rare among miracle stories from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala (and other miracles of Petrus Olavi have this information), and no witnesses are listed following the evidence, as is customary. Perhaps this was only hearsay? If so, what does that say about the authenticity of the prayer? The miracle story could also be understood as written some time after the telling of the miracle, and that the name of the woman was lost, but not the reason for the miracle and her prayer.

The prayer is constructed in three parts. It begins with an entreating submission under the Lord, that is, to Petrus Olavi, though not mentioned by name. The few cited prayers attributed to peasants differ in this dedication. In almost all cases, the addressee is mentioned by name, but in one of the prayers to St Birgitta, she is only mentioned as *domina [Lady]*, but associated with the abbey of Vadstena in the prayer. In the abovementioned prayer, Skänninge or any other place associated with Petrus Olavi, such as Rome, or any association with him at all, are absent. It is only the votive promise made before the prayer that connects Petrus Olavi with the miracle. Having shown submission to the addressee, the prayer continues with a wish for healing of her damaged

52 'Fragmentum de vita et miraculis magistri Petri Olavi', p. 14.

eyes. Strangely, the miracle story ends with the prayer, and no mentioning of healing.⁵³

A miracle through the image of the Deposition of Christ on the Cross in Stockholm

One prayer can be found among the miracles associated with the image of the Deposition of Christ on the Cross.

Situation and cause of events

The miracle was said to have taken place during Pentecost in the year 1414 in the parish of Värmdö, diocese of Uppsala, where Kristina, wife of Lars, went to look for her cattle in the woods. She left her two-year-old son, Lars, at home and when she returned, she found him almost dead. After the night, the boy showed no signs of life and his mother tried to evaluate whether he was alive or not by burning the boy on his chin with fire. He did not respond, and the mother began therefore to prepare the boy for his funeral. But then she cried out to God in prayer, making a votive offer and having just finished the prayer, the boy came to life in full health.⁵⁴

The prayer

O deus pijssime, cuius misericordia inuocantibus nomen tuum ad memoriam sancte defixionis tue multipliciter declaratur, exaudi me nunc miseram et indignam, vt filium meum vnigenitum vite restitues, et ego in recognicionem tui beneficij ymaginem tue defixionis in Stockholmis cum ipso visitans offeram ibidem ymaginem ceream ad instar pueri alacriter et deuote.

[O most merciful God, whose mercy is frequently shown to those who call on your name in memory of your holy Deposition, hear me now, wretched and unworthy as I am, so that you may restore to life my only begotten son, and I in recognition

53 In the manuscript, the prayer concludes the miracle story, contrary to the usual practice (most miracle stories end with either the miracle or with the fulfilling of the votive offering) and is directly followed by another miracle story. ('Fragmentum de vita et miraculis magistri Petri Olai', p. 14)

54 Fr. Gregorius Holmiensis O. P., 'Miracula defixionis Domini', p. 30.

of what you have done for me will visit with him the image of your Deposition in Stockholm and offer there willingly and devoutly a wax image of the boy.]

Analysis

The woman left her child while looking for the cattle. It is clear that she had no one to look after the child, since it is noted that she found him as being dead upon her return. Having tried to evaluate whether he was alive or not after the following night, she prayed to God, and hoped for answers in her prayer, and having prayed, the child came to life. The said prayer begins with several omissions to God, where the woman speaks of the holy image, and shows similarities to the liturgical canonical prayers. It continues with a hope for recovery of her son to life, though she is an unworthy person. The prayer ends with a votive offering in the shape of a pilgrimage to the image, and at that place, the offering of a wax figure, shaped like the boy. Wax was in the Middle Ages most expensive, and was therefore considered a precious gift to the pilgrim centre.⁵⁵ The wax was later melted down to be made into new candles in the continuous need for lighting in the churches.⁵⁶ The prayer could be understood as a hope for consent – she will give a votive gift, and God would heal the child.

A miracle by these Blessed Katarina of Vadstena

Two prayers appear among the miracles of the Blessed Katarina of Vadstena. This is the first prayer.

Situation and cause of events

The first prayer cited in the collection is ascribed to Lars in the year 1471 when praying for his son's life. Lars had sent his two sons to take up the fishing nets, but they were instead drawn back to the water and the younger brother drowned. The older brother rushed to his neighbour and tried to find the drowned brother and after a while they found him,

55 Engström, *Ögon i silver och fötter av vax*, pp. 22–3, 35–49.

56 Myrdal and Bäärnhelm, *Kvinnor, barn och fester i medeltida mirakelberättelser*, p. 96.

dead. They dragged the corpse onto the shore and transported it to the father's house. In his great grief, the father began to hope for God's power and intercessions by the saints – especially by the lady Katarina. He therefore prayed to her, and gave a votive offer of gifts in wax. Having made this promise, the body began to move and after more invoking of lady Katarina, the dead son stretched out one leg. As the father and the other members of the family saw this, they invoked even more the help of lady Katarina and having stretched out the other limbs of his body, the son came to life and was completely healed. The father fulfilled his promise and was most grateful to both God and the lady Katarina.⁵⁷

The prayer

O beata domina Katherina si tam sancta es et potens apud Deum, ut publica vox est et fama, tunc partire mecum de misericordia tua, et redde michi filium meum viuum qui iam mortuus hic iacet.

[O blessed lady Katarina, if you are so holy and powerful with God as people say and your reputation has it, then have compassion on me in your mercy, and give back to me alive my son who lies dead here.]

Analysis

The person saying the prayer is the father of the drowned son, not his other son during his struggle to find and rescue the drowned boy or the aiding neighbour. Having said the prayer together with a votive offering (given after the prayer), his prayers are answered and the boy comes to life. The miracle story ends with the information that the father fulfilled his promise and that he was thankful for the aid of the lady Katarina.

The short cited prayer begins in a pious tone, but changes into an expectation, and is very similar to the previously mentioned 'second' prayer to Petrus Olavi of Skänninge. If the recipient is as close to the power of God as the rumour tells, then she could bring the dead son who lies on the ground to life. The fame of the lady Katarina is the reason why he asks her for help, and he has heard of her power from others,

57 *Vita Katherine*, unnumbered facsimile print, facsimile p. 54.

successful in their prayers for miracles by her. Since the miracle occurs, the ‘trial’ is completed and the sainthood of the person is proven.

Another miracle by the Blessed Katarina of Vadstena

This is the second prayer to the Blessed Katarina of Vadstena.

Situation and cause of events

The second prayer from the miracle collection of the Blessed Katarina, comes from a miracle story in the year 1472 from the parish of Ekebyborna, diocese of Linköping. A boy named Torer went with his father Peter Karlsson to the barn in order to bring hay for the cattle, but Torer falls off the ladder and all the hay falls on top of him, pressing him against the ladder, thereby suffocating him. His mother Ingrid comes to rescue him, and takes him away from the hay. She then falls on her knees, saying a prayer that includes a votive offering. Two other adults testify to this, and add the information that the boy was dead for two hours (and that, the eyes of the boy popped out of the skull), and after the votive offer is said, they see the boy come to life.⁵⁸

The prayer

Omnipotens Deus, mundi creator et redemptor, si verum est, quod creditur de domina Katerina filia beate Birgitte, quod tecum regnat in celis coronata et tu eius precibus et meritis tanta mirabilia facis in terris, fac et mecum misericordiam, ut suis precibus reddatur michi filius meus viuus et incolumis, votum namque faciam sibi me visituram eius sepulcrum in Vadstenis vnacum filio meo, si reuixerit, et oblationibus vnus ymaginis de cera formate.

[All powerful Lord, creator and redeemer of the world, if what people believe of lady Kristina, daughter of St Birgitta is true, that she is crowned and rules with you in heaven and that you do send great marvels on earth by virtue of her prayers and merits, have mercy on me too, that by her prayer my son may be returned to me safe and sound, for I make a vow to her, then I will visit her tomb in Vadstena together with my son, if he comes to life again, and with offerings of an image made of wax.]

58 *P. seu negocium canonizacionis b. Katerine*, p. 79.

Analysis

Similar to the first cited prayer to the Blessed Katarina, the parent, in this case his mother, is praying, whereas the others present are not described as praying, though the prayer in this miracle story is only indirectly aimed to the Blessed Katarina (the formal recipient is God). In this miracle story, the others present are even described as preparing the child for his funeral. The injuries, made to the child by the hay and ladder, are described in a precise tone, telling the reader of the two bulging eyes. Having prayed and made a votive promise, the boy is completely healed.

The prayer begins with a reverential description of God, describing the power of God, and indicating that the lady Katarina is crowned in heaven, and continues to refer to her merits, and that God performs wonderful deeds on earth through her merits. It continues with a hope of agreement, giving the lady Katarina a votive promise of a visit, together with her son to the grave of Katarina and of a wax gift, in return for a restoration of the son.

Context and comparison of the cited prayers

Seen as a whole, the cited prayers share many features, not only regarding the context in which they were said, but also in their own structure. This section will therefore focus on the contexts of the cited prayers and compare these.

All the cited prayers were said in extreme and stressful situations, either by the person in question, such as the blind woman or the man with toothache, or by the parents of the seemingly dead children. Praying to saints, or people venerated as saints was a way to find aid in times of trouble, and a regular feature of miracle stories according to Eva Österberg.⁵⁹ This is part of the 'normal' description of a miracle story and can be found in the vast majority of remaining miracle stories.

The person or persons praying are all adults, and they were all praying where they lived. Both women and men are agents in these stories and it seems that there are no gender-specific behaviours in these stories, since both men and women pray, and that sometimes both are not praying, but just the wife or husband is praying. It seems, that this kind of prayer is not bound to gender-specific differences. The miracle stories show the ordinary life of the peasantry: living and working close to home, doing things such as fishing and taking care of the cattle or the hay. In these miracle stories, their everyday life becomes visible, and in contrast to the many catechetical instructions, these events took place at times not mentioned in these instructions. Due to this, these miracle stories tell the story of prayer on work days, and outside the church building, giving yet more examples that prayer was not limited to holy days and sacred places, but could be said anywhere and anytime. Prayer could, however, take special forms in times of need, such as the cited prayers in these few miracle stories.

59 Österberg, 'Witnesses to Wonders', pp. 51–2.

The miracle stories took place in the fifteenth century, except for one occurring in the late fourteenth century. This could possibly be interpreted as a change in the way miracles were reported, since these cited prayers stand out from the common way of recording these prayers, that is, to omit the said prayers. Still, the small amount of cited prayers makes it virtually impossible to draw such drastic conclusions concerning trends in miracle reporting in the Middle Ages.

When addressing the holy person, no priest is mentioned as co-addresser, and the agent is therefore a peasant woman or man. Though two examples exist of priests taking part in the selection of addressee, when it comes to prayer the lay person prays outside the church, most often at home, and with no priest present. This conclusion is perhaps the most important of the comparative conclusions, since the priests' role in the medieval religious life of the peasantry cannot be underestimated. Still, these cited prayers show that peasant women and men were, in times of great stress and need, able not only to say prayers such as the standard prayers like the Paternoster and Hail Mary, but also to construct other kinds of prayers, using their own words and imagination (at least according to what the miracle collections want the readers to think). Ordinary people, such as peasant women and men, could and were allowed to address saints in order to secure celestial aid in times of need. This is never disputed in the miracle stories, even though these were collected by priests.

The structures of these prayers show several similarities, although they were described as being prayed by different persons and in different situations, they follow the previously mentioned formulaic structure of miracle prayers described by André Vauchez.⁶⁰ The prayers begin either with revering comments such as 'the most reverent lady Birgitta' or with submission. Having begun, the prayer then continues with a description of the situation and a cry for help and aid.

The prayers also include some kind of votive promise, either in the shape of a pilgrimage or as a gift of wax to be offered on the grave or the shrine of the holy person. The promise was, however, not only a token of

60 Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 453.

gratitude, but also a means to construct a deal with the recipient, forcing a miracle in favour of the votive offering. The praying person had, or at least thought he or she had, power over the recipient no matter how venerated the person was.

Questions of authenticity and authorship

Are these cited prayers authentic? Did the praying peasants say these prayers (in Swedish, of course) in the words cited? The nature of miracle stories required the use of prayer, but why are just these few prayers cited, and not all of the prayers said? In order to answer these questions, the cited prayers must be examined using a number of source-critical questions.

This section will therefore focus on questions regarding authenticity, purpose of citation, purpose of collection and authorship.

On authenticity

Are the prayers presented as authentic, that is, were the miracle stories claiming that the praying person has said the cited prayer? This question is perhaps the only question that can be answered with some kind of certainty. Janken Myrdal, who has examined the miracle stories of the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, argues that these miracle stories should be understood as authentic on the whole. He presents a number of arguments for this conclusion, but also a few against. The main arguments against the authenticity of the miracle stories are that the responses of the saints are miraculous and that the stories share similarities in their structure of prayer: kneeling and tearfulness, possibly decided not by the individual miracle stories but through genre demands. In favour of authenticity, Myrdal presents a number of source-critical criteria:⁶¹ (1) The short time between miracle and report. The miracles of St Birgitta were reported on an average of one or two months after they occurred, whereas the miracles of the Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson and of the image of the Deposition of Christ on the Cross were reported on average about six months after the miracle.⁶² (2) Witnesses correct, confirm and

61 The following numbers are mine, created to structure Myrdal's argumentation.

62 Myrdal does not include the other miracle collection in this part of his argument.

add information to the reports. This custom was also practised in the secular juridical system in Scandinavia, where witnesses could bring more information on a certain matter, information that was considered true and valuable. (3) Credibility was vital to a cult of a particular saint in competition with other cults of saints. It was therefore a necessity to avoid exaggerations and lies, since these could bring the cult into disrepute. (4) No astounding stories of the deceased saints in question exist, although such stories existed in the medieval vernacular literature. No parallel stories to these can be found in the miracle stories. This was probably due to the firm control of the reports by the collectors. (5) No legends from the common foundation of narrative exist among the miracles, though such stories existed at the time. (6) No parallels to the miracles of Jesus Christ can be found among the miracle stories. (7) A great amount of detailed information exists in the miracle stories, such as descriptions of horses, the barns, water etc. This information brought no vital credibility to the miracle stories, but was a 'natural' part of the descriptions of where and how the miracle occurred. The miracles are also hugely varied and there seems to be no repetition of particular details that could have been used in several miracle stories by the collector and no story is similar to another. (8) Both the one recording the miracle and the one telling it censored themselves when presenting it. For example, common features of the medieval context were often omitted in order to stay focused on the important miracle. Many common diseases and vermin are almost never mentioned, although these existed in great numbers during this period. For example, lice are only mentioned once in the miracle stories.⁶³

Unfortunately for the examination of prayers, Myrdal never analyses the authenticity of the cited prayers found in miracle stories. He only mentions the similarity of how the act of praying is described in the miracle stories, and argues for their being part of the genre specifics. André Vauchez, however, takes the authenticity of cited prayers for granted (in

63 Myrdal and Bäärnhelm, *Kvinnor, barn och fester i medeltida mirakelberättelser*, pp. 119–24.

the miracles found in various European miracle stories),⁶⁴ since he has found at least one example of the collector asking the person experiencing the miracle for the precise words of the prayer made.⁶⁵

The cited prayers were part of miracle stories, proven authentic by Myrdal and by Vauchez's conclusion, and all of the cited prayers were intended for the reader to understand as offered by the person saying the prayer, that is, to be understood as authentic.

On the purpose of citation

Was there a purpose for citing a prayer in a miracle story? Since there are so few miracle stories with cited prayers (six, in total) by peasants, in relation to the vast number of extant miracle stories (about six hundred),⁶⁶ there are possibly only two explanations of why these prayers were cited – either they were consciously added or they were only addressed by coincidence. If the first explanation is true, then these few miracles were probably the only time a peasant woman or man reporting a miracle tells of his or her prayer, and that is the reason why it was added. If the latter is true, then it is highly unlikely that there is a specific purpose for inclusion of the cited prayers. Both explanations can be viewed as possible, since there is nothing separating these miracle stories from other miracle stories, other than the cited prayers, and one is therefore left with only vague explanations. Parchment was expensive at the time, and what was written was often only of importance, and it can therefore be argued that the most probable explanation is that there was a specific reason for inserting these cited prayers, but nothing is left in the miracles to explain why these were given, and not all miracle prayers including information of prayer to saints. The miracle stories with cited prayers are not differentiated from other, similar miracle stories, except for the cited prayers. The prayers were either said and cited by the col-

64 Vauchez's analysis is not geographically limited in contrast to, for example, Finucane's study of miracle stories in medieval England.

65 Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 460.

66 *Nota bene*, there exist a few more cited prayers in the miracle stories, but these were not associated with peasants and have, therefore, in accordance with the aim of this study, been excluded from the examination.

lector (who might have edited the prayer later), or constructed by the collector. If the first alternative is true, then these prayers are unique remains of the prayer life of the peasantry, but if the latter alternative is true, then these prayers were part of a clerical ambition to promote these cults of saints.⁶⁷ The purpose of including prayers actually said by people belonging to peasant communities is, however, more complex to grasp. Could it be that these miracle stories reveal the only times when the person reporting the miracle said what he or she prayed, as indicated previously? Or could it be that these occasions were the only times the collector chose to include these prayers (intentionally or unintentionally)? There are major differences among the collections of miracle stories of the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, where prayers ascribed to peasants occur. The collections of Birgitta, Katarina and Nils were sent to the papal curia for official examination, whereas the collection of Petrus Olavi was not sent away. The miracles associated with the image of the Deposition of Christ on the Cross at the Dominican church in Stockholm could of course not be part of a sanctification process, but were collected most probably to manifest the powers of the image since so many miracles occurred in connection with it. This would have made the Dominican church prosperous in terms of pilgrims coming to visit the image. Still, the collection of miracles associated with the image in Stockholm was made by one of the priests in the church, and first intended to be kept privately. But after the collector was haunted by a disease (a plague in his lower abdomen), he promised to make the collection public, and his disease disappeared. The collection, as it has been preserved, is definitely meant as a work for others to read, and the introduction is made in a sermon-like style.⁶⁸

On the purposes of collection

What were the purposes of collecting the miracle stories, in which the prayers are cited? The cited prayers seem to have different stylistic layers: one 'simple' and one elaborate. The 'simple' part or parts lend authenticity,

67 This is how I interpret these two alternatives.

68 Lundén, 'Om defixio Domini eller Helga Lösen i Stockholm', pp. viii–ix.

and describe the situation and the cry for aid. The elaborative parts (often at the beginning and end of the prayer) lend the prayer a feeling of linkage to the prayers of the liturgy and official worship, and give the prayers an orthodox framework, where the holy person (or God in the case of the image in Stockholm) is praised accordingly. If these prayers were fictional creations, these two layers could have been used to lend the prayer both authenticity and orthodoxy. This possibility is important to consider. The opposite – actual prayers said by peasants – is more complicated to understand, since the layers could be interpreted in two ways. The first possibility is that the cited prayers contain a core of the original prayer, and that it was supplemented by the collector with a traditional worship-inspired style in language when it was translated into Latin and compiled for the collection manuscripts (that is, there is no evidence that the first notation of these miracles is the text existing in the miracle stories, but these are more likely to be compilations of notes, written into the miracle-collection manuscripts later). In this case, there are parts of the actual prayers within these cited prayers. The second possibility is that these prayers were said, in whole, by peasants, and noted by the collector. If so, the peasantry was capable of imitating liturgical styles in their prayers to lend the petition more power. Since there are no remains of prayers said by those belonging to peasant communities other than these possible prayers, there is nothing to compare the prayers to except the presumptive knowledge of language and style of prayer. And of this, absolutely nothing is known. Perhaps, this was the common way to address saints in times of danger, and when the collector wrote the miracles down, he simply translated the prayer the peasant had said into Latin, without any corrections, since these were unnecessary.

On authorship

Can layers of different writers/ editors be found in the cited prayers? There are, in my opinion, three possible solutions to the question of authorship that can be applied to these prayers: (1) they were constructed by the collectors to bring orthodoxy or authenticity to the miracle stories;

(2) they were versions of the original prayers said by peasants, and recited for the collector into which for the sake of orthodoxy, were inserted liturgy-inspired phrases for the prayers; (3) they were cited prayers, created by peasants, and without alteration translated into Latin for the miracle collection. Still, these three solutions cannot explain the few occurrences of cited prayers by peasants, in spite of the existence of a few other cited prayers by people not belonging to peasant communities. Perhaps the peasantry was unable to create elegant paraphrases of the liturgy in their prayers to the saints. If so, were these prayers just another example of their 'simple' way of prayer, using only the Paternoster and Hail Mary to communicate with God and the saints, since the clergy needed to create more eloquent prayers for the peasantry? One should, however, not ignore the possibility of understanding these cited prayers as at least partly constructed by peasants. If so, these are perhaps the only close examples of the prayer life of the peasantry.

It can, however, be argued that the second alternative is the most likely, due to conclusions of dissimilarity. If the third alternative is true, then the peasantry must have known the Latin mass and its prayers, since the cited prayers in the miracle stories seem to link to these prayers, or else they had access to vernacular translations of these. But such literal translations of the mass liturgy have not been found, if there ever were such translations, and other similar prayers do not, as previously discussed, exist. From this perspective, both alternatives one and two can be argued for, but against alternative one are the conditions included in the prayers, where the praying person seems to be able to make demands of the saint because of the votive offering. This is not part of the official theological view on who is to make demands in prayer. Therefore, alternative two is most likely since both argument one and three seem highly unlikely. The cited prayers can thereby be understood as actually having been said and constructed by peasant women and men, but possibly edited with 'correct' adorations to the saints in order to bring orthodoxy to the cult of that particular saint. Perhaps their ability has hereto been underestimated, and the peasantry was able to construct prayers of their own, far beyond the standard set of pre-formulated prayers such as the

Pateroster and Hail Mary.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, without further evidence of the prayer life of the peasantry, and their ability to construct prayers, the final word of the authorship of these cited prayer is yet to be said.

69 André Vauchez interprets the prayers cited in miracle stories as genuine and authentic, since he does not question their existence at all. Cf. Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 444–62.

Conclusions

The following conclusions can, therefore, now be made concerning prayer in times of need, regarding those belonging to peasant communities.

¶ *First*, saints as recipients of prayer: peasant women and men came into the acquaintance of saints as recipients of prayer especially through the rumours of their powerful relics and their healing abilities, but also through the many saint feasts and other situations where new or existing saints were presented or talked about. When uncertain of whom to address in prayer, lot casting could be performed. This is the case in thirteen miracle stories out of about six hundred surviving miracle stories, and can therefore be concluded to have been an occurring situation. Most of the times the praying person had made the choice of addressee earlier. But when lot casting is described, it is presented as something commonly occurring and traditional among the laity. Lot casting required as a minimum three lots with a symbol marked on each of them, symbolising the different alternatives. Three persons, one for each lot, cast these lots into a bowl or a fold of cloth held by a fourth person. A fifth person then took one of the lots, and the lots were then cast once again. When one particular lot had been taken three times in a row, that saint or action (for example, a pilgrimage) was interpreted as the will of God. This method of casting lots was not understood as divination or magic, either by the laity or the clergy, but as a way to discern the will of God, and was practised by laity and clergy. Praying was one of the most important parts of a miracle story, since the miracle was perceived by a wish for divine intervention. In the surviving sources from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, there is a lack of prayers directed to saints for general purposes. A possible interpretation of this can be constructed as a hypothesis of recipients for prayer: God and the Virgin Mary were to be addressed directly in terms of normality and everyday life, but in times of specific need, saints could be addressed either directly or indirectly through God.

¶ *Secondly*, individual and personal prayers to saints in miracle stories: prayers by peasants exist in the miracle stories, although only six out of about six hundred in total. In these miracle stories, the reader is told not only of the situation of the miracle, but also the exact words used (or at least intended to be understood as authentic) in the prayer. These prayers are unique.

¶ *Thirdly*, context and comparison of the cited prayers: these prayers were said by the peasant women and men themselves, and no priest is present. Most of the prayers are constructed as some kind of agreement with the saint or God, where the praying person promises to do something in return for a miracle.

¶ *Fourthly*, questions on authenticity and authorship: how to understand these prayers? Were they authentic and therefore a source of information of how peasant women and men constructed their prayer? These prayers can in fact be interpreted as authentic, at least to some extent. The peasantry was therefore able to construct prayers of their own, using their own words instead of pre-formulated prayers such as the Paternoster and Hail Mary, although these prayers might have been added with orthodox venerating passages to enhance credibility of the cult of that particular saint.

Prayer cultures

CHAPTER 7



THE WAYS in which a peasant woman or man was supposed to pray was influenced by the religious culture. But one should not speak of one single culture of prayer, but instead of several parallel and interlinking prayer cultures in which the praying peasant was to act and also to affirm and recon-

struct the ways in which prayer was to be made and thought of.

In this chapter, I will examine three aspects of prayer cultures, namely transmitting prayer culture, maintaining prayer culture and prayer vs. magic. The chapter will end with an excursus on an existing hypothesis on a relation between prayer postures and burial postures.

Transmitting prayer culture

In what ways were prayer knowledge transmitted? In order to examine ideals and practices of prayer, one needs to understand the methods and media used for promotion and education. Perhaps the most evident form of control of how these ideals were applied to the peasantry, at least according to surviving sources, were the demands of godparents. In order to become a godparent, basic knowledge of Christianity was required. Parish priests, with no exception of parishes in rural areas, were required to teach the parishioners the basics of Christian faith. The parish priests were even fined by the bishops if they failed to do so, and it can therefore be concluded, that these basic features of Christianity were of importance for peasants to know. Baptismal instructions in liturgical manuals implied the use of common prayers to be said by priests and godparents together, and it can reasonably be held, that these instructions were intended to be used in all parts of the dioceses. Since all surviving liturgical manuals speak of these required prayers, manuals used in parish churches, now lost, would probably be similar to the surviving material in this matter.

This section will focus on didactic methods and control of basic demands.

Didactical methods

For those belonging to peasant communities in the Middle Ages, there was no formal training for the basic religious education. The responsibility of religious education was divided: the godparents (and probably also the parents) were responsible for the basic Christian knowledge and the parish priest was responsible for the continuous catechetical education and pastoral care. A consequence of the Fourth Lateran decree from the year 1215, on annual confession, according to Robert Swanson, was the discovery of religious ignorance among the laity.

This gave way to a flood of catechetical literature in Western Europe, to be used by priests as educational aids.¹

The prime teaching medium for religious education was, however, not text-based books, but the lived experience and knowledge of how to pray. This knowledge was, according to Evelyn Birge Vitz, primarily brought about by osmosis. Visiting the parish church to attend the mass and its liturgy every holy day, year after year, gave the parishioners a living knowledge by assimilation. Vitz concludes that ‘most of what was mastered was presumably learned without conscious effort’. The transmission of religious knowledge was not only brought to the laity by words, but also by body language and senses such as smell and sight.²

Peasant people probably also imitated the priest, visiting preachers such as Dominicans and Franciscans and each other.³ This knowledge is, however, almost lost today, since only fragments remain of these instructions and ideals.

In the remaining catechetical manuals, three explicitly instruct the reader/audience in terms of prayer, namely *Siælinna thrøst*, *Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera* and *De sju sakramenten*, which will be examined here from a didactic perspective concerning the transmission of prayer ideals to the peasantry.

Characteristic for two of the catechetical instructions, namely in *Siælinna thrøst* and *Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera*, is the tone of positive encouragement offered to the reader. A typical instruction for prayer, and mentioned previously in this study, consists of different levels of ambition, where the reader/audience is encouraged to say certain prayers, such as the Paternoster and Hail Mary and think of different mental themes. Then for those who want more, new lists of mental themes or whole ranges of prayers, such as the Hours of Our Virgin, are presented. The typical instruction ends, however, with the information that if one

1 Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe*, p. 26; Swanson, ‘The Origins of the Lay Folk’s Catechism’, p. 92.

2 Birge Vitz, ‘Liturgy as Education in the Middle Ages’, pp. 20–5.

3 Cf. Jakobsen, *Prædikebrøderenes samfundsrolle*, pp. 157–81, on the educating role of the Dominican order in Denmark as preachers.

has no possibility to say all these prayers, then the prayers Paternoster and Hail Mary are enough, and if the lay person is unaware of the content of these prayers, just the first two words of these prayers are enough.⁴ Sometimes these instructions are followed by *exempla* stories, to enhance the importance of these prayers, or with a description of how good the praying person will feel, such spiritual sweetness he or she will feel when saying these prayers.⁵

The didactic methods used on these occasions aim to inspire religious development for people belonging to peasant communities, where the person more advanced in praying can say more prayers than the less advanced. For each step in the development, the praying person is provided with information on what to pray, but with no comments on what would happen if he or she failed to do so. Instead, this didactic method emphasises the positive aspect of prayer and what it could lead to.

The third manual, *De sju sakramenten*, has, however, a sharper tone in the instructions. If one does not follow the recommendations, one would have to fear hell. A positive, encouraging tone exists throughout the text, but the fear of damnation is still omnipresent, although the positive choices should not be made out of fear of hell, but out of joy of heaven. Although there are examples in wall paintings of the pains in hell and Purgatory, this is often not the case in the catechetical literature. It can therefore be assumed that the didactic method of positive

4 For example: 'Alla thessa forscrifna puncta oc hwan serdelis skalt thu hedhra mz ene pater noſter oc Aue maria eller mz twa vm thu format oc hafwer ther tyma til wilth thu mera til sæthia tha mat thu thz gøra / æpter thy gudh gifwer thik nadhena til / Thykker thik thz wara offlankt / tha læg een deel aff ok hedhra wars [herra] hælgða fæm vnder mz fæm pater noſter oc fæm Aue maria oc læg ther til hwat thu wilt / oc før æn thu alzenkte læs eller bidher tha skal thu helder vm daghin læsa innelika gudhy til hedher ena Pater noſter oc aue maria / Ffor thy thz ær aldregð swa lîtin bøn at gudh wil // ioo gifwa thik ffor hona løn' (*Sællinna thrøſt*, p. 121).

5 'Hwat thz hældher ær Pater noſter / Aue maria eller annor bøn / Thu skalt oc fly thik allaledhis ther æpter at thu hafwer innogheth oc granna athwakt j thinne bøn Oc skalt rætwislika bidhia oc innelika / Tho swa at thu ey annan hindra Oc at thu maghe nokra gudhliketh oc andelikin søtma kænna / Bætra ær een pater noſter innelika mz athwakt bidhin / æn een ganzker psaltare vtan athwakt læsin / Ther wil iak sighia thik eet exemplum aff...' (*Sællinna thrøſt*, p. 117).

encouragement was used and was possibly even common and popular in the religious education of the peasantry in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala.

The positive encouragement in explicit prayer instructions is in contrast to the intimidations sometimes occurring in *exempla*. Both of these aspects of didactic methods exist in *Siælinna thrøst* and *De sju sakramenten*, and were used in parallel. Perhaps the different kind of genre can explain these differences. *Exempla* were, by their nature, more melodramatic than mild, in order to create a story easy to remember.

Control of basic demands

The most powerful instrument to control the religious devotions of the laity in the Middle Ages was, according to Robert Swanson, probably the Fourth Lateran Council's decree of annual confession for everyone belonging to the Catholic faith and having reached the age of discretion.⁶ This gave the parish priests an annual opportunity to control the religious education of all their parishioners. The religious control could be managed in other ways, for example of godparents during a child's baptism. When a child was born, it was of greatest importance to have it baptised as soon as possible in order to save it from Limbo. But the biological parents did not play the important role during baptism. The child was to be born again, this time in spirit, and this required new parents – godparents. It was the godparents who were spiritually responsible for the child and it was they who answered the priest's questions during the baptism.⁷ The biological parents were never asked for in the liturgical manuals for baptism, both because the baptism was considered a second birth in spirit, and because the mother was not allowed to visit the church before her purification. The biological father was presumably in the church during the baptism, but just as any other person in the congregation and, of course, a proud parent of the child. One statute, however, explicitly mentions that the parents of the child together with the godparents should be the teachers of the prayers the Paternoster, Hail

6 Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe*, p. 26.

7 Kilstrom, *Den kateketiska undervisningen*, pp. 55–63.

Mary and Apostolic Creed,⁸ and it can presumably be understood that the biological parents also took part in the religious education of their children, although it was seldom formalised in statutes.

Who, then, was to become godparent and what were the qualifications needed? Godparents were selected by the biological parents, and could be anyone with qualifications in prayer. The godparent was meant to know the prayers the Paternoster, Hail Mary and Creed and, according to Joseph H. Lynch in a study on godparenthood in the Carolingian period, the priest controlled this before baptism. If one could not say these prayers, one was not qualified.⁹ This was most probably the case in the late medieval period. The popularity of being a godparent could not be underestimated, according to Lynch – there were not enough children (at least of high status) to be a godparent for.¹⁰

The religious demands were similar in the late medieval ecclesiastical province of Uppsala according to Bengt Ingmar Kilström, since the practice of saying these prayers aloud in the church required knowledge of the said prayers.¹¹ Without this knowledge, one could simply not become a godparent.

At baptism, the godparents had to promise to raise the child to live a good Christian life and to teach the child to pray the Paternoster, Hail Mary and Creed, according to extant baptismal liturgies. The Hail Mary was included as a required prayer later than the Paternoster and Creed, but was probably commonly used at baptism in the ecclesiastical province from the fourteenth century onwards.¹² Manuals from the ecclesi-

8 [Undated statutes for the diocese of Strängnäs, from a manuscript from the mid-fourteenth century]: ‘Parentes et patrini filios doceant oracionem dominicam et symbolum apostolorum cum salutacione beate Marie uirginis et exortentur eos sepius et iuste uiuere.’ (Gummerus, *Synodalstatuter*, p. 88).

9 Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe*, pp. 157–8, 188, 312–13, 300.

10 Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe*, pp. 338–9.

11 Cf. Kilström, *Den kateketiska undervisningen*, p. 68.

12 For a presentation of the use of the Paternoster, Hail Mary and Creed at baptism, with an outline of regional differences and chronological differences, see: Kilström, *Den kateketiska undervisningen*, pp. 64–78.

astical province, however, do not always include this prayer for the godparents to read during baptism.¹³ At least four manuals with baptismal liturgies remain where the godparents are instructed to be responsible for the education of the child, and their knowledge of the Paternoster and Creed is tested.

In the *Manuale Upsalense* [Liturgical manual for the archdiocese of Uppsala], printed in 1487, the priest is instructed, after the baptism of the child, to remind the godparents to teach the infant the Paternoster and Creed. Both of these prayers were most probably also intended to be said aloud, together with the priest, since in the manual, these prayers are marked with reminders to say these prayers, and not as an instruction for the priest.¹⁴ In the *Breviarium Scarense* [The Breviary for the diocese of Skara], printed in 1498, the prayers Paternoster, Hail Mary and Creed are to be said, but only the priest is instructed to say them. The godparents could possibly be encouraged to say the prayers together with the priest,¹⁵ but it is not required, as implied in the other manuals. In the *Manuale Aboense* [Liturgical manual for the diocese of Turku (Åbo)], printed in the year 1522, the baptismal liturgy goes further than the manual of Uppsala and the breviary of Skara, since the priest is asking the godparents for the child's name,¹⁶ then the priest is instructed to pray the Paternoster and Creed together with the godparents,¹⁷ and to ask the godparents to provide religious education (that is, to know the Paternoster and Creed) to the child.¹⁸ The final example of lay control in the liturgical books is found in *Manuale Lincopense* [Liturgical manual

13 Kilström, *Den kateketiska undervisningen*, pp. 66–7.

14 'Tunc sacerdos iniungat patrinis, quod doceant infantem Pater noster et Credo in deum.' (*Manuale Upsalense*, p. 23). Italics mark the rubrics in the manual.

15 'Deinde legat. Pater noster. Ave Maria. Credo.' ('Breviarium Scarense', p. 142). Italics mark the rubrics in the manual.

16 'Ordo qualiter catheisentur infantes primum querat sacerdos nomen infantis...' (*Manuale aboense*, p. 5). Italics mark the rubrics in the manual.

17 'Hic legant sacerdos et patrini Pater noster. Credo' (*Manuale aboense*, p. 9). Italics mark the rubrics in the manual.

18 'Tunc dicat sacerdos patrinis quod doceant infantem Pater noster et Credo' (*Manuale aboense*, p. 11). Italics mark the rubrics in the manual.

for the diocese of Linköping], printed in the year 1525, in which the priest is instructed to say the Paternoster and Creed together with the godparents.¹⁹

A plausible conclusion is that the control during baptism was more of a formal control, since it was most likely that the parish priest controlled this even before the baptism. But, the surviving sources do not tell of anything before the actual baptismal liturgy, and therefore this conclusion is only a speculation of probability.

The abovementioned manuals and breviary show that the requirements of godparents in the peasant communities were considered to be of importance. The priest's responsibility was to teach godparents and parents the proper translations of prayers, authorised by the bishop. If he failed to do so, he was fined.²⁰ The main responsibility for children's religious education was that of the godparents, although it can be reasonably held, that the biological parents also played a vital role in the child's religious education, as previously mentioned. The child had to be taught how to say these prayers, in what manner, and how to behave during the mass and other religious activities. The religious education was, therefore much broader than stated in these minimal requirements promised in the baptismal liturgies. The tradition of making parents and godparents responsible for this religious education gave a system open to local variation – in contrast to the controlling ambitions of the parish clergy and bishops.

19 *'Poſtea ſacerdos et patrini Pr. nr. Et Credo quibus finitis teneat ſacerdos caput infantis dicens...'* ('Manuale Lincopense', p. 14). Italics mark the rubrics in the manual.

20 **Kilström**, *Den kateketiska undervisningen*, pp. 95–6.

Maintaining prayer culture

The maintaining of a prayer culture was important, and methods used for this purpose can be seen as tools available for peasant women and men in their prayer.

This section will focus on mnemonic techniques, indulgences and the use of saints' names as veneration.

Mnemonic techniques

Several instructions concerning prayers include information about how many Paternosters or Hail Marys should be prayed on certain occasions. For example, the catechetical manual *De sju sakramenten* stated that one should not forget to pray even in sorrows, instead of accusing God although such things might happen.²¹ This instruction tells not only of forgotten prayers, but also of a tendency to forget prayers in hard times. In order to enhance the use of prayer and aid the remembering of such prayers, in easy times as in hard times, mnemonic techniques such as rhyming and body language were used continuously.²² According to Walter J. Ong, mnemonic techniques are important in order to structure information and enhance memory in a society where most people are illiterate. The ability to remember more detailed instructions also increases in such a society.²³

What mnemonic techniques did the late medieval peasantry use to remember their prayers? In the material examined, four kinds of tech-

21 The original text is rather dim to grasp. 'Hwa som ey haffwer tolomodh i siin dröwilse . honom är rådhandis at han tappar sina böen . oc forthiänar sik heluüte thär mz at han talar mot gudh' (*De sju sakramenten*, p. 52).

22 I have chosen to define the term in accordance with the Oxford English Dictionary's definition: 'Mnemonics: The study and development of systems for assisting and improving the memory; a system or technique to improve the memory' (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. 'mnemonics').

23 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 46–9. Cf. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* for an examination of scholarly use of mnemonic techniques during the Middle Ages.

niques are particularly seen, namely rhyming, visualisation, beads and finger counting.

Rhyming

A common feature of mnemonic techniques during the Middle Ages was rhyming. This was firstly associated with oral texts and not with written ones, but often, oral versions were noted down and became written texts. No explicit prayer (or instruction for prayer) with rhyming has remained from peasant communities in the ecclesiastical province. There are, however, several examples of this mnemonic technique remaining from books aimed at townspeople or nobility. One such example of written prayers with rhymes to enhance memorisation can be found in *Siælinna thrøst*, where vernacular prayers are provided for not only participation in mass, but also the Divine Office, and they all rhyme in pairs – that is, A, A, B, B, C, C.²⁴ For the prayers in Old Swedish, it has been indicated by Sven-Erik Pernler and Stina Fallberg Sundmark that the purpose of these rhymes was mnemonic, a conclusion well in line with Ong's conclusions.²⁵ To exemplify this, I have chosen the prayer to be said for the prime, where the praying person is to thank Jesus for his suffering during the Passion, recalling the accusations by Pontius Pilate, stating that Jesus was said to be a false prophet, although he was the physician of the soul and body, then sending him off to King Herod. Here is a short excerpt from the prayer:

[...] Ffor pylatum domara om primis **tidh** (A)
tha stodh thu j ene starke **stridh** (A)
The saghdho thik wara een falskan **predicara** (B)
thu som est lykama oc siæla **lækiara** (B)
pylatus thik til herodem **sænde** (C)
ther aff wardh han hans win oc **frænde** (C) [...]²⁶

24 *Siælinna thrøst*, pp. 123–44.

25 **Sundmark**, *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse*, p. 119; Pernler, 'En mässa för folket?', p. 113. Cf. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 46–9.

26 *Siælinna thrøst*, p. 128. Bold markings are mine.

[...For the judge Pilate in the hour of prime
 when you stood in a fierce battle
 They said you were a false preacher
 you who are the physician of body and soul
 Pilate sent you to Herod
 who thereby became his friend and kinsman...]²⁷

In a peasant society with a long tradition of oral communication and the ability to remember long texts by heart, rhyming techniques and counting facilities provided a good basis for education and the remembering of important prayers and devout thoughts.²⁸ Rhymed prayers in the vernacular provided the peasantry with new prayers to pray during mass and other clerical activities, and could also provide ideas of how to combine prayers of one's own for similar situations. For the few who owned private books of prayer, written prayers could, according to Virginia Reinburg, often be used as a reminder of which prayer to say and when to say it, rather than for reading every word of the written prayers.²⁹

Visualisation

Prayers were sometimes also introduced to the reader/audience with an instruction that presented a theme before the cited prayer. The introduction of prayers relied on these mnemonic techniques in order to be remembered and used.³⁰

Images could also aid the remembering of prayers and, as mentioned earlier, as inspiration for prayer, for example, the *Biblia pauperum* [*The Bible of the poor*], which was often used as inspiration for wall paintings to bring knowledge and reminders to the church visitors. The many motifs in the church building could then aid the praying peasant woman or

27 I have not maintained the rhyming in my translation.

28 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 46–9.

29 Reinburg, *Popular Prayers in Late Medieval and Reformation France*, p. 81.

30 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 44–91.

man in, for example, the praying of the Rosary by counting each painted flower or bead around the motif of the Virgin of the Rosary.³¹

Beads, Rosaries and Paternoster strings

One of the most popular groups of prayers in the late Middle Ages was the Rosary, and consisted of repeated Paternosters and Hail Marys or the Lady Psalter.³² But repetition can often lead to confusion in counting. A popular way to control the counting of spoken prayers was to use beads on a string or in a ring. In the case of the Rosary, a ring with large beads represented the Paternoster, small beads the Hail Mary and a cross could be used for the Creed. The use of the Rosary shines through in several instruction manuals, although it is never mentioned with that name and its use can therefore not be studied in texts, but only through indirect mentioning and surviving rosaries. For example, in an anonymous fragment of a catechetical manual, three different themes often associated with the Rosary (the Virgin Mary's joy, her sorrows and the glory of Jesus' Resurrection) are introduced to the reader.³³

People belonging to peasant communities, with the help of beads, could also say groups of prayers other than the Rosary. In *Sjællinna thrøst*, the Paternoster and Hail Mary are recommended to be said, often in numbers of five, ten or thirty. Beads on a string, often known as paternoster beads, were sometimes used to aid the counting of these prayers.³⁴ For those like the poorer peasants who were not able to afford

31 Cf. Ringbom, 'Smärtomannen et al.', pp. 6–11; Hajdu, *Das mnemotechnische Schrifttum des Mittelalters*, pp. 99–100. An example of this motif can be found on a reredos in the Åsunda church in Gästrikland. The reredos was made in Antwerp in the early sixteenth century.

32 For an introduction to the Rosary devotion, see: Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*. Cf. Sundmark, *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse*, p. 185; Pernler, 'Rosenkransfromhet i senmedeltidens Sverige'.

33 'Dagens sju tidegärder et cetera', pp. 219–20. Cf. Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose*, pp. 65–80.

34 Cf. Sundmark, *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse*, p. 185. Beads have been found in graves from the ecclesiastical province of Denmark. Koch has also found that Rosaries could be attached to the corpse, on hands, around necks and around wrists (Koch, 'Rosenkranse i grave', pp. 122–4).



The Virgin of the rosary. Wall-painting in Dannemora church, Uppsala diocese. Painted in the first quarter of the sixteenth century by the Tierp group.

luxurious Paternosters made of gems, gold, amber or mother of pearl, less expensive ones could be afforded, usually made of glass, bone, wood or nuts, the cheapest consisting merely of knots on a string. The string was probably made of wool, silk or any other fabric, and was probably dyed to match the colour of the beads, or dyed red as a reminder of Christ's blood.³⁵

Beads of glass and stone have been found in archaeological excavations,³⁶ and a few wills mention paternoster beads.³⁷ One of the above-mentioned paternosters (found in the wills) is made of jet (it is described as 'a black paternoster string'), another is gilded.³⁸ What kinds of paternoster beads were used in the peasant communities? The archaeological evidence can unfortunately not be used to tell of such things, since there is no possibility to tell whether a corpse buried with a rosary or paternoster belonged to a peasant community or not, since the corpses were stripped of their possessions when buried, except on a few occasions.³⁹ The reason why these beads have been preserved is because they were made of non-decayable material such as (expensive) stones or met-

35 Gottschall, 'Prayer Bead Production'; Lightbown, *Mediaeval European Jewellery*, pp. 342, 345.

36 Beads from either rosaries or paternosters have been found in archaeological excavations in Sweden. (Search for 'radband' alternatively 'pärla' (Föremålskategori: Religion och kult) at the collections at the Museum of National Antiquities in Sweden (Statens historiska museum, *Sök i Historiska museets samlingar*). In the database, 11 rosaries/paternoster strings (sakord: *radband*) can be found, and 10 pearls from rosaries or paternoster strings (sakord: *pärla*; typ: *radband*).

37 SDHK, #22143 (from the year 1434), #32845 (from the year 1492), #38325 (from the year 1520).

38 SDHK, # 22143 (black), #38325 (gilded).

39 People was sometimes buried according to their social status in the cemeteries (where the best places were close to the church, a place often reserved for deceased children (Cf. Mejsholm, *Gränsländ*, pp. 231–6)). The habit of placing rosaries and paternoster strings into the graves could possibly be analysed from a social perspective, since the social position of the deceased person could possibly be examined. If such excavations would have been made, there would have been a possibility to examine the use of rosaries and paternoster strings among the lower stratum of the population. Cf. Jonsson, *Practices for the Living and the Dead*, pp. 93–6.

als. Possibly beads made of the less expensive materials could have been used, such as bone, wood or nuts, that mouldered away. The lack of archaeological evidence of such cheaper beads does, however, not exclude the possibility of rosaries or paternosters used by people belonging to peasant communities. These paternoster strings or rosaries were, according to Virginia Reinburg, used not only outside the church, but also when in church, sometimes together with prayer books, at least in late medieval France where her study was made.⁴⁰

Finger counting

Fingers could also have been used to count prayers. Prayers were often mentioned in groups of five, ten, fifteen and thirty, and could easily be counted out on the fingers of the hand. The use of finger counting was, like Paternosters, widespread throughout the Western Church during the Middle Ages. The fingers of one hand made five, all fingers ten, and with a technique of using the different parts of the fingers, one could count up to fifteen on one hand, and two hands therefore made thirty.⁴¹ This counting could be done anywhere, and cost nothing but the knowledge of how to do it. Perhaps this method was used as a complement to the more exclusive paternoster beads.⁴² An *exemplum*, though not from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, tells of a girl who was told to pray to the Virgin Mary as many times as she has joints of her fingers. When she died, she reappeared and showed her fingers, now shining like precious gems.⁴³

Indulgences

How was prayer used as a condition for indulgences? Saying prayers gave indulgences, since it was considered a most devout act to do. Sometimes, this indulgence was conditional, stating when, where and what prayer

40 Reinburg, *Popular Prayers in Late Medieval and Reformation France*, p. 223.

41 Berger, 'The Hand and the Art of Memory', pp. 97–105.

42 Visualisation techniques, such as devotional images and stories, were popular as mnemonic techniques.

43 Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, #3915.

should be said in order to achieve an indulgence. Most churches had indulgence promises connected with them, stated in letters of indulgence issued not only by local bishops, but also by archbishops, cardinals and the pope himself. In order to achieve such an indulgence, one had to visit the church. This gave the churches, as places of worship for the peasantry, even more significance. According to Nikolaus Paulus, this practice became increasingly popular from the eleventh century onwards. Different activities associated with the church building, such as visits to particular churches, to named saints and relics and sacred images, and to participate in the communion and to pray either for named people or specified prayers, could be the condition of an indulgence.⁴⁴ Robert Swanson argues that this trend is visible after the year 1350, at least in the British sources.⁴⁵

The ways in which certain prayers or prayer behaviours were used as conditions for indulgence seem to have been rather formulaic through standard phrases. An example of a conditional indulgence can be found in an indulgence letter by Bishop Knut of Linköping from the year 1409 to the visitors of a church in Visby city:

...Nos enim cupientes eandem congruis honoribus venerari, omnibus et singulis vere penitentibus et confessis, qui ante dictam ymaginem se prosternentes flexis genibus, ob venerationem septem spiritalium gaudiorum ejusdem intemperate virginis et matris Dei Marie sepcies salutacionem angeli sive alias deuotas oraciones fecerint et fuderint, aut quidquam humanitatis obsequium in candelarum uel similium presentacione reuerenter impenderint, xl dies indulgenciarum...⁴⁶

[...for We, desiring that the same [Pieta image] be venerated with suitable honours, [grant] a forty-day indulgence to each and every person who is truly penitent and has confessed their sins, who on bended knees, prostrating themselves before the said image, out of veneration of the seven spiritual joys of the same unstained

44 Paulus, *Geschichte des Ablasses im Mittelalter*, ii, pp. 175–82. For a study on the promotion of holy images through the use of indulgences, see Lewis, 'Rewarding Devotion'. Cf. Shaffern, *The Penitents' Treasury*, pp. 63–9.

45 Swanson, 'Praying for Pardon', pp. 229–33, 235–6. Cf. Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, pp. 246–66.

46 SDHK, #17297.

virgin and mother of God, Mary, performs or pours out in prayer the Hail Mary or other devout prayers, or who performs some human service by reverently presenting candles or similar things...]

Forty days of indulgence are in this letter given to the person who prays on his knees in front of an image. When the person is kneeling, he or she should honour the seven joys of the Virgin and mother of God, and also say seven Hail Marys and other kinds of devotional prayers.

The image mentioned was, in fact, a crucifix that the bishop had installed,⁴⁷ and the praying in front of holy images or crucifixes was a widespread custom, occurring also in the indulgence letters for visitors to particular churches. Sixten Ringbom has identified at least four such images or motifs in Scandinavia, namely the images of Veronica, the *Imago Pietatis* [the Gregorian Man of Sorrows], the Virgin of the Rosary and the Virgin of the Sun.⁴⁸ These motifs were associated with indulgences and indulgence letters, such as those for visitors of particular churches, affirming the value of these images, and sometimes other images were given the same status, such as the abovementioned crucifix.

If prayers were specified in such indulgence letters, it seems that only well-known prayers were presented, such as, for example, the Paternoster, the Hail Mary, the Creed or the Seven Joys of the Virgin Mary.

In the abovementioned indulgence letter, the Hail Mary is specified together with other unspecified prayers: ‘...*matris Dei Marie species salutacionem angeli sive alias deuotas oraciones fecerint et fuderint...*’ [performs or pours out in prayer the Hail Mary or other devout prayers].

But why specify the prayer, when the prayers named are only standard prayers? It seems that these specifications were not promoting certain prayers, but affirming already used prayers. If so, one can conclude that when praying in a church, presumably those visiting the church used standard prayers.

47 ‘...Notum facimus per presentes quod anno Domini mdix, die natiuitatis beate Marie uirginis, consecrauimus quendam ymaginem in memoriam gloriose uirginis et matris Dei Marie factam et formatam, figuram Christi, filii sui crucifixi, in ulnis honorifice baiulantis...’ (SDHK, #17297).

48 Ringbom, ‘Veronicabilden’; Ringbom, ‘Smärtomannen et al.’

Praying could also be specified in terms of the physical activity. If this is specified, a standard phrase is used, implying prayer on one's knees. Here follows one such example, an indulgence issued in the year 1474 by Bishop Johannes of Skara to the church of Suntak, Skara diocese:

...Cupientes igitur ut ymagines sanctorum Petri et Iohannis euangeliste apostolorum condignis ac debitis honore et reuerencia habeantur in ecclesia Swntak nostre diocesis, omnibus et singulis vere penitentibus, contritis et confessis, qui ante sanctorum prefatorum ymagines Aue Maria, Pater noster, credo seu alias quascumque oraciones deuotas humiliter orauerint cum genuflexione...

[... desiring, therefore, that the images of the holy apostles Peter and John the Evangelist be held in suitable and due honour and reverence in the church of Swntak of our diocese, [grant] to each and every person who is truly penitent, contrite, and who has confessed their sins, who, before the images of the aforesaid saints, humbly and with genuflexion, prays the Hail Mary, Our Father, or Creed or any other devout prayers...]

The praying person is given indulgence if he or she prays the Hail Mary, the Paternoster, the Creed or any other prayers, and kneels during the saying of these prayers. As previously examined, prayer could not only be said by peasants, being a part of the laity, in a kneeling position, but also in a standing or lying position. This specification then differs from that of what prayers to say, since it speaks of only one accepted way to behave in order to receive the indulgence. The specification can be interpreted as either affirming or prescribing prayer behaviour and should probably be understood as part of both, since it prescribes a certain behaviour that was widely known as a good way to pray.

Indulgence letters also stress the importance of time and place during prayer by occasionally giving an indulgence for prayers said in a certain church at a certain day each year. Sometimes, the requirements for indulgence go even further, and specify what day and time the prayer should be said in order to retain the indulgence. The previously cited indulgence letter for the Suntak church continues to specify conditions for indulgence, in the passage just following the one previously cited:

...seu eciam qui predictas ymagines in precipuis festiuitatibus, videlicet natiuitatis Domini, circumcisionis, epiphanie, pentecostes, Iohannis baptiste, cene Domini, parasceues, resurrectionis, ascensionis, trinitatis, corporis Christi, Olai, Laurencii, Erici et eorum octauis et singulis festiuitatibus Virginis gloriosissime, Crucis, Anne, Michaelis archangeli, x milium militum, xi milium virginum, dedicacionis, Birgitte, Martini, apostolorum, martirum, confessorum, sanctorum patronorum regni, singulis diebus dominicis anni gracia deuocionis visitauerint...⁴⁹

[...or also who visits out of devotion the aforesaid images on the principle feasts, namely, Christmas, the Circumcision, Epiphany, Pentecost, St John the Baptist, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, the Ascension, the Trinity, Corpus Christi, Olaf, Laurence, Erik, and their octaves, and each feast of the most glorious Virgin, of the Cross, of Anna, of Michael the Archangel, of the 10,000 soldiers, of the 11,000 virgins, of the dedication [of the church], of Birgitta, or Martin, of the apostles, martyrs, or the confessors, of the patron saints of the kingdom, of each Sunday of the year...]

The visitor is given forty days of indulgence if he or she prays inside the church on any of the Sundays and feast days listed in the letter. This kind of conditional indulgence is dependent on prayers. Without prayers said at a particular place the indulgence is not given. Still, one should not forget that the several days are mentioned, and that visits to the parish church were made on holy days such as these. The instruction can therefore be used as an example of affirmation rather than prescription. The holy days when people visited the church to pray were given an indulgence, so that that upon entrance to the church, the visitor was given an affirmation of his or her devout intention and behaviour.

Prayer as condition for an indulgence was thereby a way both to affirm and prescribe prayer behaviour for the lay visitors. Standard prayers, such as the Paternoster and the Hail Mary, were affirmed, common prayer behaviour such as kneeling was prescribed and the regular visits on holy days were affirmed through the giving of indulgences.

The use of saints' names as veneration

Saints' names were most popular in the Middle Ages as personal names, and some more popular than others. Was the use of such names intend-

49 'Avlatsbrevnen från Västgötadeln av Skara stift', p. 142 (#32) = SDHK, #29852.

ed? Could there have been implied a special connection between person and name saint?

Having a saint's name made that particular saint a person's patron. Patron saints were mostly associated with regions, churches or groups of individuals (such as guilds), but individuals also had patron saints. Having a personal patron saint was something common and general in medieval Europe and a special connection between that saint and the living person was thought to exist.⁵⁰ But how were these patron saints selected? One can examine this through the study of the use of saints' names.

Thorsten Andersson concludes that it was traditional before the Christianisation of Scandinavia that the person with a name from one of the gods would inspire special protection from that god, and that in the Christianisation, this practice continued, but with different names, those of saints. Using a saint's name would, therefore, bring protection by the saint to the name bearer, and in the case of names beginning with *Krist-* [*Christ-*] Jesus Christ was the protector.⁵¹ Roland Otterbjörk argues similarly, for personal names in medieval Sweden, that 'by choosing a known saint's name each and everyone could bring a protector to whom one primarily was to turn to in prayer'.⁵² For example, a person named Johan in Swedish or Juha in Finnish (Latin: *Iohannes*) was understood to have a special connection to St John. Giving a child a name after a saint was considered to honour that particular saint and make an everlasting connection between saint and person.⁵³ Friedhelm Debus draws the conclusion for continental Europe stating that, from the twelfth century onwards, the prime mover of name-giving was religion, and this practice spread from urban to rural areas.⁵⁴ Norman P.

50 Mitterauer, *Ahnen und Heilige*, pp. 343–5.

51 Andersson, 'Onomastiska grundfrågor', p. 19; Andersson, 'Orts- und Personennamen als', pp. 517, 522–3.

52 'Genom att välja ett känt helgons namn kunde var och en skaffa sig en beskyddare till vilken man i första hand vände sig med sina böner.' (Otterbjörk, *Svenska förnamn*, p. 20).

53 Meldgaard, 'De kristne personnavne kommer', pp. 209–13.

54 Debus, 'Personennamengebung der Gegenwart', p. 67.

Tanner seems to agree with Debus in his study of English name-giving practices, concluding that ‘devotion to a saint presumably influenced some parents in choosing names for their children.’⁵⁵ Dave Postles understands this pattern as a choice of spiritual friendship, at least in an English context, where a relation between the name bearer and the saint is wished.⁵⁶ The process of using the names of saints was, according to Michael Mitterauer, from the fourteenth century onwards in medieval Europe understood as a preparation for dying, giving protection and that particular saint’s merits to the person.⁵⁷

If this connection between devotion of saints and the use of name saints as personal patron saints is true, lists of personal names from the medieval period can be examined to understand the popularity of certain saints as patron saints, and thereby, as addressees for prayer.

It is, however, complex to determine how the naming of children during the Middle Ages was decided. For example, the question of who decided the child’s name seems still partly unanswered. When it happened is easier to answer – before the baptism, since during the liturgy of baptism the name of the child was said aloud by the priest or in baptisms of emergency, the godparent could say the name.⁵⁸ The name was an important part of baptism and should always be said aloud in connection with the baptism using the standard formula: ‘I baptise you, NN, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’. As mentioned earlier, children had their godparents at the baptism, and the priest could also be understood as the child’s spiritual sponsor. All of these had influence on the naming of the child. A child could be given the name of a godparent or sponsor, or be given the name of the calendar saint of the day of the birth or baptism.⁵⁹ The custom of naming a child after its sponsor

55 Tanner, *The Church in the Late Medieval Norwich*, p. 82.

56 Postles, ‘Identity and Identification’, pp. 28–9.

57 Mitterauer, *Ahnen und Heilige*, pp. 331, 345.

58 This statement can be found in the church law (*kyrkobalken*) sections of the provincial laws of medieval Sweden: ‘Äldre västgötalagen’, *Kyrkobalken*, §i; ‘Yngre västgötalagen’, *Kyrkobalken*, §i; ‘Dalalagen’, *Kyrkobalken*, §iv; ‘Yngre västmannalagen’, *Kyrkobalken*, §i.

59 Alexandre-Bidon and Lett, *Children in the Middle Ages*, pp. 26–7, Niles, ‘Baptism and the naming of children in late medieval England’, pp. 156–7.

or godparent caused little change in the naming process, and cannot explain the change in names that occurred during the Middle Ages in Scandinavia, from domestic names, such as Sigrid and Ulf to names of Christian origin, such as Margareta (from St Margaret) and Juha (from St John). This change can, however, be explained by the use of calendar saints as name inspiration.⁶⁰ According to Otterbjörk, the pre-Christian tradition in Sweden was to think of names as part of the physical and spiritual identity of a person. The power of a deceased ancestor, remembered to be strong or wise, could be brought back by the naming of a child with that name. The saints and their abilities were close to this understanding, and therefore a possible answer to how this shift could occur.⁶¹

60 Mitterauer, *Ahnen und Heilige*, pp. 334, 338.

61 Otterbjörk, *Svenska förnamn*, pp. 4–5.

*Common saints' names
among the Swedish-speaking population*

In a study by Per-Axel Wiktorsson of name giving in the provinces of Jämtland and Härjedalen, lists of popular male and female names are given.

Table 1. The most common medieval male personal names in the provinces of Jämtland and Härjedalen⁶²

(A) Whole medieval period	(B) Before the year 1450	(C) After the year 1450
1. Olof	1. Johan	1. Olof
2. Johan	2. Olof	2. Peter
3. Peter	3. Nils	3. Johan
4. Erik	4. Sigurd	4. Erik
5. Nils	5. Björn	5. Nils
6. Anders	6. Erik	6. Anders
7. Lars	7. Anders & Peter	7. Lars
8. Sigurd	9. Lars	8. Sigurd
9. Björn	10. Påvel	9. Påvel
10. Påvel		10. Kättil & Sven

62 (A) The list is compiled by Per-Axel Wiktorsson, and consists of 3200 male persons, recorded in the provinces of Jämtland and Härjedalen during the medieval period. Only the ten most common names are listed in descending order by Wiktorsson (Wiktorsson, 'Vad döptes barnen till på medeltiden?', p. 115). (B) The list is compiled by Per-Axel Wiktorsson, and consists of 1300 male persons, recorded in the provinces of Jämtland and Härjedalen during the medieval period. Only the ten most common names are listed in descending order by Wiktorsson (Wiktorsson, 'Vad döptes barnen till på medeltiden?', p. 115). (C) The list is compiled by Per-Axel Wiktorsson, and consists of 1900 male persons, recorded in the provinces of Jämtland and Härjedalen during the medieval period. Only the ten most common names are listed in descending order by Wiktorsson (Wiktorsson, 'Vad döptes barnen till på medeltiden?', p. 117).

Table 2. The most common medieval female personal names in the provinces of Jämtland and Härjedalen⁶³

(A) Whole medieval period	(B) Before the year 1450	(C) After the year 1450
1. Margareta	1. Helga & Kristina	1. Margareta
2. Kristina	3. Margareta	2. Kristina & Radgård
3. Radgård	4. Ingeborg	4. Katarina
4. Katarina	5. Gunhild, Katarina & Sigrid	5. Birgitta & Ingeborg
5. Ingeborg		7. Anna
6. Birgitta		
7. Helga		

According to these lists, the most popular male saint names were especially the saints Olof (of Nidaros), Johan (John the Baptist or the Evangelist), Erik (of Uppsala) and Nils (of Linköping or St Nicholas). Female saint names of similar popularity were Margareta (St Margaret), Katarina (of Vadstena or St Catherine) and Birgitta (of Sweden or the Celtic St Bridget).⁶⁴

Eva Villardsen Meldgaard also includes a list of popular names, from the tax roll of Stockholm in the year 1460.

63 (A) The list is compiled by Per-Axel Wiktorsson, and consists of 230 female persons, recorded in the provinces of Jämtland and Härjedalen during the medieval period. Only the seven most common names are listed in descending order by Wiktorsson (Wiktorsson, 'Vad döptes barnen till på medeltiden?', p. 117). (B) The list is compiled by Per-Axel Wiktorsson, and consists of 80 female persons, recorded in the provinces of Jämtland and Härjedalen during the medieval period. Only the seven most common names are listed in descending order by Wiktorsson (Wiktorsson, 'Vad döptes barnen till på medeltiden?', p. 117). (C) The list is compiled by Per-Axel Wiktorsson, and consists probably of 150 female persons, recorded in the provinces of Jämtland and Härjedalen during the medieval period. Wiktorsson has most probably forgot to mention the number of people recorded, but if the 80 pre-1450 occurrences are taken from the overall number of 230 occurrences of female personal names, the list would probably contain 150 occurrences of female personal names. Only the seven most common names are listed in descending order by Wiktorsson (Wiktorsson, 'Vad döptes barnen till på medeltiden?', p. 117).

64 Wiktorsson, 'Vad döptes barnen till på medeltiden?', pp. 115–18.

Table 3. Frequency lists of male personal names in *Stockholms skottebok* [*The tax roll of Stockholm*] from the year 1460⁶⁵

(A) Male names		(B) Female names
1. Pe(de)r	11. Erik	1. Karin
2. Olof	12. Jo(ha)n	2. Margareta
3. Hans	13. Magnus	3. Birgeta
4. Jöns	14. Klaus	4. Kristin
5. Anders	15. Mickel	5. Elin
6. Ni(g)els	16. Mårten	6. Gertrud
7. Lars	17. Herman	7. Anna
8. Henrik	18. Benkt	
9. Jakob	19. Paul	
10. Mattis		

Popular male saint names in that list are Peder (St Peter), Olof, Jöns (St John), Lars (St Lawrence), Henrik (of Turku (Åbo)) and Jakob (St James). Popular female saint names in the same roll are Karin (Blessed Katarina of Vadstena or St Catherine), Margareta, Birgitta, Gertrud (St Gertrude) and Anna (St Anne).⁶⁶

The two studies show, that international saints, such as St Peter, St John and St Margaret were popular as name saints among the Swedish-speaking population, together with local saints such as Olof of Nidaros and the Blessed Katarina of Vadstena. In the Finnish-speaking areas, differences to this pattern can be found.

65 It is unclear in the lists, whether all occurring personal names are listed or only the most common. Also unclear, is the total number of occurring names in the book, both male and female names. Meldgaard, 'De kristne personnavne kommer', p. 210.

66 Meldgaard, 'De kristne personnavne kommer', p. 211.

*Common saints' names
among the Finnish-speaking population*

Among the Finnish-speaking population, a study by Saulo Kepsu shows the most commonly occurring male Catholic calendar saints used as name inspiration.

Table 4. The most popular male Catholic calendar saints used for personal names among the Finnish-speaking population⁶⁷

(A) Personal names	(B) Homestead names
1. Laurentius (15)*	1. Johannes (27)
2. Johannes (13)	2. Henrik (23)
3. Petrus (10)	3. Gregorius (19)
4. Magnus (9)	4. Jakob (17)
5. Jacobus (8)	5. Sigfrid (16)
6. Tomas (8)	6. Nikolaus (15)
7. Andreas (7)	7. Laurentius (13)
8. Nikolaus (7)	8. Tomas (13)
9. Stefanus (7)	9. Petrus (12)
10. Paulus (5)	10. Magnus (11)

* The digits within brackets indicate number of variations on the name.

These lists share the popularity of saints used as name inspiration for the Swedish-speaking population, since among the most popular calendar saints in the Finnish-speaking material were Laurentius (St Lawrence), Johannes (John the Baptist or the Evangelist), Petrus (St Peter), Henrik (St Henry of Turku (Åbo)) and Gregorius (St Gregory).⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Number of variations within brackets in the lists. (A) According to Saulo Kepsu, 432 different domestic variations of personal names occur in the medieval material from the Finnish-speaking regions, of which 214 derive from Catholic names (Kepsu, 'Forna finska förnamn', p. 48). (B) According to Kepsu, domestic name variations deriving from Catholic names, 370 in total, constitute the majority of the homestead names (Kepsu, 'Forna finska förnamn', p. 49).

⁶⁸ Kepsu, 'Forna finska förnamn', p. 48.

Kepsu has also listed the most popular male saint names next to the previously mentioned ones.

Table 5. The 62 most typical male personal names (in alphabetic order)⁶⁹

Hakari, Hakkari, Hakko, Hako, Hakuni (all of these are variations of Hakon), Hara, Hemmo, Immi, Inna, Jakku, Jaškara, Jonkka, Julli, Jurva, Kanni (variation of Kanutus or Kanan), Karppi, Kassari (variation of Kassian), Kati, Katelus, Kattilus, Kierikka (variation of Gericke), Klaukka, Kooni, Kopio (variation of Prokopius), Korri, Kreko, Krenkku, Kössi (variation of Göstaver), Makkarus (variation of Makarios), Mankki, Manko (variation of Magnus), Matikka (variation of Matts), Melkas, Melkka, Mella, Melli, Mello (all variations of Melkior), Natuu (probably variation of Donatus, according to Kepsu), Palsi (variation of Baltsar), Penno (variation of Bengt), Piekko (variation of Per), Raikko, Reikko, Sahari, Sakhari, Sahko (variation of Sakarias), Sievo (variation of Sig-), Tarkka, Tarkki, Tarkko (all variations of Aristarkos), Teppo (variation of Stefan), Teukku (variation of Teodor or Teodorus), Tīpuri (variation of Tiburtius), Torkkeli, Torkki, Tuura, Vilkki, Vintuuri, Visuri (the last two are variations of Vincentius), Virkka, Virko (all variations of Virgilius), Vänni.

Among these names, the following names were variations of saint names: Kassari (St Cassianus), Kopio (St Prokopios), Makkarus (St Makarios), Matikka (St Mathew), Palsi (Balthazar), Melka, Mella, Melkka, Melli, Mello (Melchior), Penno (St Benedict), Piekko (St Peter), Sakhari, Sahko (Zachary), Tarkki, Tarkko (St Aristarkhos) and Teppo (St Stephen). Few Finnish female names remain from the medieval period (only thirteen), but some of them have direct links to saint names.

Table 6. All occurring female names⁷⁰

Anna, Juhe (variation of Johanna), Karri (variation of Karin), Kerttu (variation of Gertrud), Laštikka (variation of Skolaštika), Liisa, Lussi (variation of Lucia),

69 Kepsu, 'Forna finska förnamn', p. 50.

70 Almost no occurrences exist of female personal names in the Finnish material, and these thirteen names are all from homestead names, named after the owners, which in these cases, seem to have been widows, otherwise their names would not have been used, according to Kepsu (Kepsu, 'Forna finska förnamn', p. 50).

Maija (variation of Maria), Malli or Mallu (variation of Malin), Reeta (variation of Margareta), Vappu.

Names deriving from saints were Anna, Juhe (St Joan), Karri (the Blessed Katarina of Vadstena or St Catherine), Kerttu (St Gertrude), Lastikka (St Scholastica), Liisa, Lussi (St Lucy), Maija (the Virgin Mary), Malli, Mallu (St Malin) and Reeta (St Margaret).⁷¹

These saint names have some kind of similarity to the lists from the Swedish-speaking population, such as the use of St Peter as name inspiration, but with the major difference of Orthodox influence from the geographically close Russian-speaking areas.

Popular personal patron saints

Certain saints were more popular than others as personal patron saints, if the connection between personal name and personal patron saint is true. The most popular saints were a combination of universal saints such as St John, St Peter, St Anne and St Margaret, and local saints such as the Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson of Linköping, St Olof of Nidaros, St Birgitta of Sweden and the Blessed Katarina of Vadstena. These saints were, most probably, understood as good patrons for the newly born children, and the continuous use of these saints as name saints indicates that this was also the case throughout life (otherwise ineffective saints would have gone out of fashion). The name saints show that a small number of saints were more popular than other saints, but that a great number of different saints were considered powerful enough to be selected as personal patron saints. Two names were, however, never used as personal names, due to their 'originators', namely Jesus and Mary. These names were considered taboo to use as personal names, and this taboo was in use throughout the Middle Ages in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala.⁷² Ivar Modéer has, however, found a small number of

⁷¹ Kepsu, 'Forna finska förnamn', p. 50.

⁷² Among the Finnish personal names, a variation of Mary is to be found: Maija. According to Saulo Kepsu, this variation derives from Maria. The name was, however, used by only one person, according to Kepsu. (Kepsu, 'Forna finska förnamn', p. 50) It can therefore not overthrow the concept of taboo. The complete lack of names deriving from Jesus or Mary is omnipresent in the examined material, except for this one 'anomaly'.

persons named after the Virgin Mary in the Scandinavian Middle Ages, so one occurrence in the Finnish material was not entirely unique, but nearly so.⁷³

Among the Christian personal names, some were more popular than others, and this pattern cannot be explained by the use of calendar saints for birthdays, or baptismal days. This complexion is still not completely explained in onomastic studies, but a possible interpretation is that parents had a broad variety of name choices, not only the calendar saints of the child's birthday or baptismal day, but also relatives, godparents and sponsors (that is, the parish priest). This can explain why some names were more popular than others, and how these names could be selected for the children.

It is also important to remember, that not all children got 'Christian' names, but domestic, pre-Christian Nordic names as well. The group of people with non-Christian personal names and their personal patron saints is unfortunately impossible to examine through this material. Still, among the most common personal names were saint names and not domestic names. When the connection between saints and names of living people is established, statistics of name popularity can be used to give hints to popularity of certain saints as personal patron saints.

73 Modéer, *Svenska personnamn*, pp. 75-6.

Prayer vs. magic

During the Middle Ages people feared not only natural catastrophes⁷⁴ and hardships, but also diabolic powers, such as demons and the Devil. Saying prayers was, as stated earlier, to establish a communication between God and the praying person. This communication could sometimes be to lend aid to the praying person in the form of protection.

Certain prayers that were, according to Eamon Duffy, used to praise God were also used to guard against evil in the form of spells. This phenomenon was especially common in popular devotion, and those saying these prayers regarded this as ordinary practice.⁷⁵ Don C. Skemer concludes, similar to Duffy, that the use of incantations constructed from common prayers or holy names (Latin: *nomina sacra*) was considered normal and ordinary during the late Middle Ages. These prayers or names could be written on all kinds of materials, since it was the prayer that gave the power, not the material used (although certain materials such as lead were considered potent). By calling God, through incantations, the favour of God could be aimed against the dangers and betrayals of the devil.⁷⁶ Virginia Reinburg argues that incantations in the shape of prayers were used against dangers and diseases by repeated use of certain words, such as '*Pater noster*' [*our Father*] with instructions of when to sign oneself or someone else with the sign of the cross. These instructions were, during the later period of the Middle Ages, more and more formalised, and standardised in prayer books owned by lay people. If God was the one to act, it was, according to Reinburg, considered acceptable to, for example, put parchment or paper with the prayer or words '*Pater noster*' on a sick person. These notes, however, were not to have promises of healing, since one could not presume the acts of God. But, as long as ordinary prayers were used as protection for sick persons or animals, these prayers were considered legitimate. During the late

74 Cf. Hanska, *Strategies of Sanity and Survival*.

75 Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 269.

76 Skemer, *Binding Words*, pp. 1, 72–3, 107–15, 127–33.

fourteenth century, however, the use of such prayer incantations became more and more questioned, since it was considered easy to misuse these prayers. But, when used to proclaim the power of God over the devil, prayer as protection was considered accepted and correct.⁷⁷

If prayer is about communication with God, how could protective incantations against evil be defined? Could it be magic? According to the contemporary researcher Richard Kieckhefer, magic in the Middle Ages was often understood as either demonic or natural, and the key to discerning whether something was magic was to determine whether it was reliant on demonic aid or demonic powers, rather than divine action or natural phenomena. Only if it was invoked by demons or the devil was it magic.⁷⁸

Prayers were also used to secure, if not a direct way to heaven, then at least a shortened time in Purgatory in the afterlife. Those belonging to peasant communities, to ensure continuous prayers both for the living and the dead members, formed religious parish guilds. This usage of prayer can be understood as the investment of prayers for the afterlife.

When examining sources of late medieval prayer life among the laity, only a few sources tell of the protective use of prayers. Still, these sources indicate a different kind of usage of prayers than most of the prayers examined. Protective prayers should therefore be examined in order to broaden the understanding of lay prayer.

This section will focus on protection by praying aloud and connections between prayer and protection.

Protection by praying aloud

Prayers were, until the very late Middle Ages, intended to be said aloud. According to Paul Saenger, the idea of reading in silence began in Benedictine monasteries in the eleventh century where words were separated from each other in the writing process in order to emphasise private and silent reading among the monks. The practice of separating words in

77 Reinburg, *Popular Prayers in Late Medieval and Reformation France*, pp. 316–17, 321–5.

78 Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, p. 14.

manuscripts, and the practice of reading in silence, spread to the universities in the scholastic movement in the thirteenth century. From there, the practice of silent reading spread to the nobility in the fourteenth century, according to Saenger, as a way to privatise devotion in general and the saying of prayers in particular.⁷⁹ The practice of silent prayer began, similar to the use of silent reading in the western monasteries. According to Paul F. Gehl, silent prayer developed as part of the habit of living in silence, and although all public prayer was said aloud (or in a whispering tone), the Psalter could be read as prayer in the private cells, and this reading (that is, prayer) could be done in silence.⁸⁰ Pieter W. van der Horst understands this development as a change in the relation to the spoken word, from pagan Antiquity to the Christian Middle Ages. In Antiquity, words existed only when said aloud, according to van der Horst, and a silent word was therefore unthinkable, especially in connection with prayer and magic. A prayer or spell needed to be said aloud to have effect. In the early Christian tradition, a life in silence was considered the 'purest form of worship', making vocal prayer problematic. Therefore, Bible passages were used to justify the shift from vocal to silent prayer. For example, the Old Testament story of Hanna, who prayed in words unable to be heard by others, was used to justify silent prayer,⁸¹ and also the advice given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: 'But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.'⁸² Prayer was, according to the Church Father Tertullian, the words of the heart, and not of the mouth.⁸³ Van der Horst concludes, that this shift would not have been possible unless the silent

79 Saenger, *Space Between Words*, pp. 202–4, 265–71, 273, 276; Saenger, 'Books of Hours'.

80 Gehl, 'Competens silentium', p. 138.

81 1 Samuel 1.

82 Matthew 6.6 (NKJV ed.)

83 'Deus autem non vocis sed cordis auditor est.' [God does not so much listen to the voice as to the heart of men]. From *De oratione* 17, 3–4. Cited, and translated, in: van der Horst, 'Silent Prayer in Antiquity', p. 18.

milieu in the monasteries had provided the silence required to begin the practice of praying in silence.⁸⁴

Praying in silence would therefore have been possible (that is, known of) for all parts of the laity during the late Middle Ages, although there exists no evidence of such behaviour from the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala. There is, however, a difference between the use of prayer as private communication between human and God, and the use of prayers as incantations against evil.

The catechetical book *Sizlinna thröst* has at least four *exempla* on prayers used for protection against evil, and of instructions for the prevention of harm. Especially the prayers Hail Mary and *Salve regina* were associated with a protective instruction for a layperson. These stories tell of how prayers could be used as protection, when said aloud, focusing on the power of outspoken words in prayer. Although these instructions can be understood as ideals, they can also be evidences of practices, since they speak of something accepted and recommended, making *exempla* stories part of not only ideals, but also practices.

The first *exemplum* is of the monk, known as Julian, once entrusted to guard a pot filled with gold. He could, however, not resist stealing the gold, and fled to Rome with the fortune. In Rome he became emperor and was seduced by the power of the black arts. Because of his dark power, the devil helped him with various things. One day, the emperor gave the devil a mission in a foreign country. On his way, the devil passed a city, where a most pious monk was praying. As long as the monk prayed, the devil was unable to continue his journey, and since the monk prayed for days, the devil had to return with an unaccomplished mission.⁸⁵

In this *exemplum* the praying monk is unaware of the protective effect his prayer has. The reader is not told of any connection between him and the devil, only that the monk prayed for a long time, in a most devout manner. While it is the monk's intention to worship, the reader is not told of the reason for his prayer, but the sound of the prayer is explained to be preventative against dangers. The effect of his prayer is

84 van der Horst, 'Silent Prayer in Antiquity', pp. 1, 16–20.

85 *Sizlinna thröst*, pp. 67–9. Cf. Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, #3275.

beyond the good monk's reach, but most effective. It is not stated in the *exemplum* whether the prayer was said aloud, or in silence, but the devil is obviously threatened by it. The devil cannot act while the monk prays, but the reader is not told why. Perhaps the power of God against the devil was very obvious to the reader.

The second *exemplum* tells of a good priest, who always ended his Hours with the *Salve regina*, was once out in the fields when he was surprised by heavy rain with thunder and lightning. He then saw a church and ran inside. In the church, he sat down at the altar of the Virgin Mary and fell asleep. At that time, the image of the Virgin Mary spoke to him and told him that, since he prayed the *Salve regina* each time after the Hours, he would not be harmed by thunder and lightning when saying that prayer. The writer ends the story through an encouraging instruction to the reader/audience, that he or she should pray the *Salve regina* and thank the Virgin Mary.⁸⁶ The priest is said to have ended all his seven monastic Hours with the *Salve regina*. The Virgin Mary is most delighted, so she protects him from harm. Since a priest is said to have prayed the *Salve regina*, it is emphasised that this use is good and efficient, even if the priest himself is unaware of it.

The third *exemplum* speaks of a good woman that was to bring her husband his daily meal. He worked in the forest, so the woman had to leave their infant child at home. She prayed the Hail Mary to bless the child before leaving it. Upon her return, the woman found her home burnt down, but the fire did not harm the infant, since the Virgin Mary had protected it.⁸⁷

It was to the woman the most natural thing in the world to bless the child with a Hail Mary before leaving it. The purpose of this blessing was not to worship the Virgin Mary in the hope of something in return, but what she calculated to be the best protection for the infant. This usage is well in line with Don C. Skemer's conclusion, that the Hail Mary was considered to lend protection to the user. If one said at least one Hail Mary, the praying person would be protected against evil for

86 *Síaelinna thróst*, p. 148. Cf. TubaCh, *Index exemplorum*, #4164.

87 *Síaelinna thróst*, pp. 175–6. Cf. TubaCh, *Index exemplorum*, #434.

that day.⁸⁸ Prayers could protect children, since a good prayer was considered almost like a spiritual shield.⁸⁹

The last *exemplum* is about a robber knight who was paid a visit by a pious monk. Though the knight was a robber, he saluted the Virgin Mary each day with the Hail Mary. The monk wanted to speak to the knight and all his servants, but each time he was given an audience with the knight, one of the servants was missing. Having noticed this, the monk demanded also that servant hear him speak, and the servant was brought to the monk by force. The pious monk demanded, in the name of Jesus, to know the servant's real identity and the servant revealed himself as a devil. He explained that his mission was to break the knight's neck, but he could not do it on the days when the knight had prayed the Hail Mary, and since the knight said the prayer each day, the devil was unable to kill him, though he had wanted to, for fourteen years. Had the knight forgotten just one day to say the Hail Mary, he would have been killed, but he had not. Hearing this, the knight fell on his knees, and asked the monk for mercy. The devil left the knight within an instant through the roof and the knight amended his way of life and became a great friend of God. Therefore, one should read the Hail Mary.⁹⁰

Even if the knight was a robber, the protective effect of the prayer was imminent and the devil had no chance of breaking his neck. The protection worked, with or without the intention or knowledge of such protection of the praying person.

In these *exempla*, prayers were used as protection against evils of nature and the devil himself. Three praying persons were described as being unaware of the connection between prayer and protection, but the mother of the unburnt infant used prayer not primarily for worshipping the Virgin Mary, but for the protection of the child. She hoped for a connection, and was rewarded. In the other stories, the reader is

88 Skemer, *Binding Words*, p. 92.

89 Cf. Rivard, *Blessing the World*; Franz, *Die kirchlichen Benediktionen im Mittelalter*, for the use of blessings of people, cattle and property during the Middle Ages.

90 *Sizelinna throšt*, pp. 174–5.

told of the connection between prayer and protection, but the agent remains unaware of this – at least until they are told of it by the Virgin Mary.

Why does the writer of *Sixlinna thrøst* speak of prayers as being effective against the evils of nature and of the devil? Eamon Duffy associates this phenomenon with the laity and its understanding and use of prayers as protective.⁹¹ Similar to Duffy, Virginia Reinburg argues that prayers were said as protection against misfortune and evilness. But this usage of prayer was not fully appreciated by ecclesiastical authorities, according to Reinburg, since the difference between magic and divine aid tended to be blurred. If standard prayers, such as the Paternoster or Hail Mary were used to lend protection and benediction, God was the sole recipient, and such aid was appropriate. But if objects were used and prayers/spells other than these standard prayers were used, the devil might be involved or might even be the recipient – magic was used.⁹² The protection described in *Sixlinna thrøst* can, according to these definitions be considered divine aid and therefore lawful.

Connections between prayer and protection

The use of written and oral incantations in the shape of prayers show that they were used as protection against evil and misfortunes. How, then, did prayers intended to praise God or the Virgin Mary, such as the Paternoster and Hail Mary, link to protection of people, in this world? Here follow two possible interpretations: client-patron demands and merits to establish insurance against evil.

Client-patron demands

Client-patron relations, not only among the living people, but also with God, has been described and analysed in a study by Ronald F. Weissman of the fraternities of Renaissance Florence. Highest in the chain of patrons was, according to Weissman, Jesus Christ and it was therefore of uttermost importance to maintain a good relation to him. Not to ful-

91 Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 273.

92 Reinburg, *Popular Prayers in Late Medieval and Reformation France*, pp. 319–29.

fil one's duties towards the patron (Jesus) was therefore considered the worst of sins and one was thus to befriend God in the same manner as earthly patrons. Prayers could be used similar to introduction letters for relatives and for oneself.⁹³

In the examined catechetical source and miracle stories (previously studied), the use of protective prayers shows striking similarities to the client-patron functions in Weissman's study. Prayers could be used both to unfold the will of God, and as protection by God against evil. When praying to God or the Virgin Mary, one aim of the praying person is to give praise. Prayers such as the Paternoster, Hail Mary or *Salve regina* all function in this way. Praising God or the Virgin Mary with prayers that please them makes them grateful, and this gratitude might lead to a reward for the praying person, perhaps a shorter time in Purgatory, or an answer to a prayer. But the prayers said in the miracle stories and *exempla* mentioned, and rewards of praying such prayers, are not of this kind. Instead, they point to a belief that God, or the Virgin Mary, by grace, reward the praying person in this life against the evils of nature or the devil himself. The writer of the *Sixelinna thrøst* wants the reader and audience to understand this connection, even if the praying persons in the *exempla* are not aware of it, as in the case of the evil robber knight and the praying monk.

This could be understood as a client-patron relationship, where God or the Virgin Mary is the patron. The client, that is, the praying person shows the patron his or her praise and submission by saying honorary prayers such as the Paternoster, Hail Mary or *Salve regina*. In recognition of this, the patron gives protection. This attitude can also be found in wills, where the creator of the testament gives alms to a church or monastery in order for the priests to read mass for the deceased. The gift is not just a gift, but a conditional demand. The problem with God as patron in this sense, is that God's grace cannot be taken for granted. Even though God is grateful for worship, God is not under pressure to give grace. According to Natalie Zemon Davis, this link was never 'of-

93 Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence*, pp. 47–8.

ficially' established, only informally implied when providing God with gifts.⁹⁴ But, it was this hope that made these gifts possible.

Still, in these examples provided, prayer is explicitly connected with God's ability to lend grace. The examples from *Sixlinna thrøst* especially point in this direction.

Merits to establish insurance against evil

A common practice when praying to God was to refer to a particular saint's merits. Their merits were part of the Treasury of Merits, developed by scholars such as Alexander of Hales, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas in the high Middle Ages.⁹⁵ The Treasury of Merits was the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary and all saints, distributable by authorities of the Catholic Church to all those suffering from the consequences of their sins, in Purgatory and in this life. These ideas were made part of the official dogma of the Catholic Church by the papal bulls *Unigenitus* [*The only-begotten (son of God)...*], issued by Clement VI in the year 1343, and *Dum attenda* [*Considering...*], issued by Sixtus IV in the year 1474.⁹⁶ The Treasury of Merits was the theological ground on which the indulgence letters were founded. The official dogma was, therefore, that only the merits of Christ, the Virgin Mary and saints could be referred to, but the same kind of effect could also be achieved by ordinary lay persons: good deeds gave merits, and merits could be referred to in prayer.

According to Thomas Lentes, saying prayers to God, the Virgin Mary or saints was considered to provide these addressees with gifts, created by prayers. For example, the Virgin could be given a wreath of flowers, where the thread was the Creed, and the flowers Hail Marys. She could also be given a mantle, to be used as protection for the praying person.

94 Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, pp. 167, 176–7.

95 Cf. Shaffern, *The Penitents' Treasury*, pp. 79–113; Swanson, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England*, pp. 8–22; Shaffern, 'The Medieval Theology of Indulgences'; Paulus, *Geschichte des Ablasses im Mittelalter*, ii, pp. 188–230.

96 The *Unigenitus* bull declared the dogma of infinite merits (i.e. Treasury of Merits) and the *Dum attenda* bull declared that these merits could also be extended to those in Purgatory.

According to Lentjes, one such mantle could cost between 30,000 and 300,000 Hail Marys. Prayers were thus considered as currency in the heavenly court, and the giver could hope to get protection in return.⁹⁷ Rachel Fulton makes similar conclusions about prayers as currency in the aim for heavenly support both in this life and the afterlife.⁹⁸

Merits (of saints) were also used as assurance in prayer, since prayers were considered as merits. Among the most powerful prayers to say were the Paternoster, Hail Mary and *Salve regina*, and among them the most powerful of all prayers: the Paternoster, taught by Jesus himself. Merits were therefore not only considered as protection and aid for the afterlife, but also for the life on Earth.

97 Lentjes, 'Die Gewänder der Heiligen', pp. 121–40. Cf. Lentjes, 'Counting Piety in the Late Middle Ages'.

98 Fulton, 'Praying by Numbers', pp. 199–200, 208–12.

Excursus: Corpses in prayer?

In this study I have come across an issue well-fitted for an examination of prayer, but that cannot easily be presented within the existing structure. It has therefore become an excursus, shaped like a short essay, and will be presented and analysed separately from the other results, but in the context of these. It criticises a hypothesis of a connection between prayer postures and postures of corpses, first presented by Lars Redin in the 1970s, and since then has become an established 'truth' in archaeological excavations of medieval graves in Scandinavia.

Was there a connection between burial postures and prayer? One of the most prominent features of late medieval religiosity was its concern for the afterlife. When living, everything could have consequences for the afterlife and it was only the saints who came directly to heaven. Others had to spend some time in Purgatory, for the cleansing of the soul and as temporal punishment for the sins committed. But the dead were not alone in their pain and suffering for purification. The living prayed for the dead and their prayers could help the deceased. Death and its consequences was a prime force of medieval religious life, and much of life was considered preparation for the afterlife. The act of dying was part of the religious life and the parish priest was to visit the sick and dying, offering absolution and extreme unction.⁹⁹

Lars Redin's hypothesis

When a person was laid to rest in a grave, were his or her hands and arms put in a prayer-like position? Was the deceased supposed to wait for the Judgement Day in bodily prayer? Lars Redin first raised these questions in a study from 1976.¹⁰⁰ He had, during archaeological excavation on a medieval graveyard, constructed a way to date Scandinavian graves by burial postures. Different postures were used separately (at

99 For a comprehensive study of prayer in the moment of death, i.e. during the extreme unction, in medieval Sweden, see: Sundmark, *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse*.

100 Redin, *Lagmanshejdan*.

least most of them) and for long periods. Redin labelled these positions A, B, C and D.

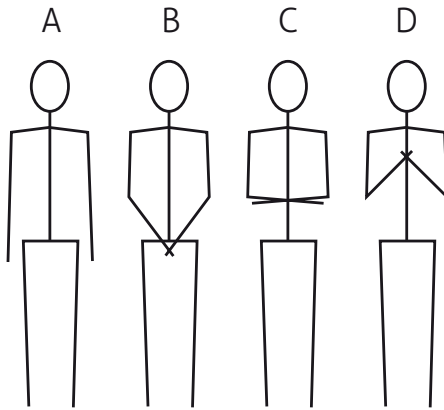


Figure 2. Redin's four positions.¹⁰¹

- A. Arms alongside the body (used from the eleventh century until c. 1250)
- B. Hands crossed over the groin (used between the eleventh and fourteenth century)
- C. Forearms crossed over midriff (used in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries)
- D. Hands crossed over the chest (used in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries)¹⁰²

Redin also constructed a hypothesis of a connection between prayer postures in life and burial postures based on the position of hands. He argued that hands and arms on pictorial notices on gravestones that show the deceased as living correspond to the position of the corpse. This can be interpreted, according to Redin, as an intention by the deceased person's relatives to show how religiously devoted the deceased was during life. Therefore, burial postures show devotional postures.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Illustration by Viktor Aldrin.

¹⁰² Redin, *Lagmanshejdan*, pp. 128–54.

¹⁰³ Redin, *Lagmanshejdan*, p. 181.

Later developments and critique of the hypothesis

In a later study of graveyards in Denmark, Jakob Kieffer-Olsen develops Redin's hypothesis, concluding that the posture of the corpse was in an adoring position showing the deceased person's devout intention.¹⁰⁴ Knud Ottosen also makes use of this hypothesis in an article about death and burial in Denmark during the Middle Ages.¹⁰⁵ The hypothesis has, however, received much criticism and the most notable criticism comes from Maria Cinthio and Hanne Dahlerup Koch.¹⁰⁶

Cinthio concludes that only some of the hand positions could have been devout hand positions (that is, position C and D), indicating a will to enter heaven, but these positions did not explicitly indicate prayer.¹⁰⁷

In an analysis of rosaries found in medieval Danish cemeteries, Hanne Dahlerup Koch¹⁰⁸ finds evidence to question the hypothesis of dating corpses by their position. The rosary (and Paternoŝter string)¹⁰⁹ was often put into the hands or around the neck or wrists of the dead person according to Koch, also on corpses positioned with their hands alongside the body.¹¹⁰ This would not have been possible if Redin's dating hypothesis of chronological burial postures is true, since that position would have been abandoned before the introduction of rosaries in Scandinavia in the late Middle Ages.¹¹¹ The first evidence of rosaries in Scandinavia comes from Norway in the year 1348 (a string of amber pearls mentioned in a will), in Denmark from around the year 1500 (scattered beads from archaeological excavations), and in Sweden from the end of the fifteenth century (wall paintings and statues of rosaries).¹¹²

104 Kieffer-Olsen, *Grav og gravskik i det middelalderlige Danmark*, p. 169.

105 Ottosen, 'Den ritualiserede død', pp. 271–5.

106 Cinthio, *De första stadsborna*; Koch, 'Rosenkranse i grave'.

107 Cinthio, *De första stadsborna*, pp. 218–24.

108 Koch, 'Rosenkranse i grave'.

109 Strangely, she does not speak of Paternoŝter strings, although several of the examined 'rosaries' are described in words, actually describing Paternoŝter strings.

110 Koch, 'Rosenkranse i grave', pp. 121–4.

111 Koch, 'Rosenkranse i grave', pp. 121–31.

112 Norway: Blom, 'Rosenkrans'; Denmark: Saxtorph, 'Rosenkrans'; Sweden: Nisbeth, 'Rosenkrans'. I have found no information about rosaries in Finland.

Why were the corpses provided with rosaries (or Paternoster strings) if the hands were already positioned in a prayer-like position? If Redin's hypothesis of categorisation model is incorrect, then the hypothesis of a connection between these positions and prayer would be a false one.

New critique, part one: On the anatomy of corpses

Was there a connection between prayer in life and how a corpse was buried, in order to give the deceased a last devout prayer like-position? Due to anatomical reasons, hands can only be placed in certain positions – in life as well as in death.¹¹³ The most common way to picture prayer in medieval paintings is a person standing or with bent knees holding his or her hands together, palm against palm. This posture is not found in the burial positions. Although it is easy to achieve before *rigor mortis*, it is problematic to retain the hands and arms in this way after *rigor mortis* (the limbs fall apart), and can therefore, most probably, be excluded as an option of how hands and arms could be positioned on corpses. Since it was customary to bury a person within 48 hours after death, the *rigor mortis* was still present. Against this critique, can be held that the body was wrapped up in cloth shortly after the moment of death and that this, together with the firm grip of the soil held the body in its shape after the *rigor mortis*. The burial position D has strong similarities to the prayer posture of crossing hands over the chest or heart. Could this position perhaps indicate a devout intention?

According to Adam Berkowicz, chief medical officer at the National Board of Forensic Medicine in Sweden (*Rättsmedicinalverket*), the positions A-D are the only existing ways to put hands and arms on a corpse before the burial. These positions indicate, at least today, stillness and peace of the deceased person, and nothing more. If one wants to indicate devotion of some kind, an object is often put into the hands of the dead person, such as a rosary or, in another place and time, the *Little Red Book* of Mao Zedong according to Berkowicz. A major difference in the four positions is between A and the others, since the arms and hands are alongside the body and not on the body. Between B and D, there are

113 Cinthio, *De första stadsborna*, pp. 218–19.

differences, but the differences between B and C, and C and D could be due to random causes, such as the separating hands or the decomposition of the body, causing it to change its position. Also, corpulent people cannot be positioned in D, since their arms and hands cannot reach over the torso when dead, according to Berkowicz.¹¹⁴

New critique, part two: On the theology of dead people

A way to understand the discrepancy between living prayer and corpse positioning is the way Christian theology defines what happens to a person when he or she dies. The connection between body, soul and spirit ends when a person dies, and the corpse becomes just a shell. The corpse should, however, be carefully handled with respect for the dead and for the mourning, in order to preserve it so that when the Judgement Day arrives, the deceased can rise with his or her old body again in order to be judged.

Conclusion and falsification

The hypothesis of a connection between the position of corpses and prayer postures in the Scandinavian Middle Ages has, as shown, no support in the examined material and its reliability in analysing religiosity in general and prayer in particular is therefore almost negligible. This is due to both theological and anatomical reasons, although there are similarities between the posture of hands during prayer and the position of hands and arms of the deceased. The corpse of a deceased person was only considered a shell after the separation from the body, soul and spirit when a person died. The corpse was to be preserved in some way if possible, so that the soul could return to it for Judgement Day, but until then the corpse had no connection to the soul. The anatomy of a corpse admits only certain positions of hands and arms, and the positions could change due to the decomposition of the corpse.

¹¹⁴ I wish to express my gratitude to the chief medical officer Doctor Adam Berkowicz for this information.

Conclusions

The following conclusions can therefore now be made concerning the aspect of prayer cultures regarding those belonging to peasant communities.

¶ *First*, transmitting prayer culture: the didactic methods of prayer instruction were twofold. On the one hand, *exempla* told of the horrors of bad behaviour, but on the other hand, the typical prayer instruction was mild and without negative consequences, encouraging progress in the prayer life instead of criticising laziness or other behaviours considered bad. The praying person was to feel the sweetness of good prayer and if a person was unable to pray all the recommended prayers, he or she could simply say the words 'Pater noster' or 'Hail Mary' and be rewarded just as much as for long lists of prayers. The only demands for godparents were the knowledge of the prayers the Paternoster, Hail Mary and the Creed. The knowledge of the abovementioned prayers was tested during the baptism, since the priest, and sometimes also the godparents, were to say these prayers aloud. Saying these prayers aloud was an effective method of control, and without this knowledge, one could not become a godparent, and probably this was tested even before the actual baptism. Still, the religious education of the peasantry was primarily in the hands of the peasant women and men themselves, since it was up to the godparents (and probably also the parents) to teach the child the prayers the Paternoster, Hail Mary and Creed, and most of the other parts of the religious socialisation, such as how to behave when in prayer and when attending mass. This gave the peasantry power and control over important parts of the religious education and religiosity.

¶ *Secondly*, maintaining prayer culture: in order both to remember the prayers themselves, and how many prayers were to be said, mnemonic techniques were used. Four such techniques were most probably particularly used among those belonging to peasant communities where few were able to read: rhyming; beads; finger counting; and mental visualisation. All were common in oral societies. Prayers in catecheti-

cal manuals were often rhymed, so that the audience would remember how to say them. Beads were arranged in both Paternoster strings and rosaries, helping the praying peasant woman or man to keep count of the numbers of prayers said. Fingers could also be used, if no beads were available, and most of the numbers of prayers prescribed could easily be counted on the fingers (5, 10, 15 and 30). An occurring feature of indulgence letters for churches was to set a condition on the indulgence through prayers and praying. These instructions could, for example, specify what prayers should be said, in a certain physical position and at what time of year this was to take place. The specified prayers were the standard prayers the Paternoster, Hail Mary, Creed and The Seven Joys of the Virgin Mary, probably affirming what was already being done in practice. The physical behaviour specified kneeling when saying these prayers. This should be interpreted as a prescription, specifying appropriate behaviours, however common they might have been (as in the case of kneeling, being a most popular way to behave during prayer). The specification of holy days to visit for prayer in order to gain the indulgence was to affirm the ordinary holy days when laypeople visited the churches and to reward this common practice. The popularity of saints' names as personal names shows the intention of a connection between saint and person. Among the most popular saints to have as name-sakes were, in the Swedish-speaking region, 'universal saints' such as St John, St Peter, St Margaret and St Anne, and local saints such as the Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson, St Olof of Nidaros, the Blessed Katarina of Vadstena and St Birgitta of Sweden. In the Finnish-speaking region, this pattern is also visible, but with the difference of an Orthodox influence from Russian-speaking areas, close to the Finnish-speaking regions. Popular male saints in the Greek Orthodox Church to use as name saints were St Prokopios and St Maccharios. The few Finnish female names from the medieval period lack this Orthodox influence, though it is impossible to know from only thirteen female persons, whether Orthodox influences existed or not among the female Finnish-speaking population. Although we might never know whom praying persons addressed during the Middle Ages, it might be concluded

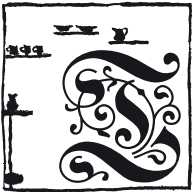
that persons with saint names, and that is in fact the majority of the population in late medieval Sweden, could pray to their name saints for protection and aid.

¶ *Thirdly*, prayer vs. magic: prayers seem to have been used as protection, not only for the afterlife (against Hell and damnation) but also for the life on Earth. This usage is similar to the practice of blessing people, animals and buildings. In order to protect oneself or someone else by prayer, ordinary prayers such as the Paternoster, Hail Mary or *Salve regina* were used. When said, these prayers were thought to lend protection for at least one day. Protection by prayers could be interpreted as a client-patron relation between living humans and those belonging to the celestial court, where God, the Virgin Mary, angels and saints lived and ruled. Prayers said by living people were considered honouring and (almost) demanded protection in return. Although grace was not to be taken for granted, the very foundations of client-patron relationships were mutual relations, and the role of the celestial patron was to protect the earthly client. The protective effects of certain prayers could also be interpreted as the positive effects of merits. Saying prayers gave merits, and these merits could not only be of aid when in Purgatory and for the dead, but also for the living person. Prayers were considered gifts to God and those surrounding the Holy Trinity, and these gifts could lead to protection of the praying person, as a token of grace and gratitude, although the grace of God could never be taken for granted.

III
PART

Summary

Framework, tools and sources for the study



THE AIM of this study has been to identify, explain and delineate praying among peasant communities in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, Sweden. In order to fulfil this aim, I have addressed four main questions, that are as follows: (1) *What were the standards of prayer?* (2) *What prayers were used for devotional purposes?* (3) *How was prayer in times of need expressed?* (4) *What prayer cultures existed?* These questions have been answered both from the ideal viewpoint and from the practices viewpoint.

However needed, no further research exists on the subject of prayer among the peasantry in the Middle Ages, either in Scandinavia or in Western Europe. This study is, therefore, the first on this subject. Two perspectives have been used throughout the study, namely ideals and practices. It has been my ambition to separate the two in order to focus

on differences, but also to combine the two in order to examine the relation between ideals and practices.

In order to perform this study, I have been much aided by the theoretical framework of Reflexive methodology, which can be understood as a meta-theory focusing not only on the researcher and the research process, but also providing a pragmatic use of theories to shed light on complex issues, sometimes described as a toolbox of theories. Two theories have been used in my toolbox, namely gender and agency.

There is an unfortunate lack of primary sources to use for this study of the prayer life of the peasantry, but through careful examination of available sources, fragments of both ideals and practices can be found. The ideals that concerned the peasantry concerned most often all of the laity, and approximations have therefore been made to delimit what ideals of prayer peasant women and men were in contact with. Practices of prayer have been found as fragments, often in the margins of texts and in modes of procedures. The primary method for both ideals and practices has been first to examine the often fragmentary empirical data, secondly to analyse and construct patterns from these fragments, and thirdly to connect these patterns and fragments with both Scandinavian and Western European research. This method can, however, lead to false conclusions that ideals and practices not occurring in the empirical data were not part of the ideals and practices in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala. This might have been the case, but probably not, since it was part of a broader and shared cultural community: Christian Western Europe. But, through this mode of analysis, established conceptions have been questioned and new patterns have emerged.

The following sources have been used, here divided into two groups, namely non-written and written sources. The non-written sources studied are: archaeological finds, and church art, such as reredos carvings and drawings, statues and wall paintings. The written sources examined are: catechetical texts, guild statutes and verses, indulgence letters, liturgical breviaries and manuals, miracle collections, official letters by the peasantry as a collective, personal names (lists of these), sermons, synodal statutes, tabulae and wills.

The disposition of the study has been made through the four previously mentioned questions, namely the standards of prayer, devotional prayer and prayers in times of need and prayer culture.

Examination and analysis of the sources

Standards of prayer

The following features of the standards of prayer have been examined, namely the right postures, right words, right intentions and right occasions.

Right postures. The body was an important part of prayer, since the praying person could express his or her intentions through body language. The most common way to pray was to stand, but depending on the situation, the praying person could also walk in the church building or in the cemetery, kneel on the ground or lie in the pew. Hands and arms were to be positioned to indicate prayer, and perhaps the position most commonly associated with prayer was to hold the palms together in front of the chest with fingers pointing either upwards or forwards. Clothes could also be used to express or reveal the intention of the praying person, especially head-gear and footwear. Head-gear could be removed when saying prayers, similar to its removal when listening to the Gospel reading. Shoes could also be removed as a sign of penance and on special days, such as Rogation Sunday, where barefoot prayer was especially recommended.

Right words. There were two seemingly conflicting ideals: either to say as many prayers as possible, or to say only a few but with great care. It seems that the writers of catechetical texts preferred the latter and instructed the reader/audience to say each word carefully and not to forget even the slightest syllable. The way to achieve this was to use mental

images to consider when praying. The language preferred in prayer was the language understood, since prayers needed to be comprehensible in order to be said with great devotion. For a peasant woman or man in the ecclesiastical province of Uppsala, this meant Swedish or Finnish, and the standard prayers the Paternoster and Hail Mary, were together with the Apostolic Creed, required to be available in vernacular translations (either written or oral).

Right intentions. The prime element of prayer for a peasant woman or man, being part of the laity, was to be attentive. Without attentiveness the prayer would not be effective. In order to establish intention, mental images were used. These images were introduced to the reader/audience of the catechetical manuals where prayers were given a context to consider, often in the shape of a story of a saint or an episode of the life of Jesus Christ. A way to maintain attentiveness was to count prayers mentally through the construction of mental images of beads or clothes for the recipient – one prayer represented one bead or one piece of clothing.

Right occasions. The place and time for prayer was important in order to achieve an effective communication. Certain prayers, such as those to say during mass, were intended to be said in the church and on holy days. The group of standard prayers such as the Paternoster and Hail Mary could, however, be said anywhere, anytime. The most common place for prayer for a peasant woman or man as part of the laity, according to the ideals, was to pray in the church building, but a few instructions do exist for prayer at home. Holy days were in focus in the ideals, and therefore these speak almost only of prayer on these days. One organised place for prayer other than the church building was the parish or rural guild. At the regular meetings members were, besides the common festive drinking and amusements, required to pray for their deceased members, and also at the burials of members. Doing so, made way for insurance through prayer, where a member could rely on their continuous prayer both in this life and in the afterlife.

Devotional prayer

The following features of devotional prayer have been examined, namely God, the Virgin Mary and angels as recipients of prayer, the three 'standard prayers' and additional prayers.

The Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary and angels as recipients of prayer. The vast majority of prayers are directed to either the Holy Trinity (here are also included God, God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit) or the Virgin Mary. Angels could also be addressed in prayer, but to what extent this was practiced is difficult to grasp. Since saints as recipients tend to stand out in the material, I have chosen to treat this group separately (under 'Prayer in times of need').

The three 'standard prayers'. Paternoster, Hail Mary and the Apostolic Creed were the catechetical foundations of lay Christianity and as such, these prayers were translated into the vernacular and where possible to use at all times and on all occasions. Particularly, the Paternoster and Hail Mary were often used together with mental themes by which the praying person should consider, for example, a situation in the life of Jesus Christ, during the saying of five Paternosters and Hail Marys.

Additional prayers. There were prayers other than the three 'standard' prayers, but it can only be assumed that these prayers were used in addition to the standard ones by people belonging to peasant communities. Three kinds of additional prayers can, however, possibly be linked with peasant women and men. The name of Jesus were recommended to be used as prayer, and was considered most powerful against evil and gave the praying person godly feelings and joy. Marian devotion such as the Lady Psalter and The Seven Joys of Our Lady could have been altered, from specific prayers to the standard prayers, so that the praying person needed only to know these prayers, and how to combine them with mental themes and the number of repetition. Although specific prayers in the vernacular existed for the laity to say during the mass and the seven hours of the Divine Office, there is explicit evidence that tells of the laity's inability to remember all of the seven hours, and recommends peasant women and men to say five Paternosters before the mass, Lauds and Vespers as spiritual preparation on holy days. The 'standard' prayers

were thereby used for additional kinds of prayer, yet again showing the flexibility of these prayers to be combined and used everywhere.

Prayer in times of need

The following features of prayer in times of need have been examined, namely saints as recipients of prayer, individual and personal prayers in miracle stories, context and comparison of the cited prayers, and questions of authenticity and authorship.

Saints as recipients of prayer. Rumours of the healing powers of a saint or feasts for particular saints were common ways to enter into acquaintance with saints as recipients for prayer. In times of uncertainty about whom to address in prayer, lots could be cast in order to reveal God's will concerning the recipient. In the catechetical manuals another pattern emerges: a reluctance to pray to saints, preferring instead to pray only to God and the Virgin Mary. This is clearly visible, although it cannot be concluded as to whether this was an intended theology or not, since there are several pieces of evidence from other sources that saints were venerated and prayed to. I have, therefore, constructed a hypothesis on the choice of recipient for prayer. God and the Virgin Mary were to be addressed directly in terms of normality and everyday life, and in times of specific needs, saints could also be addressed either directly or indirectly through God.

Individual and personal prayers in miracle stories, context and comparison of the cited prayers, and questions of authenticity and authorship. The words used by peasant women and men to pray to a saint can be found in cited prayers in a few miracle stories, and all but one of these are from the fifteenth century (one is from the late fourteenth century). These prayers are similar in their construction, where the recipient of the prayer is often first revered, then the problem and need for a miracle is presented and the prayer then ends with a presentation of agreement between the praying person and the recipient. No priests were present when these prayers were said and the praying person often said the prayer in the domestic area. In these stories the actual prayers are cited, and it can be concluded that at least parts of these prayers were authen-

tic, and the conclusion should therefore be made that the peasantry not only used the standard prayers the Paternoster and Hail Mary to pray, but also had the ability construct prayers of their own in order to address a recipient of prayer.

Prayer culture

The following features of prayer culture have been examined, namely the transmitting of prayer culture, maintaining of prayer culture and prayer vs. magic.

The transmitting of prayer culture. The ways in which prayers and prayer behaviour were learned was through a mutual relation between people, whether between priests or laity did in some cases not matter, but can often not be studied since these methods of transmission were oral. What can be examined is the educational principles that are preserved in catechetical manuals. In these, one can find positive reinforcement and encouragement as the primary didactic method. The eager can do more and the unwilling can do just a little. Hell and damnation are seldom mentioned, although they do occur. One way in which prayer knowledge was tested formally was during baptism (probably examined informally in advance), since the godparents were required to know the Paternoster, Hail Mary and the Apostolic Creed. During the baptism, godparents were often obliged to say these prayers aloud, and this can be understood as some kind of test, although it can be assumed that the priest asked the godparents before the baptism.

The maintaining of prayer culture. In order to remember certain prayers or how many times these were to be said, memory techniques were used. For a peasant woman or man, these mnemonics could include prayer beads in the shape of rosaries or Paternoster strings constructed in cheap materials such as nuts, beans or bones. Fingers could also be used for counting, and often the recommended numbers of prayers to be said in the catechetical manuals correspond to the number of fingers or joints of one or two hands (5, 10, 15, 30, 50). Indulgence letters for churches had conditions about prayer. These conditions regarded not only what prayers to say, but also where in the building to say them, how

to say them and on what day to say them. If these conditions were not met, then no indulgences had conditions. Still, the reason why indulgence was conditioned differed between direction and affirmation. The specified prayers were most often common prayers such as the Paternoster and Hail Mary, and the condition was thereby affirming an already existing practice. The place and how prayer was to be performed on that spot can often be understood as direction, since the object in front of which the prayer was to take place was installed by a bishop (often the same as the one issuing the indulgence letter). If certain days for prayer were mentioned, then these days were often popular holy days, thereby affirming the practice of visiting the church on these days. A person with a saintly namesake was considered to have a special connection to that saint. The popularity of saints to use as name saints is similar to the popularity of saints in general – universal saints such as St Peter, St Paul, St Margaret and St Barbara were popular, and also local saints such as the Blessed bishop Nils Hermansson and St Birgitta of Vadstena. Among the Finnish-speaking population Greek Orthodox saints were also popular, probably due to the nearby border zone between the Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church.

Prayer vs. magic. The saying of prayers was considered sometimes to lend protection for the praying peasant. This was not considered magic, since God was the divine power behind the protection and not demons or the devil. For example, one Hail Mary gave protection for that day. Praying was thereby a way to avoid the evils of the world and of the devil, and could be explained at least in two ways, client-patron demands and as merits. The recipient of prayer was considered to be a patron of the praying person, and saying prayers to that person made the patron responsible for him or her. Saying prayers could also be accumulated in the form of merits, and these merits could be aimed for as protection, from the recipient of prayer to the person saying the prayer.

Epilogue



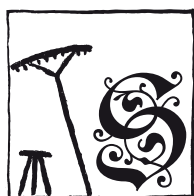
HIS STUDY is the first of its kind and, as such, the understanding of prayer among peasant communities has only begun. Therefore, this doctoral thesis should be considered incomplete in the sense that not all aspects of the subject studied have been analysed and examined, due both to the delimitations of my postgraduate scholarship, and to the fact that most of my finds have been discovered by pure coincidence during a thorough examination of the many sources used. There could be, and probably are, more things waiting to be discovered in the future, bringing more light through the hermeneutic spiral to the intriguing subject of lay religiosity and prayer among people in peasant communities. This end is only the beginning.

Sammanfattning på svenska

(SUMMARY IN SWEDISH)

Viktor Aldrin

Bön i bondesamhällen. Senmedeltida böneideal och
bönepraktiker i den svenska kyrkoprovinsen



YFTET MED denna studie har varit att identifiera, beskriva och förklara bedjande i senmedeltida bondesamhällen i den svenska kyrkoprovinsen. Studien har utförts med kvalitativa forskningsmetoder utifrån det metodologiska och teoretiska ramverket reflexiv metodologi och utifrån de båda perspektiven ideal och praktiker. Ett stort antal olika källtyper har använts, både icke skriftbaserade och skriftbaserade. De icke skriftliga källorna har varit arkeologiska fynd samt kyrkokonst såsom altartavlor, kalkmålningar och skulpturer. Skriftliga källor som brukats är avlatsbrev för kyrkor, kateketiska texter, liturgiska brevvarier och manualen, mirakelsamlin-

gar, officiella brev från bondesamhällen, personnamn (popularitetslistor med dessa), predikningar (både på svenska och latin), synodalstatuter, tabellframställningar och testamenten. De slutsatser som dragits vad gäller böneideal och bönepraktiker hos den senmedeltida bondefolkningen är baserade på följande fyra huvudfrågeställningar:

Vilka bönenormer fanns? Det vanligaste sättet att bedja var att stå upp, med händerna sammanförda, handflata mot handflata med fingrarna antingen pekandes uppåt eller något framåtriktade. Detta indikerade med största sannolikhet underkastelse i likhet med en vasall inför kungen. Knäböjande och sittande vid bön förekom också. Språket för bedjandet var modersmålet, det vill säga, bönderna bad antingen på svenska eller finska (för den finstalande befolkningen av Sverige), även om det kan antas, att majoriteten av befolkningen kände till och kunde böner på latin och troligen även innebörden av de latinska orden. Intentionen hos den bedjande var det mest centrala, och denna kunde uttryckas både i handling och i tanke, och på så vis söka påverka Gud, Jungfru Maria, änglar eller helgon till bönesvar. Mentala teman brukades för att med hjälp av bilder och berättelser frammana och upprätthålla koncentration och intention hos den bedjande. Exempel på sådana mentala teman är berättelser ur Jesu liv utifrån evangeliernas berättelser. Bön var inte begränsat till särskilda platser eller tidpunkter, utan kunde sägas var som helst, när som helst, framför allt bönerna Pater noster (Vår Fader) och Ave Maria (Var hälsad Maria). Emellertid fanns särskilda tider och platser som var mer associerade med bön än andra. Exempelvis ansågs helgdagar särskilt lämpade för bön, och då i synnerhet tiden i samband med prästens morgonbön (laudes) och aftonbön (vesper) samt inför eller under mässan. Bedjande hade även en central position i de många landsortsgillen där bondebefolkningen vanligen var medlemmar (kvinnor som män). Att vara medlem i ett sådant gille innebar ständigt bönebeskydd genom medlemmarnas böner, både för levande och döda. Gillenas skyddshelgon och även Gud tillägnades minnesskålar, där de hyllades och återopades.

Vilka böner brukades i fromhets syfte? Pater noster (Vår Fader), Ave Maria (Var hälsad Maria) och Credo (den apostoliska trosbekännelsen)

utgjorde bönegrunden för allt lekfolk under senmedeltiden, så även för den svenska bondebefolkningen. Dessa böner kunde kombineras, då gärna tillsammans med olika mentala teman, som följdes av ett antal Pater noster och Ave Maria. Konstateras kan, att även Credo betraktades som bön och brukades som sådan både till vardag och helg. Utöver dessa böner förekom med stor sannolikhet även bruket att säga Jesu namn som bön, Vår Fru tider (att be ett antal upprepade Ave Maria och Pater noster och betänka olika situationer som Jungfru Maria befann sig i) samt Jungfru Marias sju glädjeämnen (att betänka olika tillfällen i hennes liv i relation till hennes son Jesus). Dessa böner, eller grupper av böner, kunde konstrueras utifrån de tre grundbönerna, men även utvecklas med egna böner, något som finns bevarat från den svenska kyrkoprovinserna, men inte från bondebefolkningen.

Hur tog sig bedjandet uttryck i stunder av nöd? I vanliga och normala situationer tycks det som om den heliga Treenigheten (även böner till Gud Fadern, Jesus Kristus och Den Helige Anden separat), änglar och Jungfru Maria återropades i bön. Endast i specifika och allvarliga nödsituationer återropades helgon, eller personer vilka ansågs vara helgon, i bön. Detta förhållningssätt är tydligt i hela det undersökta materialet. Om den bedjande personen var osäker på vem som skulle åkallas i bön, kunde lottkastning praktiseras, något som förekommer i tretton av de dryga sex hundra svenska mirakelberättelserna. Detta ansågs vara ett fullt legitimt sätt att få kunskap om Guds vilja i valet av adressat för bönerna, något även präster kunde praktisera. Lottkastningen gick troligen till på följande vis: tre olika adressater eller platser för pilgrimsfärder ristades in på tre träbitar som därefter lades ner i antingen en skål eller en mantelflik. Därefter drogs en lott att, om samma lott drogs tre gånger i rad var detta tecknet på att Guds vilja till detta val visats. Bön var ett av fundamenten för mirakel, och i sex mirakelberättelser, finns även själva bönen som bads av personer ur bondebefolkningen bevarad. Det kan antas att dessa böner till stor del är autentiska, trots att de bevarats på latin (det språk på vilket mirakelsamlingarna nedtecknades), och ger en unik inblick i bondebefolkningens böneliv och förmåga att formulera egna böner. I dessa citerade böner framkommer ett mönster

i upplägget: först åberopas helgonet (eller Gud i relation till adressaten) och prisas och därefter beskrivs orsaken till bönen, det vill säga nödsituationen. Till sist mynnar bönen ut i ett erbjudande om avtal där den bedjande personen erbjuder sig att göra något eller ge ett föremål till adressatens locus (särskilda plats, exempelvis ett reliksskrin) om denne besvarar bönen och mirakel inträffar. Dessa böner sägs vanligen i situationer där ingen präst finns närvarande och i anslutning till hemmet eller ägorna. Både män och kvinnor ber dessa böner och i och med att de nedtecknades som mirakel, ansåg de bedjande att de fått bönesvar och mirakulöst helande.

Vilka bönekulturer fanns? Bedjande och kunskap om bön förmedlades både mellan präst och sockenbor, mellan lekfolk och mellan föräldrar och barn, för att bara nämna några av de vägar för förmedling som förekom. I de texter som var till för att hjälpa präster i deras undervisning av sockenbefolkningen användes främst en positiv didaktik, med hopp om belöning och olika grader av komplexitet beroende på intresse hos den bedjande personen. Endast litet sägs om negativa konsekvenser, även om sådana förekommer i dessa texter. Det kan därför antas att uppmuntran ansågs mer effektivt än hot som pedagogisk modell. Den religiösa baskunskapen en lekperson skulle ha var Pater noster, Ave Maria och Credo (den apostoliska trosbekännelsen). Kunskapen om dessa kontrollerades i samband med dop, då gudföräldrarna ofta skulle bedja dessa böner tillsammans med prästen vid dopet. Den som inte kunde dessa böner fick inte bli gudförälder. Minnestekniker användes för att underlätta ihågkommandet av viktiga böner, och de troligen vanligaste metoderna var rim, mentala bilder, bönepärlor (såsom paternostrsnören och rosenkransar) samt fingerräkning. Den bedjande personen kunde inhämta avlat (viss befrielse från tiden i skärselden i väntan på inträdandet i himlen) genom att besöka olika kyrkor vid särskilda tillfällen och säga någon av de vanligast förekommande bönerna, möjligen vid specificerade platser i kyrkobyggnaden såsom helgonskulpturer eller altaren. På så vis kunde de som utfärdade avlat, det vill säga biskopar (och personer högre upp i den kyrkliga hierarkin såsom ärkebiskopar, kardinaler och påven) både bekräfta redan existerande praktik

och stipulera religiöst agerande i och kring kyrkobyggnaderna. Vanligt förekommande under medeltiden var helgonnamn som personnamn. Helgonen ansågs ha en särskild koppling till namnbäraren och kunde troligen åberopas som personligt skyddshelgon. Populära helgon för namngivning var både universella helgon såsom apostlarna Petrus och Johannes, heliga Margareta och heliga Anna (Jesu mormor), och lokala helgon såsom kung Erik den helige, den salige biskop Nils Hermansson av Linköping, den saliga Katarina av Vadstena och hennes mor heliga Birgitta. I den finskspråkiga befolkningen fanns även ortodoxa helgon som namnhelgon, såsom den helige Makarios och den helige Prokopios. Några kvinnliga motsvarigheter till dessa i den finska namngivningsstraditionen kan emellertid inte hittas, då enbart ett litet fåtal kvinnliga finska förnamn finns bevarade (bland annat efter helgonen den heliga Gertrud, heliga Lucia och heliga Margareta). Den bedjande kunde slutligen bruka bön som beskydd i detta livet. Böner, såsom Pater noster och Ave Maria ansågs ge beskydd för eller hjälp till den bedjande eller personer i omgivningen. Genom att åberopa Gud, Jungfru Maria eller helgon som beskyddare och därmed patroner kunde den bedjande begära skydd som klient, även om sådan hjälp inte var garanterad. Bedjande kunde även ge himmelska meriter, vilka även de kunde åberopas vid särskilda behov.

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Colophon

Doctor of Theology dissertation in Religious Studies,
University of Gothenburg, 11 November 2010

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Limited doctoral dissertation edition,
distributed by The Department of Literature, the History of Ideas and
Religion, University of Gothenburg, PO Box 200, SE-405 30
Gothenburg, Sweden. Also available online:
<http://hdl.handle.net/2077/22489>

The text will be published in 2011 at Mellen Press
<http://www.mellenpress.co.uk>

Graphic design, illustrations, photos and initial letters: Viktor Aldrin
Typefaces: Aller (cover and figure texts) , Calluna (text),
Celebration (as part of initial letters)
Printed by: Printing Services, Chalmers University of Technology,
Gothenburg, 2010

<http://www.viktoraldrin.com>

