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978-1-107-00343-9 - Medieval Market Morality: Life, Law and Ethics in the  
English Marketplace, 1200–1500

James Davis

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## Medieval Market Morality

*Life, Law and Ethics in the English Marketplace, 1200–1500*

This important new study examines the market trade of medieval England from a new perspective, by providing a wide-ranging critique of the moral and legal imperatives that underpinned retail trade. James Davis shows how market-goers were influenced not only by practical and economic considerations of price, quality, supply and demand, but also by the moral and cultural environment within which such deals were conducted. This book draws on a broad range of cross-disciplinary evidence, from the literary works of William Langland and the sermons of medieval preachers, to state, civic and guild laws. Davis scrutinises everyday market behaviour through case studies of small and large towns, using the evidence of manor and borough courts. From these varied sources, Davis teases out the complex relationship between morality, law and practice and demonstrates that even the influence of contemporary Christian ideology was not necessarily incompatible with efficient and profitable everyday commerce.

JAMES DAVIS is Lecturer in Medieval History in the School of History and Anthropology at Queen's University Belfast.

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JAMES DAVIS

# Abbreviations

Alsford, <i>Towns</i>	<i>Medieval English Towns</i> , at: <a href="http://users.trytel.com/~tristan/towns/towns.html">http://users.trytel.com/~tristan/towns/towns.html</a> (accessed 11 October 2009)
<i>Ayenbite of Inwyt</i>	R. Morris (ed.), <i>Dan Michel's Ayenbite of Inwyt, or, Remorse of Conscience. In the Kentish Dialect, 1340 AD</i> (Early English Text Society, o.s. 23, London, 1866)
<i>BBC, 1042–1216</i>	A. Ballard (ed.), <i>British Borough Charters 1042–1216</i> (Cambridge, 1913)
<i>BBC, 1216–1307</i>	A. Ballard and J. Tait (eds.), <i>British Borough Charters 1216–1307</i> (Cambridge, 1923)
<i>BBC, 1307–1660</i>	M. Weinbaum (ed.), <i>British Borough Charters 1307–1660</i> (Cambridge, 1943)
<i>Beverley</i>	A. F. Leach (ed.), <i>Beverley Town Documents</i> (Selden Society, 14, London, 1900)
BL	London, British Library
<i>Black Book</i>	T. Twiss (ed.), <i>The Black Book of the Admiralty or Monumenta Juridica</i> , 2 vols. (Rolls Series, 55, London, 1873)
<i>Bridgwater</i>	T. B. Dilks (ed.), <i>Bridgwater Borough Archives, 1200–1485</i> (Somerset Record Society, 48, 53, 58, 60 and 70, 1933–71)
<i>Bristol</i>	F. B. Bickley (ed.), <i>The Little Red Book of Bristol</i> , 2 vols. (Bristol, 1900)
<i>Britton</i>	F. M. Nichols (ed.), <i>Britton</i> , 2 vols. (Oxford, 1865)
<i>CChR</i>	<i>Calendar of Charter Rolls</i> , 6 vols. (London, 1903–27)
<i>CCR</i>	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i> , 46 vols. (London, 1892–1963)
Chaucer	L. D. Benson (ed.), <i>The Riverside Chaucer</i> (Boston, Mass., 1987)

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<i>CIM</i>	<i>Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous</i> , 7 vols. (London, 1916–68)
<i>CLB</i>	R. R. Sharpe (ed.), <i>Calendar of Letter-Books of the City of London</i> , 12 vols. (London, 1899–1912)
<i>Coventry</i>	M. D. Harris (ed.), <i>The Coventry Leet Book</i> (EETS, o.s. 134, 135, 138, 146, London, 1907–13)
<i>CPR</i>	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i> , 54 vols. (London, 1891–1916)
<i>CUL</i>	Cambridge University Library
<i>DB</i>	A. Rumble (ed.), <i>Domesday Book, 34: Suffolk</i> (Chichester, 1986)
<i>Dives and Pauper</i>	P. H. Barnum (ed.), <i>Dives and Pauper</i> (Early English Text Society, n.s. 275 and 280, Oxford, 1976–80)
<i>Fasciculus Morum</i>	S. Wenzel (ed.), <i>Fasciculus Morum: A Fourteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook</i> (London, 1989)
<i>Fleta</i>	H. G. Richardson and G. O. Sayles (eds.), <i>Fleta</i> (Seldon Society, 72, London, 1953)
<i>Gower, Mirour</i>	W. B. Wilson (ed.), <i>John Gower, Mirour de l'Omme (The Mirror of Mankind)</i> (East Lansing, Mich., 1992)
<i>Great Red Book</i>	E. W. W. Veale (ed.), <i>The Great Red Book of Bristol</i> (Bristol Record Society, 2, 4, 8 and 16, 1931–51)
<i>Handlyng Synne</i>	F. J. Furnivall (ed.), <i>Robert of Brunne's 'Handlyng Synne', AD1303</i> (Early English Text Society, o.s. 119, London, 1901)
<i>Henley</i>	P. M. Briers (ed.), <i>Henley Borough Records: Assembly Books i–iv, 1395–1543</i> (Oxfordshire Record Society, 41, Oxford, 1960)
<i>HMC</i>	Historical Manuscripts Commission, <i>Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections</i> (London, 1907)
<i>Jacob's Well</i>	A. Brandeis (ed.), <i>Jacob's Well: An English Treatise on the Cleansing of Man's Conscience</i> (Early English Text Society, o.s. 115, London, 1900)
<i>King's Lynn</i>	D. M. Owen (ed.), <i>The Making of King's Lynn: A Documentary Survey</i> (Records of Social and Economic History, new ser. 9, London, 1984)
<i>Leicester</i>	M. Bateson (ed.), <i>Records of the Borough of Leicester</i> , 3 vols. (London, 1899–1901)

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<i>Liber Albus</i>	H. T. Riley (ed.), <i>Liber Albus: The White Book of the City of London</i> (London, 1861)
<i>Memorials</i>	H. T. Riley (ed.), <i>Memorials of London and London Life in the XIIIth, XIVth, and XVth Centuries, AD1276–1419</i> (London, 1868)
<i>Northampton</i>	C. A. Markham and J. C. Cox (eds.), <i>The Records of the Borough of Northampton</i> , 2 vols. (Northampton, 1898)
<i>Norwich</i>	W. Hudson and J. C. Tingey (eds.), <i>The Records of the City of Norwich</i> , 2 vols. (Norwich, 1906)
<i>Nottingham</i>	W. H. Stevenson (ed.), <i>Records of the Borough of Nottingham: 1155–1485</i> , 2 vols. (London, 1882–3)
<i>Oak Book</i>	P. Studer (ed.), <i>The Oak Book of Southampton</i> , 2 vols. (Southampton Record Society, 10–11, Southampton, 1910)
<i>Parl. Rolls</i>	C. Given-Wilson, P. Brand, A. Curry, R. Horrox, G. Martin, S. Philips and W. M. Ormrod (eds.), <i>The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, 1275–1504</i> (PROME) (Scholarly Digital Editions, Leicester, 2005)
<i>Piers Plowman, A</i>	G. Kane (ed.), <i>Piers Plowman: The A Version – Will’s Visions of Piers Plowman and Do-Well</i> (Berkeley, Calif., 1988)
<i>Piers Plowman, B</i>	G. Kane and E. T. Donaldson (eds.), <i>Piers Plowman: The B Version – Will’s Visions of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better and Do-Best</i> (Berkeley, Calif., 1988)
<i>Piers Plowman, C</i>	D. Pearsall (ed.), <i>William Langland, Piers Plowman: The C-Text</i> (Berkeley, 1978; repr. Exeter, 1994)
<i>RCh</i>	T. D. Hardy (ed.), <i>Rotuli Chartarum</i> (London, 1837)
<i>Red Paper Book</i>	W. G. Benham (ed.), <i>The Red Paper Book of Colchester</i> (Colchester, 1902)
<i>RLC</i>	T. D. Hardy (ed.), <i>Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum</i> , 2 vols. (London, 1833–44)
<i>RP</i>	<i>Rotuli Parliamentorum</i> , 6 vols. (London, 1783)
<i>Salisbury</i>	D. R. Carr (ed.), <i>The First General Entry Book of the City of Salisbury 1387–1452</i> (Wiltshire Record Society, 54, Trowbridge, 2001)
<i>SRO (B)</i>	Suffolk Record Office (Bury St Edmunds)

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SRO (I)	Suffolk Record Office (Ipswich)
SRP, i	J. F. Larkin and P. L. Hughes (eds.), <i>Stuart Royal Proclamations. Volume I: Royal Proclamations of King James I, 1603–1625</i> (Oxford, 1973)
SRP, ii	J. F. Larkin (ed.), <i>Stuart Royal Proclamations. Volume II: Royal Proclamations of King Charles I, 1625–1646</i> (Oxford, 1983)
Statutes	<i>Statutes of the Realm (1101–1713)</i> , 11 vols. (ed. A. Luders, T. Edlyn Tomlins, J. France, W. E. Tauton and J. Raithby, London, 1810–28, repr. 1963)
STC	A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, <i>A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640</i> , 3 vols. (rev. edn W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson and K. F. Pantzer, London, 1986)
TNA	London, The National Archives
TRP	P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin (eds.), <i>Tudor Royal Proclamations</i> , 3 vols. (New Haven, Conn., 1964–9)
VCH	<i>Victoria County History</i>
Vices and Virtues	W. N. Francis (ed.), <i>The Book of Vices and Virtues</i> (Early English Text Society, n.s. 217, London, 1942)
Winchester	W. H. B. Bird (ed.), <i>The Black Book of Winchester</i> (Winchester, 1925)
York, i–ii	M. Sellers (ed.), <i>York Memorandum Book, volumes I–II</i> (Surtees Society, 120 and 125, Durham, 1912–15)
York, iii	J. W. Percy (ed.), <i>York Memorandum Book, volume III</i> (Surtees Society, 186, Durham, 1973)



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## Notes to the text

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### Currency and measures

A pound sterling (£) consisted of 20 shillings (s., ‘solidus’) and 240 pence (d., ‘denarius’), with 12 pence to a shilling. A ‘mark’ was worth two-thirds of a pound (13s. 4d.) and a ‘groat’ was worth 4d.

A ‘quarter’ was a dry measure, equivalent to eight ‘bushels’; a bushel was equivalent to eight gallons. Other measures included the ‘peck’, which was equivalent to two gallons or a quarter of a bushel, the pottle or potel ( $\frac{1}{2}$  gallon) and the ‘quart’ ( $\frac{1}{4}$  gallon). The ell was a measure of length, particularly for cloth, equivalent to 45 inches in England.

The troy pound was mostly used for money and bread and often delineated in pounds, shillings and pence: 20 pennies to an ounce, 12 ounces to a pound (lb.), 64 lb. to a bushel, and 512 lb. to a quarter. A tower pound consisted of 5,400 barley grains, a troy pound of 5,760 barley grains, and an avoirdupois pound (of 16 ounces) of 7,000 barley grains. Many other scales were also employed throughout the period covered by this book, with numerous local variations.

### Extracts from contemporary texts

The original Middle English versions of vernacular texts are given where possible, and modern English translations are provided for certain difficult words or passages. Middle English includes the letters þ (thorn), generally pronounced ‘th’, and ȝ (yogh), similar to ‘gh’. Translations of Middle English, Latin and French texts are either the author’s own or taken from published sources as referenced.