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**Title**

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**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1p6831dn>

**Journal**

Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 30(1)

**ISSN**

0069-6412

**Author**

Hayes, Dawn Marie

**Publication Date**

1999-10-01

Peer reviewed

**MUNDANE USES OF SACRED PLACES IN THE CENTRAL AND  
LATER MIDDLE AGES, WITH A FOCUS ON  
CHARTRES CATHEDRAL<sup>1</sup>**

by Dawn Marie Hayes

Although technically reserved for worship, church buildings were put to numerous non-devotional uses in the Middle Ages, raising the question just how set apart from daily life medieval churches were. Relatively little has been written about this subject, despite its importance as a signpost to the contours of the medieval understanding of sacred space.<sup>2</sup> Late last century and early in this century Sidney Oldall Addy and William Andrews did some work on this subject for England. Their accounts, however, are narrative and do not address larger questions of meaning and significance of such uses. More recently J. G. Davies has written on the subject also with a focus on England.<sup>3</sup> Non-devotional

<sup>1</sup>This article is a version of the third chapter of my doctoral dissertation, “Body and Sacred Place in Medieval Europe, 1100–1389: Interpreting the Case of Chartres Cathedral” (Ph.D. diss., New York University 1998) 129–175.

<sup>2</sup>See *Church and Manor: A Study in English Economic History* (New York 1970 [1913]) and *Ecclesiastical Curiosities* (London 1899), respectively. Also, *Curious Church Customs and Cognate Subjects* (Hull, England; London 1895). This article will not cover dancing in churches because its focus is activities that were clearly non-devotional; dances were ambiguous activities that were sometimes acts of devotion. Also, the subject of dancing in the Middle Ages—including in churches—has been covered by a good number of competent scholars. See for example Eugene Louis Backman, *Religious Dances in the Christian Church and in Popular Medicine*, trans. E. Classen (Westport, Conn. 1977 [1952]); Louis Gougaud, “La danse dans l’église,” *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 15 (1914) 5–22 and 229–245; Jeannine Horowitz, “Les danses cléricales dans les églises au Moyen Age,” *Le Moyen Age* 95 (1989) 279–292; Pierre Riché, “Danses profanes et religieuses dans le haut Moyen Age” in *Histoire sociale, sensibilités collectives et mentalités. Mélanges Robert Mandrou* (Paris 1985); and Yvonne Rokseth, “Danses cléricales du XIIIe siècle” in *Mélanges 1945, III: Études Historiques* (Paris 1947).

<sup>3</sup>J. G. Davies, “Playing Games in Churches,” in *The Recreational Use of Churches*, ed. J. G. Davies (Birmingham, England 1978) 13–19; *The Secular Use of Church Buildings* (London 1968); and “Architecture and Theology,” *Expository Times* 73 (1962) 231–233. *Secular Use of Church Buildings* is an ambitious work with a broad chronological scope and, therefore, does not offer a focused and detailed study of medieval evidence. This, however, was clearly not the intent of the author who wrote with a defined agenda. “[C]onsecration is thanksgiving. The rendering of thanks to God upon the opening of a new church is natural and right; this is its consecration. The result, however, is not that the nature of the space is changed; rather the result is that its God-relatedness is acknowledged. Understood in functional terms then consecration is an act whereby a church does not cease to be what it is, i.e. secular space in which secular

uses of churches in medieval France remain uncharted territory. A small number of works has been published on various aspects of secular usage—including the use of Chartres Cathedral for lodging medieval pilgrims.<sup>4</sup> It is the goal of this article to offer the reader a sample of non-devotional activities in sacred places and break ground for what promises to be a fascinating avenue of exploration into the cultural history of medieval northwestern Europe by considering the conflict between the theory and practice of medieval sacred space.

People regularly tested and challenged the order of officially recognized sacred places, and the clergy responded to these challenges in a variety of ways, deeming some non-devotional activities as either harmless or necessary. Others, however, were not tolerated and were even considered sacrilegious and condemned. At issue usually was the area within the church structure, but certain objectionable activities in cloisters and cemeteries also created controversy. Just as all areas of the church building were not equally sacred, not all non-devotional activities were equally profane. People negotiated sacred places and rendered them less restricted than one might expect from the rite of consecration, the official ecclesiastical statement on the church building. Considering non-devotional uses of churches will enable historians to reconstruct a history of the *living* church.<sup>5</sup>

Certain parts of churches were more sacred—more reserved—than others. The sanctuary and the choir were the life systems of the church, and as with any system, this control center had to be kept secure. Although the nave was important to the church because it represented a

activities may be held, but it does acquire a new and additional end. It becomes the place of assembly of God's people where they can with convenience offer their corporate worship to their Lord. The space is then holy, but this holiness is not a quality of being, but an explicitly acknowledged relationship to God. So by consecration a building is dedicated as an instrument of the mission of God; its nature is not altered, but its function is declared." (262–263) Davies's agenda compels him to focus on secular use of churches as common and ordinary and diverts him from closely examining the friction between learned clerical perception of churches (in other words, the *theory*) as opposed to some clerical and lay perception and use (the *practice*) of these same spaces. Such a consideration is necessary for a sophisticated analysis of medieval sacred space.

<sup>4</sup>Jean Villette, "Quand les pèlerins couchaient dans la cathédrale," *Notre-Dame de Chartres* (June 1979) 4–7. For a later period see Jean Baptiste Thiers, *Dissertation sur les porches des églises dans laquelle on fait les divers usages auxquels ils sont destinez* (Orléans 1679).

<sup>5</sup>After the *disengagement* of the late nineteenth century, which claimed many of the church's ancillary buildings including the hospital, library, and the canons' houses, the cathedral of Chartres stands alone as a museum piece; no hint remains of the church's earlier civic context (which further reinforces modern perceptions of this sacred place as being reserved and removed). See Jan van der Meulen et al., *Chartres: Sources and Literary Interpretation: A Critical Bibliography* (Boston 1989) 192.

part that many (although certainly not all) considered integral to the church's physical structure, it was not the source of spiritual life. The lifeblood of the church originated in the sanctuary where God was made and in the choir, the location of the clergy who performed and witnessed the miracle of transubstantiation.

#### LODGING AND STORAGE

Chartres Cathedral was a place of rest for many. Some people slept in the church because it was their job, some because they were sick and were seeking a cure and others because they were visitors who simply needed a place to stay. According to Marcel Bulteau's plan, the choir contained five rooms in which church officers slept.<sup>6</sup> In the southwest corner the *queux* or cook, whose responsibilities included lighting candles and sounding the gong for mass, had quarters in which he spent the night.<sup>7</sup> Further east on opposite sides were the rooms of the lay sacristans (*marguilliers laïcs*) who assisted the clerical sacristans (*marguilliers clerics*).<sup>8</sup> These men were strategically positioned just to the

<sup>6</sup>For an account of the rooms of the choir see Marcel-J. Bulteau, *Monographie de la cathédrale de Chartres*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed., 3 vols. in cooperation with Abbé Brou (Chartres 1887–1902) 3.83–86. Bulteau's choir plan is extremely helpful because it provides a visual representation of the layout of the choir and its rooms. It should be noted, however, that all dormitories may not be identified. For example, the introduction to the cathedral's cartulary notes that a sixteenth-century sacristan's memoir records that two valets, the officer who prepared the wine and water for mass (*sous-queux*), and the bell ringer (*portier*) had rooms at either end of the rood screen. *Cartulaire de Notre-Dame de Chartres (CND)*, 3 vols., ed. Eugène de Lépinos and Lucien Merlet (Chartres 1862–1865) 1.xc, note 2.

According to L'Épinois and Merlet the cathedral had a lower clergy that was independent of the chapter. It was composed of clerics of the choir, chaplains, and a body of subordinate officials which included *marguilliers*, their servants, cantors, and children of the alb. The *marguilliers clerics* and *laïcs* were the most important of these subordinate officers. They lived communally in a house called *la Marguillerie* and owned goods in common. There were six *marguilliers clerics*, or sacristans, who took turns sleeping in a room in the sanctuary near the main altar. There were just two *marguilliers laïcs* who assisted the *marguilliers clerics*. The room of the cross-bearer was also to be found in the sanctuary. The cook occupied a small room in the northwest corner of the choir, near a bell tower used to awaken the officers who slept in the church. See *CND* 1.lxxxvi–xciii and Bulteau, *Monographie* 3.83–86.

<sup>7</sup>*CND* 1.xci: "Le queux, ou cuisinier, premier valet des marguilliers, remplissait plusieurs fonctions dans l'église. Au couvre-feu, il allumait les deux lampes placées derrière le grand autel devant la Sainte-Châsse, et il les rallumait à matines si elles étaient éteintes. Il préparait le feu pour les encensoirs, sonnait les coups de la messe de l'aurore, ouvrait le chœur et veillait sur la Sainte-Châsse pendant les messes."

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, xc: "Les marguilliers laïcs, ou porte-masses, étaient au nombre de deux. Ils couchaient aussi dans une chambrette du tour du chœur. Ils avaient pour mission d'éveiller le marguillier cleric de semaine pour les matines, de faire ouvrir les portes, de

west of the north and south entrances to the choir. The sanctuary, the most sacred part of the building, accommodated a clerical sacristan who in addition to attending to the relics, jewels, ornaments, and books of the church slept on a camp bed to guard the treasures against nocturnal theft. He had a room just to the east of one of the two treasuries so that he could always keep an eye on the cathedral's impressive collection (he even ate his meals on the rood screen).<sup>9</sup> The cross-bearer (*porte-croix*) slept across from the sacristan on the south side of the sanctuary and guarded the second treasury. The candle extinguishers (*eteigneurs de chandelles*) spent their evenings in the *guet*, which was located on one of the upper floors of the north tower.<sup>10</sup> Throughout the night they rang the bell every hour. From this vantage-point they were also able to watch for fires. These *eteigneurs* seem to have been busy men since when they were not ringing bells and looking for smoke they were trying to keep people quiet and chasing away stray dogs.<sup>11</sup> In addition four armed men guarded the church and cloister from small rooms on either side of the portals.<sup>12</sup>

The church continued its lively activities even at night so that there was a need for security. Officers were charged with keeping people quiet and orderly once darkness fell and, although the editors of the cathedral's cartulary state that these men emptied the cathedral of its visitors and locked its doors (*recherche*), it appears that at times Chartres bustled day and evening.<sup>13</sup> The crypt was the location of a

commander matin et soir l'allumage des lampes et cierges, de veiller à la propreté de l'édifice et d'exécuter tous les services intérieures, avec l'aide des valets. Ils prenaient soin de tous les objets mobiliers servant au culte, à l'exception de ceux placés sous la garde particulière des marguilliers clercs."

<sup>9</sup>*Vieille Chronique* 61: "Et ut in custodia predicta frequencius et attentius vacent, jacent in ecclesia, in cameris prope altare, refectiones suas recipiunt in pulpito. . . ." (Note that the number of rooms for the clerical sacristans is plural whereas only one room appears on Bulteau's plan.)

The *Vieille Chronique* of 1389 was written to support the authority of Chartres' bishop and chapter. Written in Latin, it has three parts: a list of bishops; an account of the church's foundation; and a description of the customs of the chapter, the church's treasures, and a number of bizarre ceremonies. Its title was later assigned to it by chartrain historians. It is included in vol. 1 of the *CND*. I refer to it here as the *Vieille Chronique* rather than the *CND* to make it more easily distinguishable from the editors' substantial (and extremely helpful) introduction.

<sup>10</sup>*CND* 1.xciv, note 4.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, xciv.

<sup>12</sup>*Vieille Chronique* 61: "Item, extra ecclesiam, in portaliis ejus, a dextris et a sinistris, sunt quatuor camenile, in quibus sunt ordinati quatuor homines ibi jacentes, armati continue, tota nocte custodientes ecclesiam atque claustrum."

<sup>13</sup>"La *recherche* était la tournée faite dans l'église, après sa fermeture, pour s'assurer que personne n'y était demeuré." *CND* 1.xci, note 2.

hospital, the Holy Place of the Strong (*Sanctus-Locus-Forcium*), which was said to have been built over the bodies of martyrs.<sup>14</sup> The fourteenth-century *Vieille Chronique* suggests that the hospital was a liminal place where Mary and her son decided the fate of those who suffered from ergotism:

Indeed up to this time this place is disposed toward miraculous sanctity for the sick from all over who are said to burn (*ardentes*) and are weakened by the sacred fire which is called *the fire of Blessed-Mary (ignis Beate-Marie)* assemble there; but through the grace [of God] and his mother during the nine days that they are accustomed to remain there they are entirely cured or, as happens in some cases, they die more rapidly.<sup>15</sup>

After the plague of 1134 a community of nursing sisters was installed in the crypt.<sup>16</sup> These women religious tended to the sick and took care of the church's linen. Brillion even suggested that Helvisa, an eleventh-century "recluse of most sacred memory," had lived in the crypt.<sup>17</sup> Had Helvisa lived a few centuries later she would have had the company of the two dogs the sacristans obtained around 1360 to guard the church at night.<sup>18</sup> The recluse would not have been pleased since the *chiens* were loud—so loud that the clergy had ultimately to give them up because they prevented the guardians of the church from sleeping!

The collection of miracles from the cathedral also helps us reconstruct the atmosphere at Chartres. When Robert de Jouy, whose body was wounded like a martyr's (*[e]n grant martyre estoit son cors*), was brought to the cathedral with a rotten leg and foot:

<sup>14</sup>In dictis autem criptis est hospitale quod dicitur *Santus-locus-Forcium*, eo quod pridem multitudo martirum ibi passa fuerit martirium, quorum corpora in magne profunditatis puteum ibidem factum, de tyrannorum mandato, projecta sunt." *Vieille Chronique* 58.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.: "Locus enim iste mirabilis sanctitatis hactenus est habitus, nam ad illum ex omni parte concurrunt infirmi qui *ardentes* vocantur et sacro igne qui *ignis Beate-Marie* dicitur infirmantur; sed per [Dei] et ejus genitricis gratiam, infra novem dies quibus ibi manere consueverunt, omnino sanantur vel, ut in paucis, cicius moriuntur."

<sup>16</sup>*Un manuscrit chartrain du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. René Merlet and l'Abbé Clerval (Chartres 1893) 112. The editors discuss a convent that had been destroyed and ask: "Ne pourrait-on pas relier a ces soeurs les *dames des saints lieux forts*, qui s'installèrent dans la crypte après la peste de 1134 et s'occupèrent du linge de l'église?" These sisters cared for the sick in the crypt and owned a house on the rue de la Corroierie, which they sold to the chapter around 1650 (*L'Épinois, Histoire* 1.461).

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 113.

<sup>18</sup>Bulteau, *Monographie* 3.342: "Le chapitre, dit Souchet, ordonna vers 1360 aux marguilliers d'avoir deux bons chiens pour garder l'église; mais on fut contraint de les ôter pour le grand bruit qu'ils faisaient la nuit et empêchaient de dormir ceux qui dormaient dans l'église pour la garder."

He finds there many dying  
 And sick people who are complaining.  
 Some burn, others don't burn anymore,  
 One cries, the other yells.<sup>19</sup>

Although the church's architecture and liturgy may have conjured visions of heaven, the reality inside the building often resembled hell where people's senses were overcome by screams of pain, the sight of rotting flesh, and offensive smells. Robert was the unfortunate man whose affliction was so fetid that those inside the church requested the guardians to remove him, saying that he smelled "worse than an otter."<sup>20</sup> Yet, just as some of the worst illnesses could be observed among the supplicants, there were times when the grace of God pierced the walls of the temple. The account of Robert's reaction to his cure gives the reader the sense that the cathedral could be a lively place indeed.

[Robert] ran continually around the altar,  
 Continually stamping his healed foot  
 Heavily on the pavement,  
 And he cried in a loud voice:  
 "Here is the foot of the beautiful lady!  
 Here is the foot of the beautiful lady!"<sup>21</sup>

The clergy took him for a village fool and ordered that he be put out in the cloister, distant enough so the people in the church would not have to hear him. The crowd, however, recognized Robert because he had been sleeping in the cathedral for days.<sup>22</sup> When he convinced them that he was the recipient of the Virgin's grace, Mary and her church received an enthusiastic response:

<sup>19</sup>*Les Miracles de Notre-Dame de Chartres*, ed. Pierre Kunstmann (Ottawa, Chartres 1973) 227:

Assés i trueve d(e)'amortez  
 Et de malades qui se plaignent:  
 Li un ardent, li autre estaignent,  
 Li un pleure, li autre crie.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.* The Old French says that "il put plus que ne fet seit."

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 234:

Entour l'autel sovent coroit,  
 Dou pié sané sovent feroit  
 Grans cops desus le pavement  
 Et si crioit moult hautement:  
 "Veci le pié la belle dame,  
 Veci le pié la belle dame!"

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 235: "Quar lienz ot assez geü."

Throughout the church they rejoiced  
 Clerics and lay people, men and women.  
 The nuns [*cloitrieres*] and good women  
 Made a great concert of song.  
 In the towers the ringing  
 Was long, great and marvellous.<sup>23</sup>

The evidence for people sleeping in Chartres gleaned from miracle thirty is corroborated by miracle fourteen:

There was a great crowd of sick  
 Who live in the church  
 At Chartres and who sleep  
 Throughout the church, from side to side,  
 On litters or beds.  
 Each waits for a cure  
 And help for his illness.<sup>24</sup>

Yet not all those who remained in the church for an extended period of time were ill. Guillaume, who is the subject of miracle fourteen, was cured of a hernia but decided to remain in the church and, in honor of the Virgin who facilitated his cure, take care of the sick.<sup>25</sup> This grateful former patient (like the religious women who tended to the sick in the crypt) is an example of how the infirm at Chartres drew the healthy into their orbit. The curious were also attracted to the spectacle of those struck by divine retribution. For example, in miracle twenty-four, which relates the tale of the villager who profaned Saint Germain's feast day, a crowd assembled around the parish church of the saint where they remained "that day and the following night until the next day."<sup>26</sup> It is probably safe to assume, therefore, that these onlookers slept in the

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.: Par le moustier sunt esjoï  
 Et clerc et lai, homes et fames.  
 Les cloistrieres et bones dames  
 De chanz firent grant melodie.  
 Es clochiers fu la sonerie  
 Et longue et grant et merueilleuse.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 134:  
 Avoit de malades grant presse  
 Qui en l'eglise demoraient,  
 A Chartres, et qui se gesaient  
 Parmi l'eglise les a les  
 Et en litieres et en les;  
 Chacun garison et aie  
 Atendoit de sa maladie.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 134–135.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 209: "et perseveraverunt die illa et nocte sequenti usque in diem crastinam"



church. Even the average worshipper whose stay in the church was shorter could take advantage of church interiors to catch up on his or her sleep. The Cistercian monk Caesarius of Heisterbach (ca. 1180–1240) relates the curious story of Henry, a knight who had a fondness for a particular paving stone in the author’s monastic church. Henry ultimately approached the abbot, Gevrard, and asked for the stone, saying that he wanted to put it on his bed because “if anyone who cannot sleep should rest his head upon it, he will go to sleep at once.”<sup>27</sup> Another noble sang the praises of the stones of the abbey church of Hemmenrode, which he claimed were softer than any of the beds in his castle.<sup>28</sup>

It was the feasts of the Virgin (Assumption, Purification, Annunciation, and Nativity of the Virgin), however, which attracted the greatest number of pilgrims to Chartres. Although the miracles do not paint a picture of what the atmosphere of the church was like on these particular days, it does illustrate how crowded the cathedral and cloister could become. Miracle four describes the response of people to reported miracles at the church:

So many pilgrims had come  
By roads and by paths  
That it was a great marvel.  
Each night they kept vigil  
And there were so many in the church  
That all of them could not be accommodated there.  
But the greatest part had to sleep in the cloister  
And eat [there] in the evening.  
Each place was totally filled  
With male and female pilgrims,  
To the extent that the clerics who, for matins,  
Came to the church at night were not able to enter the cloister.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, trans. H. von E. Scott and C. C. Swinton Bland with an introduction by G. G. Coulton (London 1929) 1.233–234. Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, ed. Joseph Strange (Brussels 1851) 1.205: “ut qui dormire non potuerit, et caput super illum posuerit statim dormiat.”

<sup>28</sup>Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum* 1.205–206.

<sup>29</sup>Kunstmann, *Miracles* 86:

Tant y venoit de pelerins,  
Et par voies et par chemins,  
Que c'estoit une grand merveille.  
Chacune nuit fesoient veille  
Et en avoit tant en l'eglise  
Qu'il n'i pöaient en nulle guise,  
Eins convenoit qu'il en geüst  
Et, au souper, se repetüst

Some of this is probably rhetorical flourish, although there is archaeological evidence that tends to corroborate the literary evidence. According to one author, the cathedral's floors were sloped to allow for cleaning the refuse left behind by lodging pilgrims.<sup>30</sup> A cistern was located on the north side of the church, near the tower. Water entered the building from this point and, due to the east-west and north-south slopes of the nave, flushed the pavement from the transept (which was level) to the western facade. The water exited the building through drains positioned at the Royal Portal, near the south tower.

According to Bulteau the cathedral received major cleanings after the feasts of the Assumption and the Nativity of the Virgin when many pilgrims left behind traces of their visit.<sup>31</sup> Villette points to a man who, although from a later period, provides information that might be helpful when considering medieval pilgrims' use of the cathedral. Roulliard made a pilgrimage to Chartres on September 8, 1608. In his account he wrote of: "people of all ages and sexes who spent the night and slept inside the church, under the caves [crypt], under the porches, and in infinite other places."<sup>32</sup> It is very likely that the cathedral functioned much the same way in the central Middle Ages.

Sanctuary seekers tested the sacredness of church buildings as they used them not only as places of refuge but also as temporary residences where they ate, slept, and performed mundane tasks. For example, clause fourteen of the Constitutions of Clarendon of 1164 reads "[t]he chattels of those who are under forfeiture to the king may not be retained by any church or cemetery against the king's justice, because

Ou cloistre la greigneur partie.  
Chacune place ert toute emplie  
De pelerins, de pelerines,  
Si que li clerc qui, a matines,  
De nuit, a l'iglise venoient,  
Entrer ou cloitre ne pöaient.

<sup>30</sup>Villette, "Quand les pèlerins couchaient dans la cathédrale," 4.

<sup>31</sup>Bulteau, *Monographie*, 45–46. Bulteau mentions that the nave was cleaned after the feasts of the Assumption (August 15) and Mary's Nativity (September 8).

<sup>32</sup>In Villette, "Quand les pèlerins couchaient dans la cathédrale," 6. Villette also cites a sixteenth-century entry in the register of the town hall [*hôtel de ville*] that suggests that at least some clergy had a problem with this use of the church: "Sur la remonstrance verbale faite par M. Josse, chanoine de Notre-Dame, à ce que les vagabonds pèlerins et autres venant en voiaux jours de la my-aoust et de la Nativité, en septembre, ne couchent dorénavant en la dicte église Notre-Dame ainsi qu'ils ont accoutumé faire, pour obvier aux inconvéniens infections et ordures qu'ils y font; a été répondu par MM. les Echevins que de leur part, ils feront ce qu'il appartient et donneront conseil, confort et aide à MM. du Chapitre."

they belong to the king, whether they be found within the churches or without.”<sup>33</sup> Apparently the right of sanctuary could be enjoyed not only by refugees but also by their property. Although King Henry II of England saw this custom as a violation of his rights, church precincts were often places of refuge for people and objects.

Times of war were particularly tense for medieval people and challenged the reserved nature of sacred places. Hugh of Poitiers, a twelfth-century notary of the abbey of Vézelay, records that the townspeople “violated the holy temple of the church, occupied its towers, [and] stocked them with guards, food, and arms. . . .”<sup>34</sup> Yet a late thirteenth-century statute from a synod of the churches of Quercy, La Rouerge, and Tulle acknowledges that rules need to be bent at certain times, particularly during wars and fires:

Because certain clerics expose churches in this way to furnishings and household utensils (their own and those of others) so that they seem to be lay houses rather than basilicas of God, we therefore firmly prohibit that furnishings and household utensils of this kind be admitted in churches unless unexpectedly on account of a war or fires or other urgent necessities [during which] it may be necessary to take refuge with them. But when the necessity ceases to exist the things should be restored to their original places.<sup>35</sup>

It is precisely this refuge that churches and their ancillary structures offered communities under attack that occasionally rendered them targets of violence, such as when Theodoric of Avesnes, a Flemish noble, set fire to a number of convents in which his enemy, Count Baldwin of Hainaut, had been stationing soldiers.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup>*English Historical Documents, 1042–1189*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. David C. Douglas and George W. Greenaway (London, New York 1981 [1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1953]) 2.770.

<sup>34</sup>Hugh of Poitiers, *The Vézelay Chronicle and other Documents from MS. Auxerre 227 and Elsewhere*, trans. with notes, introduction, and accompanying material by John Scott and John O. Ward (Binghamton, N.Y. 1992) 188.

<sup>35</sup>*Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, 54 vols. in 59, ed. Ioannes Dominicus Mansi (Paris-Arnheim-Leipzig 1901–1927 [1759–1798]) 24, col. 1019: “Quia quidam clerici ecclesias sic exponunt fuppellecilibus & ayfinis propriis & etiam alienis, ut potius domus laicae quam Dei bafilicae videantur; idcirco firmiter prohibemus, ne hujufmodi fuppellecilia & ayfinae in ecclesiis admittantur, nifi propter guerram aut incendia repentina, feu alias neceffitates urgentes ad eas oporteat habere refugium. Sic tamen quod, neceffitate ceffante, res in loca priftina reportentur.”

<sup>36</sup>Herman of Tournai, *The Restoration of the Monastery of St. Martin's of Tournai*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Lynn Harry Nelson (Washington, D.C. 1996) 78.

## VENDING

In addition to physical protection churches, cloisters, and cemeteries could provide economic protection as well. Sales made within church precincts were usually exempt from secular jurisdiction and taxation; this favorable tax status coupled with the usual high traffic made churches and their complexes strategic locations for vendors. Hubert Guillotel's study reveals that in the eleventh and twelfth centuries Breton cemeteries were used for buying and selling merchandise as well as for issuing charters since the sacred character of consecrated ground could foster a hospitable environment in which to conduct business.<sup>37</sup> The privilege of tax exemption inspired the canons of Paris to sell their wine in their cloister "as if in a tavern," a practice that attracted gamblers and drunks and raised the ire of Pope Gregory IX in 1233.<sup>38</sup> As Geneviève Aclocque points out, tavern keepers sold their wine in Chartres' nave in order to avoid even a reduced tax. It was not unusual to find wine criers and sellers of spicy liquor loudly hawking samples of their merchandise which they poured from the pitchers they carried.<sup>39</sup> By the early fourteenth century the canons of Chartres were maintaining a tavern in their cloister. During a deliberation in 1320 they enjoined two collectors of the count's *banvin* to return to a wine crier the tax the agents had collected from vendors who were selling out of a house

<sup>37</sup>Julia Barrow, "Urban Cemetery Location in the High Middle Ages," in *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead, 100-1600*, ed. Steven Bassett (Leicester, London, and New York 1992) 93. Also, H. Guillotel, "Du rôle des cimetières en Bretagne dans le renouveau du XI<sup>e</sup> et de la première moitié du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Memoires de la Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Bretagne* 52 (1972-1974) 5-26.

<sup>38</sup>"[N]e canonici quidam Parisienses intra claustrum Parisiensis ecclesie vinum suum vendi faciant quemadmodum venditur in tebernis, nec ibidem lusores et potatores conueniant." L. Auvray, *Registres de Grégoire IX*, 1, n. 1073; quoted in Anne Lombard Jourdan, *Aux origines de Paris: la genèse de la rive droite jusqu'en 1223* (Paris 1985) 84. Anne Lombard-Jourdan notes that on account of the pope's prohibition only wholesale purchases could be made in the cloister but that soon retail sales returned. "Par la suite, seule la vente en gros du vin y fut autorisée, mais on revint bientôt à la cente <<au pot>>, c'est-à-dire au détail." The note that follows reads "Hodie lecto statuto vini non vendendi in claustro nisi in grosso, sub pena amissionis vini et confiscacionis pro Domo Dei Parisiensis . . . quod quidem statutum postea fuit modificatum; videlicet ut possit vendi ad potos, etc." Coyecque, *Hôtel-Dieu de Paris* 1.129, note 2.

<sup>39</sup>Geneviève Aclocque, *Les corporations, l'industrie et le commerce à Chartres du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle à la Révolution* (New York 1967 [1917]) 253: "Pour ne pas acquitter même la taxe diminuée, les taverniers firent vendre leur vin dans la nef de la cathédrale. Des crieurs, une cruche à la main, proposaient aux fidèles de goûter le vin qu'ils portaient. Ils enonçaient les prix à haute voix, vantaient publiquement la marchandise, pendant que des fabricants de liqueur pimentée, imitant leur exemple, arrivaient eux aussi à profiter de l'immunité du sanctuaire."

situated in the cloister.<sup>40</sup> This is a striking practice given that some people considered taverns to be “the Devil’s church, where his disciples go to serve him and where he doth his miracles. . . .”<sup>41</sup> These criers who sought refuge from the count’s right of *banvin* had become so deeply rooted in the cathedral’s internal culture that even when the chapter began to regulate activity in the church seven years later it allowed the criers to continue their sales in the crypt, below one of the towers.<sup>42</sup>

Pope Gregory was hardly the only member of the clergy who objected to such mundane uses of the church environs. A synod statute from the church of Troyes decreed that only wax candles should be sold in churches or cemeteries. The sale of any other items in these places incurred excommunication *ipso facto*.<sup>43</sup> In 1246 the church of Nevers revealed the wide gap that often existed between clerical expectations and lay usage of medieval sacred places:

[B]ecause the house of God is a house of prayer, as confirmed by God, and therefore should not be given over to other uses, we more strictly prohibit that any goods be sold in the church of Nevers on any day or at any time; we give authority to any canon who comes upon a person selling goods in the church to eject the vendor with his goods.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup>Eugène de Lépinos, *Histoire de Chartres*, 2 vols. (Chartres 1854–1858; anastatic reprint, Brussels 1976) 1.512, note 5: “La délibération capitulaire du jour de la lune après l’invention Saint-Etienne 1320 contient la mention suivante: On enjoint à Colin Laguiete et Jean Langlois, collecteurs du droit de *Banvin* pour le Comte, de rendre à Guiard de la Porte, crieur de vin, le *banvin* qu’ils se sont fait donner par les vendeurs, dans la maison de feu Renaud de Senonches, située au cloître.”

<sup>41</sup>*The Goodman of Paris*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Eileen Power (London 1992 [1928]) 58. “[L]e moustier au Deable ou ses disciples vont pour le servir et ou il fait ses miracles.” *Le Mesnagier de Paris*, ed. Georgina E. Brereton and Janet M. Ferrier and trans. into modern French by Karin Ueltschi (Paris 1994) 104.

<sup>42</sup>Lépinos, *Histoire de Chartres* 1.181. Although I have found no evidence of such sales, it is highly probable that bread, the staple of Chartrain economy and diet, was also sold in the church and cloister. Four ovens (one of which belonged to the bishop, another to the chapter, the remaining two to lay owners who paid rent to the chapter) were located in the cloister. See Jane Welch Williams, *Bread, Wine, & Money: The Windows of the Trades at Chartres Cathedral* (Chicago 1993) 42.

<sup>43</sup>*Thesaurus Novus Anecdotorum*, ed. Edmond Martène and Ursinus Durand (New York 1968 [1724–1733]) 4, col. 1102: “quod res venales non vendant in eisdem, nisi candelae de cera: hoc addentes quod facientes . . . excommunicationis fententiam incurrant ipfo facto.”

<sup>44</sup>Mansi, *Sacrorum* 23, col. 731: “quia domus Dei domus orationis est, Domino attestante, & sic non debet aliis usibus deputari, districtius inhihemus ne in ecclesia Nivernensi merces aliqua aliquo die vel tempore vendantur, & quicumque canonicus, quemquam vendentem in ecclesia merces invenerit, eidem ejiciendi ab ecclesia venditorem cum mercibus concedimus potestatem.”

Most secular rulers supported clerical efforts to exclude lay commerce from churches and their immediate environs since government lost profit from tax revenue on unregulated commerce in churches. But they opposed clerical commercial activity in secular jurisdictions where taxes could be levied. This meant that local secular rulers tried to confine the commercial activity of the clergy, encouraging the clergy to engage in commerce within the church precincts. Count Guillaume III of Ponthieu was just one such official who tried to restrain the activity of the intrusive clerical merchants of the diocese of Amiens to church and cemetery.<sup>45</sup>

A late twelfth-century document from Chartres sets out the days on which merchants might sell their wares in the cloister and describes the procedure to be followed in setting up their stalls before the Purification, Annunciation, Assumption, and Nativity of the Virgin, the cathedral's four major feasts.<sup>46</sup> These feast days were the usual fair days. If a merchant set up shop in the cloister on any other day, a canon could ask him to leave; if the merchant refused, the canon could remove his goods.<sup>47</sup> For convenience, however, merchants were permitted to assemble their stalls the night before the feast.<sup>48</sup> If a vendor decided to exercise this option, he could assign custody of the stall to one of the dean's servants who would receive a small payment for his service.<sup>49</sup> If individual canons did not object, merchandise could also be sold under the canopies of their houses.<sup>50</sup> In this case, the merchant could assign the custody of his stall to one of the canons' servants, who would receive the fee.<sup>51</sup> The roads that led from the canons' houses to the cathedral, however, were not to be blocked; there had to be enough room so that two people (a canon accompanied by another man) could move freely down the street. If anyone blocked free passage, the canon could ask the merchant to move, and the merchandise of a non-compliant

<sup>45</sup>Lombard-Jourdan, *Aux origines de Paris*, 84–85.

<sup>46</sup>*CND* 1.204: “[P]reter dies nundinis deputatos nichil in claustro debeat vendi. . . .”

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, “[S]i vendentes ab aliquo canonico submoniti a claustro recedere noluerint, licet canonico merces modeste removere.”

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, “Nocte vero diem nundinarum precedente, scale vel stalla a mercatoribus in claustro debent poni, nec ante. . . .”

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, “[S]i mercator scale vel stalli custodiam servienti decani commendaverit, pro custodia illius noctis, serviens decani unum obolum percipiet. . . .”

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, “Desugundriis domorum canonicorum, dixerunt quod, si placuerit canonico, nichil sub sugundria sua vendetur.”

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, “Quod si placuerit canonico ut sub sugundria sua aliquid vendatur pro custodia scale vel stalli vel signi, idem licet servienti canonici quod in aliis partibus claustris servienti decani.”

vendor could be confiscated.<sup>52</sup> At times the canons might order the dismantling of even a permanent stall if it was inconveniently located. On behalf of her son's soul Adela, a twelfth-century countess of Chartres, had ordered a butcher's stall pulled down that was blocking the traffic entering and exiting the cloister and leaking sewage into the chapter's cellar.<sup>53</sup>

Clergy sometimes competed among themselves for the economic benefits of commerce. For example, the location of stalls within church complexes might be negotiated for financial gain. A charter dated May 26, 1224 records the move of merchants' stalls from the porches of Chartres Cathedral to the south cloister so that the proceeds, which had previously gone to the dean, would accrue to the canons.<sup>54</sup> Evidence of commerce in the cathedral is provided in a late twelfth-century charter in which Bishop Peter of Celles confirms a sacristan's [*capicerius*] right to fees received from stalls located in the church [*infra ecclesiam*] and on its porches [*in porticibus ecclesie*].<sup>55</sup> One of the most colorful

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 204–205: “Vie que sunt a domibus canonicorum ad ecclesiam semper debent vacue remanere, ita quod canonicus et alius cum eo colloquentes, sine impedimento scale vel stalli, libere per illas possint invadere. Quod si aliquis eas scala vel stallo impedierit, submonitus a canonico vel a serviente canonici ut removeat, si non removerit, licebit canonico vel servienti canonici, sine recompensatione dampni, scalam vel stallum precipitare.”

<sup>53</sup>*Un manuscrit chartrain du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. René Merlet and l'Abbé Clerval (Chartres 1893) *Necrologium* 21 (viii kal. jan.). “Obiit Odo, filius comitis Stephani pro cuius anima Adela, nobilis comitissa, mater ejus, petentibus hujus ecclesie canonicis precepit dirui quandam ftallam macellarii ante Portam Novam, nec ulterius inibi eam reedificari conceffit, quia eluviem totam continebat et in domum horrei noftri convertebat et carceiis noftris et plauftris inducendis atque educendis pro tectis hujus ecclesie reparandis plurimum nocebat († après 1106).”

<sup>54</sup>*CND* 2.103: “Consentimus nos universi et singuli, tam persone quam canonici Carnotenses, qui ad eligendum conveneramus decanum, quod stalla merceriorum que solent esse in capitellis, collocantur in claustro, a parte meridiana, inter gradus ecclesie et majorem turrim, ita quod omnis justicia stallorum et domus in qua collocata fuerunt et ipsorum merceriorum sit Capituli, nec ille qui electus fuerit in decanum valeat reclamare, sed in omni libertate possideantur a Capitulo in qua erant, in loco in quo sunt hodie collocata, in platea que fuit archidiaconi Milonis. Actum anno Domini M<sup>o</sup>CC<sup>o</sup>XXIII<sup>o</sup>, mense maio, in octabas dominice Ascensionis.” Many of these stipulations are repeated in a document from the late thirteenth century (1268–1277). See *CND* 2.186–187.

<sup>55</sup>*CND* 1.205–206: “Petrus, Dei gracia, Carnotensis ecclesie minister humilis, dilecto filio Galterio, Carnotensis ecclesie capicerio, salutem in Domino. . . . Volentes . . . jus tuum et successoribus tuis capiceriis illibatum et inconcussum conservari, predicta, cum stallis que in porticibus ecclesie et infra ecclesiam continentur et cum tercia parte denariorum de Pentecoste, tibi presentis scripti attestacione et sigilli nostri auctoritate confirmamus.” The translation of *capicerius* is uncertain but here appears to indicate a sacristan who is particularly concerned with the upkeep of furniture. See van der Meulen's note that from the fourteenth century *capicerius* is equated with *capitiarius*, which usually indicates a keeper of furniture and other goods of the chapter (*Chartres: Sources*

accounts of commercial activity in Chartres is recorded in an extract from a fourteenth-century chapter register:

The regulation was passed at the general chapter meeting at the Feast of St. John in 1327 to expel from the church, among others, those who hawk wine, those of dissolute life, young louts, and those who sell parchment.<sup>56</sup>

This prohibition followed a decade in which canons', bishop's, and count's servants continually spilled each other's blood during skirmishes in the cathedral, necessitating continual rounds of purification and reconciliation.<sup>57</sup> According to L'Épinois the nave had become a place of ill repute (*espèce de tripot*) which offered shelter to merchants, troublemakers, and children who played games.<sup>58</sup>

#### LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

The shelter provided by churches and their cloisters and cemeteries rendered them convenient places for secular and ecclesiastical courts although this use met with continual opposition. In the *Decretals* Pope Gregory IX warns that judicial trials for blood crimes should not be heard in churches or cemeteries. He objects on two grounds. It is against tradition to use the church building in such a way, and it is wrong that a church established to provide sanctuary to refugees from the law also be used as a court in which to try the very same people:

According to evangelical truth the church of God should be a house of prayer, not a den of thieves or a blood court. We prohibit under eternal anathema that secular trials which stem from the spilling of blood and from the punishment of the body be held by judges in churches or cemeteries. Indeed it is absurd and cruel that a blood trial be held where the protection of refuge has been established.<sup>59</sup>

and *Literary Interpretation*, 281).

<sup>56</sup>In capitulo generali Nativitatis beati Johannis 1327 ordinatum fuit quod de coetero expellantur ab ecclesia proclamatores vini, ribaldi, garcones et pergamenum vendentes." André Chédeville, *Chartres et ses campagnes (XIe—XIIIe s.)* (Chartres 1991 [1973]) 235, note 470.

<sup>57</sup>L'Épinois, *Histoire de Chartres* 1.181: "Les serviteurs des chanoines, les chapelains, clercs, marguilliers, gardiens de nuit, *le bas-choeur*, enchérissaient, comme il est d'usage, sur les doctrines de leurs maîtres. De là ces rixes continuelles avec les gens de l'Évêque et du Comte, qui, pendant le procès, se multiplièrent de telle sorte que de 1317 à 1327 il ne se passa, pour ainsi dire, pas une année sans qu'une effusion de sang, dans l'intérieur de la cathédrale, ne vint nécessiter la purification et la réconciliation de l'église." Punishment for such offenses was determined according to their position and the seriousness of the crime.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>*Decretals*, Lib. III, Tit. XLIX, c. V: "Quum ecclesia Dei secundum evangelicam



The objection made by the churches of Quercy, La Rouerge, and Tulle in 1289 to the similar uses of the same kinds of places (churches and cemeteries) appears to have been based on concern for the disposition of the different legal processes that apply to secular and ecclesiastical cases:

[W]e prohibit secular judges and official bailiffs, or secular messengers, from hearing cases, disputes, and quarrels or pleas of the laity in churches or cemeteries because the right to hear the cases does not have the disposition by its own law in these places.<sup>60</sup>

Although some clergy objected to the secular use of churches, cloisters, and cemeteries on various grounds, nevertheless such court usage was common. For example, Herman of Tournai notes that in the eleventh century the laity of the Flemish town of Tournai frequently used the cathedral cloister of Saint Mary as a court of law. "Before [master] Odo's arrival, the knights and citizens were accustomed by tradition to make full use of the canons' cloister to hear and determine legal cases."<sup>61</sup> Odo himself gathered students in front of the church doors where he conducted evening classes on the movement of the stars. The master spoke "in front of the church doors from the evening hours deep into the night . . . showing his students the course of the stars with his outstretched finger and tracing the differences between the zodiac and the Milky Way."<sup>62</sup>

Bishops of Chartres appear to have used their cathedral to hear ecclesiastical cases. In a letter he wrote around 1007 to define the services owed him by Reginald, count of Vendôme and bishop of Paris, Fulbert of Chartres uses the word *atrium* to describe his court. Frederick Behrends, editor of Fulbert's poems and letters, believes that *atrium* stood for both the bishop's court and the place on the church's porch on

veritatem domus orationis esse debeat, non spelunca latronum aut sanguinis forum: saeculares iudicis causas ubi de sanguinis effusione et corporali poena agitur, in ecclesiis vel coemeteriis agitare sub interminatione anathematis prohibemus. Absurdum enim est et crudele, ibi iudicium sanguinis exerceri, ubi est tutela refugii constituta."

<sup>60</sup>"Statuta Synodalia Cadurcensis, Ruthenensis, et Tutelensis Ecclesiarum" in *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio* 24, col. 1020: "prohibemus ne iudices faeculares, & baylivi officiales, feu nuntii faeculares, in ecclesiis vel coemeteriis caufas, contentiones & lites feu placita audiant laicorum, quia proceffus caufarum in eis habitus ipso jure non tenet."

<sup>61</sup>Herman of Tournai, *The Restoration of the Monastery of St. Martin's of Tournai*, 16. Odo was master of the cathedral school of Tournai from 1086 to 1092.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

which it was held.<sup>63</sup> Although little is known about the temporal justice of the later bishops, the cathedral's cartulary reveals the traffic of prisoners between the cloister and the Loëns granary/jail beyond the north wall of the cloister. For example, in a charter dated 12 April 1274 the dean William of Grez and his chapter permitted Peter, the current bishop, and his successors to place carts in the cloister on which prisoners were exposed (so long as they did not block entrance to the church):

[Bishops] may themselves place or make to be placed by mandate perjurers and their other prisoners on these said carts [and] to lead and to return [the prisoners] through the cloister, freely and peacefully, as often as they see fit.<sup>64</sup>

Unlike Pope Gregory IX, the bishops of Chartres did not consider it a breakdown in logic to use spaces that could offer sanctuary as ecclesiastical courts and places of punishment for the bishop's prisoners. It was probably much harder for the church officials who were responsible for administering ecclesiastical justice to idealize church space and protect it from secular usage.

#### SOCIALIZING AND PLAYING GAMES

It is not surprising that medieval churches were places where people could meet and socialize. In addition to the cries of pain of the sick and the confessions of the attacked who feared the prospect of being wounded, raped, or even killed, the walls of these sanctuaries heard much talking and merrymaking. Sometimes the topics of conversations were religious in nature, more often they were not. For example, in the *Miracles* the pilgrim who was captured as he traveled to Chartres but was later spared from his captors by the intercession of the Virgin visited the cathedral each year that he lived and told people in this church all about his adventure.<sup>65</sup> The girl who had made a cloth for the cathe-

<sup>63</sup>“Fulbert here uses the term *atrium* to denote his court. The *atrium* was the porch of a church and a convenient meeting place.” Frederick Otten Behrends, “Bishop Fulbert and the Diocese of Chartres (1006–1028)” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill 1962) 137, note 13. Other possible meanings of the word include *churchyard* and *cemetery*.

<sup>64</sup>*CND* 2.196: “[E]t in dictis scalis ponere seu poni facere perjuros et alios prisonarios suos, per se vel mandatum suum, per claustrum ducere et reducere, libere et quiete, quocumque sibi viderint expedire.”

<sup>65</sup>Kunstmann, *Miracles*, 189: “Qui tunc ad ecclesiam veniens Carnotensem et singulis deinceps annis quandiu vixit multis in eadem ecclesia supradicta omnia que sibi contigerant enarravit.”

dral's altar which was later spared from a fire was just as enthusiastic. The Old French version of this miracle reports that the bishop of Angers heard her relating the miracle in Chartres.<sup>66</sup>

A number of works instructed against less pious church conversation. For example, *The Goodman of Paris*, a late fourteenth-century book of moral instruction, warns that mass should not be attended as if it were a social occasion. A good woman should avoid "moving hither and thither" and "going to and fro" while she is in church.<sup>67</sup> She should not look around her and her prayer should be earnest and focused. The virtues of punctuality and modesty in dress were also praised by medieval authors. Caesarius of Heisterbach writes:

A priest [of Mainz] was going around his church and sprinkling the people with holy water, and when he came to the door of the church, he met there, striding haughtily in, a matron dressed out with all kinds of adornments, as gay as a peacock; and on her skirts, which she was dragging far behind her, he saw a number of demons sitting. They were as small as dormice, and as black as Ethiopians, grinning and clapping their hands and leaping hither and thither like fish inclosed in a net; for in truth feminine extravagance is a net of the devil.<sup>68</sup>

The priest asked the woman to wait outside the church door and invited the congregation to witness the demons. She soon realized her error (and noticed the demons with whom she had been travelling), went home, and changed her dress—serving as a model of humility for the other women of the town.

Caxton's fifteenth-century translation of Geoffrey of La Tour Landry's *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, which he began in 1371,

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 215:

A ce fet quant fu recité,  
L'esvesque d'Angers la cité,  
Vaillant hom et de grant afere,  
Ert en l'iglise quant retreire  
Ce miracle a la fame oï. . . .

<sup>67</sup>Power, *Goodman*, 38. "[C]hangier divers lieux ne aler ça ne la. . . ." Brereton and Ferrier, *Mesnagier*, 46.

<sup>68</sup>Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles* 1.327. Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, 287: "Die quadam Dominica, cum sacerdos in ecclesia, cuius erat plebanus, circuiret, et aqua benedicta populum asperget, ad ostium ecclesiae veniens, matronam quandam pompaticè venientem, et ad similitudinem pavonis variis ornamentis pictam obviam habuit, in cuius cauda vestimentorum, quam trahebat post se longissimam, multitudinem daemonum residere conspexit. Erant enim parvi ut glires, nigri sicut Aethyopes, ore cachinnantes, manibus plaudentes, et sicut pisces intra sagenam conclusi saltantes. Revera ornatus muliebris sagenae diaboli est."

offers similar messages.<sup>69</sup> Geoffrey intended it to be a book of moral instruction for his daughters and recorded tales that provide examples of women's religious and social conduct (and misconduct). One of the lessons this work seeks to teach is that people should not socialize in churches. Chapter twenty-seven, which speaks to the problem of people playing and chattering at mass, draws on an unidentified source, the "gestys of Athenes." The tale paints a colorful picture of knights, squires, ladies, and damsels misbehaving during a mass held in a hermit's chapel. As the hermit leads the service, congregants whisper, gossip, and jest. As punishment for their sin these men and women become crazed for nine days. The exemplum ends with the following summary: "And they were chastised/so that from then on/they refrained from speaking and gossiping during divine service/By this example we should understand that no person should talk in church or disturb the mass."<sup>70</sup>

The following chapter of *The Book of the Knight of the Tower* recounts the story of Saint Martin of Tours delivering a sermon on the perils of talking during mass (particularly during the Gospel) which was prompted by the misbehavior of some of the congregation. As the saint of Tours was celebrating a mass he noticed that his co-celebrant, Saint Brice, was laughing. When the service was done and the archbishop asked him why he had laughed Brice answered that he had observed the devil writing on parchment the conversations of the men and women who were talking throughout the mass. The demon jotted busily, holding the roll in his hand and unfurling it with his teeth until the parchment fell and he struck his head against the wall, which caused Brice to laugh. This colorful tale was for Geoffrey's daughters another example of "how [they] should act humbly and devotedly in church/and not talk or chatter. . . ."<sup>71</sup> One further story of a lady who is punished for "mock[ing] the church and the house of God" by exchanging signs and tokens of love with a squire during mass reinforces the message that churches—particularly during the celebration of mass—should not be houses of casual social interaction.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup>Geoffrey of La Tour Landry, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, trans. William Caxton and ed. M. Y. Offord (London and New York 1971).

<sup>70</sup>Ibid. Chapter 27 may be found on pages 48–49. The section ends: "And thus were they chastised/that fro than forthon/they kepte them from spekyng and langlyng in the tyme of the seruyce of god/wherfore we may wel vnderstonde by this ensample that no persone ought not talk in the chirche ne distourble the seruyse of god."

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 50: "how that ye ouzt to mayntene you humbly and deuoutedly in the Chirche/and not to talke ne iangle. . . ."

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 57: "mocke the chirche and the hows of god."

Yet this is exactly what they were. Dice would be cast in the *chambrier's* home after the Easter meal at Chartres Cathedral.<sup>73</sup> And in a twist on the liturgy at the same church, *alleluia* would not be said during the first vespers of Septuagesima; instead, the choir boys threw a top [*sabot*] into the nave and drove it into the cloister with whips.<sup>74</sup> John Beleth, a twelfth-century rector of the University of Paris, recorded the ancient custom of the *decembrica*, in which bishops and archbishops of some churches (he names Reims specifically) played ball with their clerks in their cloisters. Although these games were permitted, John thought it better to avoid them:

Indeed there are certain churches where even bishops and archbishops play with their clerks in the cloisters, so that they even lower themselves to playing ball. This liberty is called “decembrica” because the ancient custom was practiced by the gentiles so that in this month on account of the liberty priests, monks, and nuns are given festivals followed by meals once the crops have been gathered. Although it is permitted to the great churches (such as Reims) to have this custom of play, nevertheless not to play is considered to be more laudable.<sup>75</sup>

Paolo Santarcangeli notes that labyrinths seem to have been particularly festive areas within the nave, so much so that in 1538 the French Parliament prohibited children from playing games in them since their cries offended the sacrality of the holy places; he speculates that this prohibition was really motivated by the pagan origins of many of the games.<sup>76</sup> Although some of these ball games may have been mere diversions for children and adults alike, others seem to have had a ceremonial function. For example, at Auxerre as late as the early fifteenth century the dean and canons played a game of ball called *pelota*. The

<sup>73</sup>L'Épinois, *Histoire de Chartres* 1.549: “Le jour de Pâques, après le dîner, les chanoines se réunissaient chez le Chambrier pour faire une partie de dés. . . .”

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 550: “On cessait de chanter *Alleluia* aux premières vêpres du dimanche de la Septuagésime, suivant les rubriques de l'église de Chartres. A ce moment, les enfants de chœur lançaient dans la nef un *sabot*, sort de toupie, et le chassaient à grands coups de fouet jusque dans le cloître. Cet usage bizarre existait encore en 1775.”

<sup>75</sup>John Beleth, *Summa de Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, ed. Heriberto Douteil (Turnhout 1976) 223: “Sunt enim quedam ecclesie, ubi in claustris etiam ipsi episcopi uel archiepiscopi cum suis clericis ludunt, ut etiam descendant usque ad ludum pile. Et dicitur hec libertas ideo decembrica, quia antiquitus consuetudo fuit apud gentiles, ut hoc mense pastores et servi et ancille quadam libertate donarentur festa agentes conuiuia post collectas messes. Licet autem magne ecclesie ut Remensis hanc ludendi consuetudinem teneant, tamen non ludere laudabilius esse uidetur.” See also Book VI of Durandus's *Rationale divinorum officiorum* (Rome 1473) 204<sup>r</sup>. Unfortunately, there is no modern Latin edition of this work's later books, only the first four.

<sup>76</sup>Paolo Santarcangeli, *Le livre des labyrinthes: Histoire d'un mythe et d'un symbole*, trans. Monique Lacau (Paris 1974 [1967]) 296.

game took place in the labyrinth into which a novice carried in both hands a ball too large to be carried in one hand. The dean or another high-ranking church official accepted the ball from the novice, held it against his chest with his left hand, and following the musical rhythm sang the litanies of Easter. Thus began a dance around the labyrinth that joined the hands of those present. The dancing ended when the dean threw the ball to each of the dancers. After each canon had his turn, the chapter retired to the refectory for lunch. Thus, at Auxerre each canon's entry into the chapter was punctuated by song, dance, and a communal meal.<sup>77</sup> The game of *pelota* is described in a document from 1412 as *ordinatio de pila facienda*.<sup>78</sup> Might the word *ordinatio* suggest that the clergy saw this game as a rite of inclusion for novice canons?

#### SEXUAL ACTIVITY

Even intimate social exchanges occurred in holy places. The worst excesses could be stamped out officially. Philip Augustus began his reign with an act that prohibited Parisian prostitutes from conducting business in the cemetery of the Holy Innocents.<sup>79</sup> But clandestine dalliance not for money probably was a constant in churches, one of the few dry, relatively protected public places available for couples to use. Margery Kempe seems to have been propositioned by a man in the church of Saint Margaret, and she may have later offered herself to him in the same building.<sup>80</sup> Even monastic space was not free from such abuse; Abelard confesses in his letters to having made love to Heloise in the

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 297–298. Santarcangeli quotes Erwin Mehl's interpretation of this custom. Both believe it has ancient and pre-Christian roots: "Tout dans ce document a un air fort ancien et pré-chrétien: la balle pascale dans un lieu sacré, le labyrinthe dans un temple pris comme lieu de danses (donc, une des formes les plus anciennes, homériques), le chant pascal sur le sacrifice, le relation entre la mort et la résurrection du Christ; le labyrinthe expressément appelé *Daedalum*, donc reconnu comme pré-chrétien; la chaîne des danseurs, le solennel pas de trois (*tripudium*), le repas commun."

<sup>78</sup>Charles DuCange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis* (Graz 1954 [1678]) s.v. "pelota."

<sup>79</sup>R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Oxford 1987) 96.

<sup>80</sup>*The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen (London and New York 1960 [1940]) 49: "In the second year of her temptations it so happened that a man whom she liked said to her on St Margaret's Eve before evensong that, for anything, he would sleep with her and enjoy the lust of his body, and that she should not withstand him, for if he might not have his desire that time, he said, he would have it another time instead—she should not choose. And he did it to test what she would do, but she imagined that he meant it in earnest and said very little in reply. So they parted then and both went to hear evensong. . . . And when evensong was over, she went to the said man, in order that he should have his will of her, as she believed he desired, but he put forward such a pretence that she could not understand his intent, and so they parted for that night."

refectory of the convent at Argenteuil before she had taken the veil.<sup>81</sup> Other cautionary tales warn professed folk against such behavior. Caesarius of Heisterbach tells of the miracle of a nun who may have been propositioned in a church by a clerk; when she attempted to exit the sanctuary for an arranged tryst, she discovered Christ's crucified body blocking each of the doors.<sup>82</sup> Caesarius also records a parallel miracle of a priest who attempted to leave his church with a host in his mouth, hoping that if he kissed a certain woman, the power of the Lord's body would make her succumb to his advances. He too was miraculously prevented from leaving; frightened he would be discovered with the host, he sacrilegiously buried it in a corner of the church. Later he returned to the spot with his confessor, finding not the bread but an image of a man crucified on a cross—a graphic reminder of the power of transubstantiation?<sup>83</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that Geoffrey of La Tour Landry's book of manners to guide his daughters relates riveting *exempla* to warn readers of the divine punishments meted out to those who desecrate churches with sexual activity. One chapter is devoted to the story of Perrot Lenard, a layman from Candé-en-la-Mée, who had sexual relations on an altar with an unnamed woman.<sup>84</sup> Their punishment was to be joined together as “a dog is to a bitch” so that all could witness their crime. Perrot's penance was to mortify his flesh around the church and cemetery for three consecutive Sundays while recounting his tale to onlookers. The following chapter of the *exempla* tells a similar tale, but this time the offending male is Pigière, a monk from Poitou. On a Sunday before mass, a particularly sacred time, the monk and his unidentified partner engaged in intercourse and remained joined until the entire community—including Pigière's uncle—could witness the offense.<sup>85</sup> This was a particularly serious crime since it was a violation not only of space but of time and person as well. Pigière's humiliation was so great that he left the monastic community. Such embarrassing

<sup>81</sup>*The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, trans. with an introduction by Betty Radice (Harmondsworth, England 1974) 146: “After our marriage, when you were living in the cloister with the nuns at Argenteuil and I came one day to visit you privately, you know what my uncontrollable desire did with you there, actually in a corner of the refectory, since we had no where else to go. I repeat, you know how shamelessly we behaved on that occasion in so hallowed a place, dedicated to the most holy Virgin.”

<sup>82</sup>Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum* 2.41–42.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>84</sup>As Dyan Elliott has noted, the original Old French version has the couple *on* the altar whereas Caxton's translation places them *under* it. See Elliott, “Sex in Holy Places: An Exploration of a Medieval Anxiety” *Journal of Women's History* 6 (1994) 6–34.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

anecdotes served didactically to emphasize for his audience of young girls the dangers of inappropriate sex.

An especially dramatic fictional account of the repercussions of sex in sacred places is recorded in the thirteenth-century *Lancelot-Grail*.<sup>86</sup> One Wednesday in Holy Week preceding Easter Sunday the lord of castle Escalon had sex with a maiden in a church.<sup>87</sup> In response to the prayers of a holy hermit to whom the Holy Spirit revealed the sacrilege God struck the lovers dead as they embraced. The church was soon abandoned by the community and the castle plunged into darkness. The only source of light remaining in the castle walls was the glow that hovered over the remains of the holy bodies buried in the cemetery. The church had become a pit of squalor where devils or spirits transported to the nave the corpses of all those who died during the past seventeen years. The description of the cold, dark, and fetid church appears to be an allegory for pre-Christian time that enables the story's hero, Lancelot, to take on a Christ-like importance as he delivers the townspeople of Escalon from darkness:

all the people of the castle . . . were coming up to Lancelot in great excitement and hailing him as joyously as they would have hailed God himself. They were thin and pale, as if they had been in prison (and so, of course, they had), and their eyes were pained by all the light.<sup>88</sup>

The story also contains a powerful message of what life is like for those who have alienated themselves from God. Perhaps it was intended as a metaphor for excommunication. The self-sacrificing love Lancelot has for his woman enables him alone to endure the test of Escalon and proves to be the strength that empowers him to restore the profaned town to God's favor.

La Tour Landry's horrific anecdotes and the fictional tale of Escalon the Dark send a powerful message about the catastrophic consequences of having extra-marital sexual relations in a church. Intercourse between the married, however, raised more complex issues. Recent research on the subject of sex in holy places suggests that from the thirteenth century to the end of the Middle Ages the consensus of canon lawyers was that spouses were obliged to fulfill their marital debt in a

<sup>86</sup>*Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, ed. Norris J. Lacy (New York and London 1993).

<sup>87</sup>Perhaps the virginity of the lord's lover was intended to add to the horror of the act. The lord may have committed a threefold sacrilege by having intercourse in a church with a maiden on the first night of Tenebrae.

<sup>88</sup>*Lancelot-Grail*, 303.



sacred place if ever called upon to do so.<sup>89</sup> This is not to say that all thirteenth-, fourteenth-, and fifteenth-century people who wrote on the subject were in agreement. But marriage and intention could be mitigating factors to such a profanation. Some canonists believed that sex between man and wife polluted holy places less than sex between unmarried people; others believed that conjugal relations did not profane a church at all.<sup>90</sup> Further complicating the issue was the intention of the spouses. Some writers argued that only the exacting party sinned and that the submitting party was sinless. But the thirteenth-century Dominican friar and bishop Albert the Great argued that even the exacting party was sinless if s/he was truly sorry.<sup>91</sup> The most important issue in all of this, however, was the state of the church after the act and whether it should be reconciled or reconsecrated. The story of the cold, dark church and the dolorous townspeople in *Lancelot-Grail* is a stark simile of what it is like to live in a community tainted by the sin of fornication and severed from God.

#### CONCLUSION

Consecration purified and reserved space, theoretically setting it apart from mundane activity and dedicating it to God. The ecclesiastical use of *paradisus*, a word that can also symbolize a realm between heaven and earth, to identify the vestibule or porch of a church suggests that the space to the east (the interior of the church) was heavenly. Certainly Suger agreed with this thinking. Speaking of the dedication of Saint Denis the abbot asserted that those who celebrated in the abbey church felt “as though they were already dwelling, in a degree, in Heaven while they sacrifice[d].”<sup>92</sup> One of the chartrain *Miracles* even refers to Chartres as a *regnum Dei*—a kingdom of God.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Elliott, “Sex in Holy Places,” 14.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>92</sup>*Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and its Art Treasures*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed., trans., and annotated by Erwin Panofsky (Latin text and English translation) (Princeton 1979 [1st ed., 1946]) 44–45: “ac si jam in parte dum sacrificant eorum in coelis sit habitatio. . . .” Also consider Prache’s observation for Chartres: “[t]he exterior passages along the radiating chapels, the tiered arrangement of the bay windows of the crypt, the side aisles and the upper level, the buttresses and piers, the low rooves, the forest of flying buttresses, the balustrades, the monumental doors and the towers come together and give the exterior of the cathedral the image of a city within a city, the image of a town, whose sacred character is revealed in the vast size and wealth of its decoration.” Anne Prache, *Chartres Cathedral*, trans. Janice Abbott (Paris 1993) 73. Prache’s thesis is that the cathedral was supposed to be a reflection of the heavenly Jerusalem on earth.

<sup>93</sup>Kunstmann, *Miracles*, 158.

The west-to-east hierarchy of space seen most clearly in the division of nave/choir/sanctuary could be reinforced by vertical separation of these spaces. At Chartres (as in other churches) height was used to signify sacredness: stairs separated the nave from the choir, the choir from the sanctuary, and the sanctuary from the main altar, the most sacred part of the church. On special days the *sancta camisia* was raised high above all these levels, set upon a great dais under which adoring pilgrims could pass. Both horizontal and vertical axes of churches were manipulated to create hierarchies of reserved and holy places. This was the architectural expression of the clerical ideal.

Yet the reality was very different. Although non-liturgical activities were not always forbidden in churches, they created tension in spaces idealized by the clergy. Naves, porches, and cemeteries appear to have been especially prone to mundane use, though the arrangement of Chartres' choir suggests that this space could be subject to worldly use by clergy as well.

There are various explanations for the mundane use of sacred places. Many pilgrims felt compelled to spend the night near the relics whose sacred energy they hoped to tap. In addition, searching for costly lodging might have been more than many pilgrims could bear. Since they were often the largest buildings around, churches beckoned those who needed large (and preferably enclosed) spaces for legal proceedings. Their central location as well as their immunity from secular taxes made them attractive to merchants who sought a strategic position from which to sell their wares. As the focal points of their towns, churches were often hubs of various kinds of social exchange, and as buildings whose nooks offered privacy in a very public world, these sacred places were sometimes used by lovers yearning to evade prying eyes.

How might we understand this tension? Although the space of the buildings reflected the social division of the clergy from the laity, nevertheless non-devotional activities occurred in both "churches." The clergy promoted one meaning of the church building as liturgical space, but the realities of life demanded that churches deviate from the clerical vision of heavenly Jerusalems. The realities of mundane life encroached on these temples. Treasuries had to be guarded, and the guardians had to be rested and fed. Canons had to be woken up at regular intervals to observe the offices. And buildings had to be protected from people and animals which could compromise their integrity at any given time. The clergy had to be vigilant in defending its territorial conquests against outside threats. Further, the danger might come from within the clerical ranks as is suggested by the story of a Cistercian novice who converted to monastic life for no other reason than to steal from his church's

treasury.<sup>94</sup>

The necessities of life compelled laypeople to compromise the sanctity of church buildings as well. Quests for cheap lodging, avoidance of secular taxation, social exchange, need for sanctuary, healing, and shelter encouraged laypeople to compromise the clerical ideal. As Gurevich has noted, “[t]he vulgarized and frequently distorted tenets of popular Catholicism included also a powerful layer of behaviour patterns, views of the world and ways of thought that had little in common with the tenets taught by the priests.”<sup>95</sup> According to Alexander Murray, there were a number of reasons for this. Generally the poor were so burdened by their labor that they rarely went to church.<sup>96</sup> Even when people managed to attend, the dirty and noisy atmosphere of some churches was often less than ideal for spiritual reflection. The thirteenth-century Dominican preacher Humbert of Romans refers to the pigs, dogs, and other animals that wandered in churches and left nasty messes behind.<sup>97</sup> Chatterers, loiterers, and merchants also disrupted the concentration of worshippers, perpetuating disrespectful behavior by interfering with instruction and offering competing focuses of attention which in the eyes of the clergy compromised the dignity of their consecrated places.<sup>98</sup> Further, pilgrims to holy shrines who had been ill for a long period of time (perhaps even chronically) might know little or nothing about clerical expectations of lay behavior in churches.<sup>99</sup>

The lack of rigid separation between sacred and profane in the Middle Ages complicates and enriches the study of secular use of sacred places. Since the nave was often understood to be shared—or even held—by the laity, the opportunity for and tolerance toward such uses varied. As the Middle Ages wore on, however, sacred and profane gradually became more rigidly defined and clergy sought to differentiate themselves from laity. Chartres engaged in this process when in the late twelfth century the clergy separated themselves from the laity by allowing only clerks or regular clergy (*clericis vel personis regularem*

<sup>94</sup>Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum* 1. 9, “De Priore Claravallis, qui conversus ut aliquid raperet, mirabiliter mutatus est.”

<sup>95</sup>Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. Janos M. Bak and Paul A. Hollingsworth (Cambridge, Eng., New York 1988) 90.

<sup>96</sup>Alexander Murray, “Religion among the Poor in Thirteenth-Century France: The Testimony of Humbert de Romans,” *Traditio* 30 (1974) 302.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, 303, note 99. Speaking about how a heart should be kept clean, Humbert draws an analogy between the cleansing of a heart and a church. “Primum est ut caveatur ne animalia immunda intrent ut porci canes et huiusmodi et hoc sunt grossa peccata.”

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, 301.

*vitam professis*) to live in the cathedral's cloister.<sup>100</sup> Although the chapter complained specifically about jongleurs (*joculatoribus*), gamblers (*aleatoribus*), tavern keepers (*cauponibus*), and loose women (*mulieribus turpibus*) who rented houses in the cloister, it considered any lay ownership of cloister property dangerous on account of the laity's ability to compromise the canons' vision of an upright Christian community.<sup>101</sup> The canons' plan to close the cloister, which they had begun in the eleventh century, was finally realized by the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>102</sup> Chartres, however, was not alone in its attempt to "de-laicize" its cathedral and cloister. The canons' efforts were part of a greater movement that included the architectural and intellectual separation of religious and secular jurisdictions. Although much research needs to be done on this fascinating topic, it seems that these separations were a small part of a transition that signaled the end of an age. Sociologist Mary Douglas remarked years ago that ecclesiastical withdrawal from the secular world into a specialized religious sphere signaled the movement in European history from primitive to modern.<sup>103</sup> The gradual separation of laity from clergy and their sacred spaces might be considered part of a process in which Europe made the transition from the Middle Ages to the early modern period.

Department of History and Political Science  
Iona College  
New Rochelle, New York 10801

<sup>100</sup>CND 1.213–214.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>A. Lecocq, "Historique du cloître Notre-Dame de Chartres," *Mémoires de la Société archéologique d'Eure-et-Loir* 1 (1858) 128.

<sup>103</sup>Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York 1994 [1966]) 93.