4 The charitable gift

Some of the most distinctive types of informal giving practised over the course of the period took the form of testamentary bequests and private donations to the poor. Medieval women and men had long engaged in these types of gift offering in their lifetime or at their death; prompted by conceptions of the merit of good works and by a rigorous system of intercession for the souls of the dead, they bequeathed gifts to the parochial poor and to public institutions – hospitals, leper-houses, almshouses – that could occasionally reach beyond their immediate circle of family or parish of abode, embracing more distant acquaintances and anonymous beneficiaries. By 1500, hundreds of hospitals and almshouses that administered the care to the sick and the elderly, and provided shelter for the traveller or homes for the aged and the physically incapacitated had been founded. In their wills, testators left money to support annual distributions of bread and grains, providing small sums and foodstuff for the ailing and for the maintenance of prisoners. Doorstep alms and face-to-face giving to the poor were part of the routine of monastic life, while distributions of food and alms were organized on obits and feast days of patron saints, at funerals and on the anniversaries of abbots, priors and benefactors of monasteries and hospitals. Almsgiving was also an integral part of annual feasting in the houses of nobles and the gentry, where places for the hungry were reserved at the table and scraps from meals were offered at the gate.[1]

As W. K. Jordan showed many years ago, some of these practices, especially testamentary bequests, flourished in the period following the

[1] Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1987); Orme and Webster, *The English Hospital*, 10–12, 56–64, 93–101; McIntosh, 'Local responses', 213–25; P. H. Cullum and P. J. P Goldberg, 'Charitable provision in late medieval York: "to the praise of God and the use of the poor" ', *Northern History*, 29 (1993), 24–39; Brown, *Popular Piety*, 181–201; Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside*, 99–122; Barbara Harris, *Living and Dying in England 1100–1540: The Monastic Experience* (Oxford, 1993), 7–33; Clark, 'Social welfare and mutual aid', 381–406, esp. 403–6.

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Reformation. Protestantism eliminated prayers and chantries as forms of intercession for testators' souls and severed the powerful links between the living and the dead that characterized much of the piety of late medieval times. Yet the association between the dying scene and charities did not subside, and death continued to be a focal point for charitable giving. In his massive study, Jordan argued that the growth in charitable giving in the century and a half following the Reformation marked a departure from medieval practice, signalling secularization trends in charities and the undertaking of novel forms of social responsibility towards the poor. Jordan's thesis was the target of considerable criticism, and his argument regarding the novelty inherent to the trends he revealed was shown to have been erroneous. Yet, as subsequent contributions to the debate have suggested, for all the faults in a methodology that resulted in exaggerating the scope of the increase, Jordan's assessment of a growth in charitable giving during the period following the Reformation remains sound.[2]

What is less frequently appreciated is the role of charities that Jordan deemed peripheral to his account. Focusing as he did on testamentary bequests that were approved in the Prerogative courts, he minimized the relevance of benefactions and non-recurring gifts made by more modest testators. Although he recognized that such gifts existed, he assumed that they were 'relatively very small and statistically unimportant'.[3] Nor was he aware of the scope of giving practised during the individual's lifetime in more intimate, face-to-face encounters, within the domestic settings or in the vicinity of a house. What emerged from his account was that the period between 1540 and 1660 was distinctive in its lavishly endowed testamentary bequests. A broader assessment of all forms of private gifts that were given at the time of death or during the individual's lifetime – perpetually endowed gifts, but also non-recurring gifts and one-time contributions – indicates that a wide amalgam of gifts and donations, among which the lavishly endowed testamentary bequest was one, persisted and became more vigorous as the period progressed.

[2] Jordan, *Philanthropy in England*, esp. parts 6–7. For the critique of Jordan's thesis, see, among others, W. G. Bittle and R. T. Lane, 'Inflation and philanthropy in England: a re-assessment of W. K. Jordan's data', *Economic History Review*, second series, 29 (1976), 203–10; J. A. F. Thomson, 'Piety and charity in late medieval London', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 16 (1965), 178–95. For a more positive assessment of Jordan's statistics, see J. F. Hadwin, 'Deflating philanthropy', *Economic History Review*, second series, 31 (1978), 105–17; Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, 162–4; Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, 163–5; Archer, 'The charity of early modern Londoners', 224–5.

[3] Jordan, *Philanthropy in England*, 24. See also Hindle, *On the Parish?* 98–9.

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Testamentary bequests

The period following the Reformation witnessed a surge in private donations and bequests to the poor. Initially, this development appears to have been a reaction on the part of individuals and communities to the devastation caused by the closing of monasteries in the aftermath of the Reformation. During the 1550s the foundation of almshouses rose appreciably, and within four decades, a total of 133 new almshouses had been established throughout the country. Increases in testamentary bequests to the poor, including moneys allocated for the distribution of alms and for poor boxes, can also be observed throughout the country, from Sussex and Berkshire in the south, to Gloucestershire in the west, Norfolk in the east and other locations in the north. In London, the upward trend in private giving that accompanied the Reformation persisted through the 1560s and 1570s, when nearly two-thirds of the wealthier testators made contributions to relieve the plight of the poor.[4]

Following a certain slackening during the 1590s,[5] a sustained rise in bequests to the poor was evident in the ensuing decades. After adjusting Jordan's statistics to account for inflation and the cumulative yield of old and new benefactions, historians concluded that his assessment of a growth in charitable giving up to the 1660s was not as far off the mark as some of his critics had claimed. Charles Wilson argued that the aggregate income produced by philanthropic donations between the sixteenth century and throughout the eighteenth grew, although the rate of growth remains uncertain; Paul Slack estimated that when allowing for inflation, the yield of endowments for the poor quadrupled between the 1550s and the 1650s, with a surge in the early decades of the seventeenth century. By the 1650s a total income of approximately £100,000 per annum – probably equalling the peaks of earlier pre-Reformation levels – was produced by charitable gifts throughout the country.[6] These

[4] McIntosh, 'Local responses', 225–8; Susan Bridgen, 'Religion and social obligation in early sixteenth-century London', *Past and Present*, 103 (1984), 104–7; Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1989), 181; Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, 167; Robert Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England* (Oxford, 1998), 135–6; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family*, 116–18; Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 23–5; Schen, *Charity and Lay Piety*, 107–8.

[5] Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, 167, 170–4.

[6] Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, 162–4; Charles Wilson, 'Poverty and philanthropy in early modern England', in Thomas Riis (ed.), *Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe* (Stuttgart and Bruxelles, 1981), 253–71. For local studies indicating a growth in charitable bequests, see also Connie S. Evans, '"An echo of the multitude": the intersection of governmental and private poverty initiatives in early modern Exeter', *Albion*, 32 (2000), 418, where it is shown that in Exeter an increase can be observed in average annual bequests from the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth centuries, from £17 to £22 p.a.

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bequests included many large perpetual gifts that produced annual returns upon application, thus generating the creation of a large number of charitable trusts that ensured their continuity over the years. Arrangements for the transmittal of the endowed gift to trustees varied, and sometimes included the transfer of funds to be invested in properties, annual rents from private properties or the establishment of revolving loans for targeted objectives specified by donors in their wills. The creation of trusts was reinforced by the Elizabethan Statute of Charitable Uses (1601), which defined the proper objectives of charities for the poor and appointed Charity Commissioners to review disputed trusts.[7] By 1660, no less than 10,000 trusts had been established in the form of self-perpetuating groups and individuals, parish or municipal officers, guilds, universities and hospitals. Nor did the number of trusts slump in the ensuing decades, as Jordan believed. Paul Slack estimates that between 1660 and 1740, charitable trusts had doubled and possibly even grown three-fold. The charitable trust that played such a major role in Jordan's account of the philanthropic endeavour up to the 1660s appears to have been a distinctive mark of large testamentary bequests well into the final decades of the seventeenth century and the early eighteenth.[8]

Many testamentary bequests did not come in the form of perpetual gifts and charitable trusts, but rather as one-time gifts to the poor. Jordan's sample of will makers was dominated overwhelmingly by a small group of wealthy donors who established perpetual gifts and charitable trusts, and only a minority of his testators came from the ranks of artisans, husbandmen, labourers or women (15 per cent).[9] Subsequent research focused on wills that were proved in the minor courts (Consistory courts, Archdeaconry and other local courts), and on charitable giving at death among wider sections of the population. The findings indicate that while levels of participation among these groups were smaller, the practice of bequeathing small, non-recurring gifts at the time of death was common and ingrained in rural and urban communities throughout the mid-seventeenth century and in many places beyond (Table 4.1). In London in the 1570s, 61.9 per cent of testators whose wills were proven in the Prerogative Court of

[7] Jordan, *Philanthropy in England*, 117–25; Evans, 'An echo of the multitude', 20–2; Gareth Jones, *History of the Law of Charity, 1532–1827* (Cambridge, 1969), 16–56. About 80% of charitable funds in Jordan's sample were in the form of charitable trusts. In Exeter between 1558 and 1625, half of the bequests were in the form of endowments.
[8] Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 129 and n. 14.
[9] Jordan, *Philanthropy in England*, 378, 382, tables viii and ix.

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Table 4.1. *Proportions making bequests to the poor in collections of wills, 1350–1750*

	Prerogative courts	Lesser courts	All courts	Numbers
York, 1350–1500			25.0	
Salisbury, 1450–1545			25.0	(196)
South-West, 1520–9	20.0			
South-West, 1560–9	43.0			
London, 1594–7	53.9	23.5	38.9	(487)
Bristol, 1565–95	51.5	20.4	37.9	(90)
Yorkshire, 1500–1650		10.0	10.0	(43)
Suffolk, 1630s		18.0	18.0	(200)
Hall, 1520–1640			c. 40.0	
Leeds, 1520–1640			c. 25.0	
Gloucestershire, 1590–1615		31.0	31.0	(70)
Gloucestershire, 1641–90		7.6	7.6	(23)
London, 1660–1730			30.3	(55)
London-aldermen, 1690–1719	67.4			(30)
Helmdon, Norths. 1603–1760		16.6	16.6	(15)
Worcestershire, 1676–1775		6.8	6.8	(11)

Sources: Brown, *Popular Piety*, 198–9, table 15, and n.66; Cullum and Goldberg, 'Charitable provision', 24–39; Whiting, *The Blind Devotion*, 181, Appendix 2, graph 1; Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, 170–4; Wadley, *Notes or Abstracts*; Patrick McGrath and Mary E. Williams (eds.), *Bristol Wills 1546–1593* (typescript of the wills proved in the Consistory Court of Bristol, Bristol Record Society, 1975); Coster, 'Kinship and inheritance', 9; Evans (ed.), *The Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*; Claire Cross, 'The Development of Protestantism in Leeds and Hull 1520–1640', *Northern History*, 18 (1982), 230–8; Dan Beaver, ' "Sown in dishonour, raised in glory": death, ritual and social organization in northern Gloucestershire, 1590–1690', *Social History*, 17 (1992), 411, table 4; E. Parry, 'Helmdon wills, 1603–1760', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 5 (1975), 235–42; Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class*, 316–19; Donna Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, 1989), 46–7; J. A. Johnston, 'The probate inventories and wills of a Worcestershire parish 1676–1775', *Midland History*, 1 (1971), 31–2.

Canterbury made charitable bequests, but among their counterparts in the lesser courts during the same decade, the proportion of individuals leaving gifts for the poor was still about one-third – the same as the percentage leaving gifts for the poor a century earlier.[10] In Bristol during the late sixteenth century, over half of its mercantile groups and wealthy traders whose wills were registered in the Great Orphan Book

[10] Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, 170–4.

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left charitable bequests, while among testators in its Consistory Court – with representatives from among artisans and small traders in the city parishes as well as husbandmen from rural areas surrounding it – nearly a fifth made some charitable gifts. In other rural areas – Suffolk in the 1630s, Northamptonshire villages and Yorkshire parishes in the first half of the seventeenth century – up to a fifth bequeathed modest donations for the local poor (Table 4.1).[11]

These bequests, often not exceeding 20s or 30s and sometimes less, involved no arrangement for the perpetuation of the gift, but rather were intended for immediate use or within a specified time span; 'to be distributed half at my death and half at Christmas following', as one testator put it. In 36 wills containing charitable gifts (out of 200 wills) that were proved by the Archdeaconry Court of Suffolk in the early 1630s, only 4 were endowments (and only one of these involved the large sum of £100). The vast majority consisted of legacies of £1 or £2 and up to several pounds that were distributed to the local poor; 'to the increase of the town stock ... to the use and benefit of the poor', 'to the poor widows and aged people of the town', as stated in many of these wills.[12] In parishes throughout London, this type of relatively modest and non-perpetual gift continued to supplement resources for the aid of the poor year after year throughout the century. In Allhallows the Great in 1618, for example, three legacies were received from deceased parishioners who left the parish £1, 7s and £5, respectively. During the following year a bequest of £4 was left to the parish, and subsequent years witnessed a similar level of annual legacies, throughout the mid- and later part of the century. In St. Dunstan in the West, the small 'casual' legacy 'given to the poor presently' regularly supplemented the various sums accrued by rents and annuities, voluntary collections and obligatory rates. In 1620, annuities from several gifts totalled £45 and half a dozen one-time legacies came to £12.[13] In other parishes, the pattern of a trickle of one-time legacies and gifts repeated itself year after year, through 1700 and beyond.

Various relief projects were favoured by testators, from the founding and support of schools and hospitals, to aiding the church, provision of apprenticeships and loan stocks to young traders, and the bestowal of

[11] See also Hindle, *On the Parish?* 126; Keith Wrightson and David Levine, 'Death in Wickham', in Walter and Schofield (eds.), *Famine, Disease and the Social Order*, 164.

[12] Evans, *The Wills of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury*, 52. Widowed women were more inclined to engage with the care of the local poor, and were slightly more likely than men to make minor, non-endowed charitable bequests. Erickson, *Women and Property*, 211–12.

[13] GL, MS 818/1, fol. 6; MS 2968/2, fols. 177–88.

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aid to prisoners, workhouses or municipal improvement.[14] This channelling of bequests to public institutions notwithstanding, the novelty of patterns of testamentary giving was less striking than Jordan had deemed. Two objectives of relief, both of which were familiar and common already in pre-Reformation times, were prominent, namely, support for the parochial poor, and the founding and supporting of almshouses. A typical donor of this sort was Lady Ann Potter, who in 1614 bequeathed to the Brewers' Company in London the sum of £100, of which 40s were to be paid in annual pensions to the almswomen at Islington (founded several years earlier in 1609), and an additional 20s was allocated for the poor in the parishes of St. Sepulchre without Newgate and St. Giles Cripplegate.[15] In the 1590s, more than half of the wealthier testators in London designated bequests to support the parochial poor and almshouses, and in early seventeenth-century Exeter, the majority of testators with endowed charities made similar contributions (45 per cent for almshouses and 38 per cent for the parochial poor).[16] The records of London parishes throughout the mid- and late seventeenth century do indeed attest to the continued reliance of many parishes on endowments and one-time legacies, where a third and sometimes nearly half of the moneys accrued for the use of the poor came from both these types of testamentary gifts. In some poverty-stricken parishes along the Thames – Allhallows the Great, for example – testamentary bequests constituted the bulk of the money expended on the poor as late as the 1680s and 1690s, while in wealthier parishes – St. Dunstan in the West, for example – annuities and one-time legacies still comprised near half of their expenses on aid for the poor in 1680. In St. James Garlickhithe half of the sums received for the aid of the impoverished in 1680 came from non-perpetual and perpetual gifts.[17] In

[14] Jordan, *Philanthropy in England*, 254–97, 368, table I; Evans, '"An echo of the multitude"', 418–21; Archer, 'The charity of early modern Londoners', 232.

[15] *Report of the Charity Commissioners* (vol. 8, 1823), 306. The gift (between £3 and £4) was distributed to the almswomen and the poor of the two parishes throughout the seventeenth century and up to the 1730s. GL, MS 5442/5-12.

[16] Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, 164; Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, 170–5; Evans, 'An echo of the multitude', 420–1.

[17] See Chapter 3, Table 3.1, for legacies in St. Dunstan in the West and St. Bride Fleet Street. In Allhallows the Great in 1640, £45 of the money received for the poor was in the form of legacies, which constituted near half of the parish expenses on relief in that year; in 1660 £16 were legacies, and in 1680 and 1700 slightly higher amounts (£19 and £20) were obtained. In St. James Garlickhithe in the years 1620, 1640, 1660 and 1680, between £20 and £30 were legacies; in Allhallows Lombard Street in these sample years, similar amounts were obtained (between £19 and £33), which came to half of the amount collected through the rates. GL, MS 818/1, fols. 142–5, 202–7, 250–3, 312–14; MS 4810/1, fol. 201–2; MS 4810/2, fols. 40, 70; MS 4051/1, fols. 27–9, 98–100, 181–7, 301.

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other places across the country, the heavy reliance on testamentary bequests for the poor at least up to 1660 and in many places beyond that time, was no less marked. In Exeter by 1625 charitable bequests comprised more than half of the expenditures of the city on its poor; in some rural parishes in mid-seventeenth-century Warwickshire, these gifts supported similar proportions of the parishioners who obtained relief. In Bristol throughout the century following 1680, endowed charities for the parish poor – doles of clothing, bread, coal and money – far outnumbered all endowments made for other charitable purposes during that period.[18]

Many of these gifts also involved support for the elderly and the founding of almshouses, whose numbers continued to rise in the course of the period. In London, the number of new institutions for the aged rose from 41 in 1599 to at least 100 by 1700, that is, from an average of 2.5 foundations per decade in the mid- and late sixteenth century, to 6.2 per decade throughout the seventeenth – and probably more.[19] Livery companies in London played a key role in the founding of new almshouses with the money obtained from their wealthy members and benefactors. The Haberdashers built three almshouses, two in the provinces and one in the capital, in the course of the seventeenth century. Of the five companies examined in this study, by the year 1700 two (the Brewers and Fishmongers) were running six almshouses, five of which were in Wales, Berkshire and Kent.[20] All these new foundations were built in the early and middle decades of the seventeenth century, but the intensive pace of new foundations for the aged in London

[18] Evans, 'An echo of the multitude', 416, 425; Hindle, *On the Parish?* 128; Gorsky, *Patterns of Philanthropy*, 48–56.

[19] McIntosh, 'Local responses', 222–3; Jordan, *Philanthropy in England*, 263; Geoffrey Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain, 1830–1990* (Oxford, 1994), 62, where figures are given based on Sampson Low's directory *The Charities of London* (1861), which stated that 640 institutions existed in that date in London, of which 103 had been founded by 1700, and 114 between 1700 and 1800. This would suggest 62 new foundations between 1600 and 1700. Assuming that not all foundations dating from the seventeenth century survived into the nineteenth, this figure is minimal. See also Slack's contention that the legislation's encouragement of charitable trusts accounts for the number of almshouse foundations, Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, 165; Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 129.

[20] The almshouses founded by the Brewers were in Islington (Owen's charity, 1609); Aldenham, Hertfordshire (Platt's charity, 1599), South Mimms, Middlesex (Hickson's charity, 1686). The Fishmongers' foundations were in Bray, Berkshire (Goddard's charity, 1609), St. Peters, Surrey (Hunt's charity, 1615) and Harrietsham in Kent (Mark Quested charity, 1642).

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appears to have persisted throughout the early and middle decades of the eighteenth century.[21]

By the late seventeenth century, the profile of testators who made bequests at their death began to change and assumed more distinctly urban features. While among rural and more modest urban testators deathbed legacies dwindled and gradually diminished, among their wealthy urban counterparts, first and foremost in London, far greater persistence in testamentary bequests can be observed. In rural areas in Worcestershire, for example, only 6.8 percent of village testators made bequests to the poor in the later decades of the century and through the mid-eighteenth. In north Gloucestershire, where in the early seventeenth century about a third of testators made bequests, only 4 per cent bequeathed charitable giving at death in the years between 1660 and 1690 (Table 4.1) At the same time, amongst all of London's testators, a third was still making bequests in the decades following 1660, only a slight decline in comparison to the nearly 40 per cent of a century earlier. Among the most prosperous Londoners, moreover, continuity and even increase in testamentary bequests to the poor can be observed. Richard Grassby's study of charitable bequests among London's business community throughout the period between 1580 and 1740 indicates that the proportion of major charitable donors 'remained fairly constant in successive cohorts at 46 to 47 per cent'. Among the wealthiest group of businessmen worth £50,000 and above no less than 73 per cent made major bequests and only 14 left no charitable gifts.[22]

The association of great wealth with testamentary bequests for the poor and the prominence of wealthy individuals who left large fortunes for charitable projects continued to dominate the urban charitable scene well into the mid- and late eighteenth century. Famous examples were John Radcliffe, a prosperous physician and benefactor of Oxford University, Thomas Guy, a printer who bequeathed his estate for the foundation of a hospital in London in 1727, and Edward Colston, a merchant who endowed a school and became one of the celebrated philanthropists in early eighteenth-century Bristol. In mid-century London, 14 out of 35 wealthy donors continued to leave large bequests for the support of a host of charitable projects, including apprenticeships, aid for the parish poor, schools and the new hospitals. Thomas Edward Freeman, a financier and a member of Parliament, left large

[21] See n. 19 above. See also Ottaway, *The Decline of Life*, 212–13.

[22] Grassby, *Kinship and Capitalism*, 260. By the early nineteenth century, when only 13% of legacies in London left sums of money for charitable causes, most large wills still included some provision and cash gifts to charity. See Keir Waddington, *Charity and the London Hospitals* (Woodbridge, 2000), 40.

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sums of money for the Lock Hospital and Middlesex Hospital, as well as for a local school and several charitable societies.[23] In provincial towns and urban areas outside London – in the south and the east as well as in the north – benefactions and charitable bequests continued to loom large. Steven King's study shows that in some urban areas in the south, charitable benefactions constituted a substantial (up to 40 per cent) proportion of local expenditures dedicated to the alleviation of poverty throughout the 1770s, when they began to decline. In urban communities in the north, the charities that were accrued over hundreds of years were still incremented in the mid- and late eighteenth century with new benefactions from prosperous individuals. In small towns in Cumberland and Lancashire, the latter left hundreds of pounds for the local poor. In large provincial centres the continued role of the endowed gift was equally evident. In Bristol, endowed charities that were entrusted to the parishes, the corporation, and dissenting congregations, continued to sustain resources for the relief of poverty throughout the final decades of the eighteenth century, when they were gradually diverted towards the new types of subscription charities. Moreover, there was an increase in the legacies given in the form of lump sums, and their contribution alongside subscriptions to the new charitable projects remained substantial. The Bristol infirmary, established in 1737, relied on both legacies and subscriptions at roughly the same proportions throughout the late eighteenth century and beyond.[24]

Lifetime gifts

About a third of the charities reviewed by W. K. Jordan across his 10 selected counties were what he called 'living gifts', that is, gifts created during the lifetime of donors.[25] For the most part, these charities included large perpetual gifts that became trusts, and their donors included some wealthy benefactors who endowed large portions of their wealth during their lifetimes. For example, William Gee, one of Hull's greatest philanthropists in the early seventeenth century who upon his death

[23] Paul Langford, *Public Life and Propertied Englishmen 1689–1789* (Oxford, 1991), 491; Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, 78–9, where it is also estimated that bequests accounted for about 20% of the annual income of the new charities in the mid-eighteenth century. See also King, *Poverty and Welfare*, 173, 217.

[24] King, *Poverty and Welfare*, 172–3, 217; Gorsky, *Patterns of Philanthropy*, 44–5 and Appendix 2, 238–41, which indicates that between 1742 and 1750, 38.8% of the Bristol infirmary's income came from subscriptions and 39.1% from legacies; in 1771–80, 38.5% were in the form of subscription and 34.8% in legacies.

[25] Jordan, *Philanthropy in England*, 24.

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established a fund to supply corn to the poor, during his lifetime donated £300 for rebuilding the Hall Grammar School as well as £1000 for a hospital for the elderly poor. Thomas Ferries, Gee's contemporary in Hull, left large sums for poor relief and municipal improvement when he died, but during his lifetime had already founded a hospital. In Dorchester all of the leading benefactors – the Goulds, Richard Parkins and Margaret Chubb – contributed lavishly during their lives to several relief projects in the town, including a new hospital for orphans and a municipal brewhouse. Margaret Chubb, who in her will left a large sum for the Dorchester almshouse, had endowed it several years before she died.[26]

Living gifts did not only take the form of perpetual gifts, but were also presented in cash, food and alms that – like the small legacies discussed earlier – largely eluded Jordan's net. Parish records are interspersed with these types of gifts that were intermittently recorded alongside the annuities, legacies and the church collections for the use of the poor. An examination of several London parishes shows that these donations varied considerably between and within parishes; in some years, notably during plagues and dearth, relatively large contributions were amassed, while in other years few or no contributions were recorded. In St. Peter Westcheap, for example, there were no donations in the sampled years 1610, 1620, 1630, 1640 and 1645, but during the harsh winters of 1647–49, four gifts were offered to the parish, including £200 'of an unknown charitable person to be bestowed upon a house', and another £50 from 'Mr. Roger Drake, being the gift for the poor of this parish'. In St. Mary Aldermanbury small contributions appeared randomly in various years prior to 1660, but during the plague of 1665, £10 were the gift 'of several parishioners for and towards the relief of the poor', and £15 were given by Thomas Smith, Esq. of which a third was directed to people 'as he appointed' and the remainder for the parish poor.[27] In St. Bride Fleet Street only one gift was recorded in a sample of 15 years between 1640 and 1710.[28] Yet other parishes experienced far more regular income of small donations, and in some years these yielded large amounts. In Allhallows the Great, 'benevolences for the poor' appeared

[26] Cross, 'The development of Protestantism', 237; Underdown, *Fire from Heaven*, 44–5, 110–15. For lifetime philanthropy in the sixteenth century, see Robert Tittler, 'Sir Thomas White of London: civic philanthropy and the making of the merchant-hero', in *Townspeople and Nation: English Urban Experiences, 1540–1640* (Stanford, 2001), 100–20.

[27] GL, MS 645/2-3, fols. 85, 91; MS 3556/2, no fols. For distributions during the crisis years of the 1590s, when large sums (for coals, meat and bread) were given to the poor of Westminster parishes and to poor households in Southwark, see Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, 179–80.

[28] GL, MS 6552/1-5.

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in all the sample years between 1610 and 1660, while in St. Dunstan in the West the influx of contributions appeared nearly every year between 1620 and 1660, with several years yielding a total of £10 and up to £20.[29] In both these parishes, crisis years witnessed spurts of contributions and gifts. During the plague year of 1625, 26 parishioners in St. Dunstan in the West gave the parish between £1 and £2 each, and in Allhallows Lombard Street 18 parishioners donated between 5s and up to £5 each for the relief of their poor. When in the aftermath of the plague in 1665 the poor rates as well as church and sacrament collections dropped to no more than a few pounds in Allhallows the Great, a total of £26 came from eight individual donors.[30] A more regular influx of gifts in these parishes was sustained by individuals who contributed for several consecutive years, normally around the Christmas season, so that the parish was secured with a sort of voluntary 'subscription' donated by the more prosperous parishioners for several years.[31] In parishes across the country, these types of casual lifetime gifts continued to supplement parochial resources for the aid of needy persons and the elderly poor well into the late seventeenth century and early decades of the eighteenth.[32]

London's hospitals also benefited from these types of benevolences.[33] In Christ's Hospital, one of four royal hospitals re-established following the Reformation, lifetime gifts and benevolences supplemented the

[29] In Allhallows the Great, a typical year was 1634, during which contributions were received from 'Mr Draper for the use of the poor', from Lady Midleton, Mr. Browning, Mr. Webb ('for the poore at two several times'), and from 'a gentleman unknown'. From 1660 onwards similar donations were received but less frequently. In 1678 a small gift was received 'for the poor for sea coles', and in 1690 another donor furnished the parish with £6 for the use of the poor. GL, MS 818/1-2. For St. Dunstan in the West, see MS 2968/2-4.

[30] GL, MS 2968/2, fols. 291–2; MS 4051/1, fols. 41–3. In Allhallows the Great in 1665/6, the poor rates dropped to £3 4s and the voluntary collections to £2 15s 8d. MS 818/1, fol. 211.

[31] In Allhallows the Great, five men gave the parish sums ranging between 10s and 15s every Christmas during the years 1616–25. In St. Dunstan in the West in 28 October 1620, Richard Watson, a silkman, gave the parish 20s which were distributed to 40 poor people 'the same day by 6d a piece'; between 1635 and 1640, Dr. Marsh gave the parish the annual sum of 20s for the poor. GL, MS 818/1, fols. 1, 6, 9, 18, 37; MS 2968/2, fol. 161; MS 2968/3, fols. 421, 496, 583, 590, 625.

[32] Hindle, *On the Parish?* 128–9; Ottaway, *The Decline of Life,* 215–16.

[33] Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 19–23. For the initial lack of enthusiasm, in the post Reformation decades, for endowing these institutions, see Claire Schen, 'Strategies of poor aged women and widows in sixteenth-century London', in Lynn Botelho and Pat Thane, *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500* (Harlow, 2001), 19; for the greater interest in the hospitals, among wealthier Edwardian citizens, see Archer, 'The charity of early modern Londoners', 232.

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hospital's income year after year, throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Donors included not only relatives of the children admitted to the hospital and the governors of the hospital themselves, but also other prominent members of the elite – deans and Archdeacons, aldermen, bailiffs, dukes, countesses – as well as widows, grocers, merchants and those who desired that their names (and sometimes their titles) remained 'unknown'.[34] Gifts also came from the parishes, or were forwarded from ward boxes and London streets, or dispatched from distances 'beyond the seas'.[35] Most of the donations were small, ranging between a few shillings up to about £10, but some were exceptionally large, reaching £50, £100 and more. In 1610 a widow named Mrs. Ann Chamberlayne gave the hospital a gift of £80, and in 1640 Dame Rebecca Rumney donated £400 to the hospital 'for the maintenance of ten children which the said lady is to prefer during her life'.[36] Some individuals donated annually, as in the case of the 'gentlemen of Grays Inn', who from the 1590s through the 1610s donated the sum of £1 10s every year. Another example is that of Ann Harvey, a gentlewoman from Bedfordshire, who contributed the annual sum of £5 to the hospital between 1635 and 1650, forming an on-going commitment between herself and the hospital.[37]

Lifetime gifts constituted only a small fraction of the hospital's income, which was made up largely from annuities, endowments and properties, as well as city tolls, parish collections (up to the 1620s), and various non-recurring legacies.[38] But the lifetime benevolences were a viable source that at times supplemented the hospital's income with hundreds of pounds, and in some years they equalled the amounts that came in the form of legacies. As Table 4.2 indicates, in some years the volume of lifetime gifts lagged behind the yield from several legacies left for 'the poor children harboured in Christ Hospital', as was the case in 1620 or 1690. But in most years the gap between the volume of legacies and that of lifetime benevolences was small, and at times the yield from lifetime contributions was higher than the income from the testamentary

[34] In 1620, 'a gentleman unknown for his benevolence', and a 'person unknown' gave £2 to the hospital; in 1635 'certain worthy persons unknown' gave £100 'for the relief of the poor in this house'; in 1650 £10 were received from 'a worthy gentleman that doth not desire to be known'. GL, MS 12819/4, 230; MS 12819/6, 60; MS 12819/7, 20. For the founding and administration of Christ's Hospital, see Manzione, *Christ's Hospital*.

[35] The parish of St. Martin Ludgate sent a donation of 17s in 1610; the gift 'beyond the seas' was received in 1635.

[36] GL, MS 12819/3, no fols.; MS 12819/6, 40.

[37] GL, MS 12819/2-3; MS 12819/6-7.

[38] See also Manzione, *Christ's Hospital*, 77–95; Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, 159.

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Table 4.2. *Lifetime gifts and legacies, Christ's Hospital, London (nearest £)*

	Lifetime gifts	Legacies
1610	112	426
1620	41	958
1640	457	431
1650	115	207
1660	390	116
1670	451	110
1680	514	2786
1690	35	5863[a]
1700	291	915
1719	302	1050
1729	72	332
1734	400	630

Note:
[a] Includes two gifts of £4000 and £1000.
Source: GL, MS 12819/2-15.

bequests. In 1640, the total income from benevolences was £457, the bulk of which (£400) came from a single donor and the remainder from 10 additional individuals. In 1660, 10 people contributed more equally (with sums varying between £10 and £100 each) and the total reached £390; in 1670 the total of £451 was gathered from benevolences, including 10 gifts and funds from poor boxes in the hospital and other places 'being the charity of sundrey persons'. These types of lifetime 'benevolences', which formed a part of the resources of Christ's Hospital, became ever more evident in the maintenance of a variety of charitable projects, including the new hospitals that emerged in the early and mid-eighteenth century.[39]

Household charities

An abundance of lifetime gifts circulated in the domestic settings of private households rather than in parishes, municipalities or guilds. The wellspring of such largesse was open hospitality, whereby large amounts

[39] Gorsky, *Patterns of Philanthropy,* 60. The income of Bristol's infirmary in 1742–50 was comprised of subscriptions (38.8%), legacies (39.1%) and sundry donations (11.4%). Ten years later on, donations rose to over a third of the income while legacies dropped to about a tenth.

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of food and drink were proffered to tenants and neighbours in the large houses of the gentry. The origins of these practices go back to medieval times and to exchanges that allowed the villein who brought his gift to the lord's house to obtain, in return, food and drink at the lord's expense. Throughout the early modern era, special feasts were organized during the Christmas season, in the course of which tenants and poorer neighbours were treated in the house of the lord, often bringing in their own gifts and presents. The poor who arrived from outside and passers-by were occasionally allowed in the house as well.[40] Other times of the year also witnessed distributions to the poor by the landed elite; in some large houses meals and alms were offered on a regular basis and a stream of carters, ordinary tenants and the local poor were provided with food and remains of meals at the gates or kitchen doors most of the year. Throughout much of the period it was considered the special obligation of the landed elite to relieve their poorer tenants following periods of dearth, and some houses distributed food on a large scale, with the poor who resorted to their gates being fed every day of the week. Elsewhere the landlords sold their grains at their homes or sent them to the local markets, in years of crisis, at low prices. Among the higher clergy, hospitality to the outsider and the poor was an integral part of the daily routine, and scraps at the kitchen door were handed out well into the late seventeenth century and beyond.[41]

Domestic celebrations that were associated with the life cycle also yielded gift offering to the poor. Some large weddings witnessed the offering of doles by the bridal party or the newlyweds who passed through the church and bestowed their largesse on the poor.[42] The distribution of doles at funerals – so characteristic of the piety of late medieval donors – remained common, and especially large distributions could be observed in many places. In late sixteenth-century London, hundreds and thousands of poor people were provided with bread following funerals of members of the elite. Thereafter the distribution of doles could be sporadically observed in some London parishes, occasionally in conjunction with special distributions of food in times of dearth.[43] In the parish of St. Dunstan in the West, the sum of £5 10s was received in 1632 from Josiah Harris at the burial of his wife 'for the poor'; and following the harsh winter of 1648 20s were given by

[40] Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, 68–9, 74–5, 176, 187–8. For an analysis of these gift offering, see also Chapter 6.
[41] Walter, 'The social economy', 107 and n. 91; Hindle, *On the Parish?* 104–6, 114.
[42] Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, 367.
[43] *Ibid.*, 443–9; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 275–6, 287–8, 293–4; Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, 169, 175; Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, 372–5.

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Mr. Thomas Edward 'to be presently distributed to poor widows and other poore people of this parish by 12d a piece at the funeral of his wife'. The same year the records show another gift for poor people whom the donor appointed at the funeral of his wife, as was the gift, in 21 November, of Lady de la Chamber who distributed 25 dozen loaves of bread among the poor of the parish following the funeral of her husband. Gifts of funeral doles continued to come into the hands of churchwardens.[44] In other places the poor received alms of bread, money, as well as broth and meat, throughout the mid- and late seventeenth century. In 1689, the costs for the funeral of the wife Morris Claver, a physician in Wells, included £1 for a 'dole to the poore of Wells'.[45]

As festive liberality assumed more private features and the daily meals in large houses became more socially confined, the incorporation of the poor within the halls of large houses dwindled. A slow and gradual decline in the custom of distribution of funeral doles can also be observed.[46] Nonetheless, household charities among the gentry and prosperous elite continued to circulate, taking more diversified forms that could include sumptuous displays of generosity towards tenants during the Christmas season, but also more modest handouts throughout the year. These types of gifts were delivered within segregated spaces or in the vicinity of large houses, taking the form of offering via intermediaries or in response to letters of request rather than through face-to-face encounters and feasts. Sir Richard Grosvenor, a Puritan gentleman in Cheshire in the early seventeenth century, spent little on open hospitality, but dispersed small amounts of money to poor and needy people in his locality and beyond, throughout the year. He had a strong aversion to sumptuous entertainment; 'suffer not your butlery and seller to bee converted into an alehowse and taverne for men to swill and drink themselves drunken', he advised his son. But like others of his social position with contacts across the locality – upper and lesser gentry, as well as neighbouring yeomen – he acquired a reputation as one of the local worthies, and deemed the giving of charities to the 'truly poore' an imperative and an obligation.[47]

[44] GL, MS 2968/3, fol. 425; MS 2968/4, fols. 95–6, 417; MS 818/1, fol. 200.
[45] Edmund Hobhouse (ed.), *The Diary of a West Country Physician A.D. 1684–1726* (London, 1934), 143. See also Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 288; Hindle, *On the Parish?* 122.
[46] Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, 140–92; Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales*, 286–9; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 446–9; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family*, 288–9, 293–4; Hindle, *On the Parish?* 121–3. See also Whyman, *Sociability and Power*, 89–91; Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven and London, 1998), 195–6, 203.
[47] Cust (ed.), *The Papers of Sir Richard Grosvenor*, 32.

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His account book shows little spending on lavish hospitality, but instead records casual distributions of small sums of moneys. During the summer months of 1636 he gave various sums to 'poor women', to the 'poor of Cheshire' 'diverse wives', 'our parson', to 'poor Sir Michael Grene', to 'poor people' and to a 'poor minister coming out of Virginia'. Some of the gifts were made in response to a 'request' or at the 'intreaty of divers wives in the towne'; still others involved the distribution of small sums to a host of servants and maids, newlyweds, carriers and workmen who came to his house.[48] On the Naworth estate of Mr. Charles Howard in Cumberland, the steward recorded contributions to the poor throughout the late 1640s and early 1650s under the separate subheading of 'rewards and given to the poor'. The many gifts were comprised of small and larger amounts. In 1648 a total of £12 was distributed 'at the gate' to wounded soldiers and other poor individuals on three separate occasions (in November and twice during the Easter season). In addition, small sums of 1s or 2s were offered to a 'poor woman', to the 'poor at Carlisle' (dispatched via an intermediary) and to soldiers 'with a pass' from the governor of Carlisle. When during the turbulent months of 1648 Cromwell's soldiers were quartered on the estate, the sum of £2 was distributed in the hall to 60 prisoners upon petition 'to my lady'. Like Sir Richard Grosvenor, Charles Howard distributed rewards for a variety of services performed by maids and servants who came to the house and during visits he made elsewhere.[49] Similar types of offering at the door, to 'boys boxes' and to 'Christmas boxes', and upon letters of request appear in other diaries well into the 1700s. In 1709 Timothy Burrell, a Sussex gentleman, resolved to give to the poor 'who apply for it at the door on Sundays', beef, wheat and barely, 'as long as the dearth of provisions continues'.[50] Distributions for the poor in the vicinity of

[48] *Ibid.*, 64, 66, 68, 71, 75.

[49] C. Roy Hudleston (ed.), *Naworth Estate and Household Accounts 1648–1660* (Surtees Society, Durham, vol. 168, 1958), Introduction, 31–2, 94–5.

[50] Robert Willis Blencowe (ed.), *Extracts from the Journal and Account-Book of Timothy Burrell, Esq.* (Sussex Archaeological Collections, vol. 3, 1850), 159. Burrell also recorded the distributions of moneys and foods 'to the poor of the parish', and 'to the poor at Christmas' throughout the 1690s and the 1700s; he responded to petitions and requests for help that came from further afield (in 1705, he sent 1s 6d to a lame person from Hereford as well as 5s to 'a poor man' for treatment and travel costs to St. Bartholomew's Hospital). He also gave various moneys to briefs and sacrament collections, to 'boys' boxes' and 'Christmas boxes'. For Christmas boxes, see also Munby, *Early Stuart Household Accounts*, x; for distributions of food, *Cavalier and Puritan in the Days of the Stuarts: Compiled from the Private Papers and Diary of Sir Richard Newdigate ... by lady Newdigate* (London, 1901), 201.

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large houses, especially in times of dearth, remained common practice well into the mid-and late eighteenth century.[51]

Other account books indicate various types of handouts that flowed below the landed elite, among women and men in urban business communities as well as yeomen and clergymen in the rural countryside. Anne Archer, the daughter of a London alderman and wife of Henry Archer of Coopersale, Essex, kept household accounts between 1600 and 1630 in which she meticulously recorded not only various handouts – marriage presents and money to named individuals – but also money offered 'to the poor', or 'given at the faire', all amounting to between several shillings and up to £3 annually. In some years, several amounts were recorded every month, with larger and more lavish sums becoming evident during the Christmas season. Joyce Jefferies, a spinster and business woman who was engaged in extensive lending and borrowing in early seventeenth-century Hereford, dispensed similar amounts between the years 1638 and 1642. Her accounts for 1638 show numerous gifts to widows, poor women, 'poor wonderers', prisoners, 'a blind man', 'the poor at the Minster church', various gifts to her cousin, goddaughter and godson, 'the beedles of the city', her servant and several named women and widows. The gifts she offered were in kind ('a pair of shoes for Megg Androse') but also in sums of money ranging between several pennies and up to 5s.[52] Evidence from surviving account books in the rural countryside shows similar, small, repeated donations handed out by women, yeomen and their wives and clergymen – well into the late seventeenth century and beyond. Elizabeth Harley's accounts for the period 1678–88 show her offering small separate donations to poor women, boys and the elderly poor; Nicholas Blundell, a Lancashire

[51] Walter 'The social economy', 127; Hindle, *On the Parish?* 108. For the Strutt family of Terling, Essex, who in Christmas of 1781 gave half-peck loaves of bread to 70 poor people, see Ottaway, *The Decline of Life*, 215. See also Joanna Innes, 'The state and the poor: eighteenth-century England in European perspective', in John Brewer and Hellmuth Eckhart (eds.), *Rethinking Leviathan: The Eighteenth-Century State in Britain and Germany* (Oxford, 1999), 236–7, n. 27.

[52] BL, Add 27622; Add 30494; Egerton 3054 [Household Accounts of Anne [Crouche], daughter and co-heiress of Simon Crouch, Alderman of London, and wife of Henry Archer, of Coopersale, 6 January 1608/9–15 October 1615, 23 February 1615–January 1616/7; Household Accounts of Anne Archer, 1600–29; Diary of Joyce Jefferies]. For Jeffries' businesses, career and social connections, see Robert Tittler, 'Joyce Jefferies and the possibilities of spinsterhood in Hereford', in *Townspeople and Nation: English Urban Experience 1540–1640* (Stanford, 2001), 177–97, esp. 193, 195. For women's role in the management of charities through the offering of scraps of food, alms and meals at the door, as well as the ministration of the sick, see Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England,* 178–83. See also BL, Add 70348 [Account Book of Mrs. Elizabeth Harley 1687–88 and Mrs. Martha Hutchins 1692, 1703–15]; Penney (ed.), *The Household Account Book,* 47, 49, 55, 67, 71, 73, 75, 81.

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yeoman, made reference in his diary to 'the bread ... at the door', and to habits of offering 'some beefe in the morning' in which he and his wife were engaged.[53]

Account books kept by clergymen indicate routine handouts that were given two, three and more times monthly. Giles Moore recorded his numerous small handouts in the diary he kept between 1656 and 1672; in 1657 there were 27 donations to the poor, in 1658 he listed 29 and in 1659 donations were given 32 separate times. His lists included repeated offering to the same named individuals, Christmas gifts, moneys towards sacrament collections and briefs, gifts to poor scholars, wedding gifts to neighbouring couples, as well as various small sums and rewards to men and boys who ran errands or who carried the annual Christmas gifts to his house.[54] John Crakanthorp, the rector of Fowlmere in Cambridgeshire in the later decades of the seventeenth century, likewise distributed small donations of 2d, 3d and 6s (occasionally more), once, twice and sometimes several times every month, throughout the decades between 1682 and 1710. His list of donations ('to poor and others') records various handouts at the door, to the local poor and to neighbours in need (in June 1708 he gave 7d to 'one or two of my neighbours being hard put to it'), as well as provisions for entertainment of local people. In August 1707, he recorded spending 13s 6d 'for largess in the whole towne this year, as the year before'. His record also indicates a host of giving to seamen, prisoners of war, widows and others 'in want' in places as distant as Lincoln and Kent, from whence requests for aid must have arrived in the form of written appeals and begging letters.[55]

What was the overall scale of household charities? The sporadic and indiscernible character of many forms of household charities makes it extremely difficult to assess their scale, even among the well to do.[56] We know, for example, that some people, including people of modest means, kept poor boxes in their homes where money was collected and then distributed to neighbours and the local poor. Nehemiah Wallington, the Puritan London artisan, had a poor box in his chamber where he collected the fines he imposed upon himself whenever he broke his private rules of conduct.[57] Several decades later, Sir Nathaniel Hearne, knight

[53] Frank Tyrer and J. J. Bagley (ed.), *The Great Diurnal of Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire* (vol. 1), 1702–11 (The Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, vol. 110, 1968), 17, 135.
[54] Bird (ed.), *The Journal of Giles Moore*, 313–23.
[55] Brassley et al. (eds.), *Accounts of the Reverend John Crakanthorp*, 220, 248, 256, 132–251.
[56] Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, 166.
[57] Seaver, *Wallington's World*, 237, n. 69; Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, 166.

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and alderman in London, also kept a poor box in which large sums of money were accumulated. In February 1675, he gave Christ's Hospital a gift of £14 which had been 'collected in a box at his house for the poor'.[58] Distribution of food at the door, lodging in barns, small handouts to beggars on the street were at least as common, although they remain unrecorded and only infrequently and inconsistently surface in various account books, diaries and court testimonies. Edward Terril, a nonconformist in mid-seventeenth-century Bristol, recalled in his autobiography how in his youth, his aunt was in the habit of sending him 'to the door with victuals to a poor body'.[59] Depositions at court proceedings occasionally reveal young men in their travels around the countryside, spending the nights in barns, fairs, 'farme houses', 'old cow house[s]', or being offered sleeping accommodation in a 'little tenement belonging to an inn', in servants' lodgings and 'outhouses'. Casual hospitality and handouts to the vagrant at the door or in the vicinity of houses – in streets, marketplaces, local fairs – was extended to local and licensed beggars, but also to those travelling from afar with counterfeit licences or none at all.[60] Account books occasionally make specific references to handouts to licensed beggars ('given to a soldier with a license'), but more commonly they make no such allusion, presumably because the gift was not conditional upon the presentation of such a certificate and no demand for it was made.

Begging had long been a familiar part of the landscape of rural and urban parishes, but its scale remains notoriously difficult to document. Paul Slack conjectured that beggars became less ubiquitous over the course of the seventeenth century, but we know that they continued to cram parishes, streets, alehouses and churchyards, especially in fast-growing towns.[61] In London, beggars congregated at the palace gate or at the gateways leading through Covent Garden, where alms could be expected from the royal almoner or the liveried servants accompanying dignitaries in their ride throughout the town. Beggars filled churchyards during service time, pestering mansions and houses even of the socially exclusive West End, in the seventeenth century and throughout the

[58] GL, MS 12819/10, fol. 521.

[59] Edward Terril, *The Records of a Church of Christ Meeting in Broadmead, Bristol, 1640–1678* (London, 1847), 58.

[60] Anderson (ed.), *The Book of Examinations and Depositions* (vol. 29), 42; Ilana K. Ben-Amos, '"Good works" and social ties: helping the migrant poor in early modern England', in McClendon et al. (eds.), *Protestant Identities*, 129–30; Hindle, *On the Parish?* 66–76; Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, 384–5.

[61] Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, 167–8. For begging in a broader European context, see Joanna Innes, 'State, church and voluntarism in European welfare, 1690–1850', in Cunningham and Innes (eds.), *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform*, 24–7.

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eighteenth.[62] Only fleeting allusions to the reactions that these beggars triggered surface in the records, as in eyewitness accounts that reached the Old Bailey Court, in which glimpses are provided of encounters between beggars and householders among the population at large. In a session held in December 1732 a witness described how the accused person came into his house and desired 'to let him warm himself by the fire, for he said he had been with a cart to Edmunton and was very cold. He begg'd an old pair of shoes ... he stayed till eight o'clock'. Other testimonies speak of a theft that occurred after a master had ordered his servant 'to rise and make a fire' to a person who came in with wet clothes, or of a thief who was charged with robbing a house while the plaintiff claimed she was arranging to provide him with food. The accused subsequently insisted that he came for 'a bit of victuals'.[63] The casual handout at the door surfaces in occasional reports of mid-eighteenth-century diarists like Thomas Turner, the shopkeeper, who at Christmas every year offered small amounts of money to poor women and children, and at other times several pennies to beggars and needy persons, such as the man 'who went about with a petition to make up his loss sustained by fire at wartling in this county, the damage being estimated at about 55 pounds'.[64]

For all the great difficulty involved in attempting to reach an assessment of the scope of household charities, two points are evident. First, casual offerings to those deemed worthy of relief constituted a common practice and were considered a normal routine and an obligation not only by members of the elite, but also by wealthy urban traders as well as artisans and wider sectors among middling groups – even if by no means was the engagement in it universal and the type and scope of giving varied greatly. Second, while gifts were often miniscule and did not exceed 2d or 3d, cumulatively the sums dispensed turned out to be quite substantial. Among those who were accustomed to giving, these small handouts could amount to more than the lump sums they eventually left in their wills and at death, or even the sums they were obligated to pay towards the compulsory rates. In 1638, Joyce Jefferies spent more than a pound on small contributions to the poor and on Christmas gifts, while her payments to the overseers of the poor during that year were 8s; Giles Moore's offering in the years 1656–62 ranged between £2 and £5 annually, while his tax payments were 8s per year. John Crakanthorp,

[62] Jeremy Boulton, 'The poor among the rich: paupers and the parish, in the West End, 1600–1724', in Griffiths and Jenner (eds.), *Londinopolis*, 216–17; Hitchcock, 'Begging on the streets', 481–96.
[63] OBSP, 6–11 December 1732, 4; 13–16 January 1720, 4; 28–31 August 1700, 1.
[64] David Vaisey (ed.), *The Diary of Thomas Turner* (Oxford, 1985), 75, 197, 130, 131, 283.

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the Cambridge rector, gave the poor about £1 every year between 1682 and 1710, while his payments to the poor rates were approximately 9s. Between 1686 and 1712, Timothy Burrell, the Sussex gentleman, was distributing £5 annually in the form of an assortment of donations to the local poor, collections and briefs, and in response to private requests for relief. In all these years his payments to the collectors of the poor tax did not exceed 11s annually. By 1712, when his rate assessment rose to £1, his casual donations were still more numerous. As he recorded in his diary that year, 'to the poor, according to custom, £3, and something more, and daily, beyond this, to parishioners, wounded soldiers and sailors, poor creatures, pensioners, and others, I don't know how much'.[65]

Associated philanthropy

By the early eighteenth century a novel form of lifetime giving began to dominate and profoundly affect the philanthropic scene – societies for charitable giving. Starting in London around the mid-seventeenth century, groups of individuals formed small associations with the view of promoting charitable projects in their locality and beyond. These groups were sometimes conceived at the initiative of an individual, for example, a merchant or a bishop, who soon assembled others in an association that became involved in the application and management of large charitable projects, sustaining them through fund raising among members and the population at large. Some of the earliest associations were the outcome of a campaign for the Reformation of Manners and the establishment, between 1696 and 1712, of a series of corporations for the poor and societies for moral reform. By 1700, the number of moral reform societies in London may have been as many as 20, the most prominent of which was the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK). This society was highly effective in encouraging the establishment of religious societies across the country and in promoting a host of new charitable projects.[66] Acting as an umbrella organization, the SPCK set up charity schools in dozens of parishes across England and Wales, most notably in London, where by the 1730s there were 132 charity schools mostly in its poorer parishes. From the late 1710s the society also became engaged in establishing and promoting workhouses to provide employment for the parochial poor, and a wave of new

[65] BL, Eg. 3054; Bird (ed.), *The Journal of Giles Moore,* 314; Brassley et al., *Accounts of the Reverend John Crakanthorp,*132–251; Blencowe (ed.), *Extracts from the Journal and Account-Book of Timothy Burrell,* 167.

[66] Clark, *British Clubs,* 64; Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement,* 111–14.

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foundations was soon gathering momentum. While relying on the direction and inspiration of the SPCK, the workhouse movement was deeply rooted in localized efforts and engagement, and, as Tim Hitchcock has shown, unlike the workhouse establishments that had been founded a century earlier (with backing provided by legislation and the state), the new workhouse movement was a parochial affair based on the voluntary efforts of local groups and parishioners. Hundreds of workhouses were established throughout the 1740s, and by mid-century at least 600 workhouses were in operation.[67]

Other charitable projects also began to take shape. In 1704 the 'Charitable Fund' was set up and advertised for subscribers 'for the public good' with a view to promoting pawnshops, hospitals, workhouses, free schools and a fund for poor prisoners in London. Chief supporters were again members of the SPCK, but a broad spectrum of Anglicans and dissenting ministers was involved as well. Similar societies sprang up in the ensuing decade in London and other provincial towns, all aimed at alleviating the suffering of the sick and needy, providing free medical advice, nursing for 'lying-in' women or visitations of sick prisoners.[68] The founding of a hospital or 'infirmary' for the sick soon became a preferred objective. By 1720, the 'Charitable Society' founded in London in 1716 to help the ailing poor was already leasing a house and admitting patients into what would become the 'Westminster Infirmary', signalling the onset of a new movement for the foundation of hospitals. Like the workhouse movement that took shape in these decades, and in contrast to the older Tudor hospitals that had been established with the support of the Crown, the new foundations were based entirely on voluntary groups of individuals rather than on legislative state initiatives or a body of trustees. By 1750 London had four new general hospitals as well as three specializing institutions – the foundling hospital (1739), which replaced the older Christ's Hospital where parish foundlings were no longer admitted (after 1662), the two lying-in hospitals (1749–50), and the Lock Hospital for venereal diseases (1746). In the provinces, the late 1730s and early 1740s witnessed a surge in new foundations: Winchester County Hospital was founded in 1736, followed by the

[67] Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, 50–2; Clark, *British Clubs*, 81–3; Tim Hitchcock, 'Paupers and preachers: the SPCK and the parochial workhouse movement', in Lee Davison, Tim Hitchcock, Tim Keirn and Robert B. Shoemaker (eds.), *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems in England, 1689–1750* (Stroud and New York, 1992), 99–120, esp. 153–60; Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 133–4.

[68] Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 114; Clark, *British Clubs*, 82–3.

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Bristol Infirmary (1737), and the hospitals in York (1740) Liverpool (1749) as well as other towns in northern regions and the south.[69]

When London's charitable society resolved, in 1719, to establish the Westminster Infirmary, it consisted of 12 individuals who were all members of the urban elite, including a banker, the head usher of the Westminster School and high clergymen. Two were also members of the SPCK who were involved in other charitable activities and the charity school movement. The group proceeded to advertise its new project and raise the necessary funds, and it received immediate support mostly in the form of subscriptions of one or two guineas per year, that helped sustain the project in its early and subsequent stages. All subscribers had the right to attend the weekly meetings of the society, where decisions regarding management of finances, nomination of physicians and admission of patients were made.[70]

This mode of operation, which included active participation of the subscribers engaged in the running of the charitable project, became the hallmark of associated philanthropy. Subscribers were involved in attending annual meetings and supervising reports, administering the finances of the society, investing funds and managing property, fund raising and the nomination of staff and patients. The levels of participation of subscribers varied among the hospitals, from those like the Westminster and the Bristol Infirmaries, where all subscribers were considered 'governors', who were entitled to come to meetings and were granted governing and nomination rights, to many other hospitals where a more hierarchical structure emerged. In the latter type, the subscribers elected a committee and a secretary, and a core of powerful office holders took the lead. Subscribers still had the privilege to nominate staff or recommend patients, but they were not directly involved in hospital administration. In some cases – such as London's lying-in hospitals – a more distinctive arrangement emerged; the founding member becoming a permanent governor, while the subscribers elected a committee and recommended patients. Whether dominated by the selected few or more evenly distributed, the active participation of donors was the prevalent norm.[71]

[69] Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, 53–73; Clark, *British Clubs*, 82–3; Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 135–41; Mary E. Fissell, *Patients, Power, and the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Bristol* (Cambridge, 1991), 74–93; Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1999), 136–7; Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*, 134–7.

[70] Adrian Wilson, 'The politics of medical improvement in early Hanoverian London', in Andrew Cunningham and Roger French (eds.), *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1990), 18–19.

[71] Roy Porter, 'The gift relation: philanthropy and provincial hospitals in eighteenth-century England', in Lindsay Granslaw and Roy Porter (eds.), *The Hospital in History*

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This participation through subscription engendered renewed involvement in large charitable projects among wider sectors of urban society. The phenomenon of subscription for specific causes was not wholly novel and can be traced to mid-sixteenth-century London hospitals, or indeed to the seventeenth-century parish and guild.[72] Nor did fund raising through subscription become the sole source of financing in the new societies, and many projects continued to rely on very large sums that were initially provided by local nobility and gentry, and subsequently sustained by additional benefactions and legacies.[73] Notwithstanding, as a mechanism for ensuring the continuity of a charity, subscriber associations became far more widespread and extensive, and continued to flourish through the mid- and late eighteenth century, attracting larger sectors of urban populations. The Westminster Infirmary had a few dozen subscribers in 1719, but doubled their numbers by 1723; London's lying-in hospitals and the Bristol Infirmary had about 200 subscribers in their early years, and their lists grew steadily thereafter. According to Donna Andrew, most mid-century charities in London encompassed between 100 and 500 on their subscription lists. While a coterie of wealthy nobles and gentry was prominent, about half of 138 substantial donors and subscribers she examined were men with mercantile and professional backgrounds (financiers, stockbrokers, merchants and manufacturers), and the remainder were men of lesser fortunes. Some charities included a substantial group of women (about a tenth) among their subscribers. Overall, thousands of Londoners in a wide range of occupations gave or subscribed at one time or another to one of these mid-century charities. This heterogeneity of the subscription list in eighteenth-century charities has been noted by many historians.[74]

New vitality animated recruitment and fund-raising tactics for the new charities as well. Since subscriptions relied on the cumulative efforts of groups of individuals who each contributed a small annual sum, massive

(London and New York, 1989), 156–7; Fissell, *Patients, Power and the Poor*, 221, n. 14; Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, 49; Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 141; Clark, *British Clubs*, 251–7; Wilson, 'The politics of medical improvement', 12–14.

[72] Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 113; Archer, 'The charity of early Modern Londoners', 232.

[73] Guy's hospital was based wholly on benefactions; the Bristol Infirmary was supported heavily by John Elbridge, its founder and first treasurer, who paid by means 'of his own pocket'. Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 138; Fissel, *Patients, Power, and the Poor*, 75.

[74] Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, 87–8; Porter, 'The gift relation', 157–60; Langford, *Public Life*, 493–4; Gorsky, *Patterns of Philanthropy*, 119; Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 141.

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campaigns aimed at establishing and promoting charities among members of the society and outside of it were imperative for the encouragement of the continued support of veteran subscribers and to elicit new subscribers. Much soliciting was conducted by organizing public events such as dinners, banquets, annual concerts, benefit plays, as well as through sermons and collections at the church. Especially popular were the societies' anniversary celebrations that featured a large benefit dinner following a sermon at church. From 1704, the London charity schools held an anniversary celebration every year, which included a procession of all schoolboys and girls through the streets followed by a church service and a large feast.[75] Extensive use was also made of newspapers, where public events and sales of tickets were announced, requests made by societies or sermons exhorting the public to give were published, and lists of contributors and benefactors were publicly honoured and thanked. When London's *General Evening Post* published the account of money received 'for the use of the new General Hospital at Bath', the long list included some 30 contributions that came from dukes, the gentry and ordinary subscribers, as well as various parishes and a host of collections at church doors throughout the metropolis.[76]

For all the vitality and vigour that subscriber associations introduced into the charitable scene, they did not signal a wholesale departure from earlier practices, as some historians have claimed.[77] In important respects, these newer associations were drawing on a well-established tradition of associations, especially that of the guilds. London's companies and their counterparts in towns across the country had procedures of elected officers and subscription ('quarterage') payments that entitled all members to certain privileges. They were engaged, as we have seen in a previous chapter, in the provision of care to members, and in their capacity as the trustees of a growing number of charitable bequests, they were by the late seventeenth century in charge of a wide range of charitable projects, in London and elsewhere, keeping and auditing their accounts and annual inventory of funds and properties, including the endowed charities they came to administer. Parishes were also the trustees of numerous charities and bequests that continued to

[75] Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, 80–3; Clark, *British Clubs*, 258–9; Gorsky, *Patterns of Philanthropy*, 118; Sara Lloyd, 'Pleasing spectacles and elegant dinners: conviviality, benevolence, and charity anniversaries in eighteenth-century London', *Journal of British Studies*, 41 (2002), 23–58, esp. 34–5. See Chapter 5 for the festal dimensions of the new charitable projects.

[76] *The General Evening Post*, 6 December 1743. See also Chapter 6, 226–7.

[77] David Owen, *English Philanthropy* (Cambridge, MA, 1964), 11–13, 71–2; Porter, 'The gift relation', esp. 172; Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman*, 491–4; Clark, *British Clubs*, 23–5.

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come into their hands. They kept accounts, invested funds, managed properties obtained through bequests and enhanced their finances, as we have also seen, through sermons and a host of church services and fund-raising techniques. These bodies of churchwardens and vestries were not exclusively controlled by the elite, but rather included members of lesser property and middling groups among the parishioners.[78] The new associations borrowed some of their procedures and practices from corporate bodies and guilds that for centuries had been administering charitable bequests and were adopting procedures from the bodies they vigorously criticized and in contrast to which they fashioned themselves anew.[79] These older bodies of trustees were legally bound by the terms of the charities they controlled and hence were more limited in their scope of decision making. Nevertheless, as we have already indicated, they were pivotal to the handling of charitable enterprises and the sustenance of practices of charitable giving throughout the period, and to this extent their role was far more influential than that of the wealthy individual who initially bequeathed them with a large portion of his or her wealth. The new charitable associations, with their annual accounting, financial reports and committees elected from among subscribers, elaborated and improved upon an earlier principle of management through association rather than creating something anew. The transition to subscriber associations was not quite a changeover from 'individual' to 'collective' or 'organized' giving, as has been argued and is still presented in historical accounts.[80]

Nor should this transition be perceived in terms of a shift from giving at death to giving during one's lifetime, yet another angle of the dynamics of transformed charitable giving hitherto overlooked by historians. The most distinctive feature of the subscription was indeed the small annual donation; the repeated giving of small amounts by the widest possible group of individuals. This type of cumulative effort by groups of donors that produced a bewildering range of incomes was rooted in many of the practices that we have surveyed here and in an earlier chapter. Subscriber associations drew on, and in many ways were inconceivable without practices of lifetime giving that had long been

[78] For parish governance, see Chapter 3, n. 9.

[79] For the critique against the corruption and lack of 'accountability' of the old charities, see Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police,* 48–9; Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement*, 141–2.

[80] For the more recent formulations, see Porter, 'The gift relation', 156; Langford, *Public Life*, 492–4. For a similar argument that contrasts the older 'individual' charity with modern 'collective' or 'organized' philanthropy, in an American context, see Lawrence J. Friedman and Mark McGravie (eds.), *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History* (Cambridge, 2003), 7–8.

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sustained and by the late seventeenth century were entrenched in the daily lives of parishioners, punctuating the calendar of church ritual and of household routine in cities and villages across the country. Especially formative in sustaining practices of small repetitive giving were the parochial collections that accompanied the communions – on Easter, at Christmas and several other times throughout the year, as well as the numerous special collections organized quarterly or at the church doors, following fasts, lectures and sermons and upon briefs, for the benefit of fellow Protestants and captives overseas, but also for parochial orphans or those hard hit by plague and dearth. Other practices involved greater individual initiative and a more direct personal engagement of the donor with a churchwarden or the clergy. As we have seen, many parishes at one time or another managed to obtain these types of contributions – the 'benevolence', 'sundry donation' or 'causal gift' – offered repeatedly by named individuals or persons who desired that their names remained 'concealed', occasionally on a regular or annual basis. There were also the household charities handed out repeatedly, year after year, in the domestic domain or in response to solicitation letters. Cumulatively, these disparate practices amounted to an enormously varied informal scene, whereby some individuals donated only infrequently, if at all, but others gave time after time, sustaining and gradually transforming practices of offering small handouts at church, the domestic domain and elsewhere. Viewed in this socio-cultural context, the subscription offered by individuals with modest means to new charitable societies that appeared on the urban scene and advertised in one's parish or local tavern was far less novel than it might appear initially. This is not to say that no change had taken place, but the change need not be perceived in terms of a shift to lifetime giving that sharply contrasted with an earlier age dominated by the wealthy donor and the large charitable bequest. The new type of association constituted a sophisticated and effective co-optation and adaptation of a wide range of private as well as collective practices that had taken shape in the course of the century and a half following the Reformation.

Conclusion

By 1700, some practices of private offering long familiar in the countryside and towns had diminished. Small, one-time gifts left by individuals at their deathbed dwindled, and the distribution of doles ceased to play a major role in funerary rites that signalled the parting of the living from the dead. Some of the more inclusive aspects of festive liberality long practised in aristocratic houses, whereby an outside stranger

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was occasionally incorporated into the house, were eliminated, subtly affecting the transformation of practices of hospitality among the landed elite.

All this did not imply that the charitable gift offered at death or during the lifetime was on the wane. Measuring the precise scale of these types of handouts, or comparing their levels to that obtained through the gradually emerging compulsory rates, remains a hazardous undertaking.[81] Yet an overall assessment that takes stock of all the types of giving surveyed here and the previous chapter nonetheless indicates that a diversified scene that cumulatively produced large sums had vigorously been sustained throughout the period. Alongside the rising scale of endowments and large testamentary bequests channelled to hundreds of parishes and institutions, there were the 'sundry benevolences' offered during the lifetime of individuals, as well as the variety of household charities handed out within or outside the domestic domain. These household charities took many forms, from the lavish hospitality proffered by the landed elite on their tenants and neighbours, to the casual provisions in the vicinity of large houses and the small handouts at the door and upon requests in which larger segments among the professions and middling groups partook. If we add to these types of handouts the more routine offering to the varied and eclectic fund-raising enterprises and collections induced at the church (discussed in an earlier chapter) – the informal scene was diversified and vigorous throughout the decades in which the obligatory rates were taking roots, and well before benefit societies and charitable associations made their appearance. By 1700, when the compulsory rates had become universal and these societies began to mushroom, the volume of voluntary gifts that circulated through an array of techniques and modes of operation was extensive. Rather than replacing older forms of giving through testamentary bequests, the new societies expanded an already existing scene and offered novel avenues for participating in the multiple circuits of charitable gifts.

Some of these offerings lacked a direct, face-to-face contact between the donor and the beneficiary. Offered at death or during the lifetime, many of these charitable giving were channelled via intermediaries – vicars and churchwardens, civic authorities or boards of governors, stewards in charge of household finances. Many gifts took the form of

[81] For an attempt to quantify informal and formal expenditures on relief, on the basis of eighteenth-century estimates, see Innes 'The mixed economy of welfare', 147–8; Innes, 'The state and the poor', 237, where Innes estimates that by the late eighteenth century the funds flowing through informal support, especially in the larger towns and cities, 'may have rivalled and even out-stripped rate-based expenditure'. For the earlier period, see also Archer, 'The charity of early modern Londoners', 238–44.

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lump sums and were offered anonymously to unnamed individuals, in response to letters of request that arrived from unknown persons, or in face-to-face but fleeting and momentary encounters at the door or the street. Yet, for all this apparent lack of personal and long-term exchange between the donor and the recipient, these types of charitable offering were nonetheless the locus of an intricate set of reciprocities and at times of intensely personalized transactions – be it with the beneficiary herself, or with the individuals and groups administering the gift, the communities in which it was allocated, or even the public at large. As we shall also see in subsequent chapters, charitable gifts involved varied if indirect cycles of exchange whereby the returns for the offering were neither equal nor material but rather entailed social and cultural assets that were by no means any less potent and binding.

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