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"Constructing the Poor in Early Seventeenth-Century London"[1]

Claire S. Schen

Historians of early modern Europe have become accustomed to the dichotomy of the deserving and undeserving poor, though they still debate the origins of the transformation of attitudes toward the poor and poverty.[2] Historians have studied less carefully the ways in which these presumably static categories flexed, as individuals and officials worked out poor relief and charity on the local level. Military, religious, and social exigencies, precipitated by war, the Reformation, and demographic pressure, allowed churchwardens and vestrymen to redraw the contours of the deserving and undeserving poor within the broader frame of the infirm, aged, and sick. International conflicts of the early seventeenth century created circumstances and refugees not anticipated by the poor law innovators of the sixteenth century. London's responses to these unexpected developments illustrate how inhabitants constructed the categories of the deserving and undeserving poor. This construction depended upon the discretion of churchwardens and their fellow officers, who listened to the accounts and read the official documents of the poor making claims on parish relief and charity.

Studies of the poor rightly point to the sick and the impotent, the orphaned and abandoned, the widowed and aged in discussions of the deserving poor.[3]

[1]An earlier version of this paper was presented at the North American Conference on British Studies in October 1998 in Colorado Springs, CO on a panel organized by Anthony Thompson. The author wishes to thank the commentator Michael Braddick (University of Sheffield), the chair Caroline Hibbard (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), the organizer of this forum, Paul A. Fideler (Lesley College), and *Albion*'s editor for their insightful comments. Special thanks to Drs. Jonathan Harris, Bashir El-Beshti, and Paul Cobb.

[2]Robert Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1994); Paul Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988); Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1987); Paul A. Fideler, "Poverty, policy and providence: the Tudors and the Poor," in idem and T. F. Mayer, eds., *Political Thought and the Tudor Commonwealth* (New York, 1992), pp. 194-222; Deborah Valenze, *The First Industrial Woman* (New York, 1995), p. 27.

[3]Amy L. Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (New York, 1993); Marjorie McIntosh, "Networks of care in Elizabethan English towns: the example of Hadleigh, Suffolk", in Peregrine Horden and R. H. Smith, eds, *The Locus of Care: Families, Communities, and Institutions in History* (London, forthcoming); Tim Wales, "Poverty, poor relief and the life-cycle: some evidence from seventeenth-century Norfolk", in R. H. Smith, ed., *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 351-404.

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Some of the poor included in the broad category of "undeserving" were able-bodied women and men, male and female vagrants, and poor pregnant women who had been born in other parishes. Parishes hurried, even whipped these individuals out of their parishes, especially pregnant women, or those still in childbearing years who might lay a new charge in the churchyard or at the front door of a prominent parishioner. The small sums disbursed to the "new," negotiated members of the deserving poor, the subject of this study, could have made relief even less forthcoming to the traditionally deserving poor. An analysis of the surviving churchwardens' accounts for the city of London, the records of the Court of Aldermen, and certificates and briefs described in the State Papers Domestic reveals how contemporaries shaped their sense of the deserving poor, in extraordinary circumstances and in an extraordinary city.

London churchwardens' accounts of the first third of the seventeenth century list relief, funded by poor law-mandated rates, and outline one-time payments made by churchwardens and vestrymen. These involuntary and voluntary "gifts" strained parish resources and even opened avenues for fraud. Formal collections, besides those turned over to the collectors for the poor, included those gathered for Christ's Hospital. Municipal support for the post-Reformation hospital dated to the mid-sixteenth century, following petitions from the Lord Mayor and citizens for its foundation. Beginning in the late sixteenth century, parishes contributed to a collection for maimed soldiers, as stipulated in the 1593 act for the relief of soldiers.[4] In addition, London parishes participated with little enthusiasm in a scheme to send poor children to Virginia from roughly 1618 to 1623.[5] Casual or one-time payments, briefly noted by churchwardens, tell the tales of natural and human-made disasters around the world: wars, shipwrecks, fires and floods, and enslavement in pirate galleys.

War and international politics thus had an impact on local decisions about relief, as stranger refugees and native-born casualties solicited aid from parochial officials by sharing their stories of woe or bringing certificates, briefs, or passes (also called 'passports') in support of claims. Charitable briefs, certificates from prominent officials, and passports for the wandering poor documented need, citing loss by natural or human-made disaster.[6] Roslyn Knutson's fascinating study of captivity narratives in briefs and certificates focuses on their relation

[4]SR 35 Eliz. c. 4. Geoffrey L. Hudson, "Disabled Veterans, the State and Philanthropy in England, 1585-1680," p.1 and handout; paper presented at the North American Conference on British Studies, October 1998, at Boulder, Colorado.

[5]Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance*, p. 168; R. C. Johnson, "The Transportation of Vagrant Children from London to Virginia, 1618-1622," in H. S. Reinmuth, ed., *Early Stuart Studies* (Minneapolis, 1970).

[6]See Wilfred Pemberton, "The System of Briefs Illustrated from Leicestershire Records," *Local Historian* 15 (May 1983): 345-54, and Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, pp. 166, 97.

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to Elizabethan drama, but not to the social and political issues of parochial relief.[7] The stranger refugees and the native British aided by churchwardens were ministers, soldiers and sailors, and captives fleeing from or originating in the Thirty Years' War or in conflicts on the "frontiers" of Europe. The "frontiers" lay between the Ottoman Empire's dependencies and those lands allied with Christian Europe. The Ottoman Empire had been defeated at the battle of Lepanto in 1571, but its threat lingered in the minds and just beyond the borders of the Austrian Habsburgs and Christian Europe. In the Mediterranean Sea, Spain and the Muslim kingdoms of North Africa competed for empire and dominance, while English pirates preyed on Spanish trade. The English supplied goods and munitions to the Ottoman Empire, a vast new economic opportunity for them.[8]

Refugee ministers gained relief because parishes followed an established practice of supporting poor Protestant or puritan ministers with benevolences, or opportunities to preach in the parish church. Parochial approval signified that the religion of exiled or "silenced" ministers, and their suffering on behalf of their faith, conferred on them the status of deserving poor.[9] Notes referring to ministers and poor scholars from Bohemia and the Palatinate began appearing in the records of London parishes in the early 1620s, shortly after the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War.[10] Churchwardens frequently named a Christianus Columbus, an exiled Moravian minister or scholar of the Palatinate, although scribes usually neglected to name or describe charitable recipients.[11]

[7]Roslyn L. Knutson, "Elizabethan Documents, Captivity Narratives, and the Market for Foreign History Plays," *English Literary Renaissance* 26 (1996): 75-110. Thanks to Jacob Selwood for this reference.

[8]*New Cambridge Modern History*, [*NCMH*] vol. 4: 226-38; vol. 3: 252, 347-76. See also, Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain, 1877-1924* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 1-5. Incidentally, the presence of refugees from non-Western European countries and of survivors of disputes with those peoples and empires reinforce recent arguments about the ethnic and racial pluralism of London well before twentieth-century immigration. See Gretchen Gerzina, "The Black Presence in British Cultural History," in *Perspectives* 35, 5 (May/June 1997): 15-17; N. I. Matar, "Muslims in Seventeenth-Century England," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, 1 (January 1997): 63-82; Matar, *Islam in Britain, 1558-1685* (Cambridge, 1998); Kathleen M. Noonan, "'The Cruell Pressure of an Enraged, Barbarous People': Irish and English Identity in Seventeenth-Century Policy and Propaganda," *The Historical Journal* 41, 1 (1998): 151-77.

[9]Guildhall Library [GL], MS 4051/1, f. 65; GL, MS 1568, Part 2, f. 604.

[10]For examples of Bohemian ministers see GL, MS 5026/1, f. 6v; GL, MS 1303/1, f. 44; GL, MS 6836, f. 101v; GL, MS 66, f. 31v. For examples of ministers from the Palatinate see GL, MS 4051/1, f. 43; GL, MS 4835/1, f. 155; GL, MS 1303/1, f. 57v; GL, MS 4524/1, f. 255; GL, MS 2968/2, f. 215v; GL, MS 4409/1, f. 150.

[11]GL, MS 2895/2 (1624-25). Perhaps the "Moravian minister" in Holy Trinity the Less in 1628 was Christianus Columbus, GL, MS 4835/1, f. 173.

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Parishes included the poor soldiers and sailors who fought in distant battles with European and Ottoman rivals in the category of the deserving poor, out of gratitude and fear.[12] The populace repaid veterans for their sacrifices in the military, but purchased order among the idle soldiers with those payments. The curious conflation of deserving and undeserving aspects of poverty in descriptions of these men—maimed and vagrant—highlighted the liminal status of war veterans, servants of the state yet potentially unruly and dangerous men. Robert Tittler has emphasized the presence of disruptive soldiers in Chester late in the sixteenth century, many of them vagrants before conscription.[13] The Elizabethan Proclamation of 1589, "Placing Vagrant Soldiers under Martial Law," noted the "outrages" perpetrated on the queen's subjects by soldiers, mariners, and "others that pretend to have served as soldiers," but were merely vagrant or masterless men. The act required soldiers to carry passports and return to their homes, but also required parishes to grant impotent veterans a weekly pension.[14] Parochial accounts also used the epithet "vagrant" interchangeably with "maimed," as in St. John Walbrook in the late 1620s.[15]

The implicit threat of disorderly, unemployed soldiers, and the pathos of injured or disabled ones, prompted parishes to help beyond the formal collection for maimed soldiers. The soldier John Greene on 16 September 1622, "having lost one of his hands in Bohemia," was given 12d.[16] One thin set of churchwardens' accounts, lacking consistent bookkeeping and having worse than usual spelling, referred in general terms to some wandering poor: "pd & given to poore schollers & souldiers to send them home" £1 18s.[17] The gift likely alleviated the parish of further responsibility to these poor men and freed parishioners of the continued presence of veterans. Churchwardens also relieved men who had been pressed out of their parishes, perhaps out of the same confluence of duty to and fear of them. For a number of years in the 1620s, St. Dunstan's in the West helped James Bartholomewsheire (or, Bartholomew Sheires). He had been pressed out of the parish to serve in Bohemia and only returned to his parish via one of the spitals in the city.[18] The churchwardens of St. George

[12]Eg., GL, MS 4524/1, ff. 167v, 185.

[13]Robert Tittler, "Henry Hardware's Moment and the Puritan Attack on Drama," *Early Theatre* 1 (1998): 39-54; see also his *The Reformation and the Towns in England: Politics and Political Culture,* c. *1540*-c. *1640* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 318-19.

[14]Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. 3: 46-48 (#716).

[15]GL, MS 577/1, f. 61 (vagrant) and f. 62v (maimed).

[16]GL, MS 2968/2, f. 215; see also GL, MS 4524/1, f. 191; GL, MS 577/1, f. 59v.

[17]GL, MS 559/1, f. 29.

[18]GL, MS 2968/2, ff. 215, 340.

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Botolph Lane gave 5s. to English gentlemen who had come out of the Palatinate in 1637–38.[19]

Although the frequency of poor Protestant ministers and returning soldiers in accounts of parochial charity suggests that parishioners recognized them as "deserving," churchwardens nevertheless fretted that the auditors would overturn their decisions. In anticipation of the yearly audit by the ancients and "better sort" of a parish, churchwardens layered the reasons in favor of making a disbursement. St. Mary Somerset's wardens gave 1s. 6d. to a poor soldier who "had serued in the warres 16 yeares, and had gotten somewhat to maineteyne him in his age, but was robbed cominge out of Germany, and had a Certificate to gather in London." The churchwardens carefully noted the multiple aspects of his personal tragedy: his service, his attempts to provide for himself, his age, his unfortunate robbery, and, lastly, the official recommendation contained in a certificate.[20] St. Christopher's again noted clerical influence in justifying gifts to poor ministers and their wives and to poor soldiers in 1627, but added the "many presidents" for the outlay, since the poor carried passes.[21]

The parish audit tempered churchwardens' discretion in the distribution of relief since disagreements could arise about who were the deserving poor, particularly when balancing the needs of these soldiers and refugees with those of native Londoners or English. Letters and certificates, for one, lent their carriers additional credibility and helped churchwardens decide on worthy recipients. A poor man taken captive in Turkey carried a letter from Lord Montague; a father had letters "of the Counsells handes for the ransomming of his sonne from the Turks."[22] St. Margaret Pattens' small and simple account book notes churchwardens' payments to the diverse wandering poor, with or without passports.[23] St. Mary Magdalene Fish Street, on the other hand, allowed payments on certificates, but occasionally disallowed the same during the audit.[24] Likely to appease parishioners who disputed certain payments, some officers justified their benevolences as being only "as other churchwardens had done."[25] In 1617, the

[19]GL, MS 951/1, f. 89; for other distressed men from region see GL, MS 1188/1, ff. 220, 229; GL, MS 645/2, f. 39; GL, MS 4457/2, ff. 346, 346v.

[20]GL, MS 5714/1, f. 70v.

[21]Edwin Freshfield, ed., *Accomptes of the Churchwardens of the Paryshe of St. Christofer's in London, 1575-1662* (London, 1885), p. 63, col. 2.

[22]GL, MS 5714/1, ff. 54v, 7.

[23]GL, MS 4570/2, ff. 241, 243, 245, 249. For more examples of briefs or certificates, see GL, MS 1124/1, ff. 17, 27v; GL, MS 5090/2, ff. 203, 205v; GL, MS 878/1, ff. 118, 118v, 130, 159v.

[24]GL, MS 2596/2, ff. 15, 20v, cf. f. 26.

[25]GL, MS 2593/1, f. 218v; see also GL, MS 4051/1, f. 43v.

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churchwardens of St. Matthew Friday Street granted 2s. to a poor man with a certificate "to whom verye manye p[ar]ishes in the cittye hadd giuen." In the next year, however, the auditors disallowed a number of small gifts to poor ministers and other poor men and women.[26]

Churchwardens relied on a parish's minister or its Ancients to give their "order" or "consent" to aid these strangers and soldiers, indicating that local leaders had to reach consensus on the deserving poor.[27] Seemingly, dependence on "men above reproach," as urged in puritan writings, and not simply on the churchwardens to distribute charity to worthy recipients, had become a part of parochial practice in London.[28] In St. Christopher's in 1615, the auditors "did not well approoue" of 16s. 6d. granted to poor persons with certificates. In 1623, when they noted £1 19s. 4d. given to "dyvers ministers & poore distressed men & women," the churchwardens remarked on the influence of the minister and lecturer, Mr. Blackwell.[29] The auditors may have hesitated to argue against men trained in the Bible and responsible for the spiritual life of the parish, but less so when forcing churchwardens to repay the parish for ill-advised disbursements. In 1614, the auditors of St. Michael Cornhill warned that gifts to poor Grecians, despite the consent of the minister and Anthony Soda, Deputy, were "not to be allowed hereafter," a commandment they repeated in 1617 when churchwardens gave money to a Barbarian, who had been robbed by pirates.[30]

Cases of forgery and fraud fed the suspicions of parochial auditors sorting through a year's account of tragic pleas for charity and alms. George Alexander, Macedonian, and John Millos, Syrian, forged their official-looking briefs in 1623. They had procured a forged letter from the king to collect charity from foreign princes, but with the help of another Englishman they altered it to gather charity in England. The brief narrated a familiar tale of piracy and captivity: one had left two dear friends and the other had left his wife and four children as pledges for the 500 and 1,000 gold pieces owed for their ransoms.[31] They were caught only after collecting small sums of money from a number of London parishes.

[26]GL, MS 1016/1, ff. 135, 137.

[27]GL, MS 6574, f. 119v; GL, MS 66, ff. 40v, 63; GL, MS 4409/1, f. 156v.

[28]See Paul Fideler's discussion of Martin Bucer: "*Societas, Civitas* and Early Elizabethan Poverty Relief," in Charles Carlton, et al., eds., *State, Sovereigns and Society in Early Modern England: Essays in Honour of A. J. Slavin* (New York, 1998), pp. 61-62.

[29]Freshfield, *Accomptes*, p.49, col. 1, p. 58, col. 1.

[30]GL, MS 4071/2, ff. 24, 37v.

[31]GL, MS 2601/1, Part 1, f. 49v. Public Record Office [PRO] SP 14/158, f. 37 (new date: 13 Jan. 1624).

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Churchwardens exercised discretion, though the above examples have shown that a narrative of legitimacy cloaked any gifts to strangers or wandering poor, just as it did for any other person understood to be part of the deserving poor.[32] In addition to ministers and soldiers, other strangers and natives of England, Scotland, and Ireland touched by these military and political conflicts appealed to London parishes. The scribe or churchwarden in St. Mary Aldermary specially highlighted an entry regarding a Greek man collecting for his brothers' ransoms: a poor "*Grecian* whose bretheren were taken prisoners by the *Turks* for their religion, by consent of *Mr Deputy*."[33] Set apart as in a title page of a book or pamphlet with italicized characters, the players and themes represented the struggle between the Christian and the Infidel in graphic terms. The Grecian suffered for his Christianity, the Turk persecuted Christians, and the civic leader legitimated the charitable outlay. The finer points about Greek Orthodox reliance on iconography receded into the background of this colossal struggle between Christian and Infidel, papering over vast differences among Christians.

The deserving poor created by this struggle led local leaders to re-emphasize the religious underpinnings of relief and charity in the early modern period. The spread of Christian religious skirmishes outside the boundaries of Western Europe created unexpected religious allies and unanticipated, suitable candidates for informal parochial relief. Greek refugees, many of them ministers or bishops, like Nicophorus, bishop of "Mount Syna," appeared in seventeenth-century London.[34] The English courted Greek Orthodox believers as spiritual allies against Counter Reformation Catholics, even sending a Greek printing press to Istanbul in 1627 for publishing Protestant tracts. When Jesuits tried to suppress the press, the Ottomans placated the English ambassador by temporarily banning the Jesuits from the city.[35] Charles I also called for setting up a Greek press in London for the "honour of the kingdom and good of the church."[36]

[32]Schen, "Strategies of Poor Aged Women and Widows in Sixteenth-Century London," in Pat Thane and Lynn Botelho, eds., *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500* (forthcoming).

[33]GL, MS 6574, f. 101v. In the 1630s St. Mary Somerset gave 5s. to a "Gretian that had a Certificate under the kinges hand of England that he was a Noble man in his countrye and was taken by the Turks hee and his foure brethren." (GL, MS 5714/1, f. 83; Dyonisius Coroneus? GL, MS 2593/1, f. 234.)

[34]St. Catherine's Monastery, on the south Sinai Peninsula, housed one of the oldest Greek Biblical manuscripts until the mid-nineteenth century and sold to the British Museum in the twentieth century, *Webster's Geographical Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass., 1949). On Greeks in London at an earlier time, see Jonathan Harris, *Greek Emigres in the West, 1400-1520* (Camberley, 1995), and idem, "Two Byzantine Craftsmen in Fifteenth-Century London," *Journal of Medieval History* 21 (1995): 387-403.

[35]V. J. Parry, "The Period of Murād IV, 1617-48," in idem, H. Înalcik, A. N. Kurat, J. S. Bromley, eds., *A History of the Ottoman Empire to 1730* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 151.

[36]*Calendar of State Papers Domestic* [*CSPD*], vol. 259, 13, p. 423 (18 Jan. 1633-34).

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By reflecting the prominence of religion in poor relief, stories of conversion influenced parish officials' decisions about relief and the deserving poor. Muslim strangers forged a "deserving" reputation when they converted to Christianity. The few Turks in London who underwent religious conversion offered, to the English imagination, a small, yet significant victory in the wider struggle between Christianity and Islam.[37] St. Dunstan's in the West on 10 July 1628 gave 6d. to "Richard a poore Turke Christened att St Sepulchers."[38] In 1628 in St. Benet Fink the recorder described stark doctrinal oppositions when the parish gave 1s. "to a heath[e]nish Turke turned from a[n] Infidell to a Christian," although the churchwardens of St. Alphage London Wall in the same year merely noted that a converted Turk received 6d.[39] Churchwardens or a scribe would likely have made some comment on Richard's origins in the margins of the baptism register, but unfortunately the Great Fire ravaged the parish of St. Sepulchre's and no records survive.

Parochial and civic approval of conversion echoed the reasoning of high politics. The Court of Aldermen noted in 1624 that a poor Turk named Salleman Alexander, "hauinge binn of late instructed in the groundes of Christian Religion, is desirous to beacome a true Christian, and that therefore meanes bee made, that hee shall shortly bee baptized." Reference to "true" Christianity further refined conversion to mean, to Protestantism. The Aldermen went on, "It is ordered by this Court, out of theire Christian pietie that hee shalbee forthwith clothed out of the remayne of the app[ar]ell heretofore p[ro]uided for the souldiers impressed out of this Cittie, And Mr. Ald[e]r[m]an Hodges, is desired to see the same done and for and towards his reliefe, it is also ordered that hee shalbe allowed out of the Chamber of London weekelye duringe this Courts pleasure the some of iijs vjd."[40] The provision of clothing from the store for soldiers emphasized the militancy underlying the rhetoric of conversion, the link between the spiritual battle and the physical one between Christians and Muslims.

The men and women who beseeched parishes for relief sought to emphasize their genuine need by weaving "true" stories of suffering, especially at the hands of the Infidel, that churchwardens summarized or paraphrased in their accounts. In the late 1630s a "very pore woman" came to St. Benet Gracechurch with a certificate that described the loss of her "2 children taken by the turkes (in the west countery) by night out of their bedes."[41] Normally, the historian can trace

[37]On writings about conversion, see Matar, *Islam in Britain*, pp. 120-52.

[38]GL, MS 2968/2, f. 339v.

[39]GL, MS 1303/1, f. 72; GL, MS 1432/3, f. 167v.

[40]Corporation of London Record Office [CLRO], Rep. 39, f. 147.

[41]GL, MS 1568, Part 2, f. 604.

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a supplicant's route through the city, but no other parish with accounts from 1637–38 related this tale of kidnap. That absence suggests this may have been a fanciful fraud, perhaps inspired by fiction and propaganda about Turks and Islamic pirates. Nevertheless, the claim to authenticity through the parenthetical "(in the west countery)," as if to acknowledge the disparity between events in fishing villages and those in London, hints that Londoners were primed to believe accounts of Turkish attacks on the coast of England. The State Papers described raids on fishing boats and landings of Turks to take fishermen out of their homes.[42] Indeed, some inhabitants of an Irish town burned by Turks made their way to London in 1638 to collect toward their losses.[43] Britain's island geography inspired charitable concern for the men and women living on the vulnerable coasts.

Manifestations of suffering exhibited by poor strangers and soldiers—physical marks of captivity, tongues cut out, brands, and assorted infirmities—punctuated their supplications, reinforcing their deserving status. In 1625–26 one poor captive who said he "drew in a plow under the Turks" received 2s.[44] Henry Clare appeared in St. Michael Bassishaw in 1619–20, a "poore Captive being branded in Turkey."[45] St. Mary Aldermary paid 18d. "towards the reliefe of diuers poore men w[hi]ch were maymed by the Turkes and lye vnder the Surgeons hands to be cured."[46] St. Benet Paul's Wharf gave 12d. to nine men "that had a passe to trauell from Devonshire into Suffolke...who had their toungs cut out by the Turks."[47] Others had their tongues cut out by "pirates," men of any allegiance. John Rasheley, mariner, "taken by a ffrench Pirott & his tongue cut out" received 12d. from St. Helen Bishopsgate.[48] Even English pirates were recognized as cruel, as when a French gentleman collected 6d. since he had been taken by English pirates.[49]

The narratives, documents, and bodily proofs supplied by petitioners assisted churchwardens' decision-making by appealing to common threads of "deservingness." Through no moral failings had these claimants come to poverty, in-

[42]*CSPD*, vol. 327, 12, p. 4 (20 June 1636) and vol. 328, 62, pp. 60-61 (14 July 1636).

[43]GL, MS 5714/1, f. 115v; GL, MS 3907/1, unfol. (1638-9); GL, MS 66, f. 77v. See *CSPD*, vol. 196, 24, pp. 101-02 (5 July 1631) for Turkish attacks on Irish coast.

[44]GL, MS 5714/1, f. 50.

[45]GL, MS 2601/1, Part 1, f. 21.

[46]GL, MS 6574, f. 96v.

[47]GL, MS 878/1, f. 86v.

[48]GL, MS 6836, f. 87.

[49]For example, GL, MS 4956/2, ff. 283, 323.

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stead they had become impotent, sick, or impoverished through national duty or through the cruelty of enemies. With mutual understanding of the general categories of poverty, otherwise "undeserving" individuals helped to recast themselves as the deserving poor to local parishioners. Perhaps the "otherness" of these women and men mirrored the changes underway in conceptions of the native poor.[50] People of ethnic and racial backgrounds different from the English, however, shared religious concerns, as did the Protestant French and Dutch strangers in London. St. Mary Colechurch gave 1s. to Mr. Jacobis Widdow, a "converted Jewe Hebrew lecturer" of Cambridge since Greek, with Hebrew, were the "languages of biblical exegesis" whose study was supported by English kings and universities.[51]

Even ministerial exiles from the Thirty Years' War, recipients of parochial aid like other poor ministers in Protestant London, reinforced their deserving status by bringing additional proof of their misery. In 1624, a poor minister of the Palatinate brought a letter of the "King of Bohemias hand and seale" to St. Peter Westcheap.[52] The churchwardens of St. Dunstan's in the West had conversed long enough with the poor scholar Stephen Cooper to know that he had been born "in the Pallatinate at Oringa 15 myles from Hidelborough" and that he had "lost his ffather at the taking of ye same Towne."[53] Since churchwardens often did not record names in their accounts and petitioners usually circulated through the city, the poor "Bohemian" minister who appeared in a number of parishes' accounts in the year 1621–22 may have been this Cooper.

Other victims of the military and economic struggles among Europeans or with the Ottomans solicited, and gained, parish aid by appealing to traditional charitable motives, even pre-Reformation ones. Few, however, met the residency rules required of other poor men and women who petitioned parishes, or were turned out of parishes. Charity to captives echoed one of the late medieval acts of mercy, an example of the survival of some Catholic practices in the guise of worthy Protestant ones in Reformation England.[54] Those who had been en-

[50]See Fideler's discussion, drawing on Felicity Heal's work on hospitality: "Societas, Civitas," p. 63.

[51]GL, MS 66, f. 44. R. R. Bolgar, "Education and Learning," *NCMH* 3, *The Counter-Reformation and the Price Revolution, 1559-1610*, p. 430. On the importance of study of Arabic and Islam as well, see P. M. Holt, "The Study of Islam in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of Early Modern History* 2, 2, pp.113-23; Holt, "Edward Pococke (1604-91), the First Laudian Professor of Arabic at Oxford," *Oxoniensia* 56 (1991): 119-30.

[52]GL, MS 645/2, f. 41v.

[53]GL, MS 2968/2, f. 232. Heidelberg and Reilingen? St. Mary Colechurch's churchwardens thought he had come from "Prage," Prague] GL, MS 66, f. 38.

[54]On acts of mercy, see Maureen Flynn, *Sacred Charity: Confraternities and Social Welfare in Spain, 1400-1700* (Ithaca, NY, 1989). On "survivals" in Protestant London, see Schen, *Charity and Lay Piety in Reformation London, 1500-1620* (Ashgate, forthcoming).

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slaved or held in captivity in Turkey or, more likely, in Tunis, Algiers, or Sallee in North Africa, or who had been captured by European pirates, enjoyed relief. In the 1620s, churchwardens regularly noted contributions to the relief of captives, as in Allhallows Lombard Street in 1625–26 when the rector called on the churchwardens to grant 10s. to fifteen poor captives.[55] In the same accounts that paid for ringers to celebrate Prince Charles' safe passage through dangerous seas to Spain (1622–23), the churchwardens of Allhallows Staining gave Richard Stibbard 1s., "a poore lame souldier that had that had [sic] bene a Slaue in Turkey." In the next year the churchwardens gave him and "one Graye" an additional 1s., explaining that they had come from Spain and were traveling toward Somerset.[56] Some cases referred to men who had spent time in Turkish or Spanish galleys, as in 1633–34 when the churchwardens of St. Olave Jewry gave 2s. to a poor stranger from "Gallatia" for freeing himself and his brothers from Turkish slavery.[57] An oral promise and a written warrant pledging to return home helped some strangers secure aid, like the four seafaring men in the late 1630s who had lost their goods to Turks and were trying to go home.[58]

Besides supporting freed captives traveling to their own counties on passports or with certificates, parishes made small donations to the redemption of captives by family members, to alleviate suffering and save Christian souls. St. Stephen Coleman Street in the later 1630s made frequent gifts to women to redeem their husbands, and even a father to redeem his two sons.[59] "Distressed wives" had earlier petitioned the Duke of Buckingham to intercede on their behalf with the king. They hoped to see their 2,000 husbands freed from captivity in Sallee, where their suffering and misery might force them to convert from Christianity.[60] Apostasy of English mariners would imperil Christians, not to mention that it would negate the small victories won in the parishes of London by the conversion of Turks to Christianity. The Court of Aldermen also helped parents redeem children. In 1625, the citizen and mercer Edward Barnes proved that Moors had taken his son Robert prisoner in 1623. Robert had been transported to Sallee in Barbary "where he hath ever sythence Contynewed in most lamentable slauerie and that hee is lately released thence upon promise to pay 300li for his Ransome." The Chamberlain paid the elder Barnes £79 11s. ½d. from a collection taken at sermons at St. Mary Spital and the "rehearsall sermons"

[55]GL, MS 4051/1, f. 43.

[56]GL, MS 4956/2, ff. 313, 322v, 345v, 346, 353v.

[57]"Gallatia" is Gallacia; GL, MS 4409/1, f. 216. For another example, GL, MS 6836, f. 89v.

[58]GL, MS 645/2, f. 69v.

[59]GL, MS 4457/2, ff. 346v, 352v, 361v.

[60]*CSPD*, vol. 43, 46, pp. 516-17 (1626?).

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at St. Paul's "for the Redeeminge of Captives."[61] Surviving widows of men once held by the Turks also collected relief.[62]

Fractures within Christian Europe, on the other hand, legitimated affiliations between Protestants and Muslims. Although the corsairs that attacked English ships originated along the Barbary coast, some London parishioners supported the "barbarryens" of Morocco who had been taken by Spaniards, in 1615–16.[63] The Court of Aldermen also helped "barbarians," by funding their transportation out of London and back to Barbary.[64] Some parish gifts to strangers point out the shifting alliances that saw the English and Ottomans united against Jesuits in one instance and the two pitted against each other in another. St. Olave Jewry, for instance, gave 12d. to a "moore taken by the turkes."[65]

Local leaders and the monarch made further exceptions to the usual definition of the deserving poor to include mariners and tradesmen, the economic casualties of international conflicts. In addition to the risks of captivity, sailors and merchants risked loss of goods and lives at sea. Charles I approved of relief to maimed, shipwrecked, distressed seamen and their wives and children as a "pious and charitable work," in a royal proclamation mandating such aid.[66] In his accounts of 1623–24, William Fortune, the churchwarden of Allhallows Staining in London, recorded spending 8s. for the vestry men's dinner at the "Shipwreck," a tavern whose name, and likely its sign, reflected the experiences and fears of some inhabitants. In the previous year the parish had granted a shilling to an Edinburgh merchant for the loss of his ship and goods in a shipwreck.[67] St. Lawrence Jewry helped Dutch mariners, poor English soldiers, and even "foure poore Turkes undonn by sea."[68] Not all of the sailors or merchants had suffered losses in skirmishes with pirates or Turks in the Mediterranean: St. Botolph Bishopsgate gave 21d. to one man who had suffered a shipwreck from Norway and 12d. to another who had lost goods in a shipwreck.[69]

Expanding pious and charitable imperatives through the first part of the seventeenth century, therefore stretching the category of the deserving poor, taxed

[61]CLRO, Rep. 40, ff. 103-130v. Knutson, "Elizabethan Documents," p. 78.

[62]GL, MS 2601/1, Part 1, f. 66v.

[63]GL, MS 2895/2, f. 31.

[64]CLRO, Rep. 32, ff. 208v, 222v.

[65]GL, MS 4409/1, f. 121.

[66]James F. Larkin, ed., *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, 2: 637 (#272).

[67]GL, MS 4956/2, ff. 327v, 313. On trade signs and the consciousness, see David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art* (Manchester, 1987), p. 18.

[68]GL, MS 2593/1, f. 218v, 234. See also GL, MS 4457/2, f. 273v.

[69]GL, MS 4524/1, f. 185v.

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parochial resources already strained by demographic growth in London and by the "crisis" of the 1590s.[70] Careful auditing of accounts provided one check on uncontrolled expenditures. Civic and parochial leaders also regulated inmates and lodgers in an attempt to curb the influx of poor into London and to control a host of urban ills from crime and prostitution to fire and disease.[71] The Court of Aldermen made frequent mention of efforts to count and contain the numbers of inmates and lodgers, some British and some probably these soldiers, strangers, and refugees. Parishes tried to comply with the regulations, to lessen their own expenditures and to obey city leaders. The vestry of St. Lawrence Pountney in 1623 remarked on Mr. Steven Raule's houses, divided to contain a "multitude of poore people, agaynst the law in that case provided, by which we found that not only god was dishonored, but also the poore of the parish much increased, to the great prejudice and impoverishing of the same parish."[72] The vestry invoked the law and God to justify, in this case, the suspension of relief to poor people, whose circumstances might otherwise have made them deserving.

Churchwardens exercised discretion in determining the deserving poor, but they did so with the help of detailed personal histories of time spent in captivity, loss to religious and political enemies, and conversion to "true" religion. The difficulty of many in the ranks of the wandering and even resident poor to gain relief highlights the significance of the narratives that opened the parish chest to other poor. These personal histories offer microcosmic versions of the larger histories played out through war and piracy, and demonstrate how local decisions about poor relief legitimated the goals of Crown and Parliament. The prayers and bell-ringing for national thanksgiving and the celebrations of coronation days and spoiled "popish plots" are interspersed in churchwardens' accounts with the everyday allotment of charity and relief to the poor who resided in or traveled through parishes. Thus, the determination of the deserving and undeserving poor, worked out nearly daily in the parishes of London by churchwardens, vestry men, and prominent inhabitants who bequeathed money to the poor in their testaments, served a broader national purpose. Community deter-

[70]Roger Finlay estimated that the population of the city of London grew from an estimated 50,000 in 1500 to 200,000 in 1600 and doubled to 400,000 by 1650. Finlay, *Population and Metropolis: The Demography of London, 1580-1650* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 51. On debate over the 1590s, see Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991) and Steve Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 1989).

[71]James F. Larkin and Paul Hughes, eds., *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, 1: 47, 25, "A Proclamation against Inmates and multitudes of dwellers in strait Roomes and places in and about the Citie of London: And for the rasing and pulling downe of certaine new erected buildings." See Schen, "Strategies of Poor Aged Women and Widows."

[72]GL, MS 3907/1, unfol.

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minations of "deserving" buttressed Tudor and Stuart government conceptions of the same.[73] Parochial poor relief and high politics furthered complementary aims of identifying the deserving poor, and of supporting religious and economic allies, exigent circumstances forging bonds across religious, racial, and ethnic lines.

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[73]Fideler's notions of *societas* and *civitas* pertain here, "Societas, Civitas," pp. 59, 66.

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