CRISIS IN CHARITY: CENTRIFUGAL AND CENTRIPETAL INFLUENCES UPON MEDIEVAL CARITATIVE ORDERS

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Abstract

All medieval religious orders were subject to competing centrifugal and centripetal forces that served not only to unite far-flung establishments into a single institution but also to tie each charitable outpost solidly to its local community. The local character of charitable practice, however, tended to exaggerate the centrifugal tendencies within the charity orders. Each individual house was rooted in local communities, from which it derived financial support and membership; as a consequence, these outposts operated with much independence. As a consequence, orders, such as those of St. Anthony, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity and Our Lady of Mercy, are more analogous to modern franchises than they are to vertically integrated corporations.

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Among the new orders that arose from the reformist currents of the twelfth century are a diverse group of religious corporations devoted to service to the poor. Of these charity orders, some, such as the Hospitallers of St. John and the Teutonic Knights, are far better known for their military endeavors than for their works of benevolence. Others, such as the Orders of Somport or Altopascio, were regional federations of hospices that sheltered and protected pilgrims and other travelers. Other small groups engaged in such varied apostolates as the reformation of former prostitutes and the burial of victims of plague. Of the dozens of such orders that arose throughout medieval Europe to serve the needy, however, only four reached any sort of widespread prominence as practitioners of charity. Two of these, the Trinitarians and Mercedarians, were associated with the ransoming of captives; two others, the Antonines and the Order of the Holy Spirit, established hospices and hospitals for the sick, disabled, orphans, those terminally —ill— in short those who were classified in the Middle Ages as "miserable persons." My purpose here is to ask how and in what ways their apostolate of charity impacted the constitutional structure shared with other canonical orders and influenced their ability to perform the various missions of charity that motivated their foundation.

Institutionally the element that all of the new orders shared was their practice of the Rule of St. Augustine. Derived from the writings of the fourth-century Church Father, the Rule only emerged in its modern form during the Gregorian Reform of the eleventh and twelfth centuries when it was adopted variously by reformed chapters of cathedrals and collegiate churches, congregations of canons devoted to preaching and teaching, several of the military orders as well as groups focused on performing works of mercy. This Rule commended itself to each of these institutions for much the same reason. First of all, since it antedated the Rule of Benedict by over a century, it gave the sanction of tradition to movements that were essentially new. Secondly, the brevity of the Rule itself demanded amplification that in turn permitted each group to shape its contours to serve its own particular purposes. Finally, the Rule emphasized the social obligations of religious persons and so was particularly suitable for those who labored outside of the cloister.[1]

While not the first to embrace Augustinian usages, all of the charity orders fell under its discipline. The oldest of these is that of St. Anthony, founded at the end of the eleventh century to treat victims of ergotism and other skin diseases. By the thirteenth century, the Order encompassed several hundred houses that stretched from Scotland to Syria. From the beginning the Antonines were tied to the Benedictine Abbey of Montmajour and its Rule but, in the thirteenth century, the Order became independent and reorganized itself as a canonical order under the Rule of St. Augustine.[2] Two additional charity orders also arose in the southern regions of France. The first descends from a hospital at Montpellier established by

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1. Brodman, James W. *Charity and Religion in Medieval Europe.* Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009: 224-26.

2. The standard history of the Order of St. Anthony is Mischlewski, Adalbert. *Un ordre hospitalier au moyen âge: Les chanoines reguliers de Saint-Antoine-en-Viennois.* Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1995; a convenient study in English is found in, Brodman, James. *Charity and Religion...*: 127-36.

a lay brother named Guy around 1175. Guy's brotherhood went on to establish a small network of hospitals in southern France and Italy that we know from a bull that Pope Innocent III issued within weeks of his inauguration as pope in 1198. While the initial papal letter was no more than a formal recognition of this new fraternity, which was now to be organized as an order under a Rule, Innocent was far more generous six years later when he conferred upon Guy a pilgrim hospital that he himself had rebuilt very near to St. Peter's basilica in Rome. Thereafter, the Order, now under the advocation of the Holy Spirit, developed a network of houses and hospitals between Iberia and eastern Europe that served, in addition to the poor and sick, pregnant women and new-born children.[3] Also from France is the earlier of the ransoming orders, that of the Holy Trinity or Trinitarians. It dates from 1198 when Pope Innocent III first took note of its founder, John de Matha, and subsequently approved a Rule. The Order's first important centers were in Iberia and France, but there were also houses in Italy, Great Britain and even in the Levant. Besides directly ransoming Christians in Muslim captivity and indirectly subsidizing individual efforts at raising ransoms, the Trinitarians also maintained hospitals that served the broad range of the medieval needy.[4] A second ransoming order, the Mercedarians, lacked this hospitaller mission and devoted all of its energies to the rescue of captives. Founded by Peter Nolasco just before 1230 and headquartered in Barcelona, the Mercedarians established houses in Iberia, southern France and, at the end of the Middle Ages, in Italy and Britain as well.[5]

What besides works of charity did these four organizations have in common? First of all, as indicated above, each observed a Rule derived from or influenced by the Rule of St. Augustine.[6] Only the Antonines had roots in monasticism but these ties were severed in 1247 when Pope Innocent IV assigned them Augustinian customs as more appropriate for those whose ministry was directed toward service to others.[7] Furthermore, each Order had a sizeable component of lay brothers and/ or lay sisters, that is, individuals whose religious profession required neither holy orders nor any extensive liturgical or choir service. While the Antonines and the Trinitarians always had a clerical leadership and the Mercedarians and Order of

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3. There is no recent monograph devoted to the Order of the Holy Spirit; the last general history is that of Brune, Paul. *Histoire de l'Ordre Hospitalier du Saint-Esprit*. Paris: G. Martin, 1892; more recent is the treatment in Brodman, James. *Charity and Religion...*: 137-49.

4. For the Trinitarians, see the many works of Cipollone, Giulio. *Cristianità-Islam: Cattività e liberazione in nome di dio. Il tempo di Innocenzo III dopo 'il 1187*. Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1992; Cipollone, Giulio, ed. *La liberazione dei 'captivi' tra cristianità e islam. Oltre la crociata e il ğihād: Tolleranza e servizio humanitario*. Vatican City: Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 2000. See also Brodman, James. *Charity and Religion...*: 150-62.

5. The basic work on the Mercedarians in the Middle Ages is Brodman, James William. *Ransoming Captives in Crusader Spain: The Order of Merced on the Christian-Islamic Frontier*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986. See also Brodman, James. *Charity and Religion...*: 162-72.

6. On the Rule of St. Augustine and its adoption by caritative orders, see Brodman, James. *Charity and Religion...*: 224-29.

7. On the relationship between Rule and mission, see Brodman, James W. "Rule and Identity: The Case of the Military Orders". *Catholic Historical Review*, 87 (2001): 383-400.

the Holy Spirit displaced their lay masters with priests in the later Middle Ages, the
large majority of the membership that actually tended to the poor was composed
of lay brothers and sisters. Structurally, a corollary of this is a certain localism since
my sense is that those under simple vows were even more likely than clerics to be
drawn from the locality in which they served. The probability is that only those who
gained positions of leadership or sought higher education moved any distance from
their points of origin. This sort of localism highlights a problem faced by all medieval
religious orders —the competition between centripetal forces of centralism and the
centrifugal forces of localism. The situation faced by the charity orders, however,
might have been more acute.

Maintaining a central identity and structural cohesion seems to have been
an issue faced by each of the charity orders. The two major hospital orders, for
example, emulated the Cistercian practice of filiation, whereby each new house was
tied most directly to the community responsible for its original foundation rather
than to any central authority. The result is an organizational chart that resembles
a web more than a tree. This is most apparent in the Order of St. Anthony with
its close ties to the Benedictines. As the Order grew, the original mother-daughter
relationships were replaced by so-called grand-preceptories, which were important
regional houses that had supervisory authority over lesser establishments. While
the master of the entire Order, who later adopted the title of abbot, had the power
to appoint the superiors of individual houses, his ability to regulate or discipline
these local communities was constrained by the lifetime tenure enjoyed by such
rectors. The central structures of the Order, moreover, were weak. A general chapter
does emerge in the later thirteenth century, at a time that the master was rallying
support for the Order's final rupture from the Benedictines, which finally took
place in 1297. But thereafter, attendance at this chapter was limited to the thirty
or so canons actually resident at the motherhouse of St. Anthony. Consequently,
this central community acquired an exclusive right to elect the head of the Order.
Evidently the only outsiders permitted to participate in its deliberations were those
preceptors who just happened to be at St. Anthony when the chapter met. Thus,
there was no effort to consult with or encourage the participation of the broader
membership in the determination of the Order's governance, even though each
professed member, whatever his location, was theoretically a canon and member
of this chapter.[8]

In 1310, the chapter of St. Anthony, recognizing the looseness of the Order's
organization, attempted to achieve greater cohesion by legislating that in the
future all preceptors, irregardless of their assignment, be natives of southeastern
France. Additionally, in 1327, the chapter limited appointments to brothers
who had actually lived in residence at St. Anthony for at least a year. Evidently,
however, this legislation could not overcome regional and local prejudices. While it
succeeded in privileging a number of aristocratic families from southeastern France,
who won a quasi-hereditary right to nominate the heads of certain preceptories,

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8. Mischlewski, Adalbert. *Saint-Antoine...*: 19-21, 30, 39.

it was ineffective outside of France because few foreign preceptors ever met the requirement of residency at St. Anthony. Such centrifugal forces were reinforced by Great Schism and the Hundred Years War. These events led to greater autonomy among the Spanish and German houses and in 1447 to the outright loss of all houses in England.[9]

The Order of the Holy Spirit also followed the principle of filiation, made even more complicated by the competition between the two principal houses of the Order. The first is the community of Montpellier that was Guy's original foundation and which served as the Order's first headquarters; the second is the Hospital of Santa Maria in Sassia, which was founded and endowed by Pope Innocent III and which subsequently became the seat of the master. As early as 1204, jurisdiction over the Order's European possessions was divided between this Roman master and the preceptor or commander of Montpellier. To the former belonged houses in Italy, Sicily, Hungary and England, while the latter supervised those in France, Iberia, Scandinavia and Germany. In addition to the power thus enjoyed by the Montpellier commander, the master was also constrained by the office of prior. Until papacy imposed clerical masters in the fifteenth century, the prior, as a priest, had primary jurisdiction over brothers in holy orders. In addition to a weak mastership, the Order of the Holy Spirit also lacked any body truly representative of the diversity of its membership. As with the Antonines, the master was chosen only by a central community —in this case, that of Santa Maria in Sassia in Rome— not the entire chapter general. Like the Antonines, moreover, this Order had a general chapter, which was obligated to meet annually at the feast of Pentecost. Its membership, however, was also small and not particularly representative of the broader order. For example, French houses, which may have numbered as many as several hundred sent only four delegates to the general chapter. Instead, preceptors from lesser houses were summoned to chapters that met at regional motherhouses. Thus, local centers of the Order's activities had at best only a very indirect tie to the center. This must have been further weakened by the right of each local community to elect its own head who then enjoyed a lifetime term. Consequently, the ability of superiors to sanction or discipline an individual community must have been slight. Indeed, the strongest institutional tie that bound the lesser to the greater houses was the financial obligation of the former to pay an annual tribute to its mother.[10]

The ransoming orders, on the other hand, did not follow the principle of filiation; instead, just as the mendicants, they adopted a provincial structure. The Trinitarians, at the end of the Middle Ages, held some 154 houses in twelve such provinces —six were in France, four in Iberia, and two in the British Isles.[11] Unlike the other three orders discussed here, the Trinitarians were able to maintain some degree of independence from outside influences. For example, the papacy was never successful

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9. Mischlewski, Adalbert. *Saint-Antoine...*: 68-70.

10. Brodman, James. *Charity and Religion...*: 139-42.

11. Deslandres, Paul. *L'Ordre des Trinitaires pour le rachat des captifs*. Toulouse-Paris: E. Privat, 1903: I, 176, 179; Brodman, James. *Charity and Religion...*: 154-59.

in imposing any of its nominees for minister general upon the Trinitarians. An effort to do so in 1415 was successfully blocked by the Parlement of Paris. Nonetheless, the Trinitarians exhibited some of the same centrifugal tendencies as the hospitaller orders. For example, while head of the Order, or minister general, was elected for life by the chapter general of the Order, the chapter itself came to be dominated by officials from only the four provinces in northern France; delegates from elsewhere in France and from all other regions did not successfully gain the right of admission until the seventeenth century. Furthermore, the Order's provincial organization reinforces the weakness of the center. In France, the heads of such provinces were nominated by the minister general, but these appointments also required the acquiescence of the superiors of each house within the appointee's jurisdiction. Outside of France, however, such provincials were elected by local assembles of superiors, with the general's role limited to mere confirmation. Furthermore, the custom was that such regional leaders were always to be native to the area of their responsibility.[12] As with all international religious orders, localism was exacerbated by the circumstances of the Great Schism. The Trinitarian province of England, for instance, was wooed by partisans of both obediences. In 1402, for example, the Roman pope, Urban VI, exempted the province from its obligation to seek confirmation for the election of a provincial minister, presumably because the head of the Order was loyal to his rival in Avignon.[13] The Avignonese pontiff then countered by offering the province a complete exemption from the usual tax on its revenues that was used to support the ransoming of captives in the Mediterranean.[14] Castilian Trinitarians, also of the Roman obedience, gained a similar regional autonomy as the English. As with the hospitaller orders, central authority at the local level was particularly weak. Individual Trinitarian communities chose their own superiors, who then enjoyed lifetime tenure. While particularly able or ambitious ministers might move on to more important appointments, evidence suggests that few priests or brothers did so, most remaining for life within the house of their initial profession.[15]

Most centralized, but also far smaller in geographic extent, was the Mercedarian Order. The master of the Order, at least until the fourteenth century, was elected by the general chapter, to which all local superiors or commanders were summoned. Reforms of 1319 and 1327, however, created a more complicated structure. That of 1319 divided local houses among five provinces; the latter organized the five into two blocs coinciding with the crown lands of Aragon and those of Castile and Portugal. Provincials and deputies, called *commendores mayores*, were appointed by the master but, just as the master, they served for life. After 1327, furthermore, the master in theory was to be chosen by two delegates from each of the five provinces, but in fact the appointment of the Mercedarian master fell variously into the hands

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12. Deslandres, Paul. *L'Ordre des Trinitaires...*: I, 38, 45, 55-56, 66, 161.

13. "*Synopsis bullarii ordinis sanctissimae trinitatis medii aevi ex variis fontibus praecipue vero ex registis summorum pontificum in archivis vaticanis asservatis collecta atque digesta*". *Acta Ordinis Sanctissimae Trinitatis* 1/11 (1923): 508, (doc. n. 242 [June 26, 1402]).

14. *Acta Ordinis Sanctissimae Trinitatis* 1/11 (1923): 508 (doc. n. 243 [November 11, 1402]).

15. Deslandres, Paul. *L'Ordre des Trinitaires...*: I, 45, 65, 74.

of either the pope or the king of Aragon.[16] Additionally, during the fourteenth century, Kings James II and Peter IV of Aragon also claimed special rights over the Order's revenues and its members on the supposition that their ancestor, King James I, had been the actual founder of the Order. According to this so-called *ius patronatus*, individual brothers could be summoned for royal service independent of the wishes of their religious superiors.[17] In the fifteenth century, despite the accession of a Castilian dynasty to the Aragonese throne and the eventual merger of the monarchies through the marriage of Isabel and Ferdinand, Mercedarians in Aragonese and Castilian lands grew increasingly estranged from each other as the brothers in the now larger and more prosperous Castilian province rejected any oversight from an eastern master resident in Barcelona. This conflict ultimately led to a negotiated settlement, the Concordia of 1467 which granted institutional autonomy to the Castilians. As a consequence, the master lost all control over the Order's richest province as well as over the burgeoning provinces soon to be established in the New World. Thus, this most centralized of the charity orders gradually became its most fragmented.[18]

If structural issues tended to favor the periphery over the center, what prevented the large, international charity orders from disintegrating into a series of purely national or regional associations? None of these possessed a St. Dominic or a St. Francis, charismatic and saintly figures, whose patronage and spiritual reputation might provide a measure of institutional cohesion and common identity. But each order, however, came to be associated with a particular charitable vocation and it was this identity that provided a measure of cohesion to the entire organization, despite the efforts of individual provinces or houses to evade this or that particular tax on their local revenues. A good illustration of this is England because, geographically, it was located on the periphery of Europe and thus was far removed from many of the signature works of charity. For example, those which supported pilgrims to Santiago or Rome or the Levant or else aided those in Muslim captivity were centered far to the south in the Mediterranean region. Nonetheless, all of these works of mercy continued to be supported by English Catholics up until the eve of the Reformation through collections organized under the aegis of each of the charity orders. At the same time, however, the institutional ties between houses in England and motherhouses located on the continent gradually weakened. At the time of the dissolution in 1540, only the Hospitallers of St. John continued any formal ties with their continental brethren.[19]

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16. On the Albertine constitutions, see Taylor, Bruce. *Structures of Reform: The Mercedarian Order in the Spanish Golden Age*. Leiden: Brill, 2000: 36-49.

17. On the relations between the Mercedarians and the House of Barcelona, see Brodman, James W. "Fable and Royal Power: The Origins of the Mercedarian Foundation Story". *Journal of Medieval History*, 25 (1999): 229-41.

18. Taylor, Bruce. *Structures of Reform...*: 44, 52-56.

19. For example, in fourteenth century England, the principal charities located outside of England that received support within the kingdom were these charity orders: the Order of the Holy Spirit, that of St. Anthony, the Pyrenean order of Roncesvalles and the Italian order of Altopascio. See Swanson, Robert

As a result, medieval charity orders are more comparable to modern franchises than they are to highly structured corporations. Local communities shared a common Rule and habit, were engaged in similar work, and appealed to similar charitable impulses within late medieval society. But, structurally they were highly decentralized. For three of the Orders, the overall superior —the master or minister general— was associated with a particular geographical area and so brethren from other regions were excluded, at least in a practical sense, from participation at this level of governance. Chapters general were typically not very inclusive and represented only narrow slices of the overall membership. On the local level, communities were recruited from nearby populations and heads of houses typically served for life, both of which limited the ability of central authorities to challenge or change local decisions. But, I suspect, that such decentralization was not entirely unique to the charity orders. Jill Webster's study of the Franciscans in the Crown of Aragon, for example, has demonstrated a similar pattern of local recruitment among populations of friars.[20] Did the practice of charity, however, exacerbate this tendency toward localism?

The experience of the ransoming orders suggests that the answer is an affirmative one, at least structurally. This is seen most clearly in the history of the Trinitarian Order, whose apostolate included the new work of ransoming Christian captives as well as the more traditional works of hospitality. On the one hand, right up until the Reformation, Trinitarians in England remained very active in the indulgence trade, seeking alms to benefit captives in the Mediterranean.[21] On the other hand, however, within a generation of the founder's death, the commitment of local foundations to ransoming began to waver in regions of northern Europe where captivity had ceased to be an issue of local concern. Thus, by the 1260s, revised constitutions permitted houses to honor restrictions against grants to captives contained in individual charters of donation. In 1265, even King Louis IX, himself a recent victim of captivity, forbade that any revenues from a hôtel-dieu at Compiègne that he had transferred to the Trinitarians be used for ransoming.[22] By 1429, the Order's constitutions speak of ransoming as the work of only its Iberian provinces and, within them, as efforts of a handful of houses. Thus, even within Spain, where a concern for captives remained strong into the eighteenth century, not all Trinitarian centers were expected to contribute toward this signature activity. For example, one stipulation in the 1429 constitutions warns that provincial superiors, who travel for the purpose of ransoming, could expect no more than simple hospitality from any

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N. *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise*. Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007: 24, 66-67.

20. Webster, Jill R. *Els Menorats: The Franciscans in the Realms of Aragon From St. Francis to the Black Death*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1993: 67-68, 109, 148, 261 and appendix 3 (Family Origins of Friars): 368-71.

21. Swanson, Robert N. *Indulgences in Late Medieval England...*: 63-64, 144-45, 147.

22. Constitutions of 1263 permit donors or their delegates to reserve their gifts for a particular use or for the use of the local house: Deslandres, Paul. *Trinitaires...*: II, 44 (doc. n. 36); Brodman, James W. *The Trinitarian and Mercedarian Orders: A Study in Religious Redemptionism in the Thirteenth Century*. Virginia: University of Virginia (Ph.D.dissertation), 1974: 237.

Trinitarian convents encountered en route. Another provision limited visitations by ransomed captives, whose personal testimonies had become an effective tool for fund-raising, only to houses that had actually contributed financially and logistically to their ransoming "so that the return be proportionate to the effort."[23] A similar local bias can be seen in the Order's non-ransoming work as well. Evidently hospitals entrusted to the Order's care were expected to be self-supporting. When the Hospital of San Lucas, transferred to the Trinitarians of Burgos in 1262 for the care of the sick poor, could not meet this standard of support, the local community returned the institution to the cathedral chapter.[24] Indeed, one has the sense that in many places the work of the Trinitarians was determined by the expectations local patrons, be they a bishop, town council or magnate.[25]

Evidence of Mercedarian ransomings also reveal the strength of localism in shaping the Order's charitable activities. One has the sense, in the first place, that the Order was expected to use any alms collected within the community to assist local captives. For example, the Mercedarians at Vic, a town in Catalonia, doled out subsidies in the later thirteenth century to some sixty-two residents of the town. The earliest known captive lists, dating from 1366 and 1388, show Mercedarians from Catalonia and Valencia traveling to North Africa to purchase the freedom of fifty captives, all natives of territory controlled by the king of Aragon. The document of 1388 notes that these individuals were selected from the very large number of Christians held captive there.[26] The existence of a parochial expectation for charity is revealed in the complaints from councilors of the Valencian town of Morella in 1384 that the Mercedarians were refusing to ransom certain local residents despite the funds that the town had already contributed to the Order, or in the will of Elionor Sacirera, a wealthy Barcelona widow who in 1441 demanded that her alms be withheld from both the Mercedarians and Trinitarians and instead be given to local merchants who could be trusted to deliver captives.[27]

A lack of modern studies obscures our view of how St. Anthony's local houses functioned but there is a suggestion that the motherhouse's appropriation of the revenues of several provinces, including those of southern France, northern Italy and the Dalmatian coast, to support the abbot and his debts harmed the Order's reputation in those regions due to its diminished ability to serve the local needy.[28] Even less is known about how the Order of the Holy Spirit functioned on the local

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23. Deslandres, Paul. *L'Ordre des Trinitaires...*: II, 136-137.

24. *Documentación del monasterio de La Trinidad de Burgos (1198-1400)*, ed. Lucía García Aragón. Burgos: J.M. Garrido Garrido, 1985: 62-64 (doc. nº 32).

25. For examples at Arles and Avignon, see Le Blévec, Daniel. *La part du pauvre: L'assistance dans les pays du Bas-Rhône du XIIe au milieu du Xve siècle.* Rome: École Française de Rome, 2000: 159-64.

26. Brodman, James. *Ransoming Captives...*: 105-7, 114.

27. Sáinz de la Maza Lasoli, Regina. "Los Mercedarios en la Corona de Aragón". *Miscel.lània de Textos Medievals*, 4 (1988): 240, 286-87; Núria Coll, Julià. "Documentación notarial relativa a los pobres en la Cataluña del siglo XV", *La pobreza y la asistencia a los pobres en la Cataluña medieval*, Manuel Riu, ed. Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1981-82: 2, 307.

28. Mischlewski, Adalbert. *Saint-Antoine...*: 44-45, 61-64.

level. Some glimmer of this, however, might be suggested by the experience of the Teutonic Order, a military Order with a network of local hospitals in thirteenth and fourteenth-century Germany. Given the Order's focus upon its own independently governed domain in the Baltic, these German hospitals were viewed as something of a distraction and were expected to be supported by their own endowments or else by income from the local preceptories. An insufficiency of such revenues presumably led to a rapid abandonment of its charity houses in Flanders and the transformation of the German hospitals around the time of the plague into shelters for elderly patrons and the orphaned children of the rich. Within the Teutonic Order, any transfers of revenue were to be from local institutions into the Order's central coffers.[29]

This sense of local identity runs counter to the dream of early thirteenth-century reformers, such as Robert of Courson and Pope Innocent III, to use the agency of the Church to redistribute charitable resources from areas of abundance to those of need.[30] To some degree, as Robert N. Swanson's recent study of the indulgence trade in late medieval England clearly demonstrates, each of the four charity orders did collect alms on a general basis and dispatch these revenues toward the center for the purpose of supporting their signature caritative activities. Furthermore, there is the evidence of agents —who might or might not be actual members of an order— commissioned to preach in favor of the particular charity within assigned districts.[31] Cartularies are replete with papal indulgences to be awarded those who gave to these noble works as well as stern warnings to those who impeded such collections through fraud or denied access.[32] Each of the charity orders established confraternities of lay people that encouraged such giving on an annual basis through a variety of spiritual incentives and privileges. Evidence, furthermore, indicates that there was some redistribution of resources from one region of Europe to another. The largest institution operated by the Antonines was the great hospital attached to its motherhouse in southeastern France, toward which victims of ergotism from throughout Europe were drawn by the relics of St. Anthony and which itself was supported with alms from several European provinces. Mercedarian and Trinitarian ransomers drew upon both regional and more generally collected resources to finance the liberation of captives. Yet, all of these broad efforts, as we have seen, were limited both by the local organization of charity as well as by the prejudices of medieval givers that privileged neighbors over strangers, and the worthy over the unworthy. By modern standards, no medieval corporation was truly centralized. But, of the great religious orders that were products of the Gregorian reforms of the twelfth century, those whose work was charity seem to have been the least integrated and structured. The reasons for this are complex and involve such variables as

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29. Brodman, James. *Charity and Religion...*: 105-106.

30. For a review of the program of Parisian reforms of Pope Innocent's generation, see Brodman, James. *Charity and Religion...*: 16-25, 78-80.

31. See Swanson, Robert N. *Indulgences in Late Medieval England...*: 63-66, 128, 391.

32. For examples of privileges granted to the Mercedarians, see Brodman, James. *Ransoming Captives...*: 86-87.

patronage, tradition and politics. But, underlying all of these factors is a practice of charity that was fundamentally local —in terms of personnel, of financial support and of clientage. The centripetal forces that tied medieval charity orders together as coherent institutions were ideological in nature; actual structures were more highly influenced by centrifugal tendencies that bound the practitioners, patrons and clients of particular localities more closely to each other than to any external agencies of governance. As a consequence, orders, such as those of St. Anthony, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity and Our Lady of Mercy, are more analogous to modern franchises than they are to vertically integrated corporations.