

**FIRST DRAFT: NOT TO BE REFERRED TO WITHOUT PERMISSION**

The 'decline of neighbourliness' revisited

Keith Wrightson

I

The 'decline of neighbourliness' is one of the longest established interpretative themes in the social history of early modern England. It is a theme with very deep roots, as we will see. To historians of my generation, however, it is indelibly associated with two of the foundation texts of the 'new social history': Alan Macfarlane's *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* and Keith Thomas' *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. To Macfarlane the upsurge of witchcraft accusations in the late sixteenth century was closely linked to "a deep social change; a change from a 'neighbourly', highly integrated and mutually interdependent village society to a more individualistic one".<sup>1</sup> To Thomas it reflected "an unresolved conflict between the neighbourly conduct required by the ethical code of the old village community, and the increasingly individualistic forms of behaviour which accompanied the economic changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries".<sup>2</sup> Thomas and Macfarlane drew in turn upon the interpretation of social and cultural change put forward by Christopher Hill; one in which economic change "manifested itself in the rise of a spirit of individualism" which, in concert with the religious changes of the Reformation era, served "unconsciously to atomize the parish".<sup>3</sup> But such perceptions were not confined to either those writing, like Hill, in a Marxist tradition or to English historiography. They were prominent in the work of Lawrence Stone, and in the manner in which contemporary historians of early America traced the declining cohesiveness of New England townships.<sup>4</sup>

The notion of the 'decline of neighbourliness', then, was very much part of the first systematic attempt to explore the history of social relationships in early modern England, and as such it established an interpretative theme which has continued to exert an influence. That said, however, it is also the case that in recent years such influence has been exerted in an increasingly cautious, even surreptitious, manner. For if historians of the period still frequently address the subject of neighbourliness, they do so with far less confidence about the trajectory of change than did Hill, Thomas, Macfarlane and Stone. This for a variety of reasons; some theoretical, some empirical.

Historians of the period have long been sufficiently well-versed in social theory to be anxious to avoid the charge that their interpretative models are unconsciously influenced by the subterranean traditions of nineteenth-century sociological thinking – especially the tendency to conceptualize social change in terms of "polarities...linked by processes of irreversible sequential change". They know that

community and individualism are not mutually exclusive; that tensions between the two are recurrent, even perennial phenomena; that cooperation and conflict are two sides of the same coin; that conflict is not the same thing as change or decay; that social processes are rarely linear; that communities are “endlessly dying and being born” and that the temptation to sentimentalize the past and to depict change in social relations elegiacally, as a process of decline, should be resisted.<sup>5</sup>

More specifically, they are also increasingly aware that the notion of the ‘decline of neighbourliness’ in its original formulation made too many unwarranted assumptions about medieval society; about the *status quo ante* in social relations. To be sure, early modernists might be forgiven for their naive willingness to believe what medievalists actually used to tell them. Thus, we read that medieval villagers were “bound” to their local community by a “finely woven web of manorial, kinship, economic, legal and cooperative relations”, and that the concept of neighbourhood was “their premier organizational ideal”.<sup>6</sup> We learned that the century after the Black Death was one of “weakening village cohesiveness” in which “the seeds of destruction of the village had already been sown”, a process which “would lead to the triumph of individualism over the interests of the community”.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the “high degree of cohesiveness, cooperation and solidarity” that had characterized pre-plague villages remained alive in the fifteenth century, not least because labour shortages and an intensified resistance to seigneurial demands promoted interdependence, cooperation and solidarity.<sup>8</sup> In sum, there was something there to decline.

All this offered aid and comfort to the early modernist interested in exploring subsequent developments in these matters. But since the 1980s the medievalists have toughened up. They are less “tempted” by the concept of community into a “privileging of harmony over tension and conflict”; more anxious not “to misrepresent by idealizing the degree of harmony and neighbourly cooperation” to be found in the medieval village. The emphasis now is upon the need to recognize its heterogeneity, hierarchy, and conflicts of interest, to appreciate the extent to which it was a coercive organization, and to understand community “not as an organic state, but as one negotiated and re-negotiated to suit the self-interests of its participants”.<sup>9</sup> Few would perhaps go so far as John Bossy, who as early as 1973 challenged the notion that “the pre-Reformation rural parish was a unified community broken up by the progress of economic individualism in the sixteenth century” by proposing an alternative vision of the parish as an assemblage of internally cohesive “kinship communities” which existed in a state of actual or potential hostility to one another.<sup>10</sup> But more generally, it seems to be the prevailing view that in medieval society neighbourliness was less a real, existing, state of harmonious social relations than an ideal; a set of values aimed at fostering cooperation, a sense of collective identity and sentiments of community.<sup>11</sup> Hence the stress in recent depictions of late medieval religion on “a Christianity

resolutely and enthusiastically oriented towards the public and the corporate”, in which “the state of charity, meaning social integration, was the principal end of the Christian life”; an ideal expressed in the promotion of “holy neighbourliness” through such institutions as religious guilds and fraternities and an elaborating world of communal festivity and commensality.<sup>12</sup> As for the *actual* state of neighbourliness in the medieval village, however, as J.A. Raftis confessed in 1964, “we know very little”.<sup>13</sup> Previously dominant views were based more on inference or prior expectation than on evidence, and it seems that we should not assume too much.

To add to our difficulties, it is clear that if changing perceptions of the nature of medieval communities pose problems at one end of the supposed ‘decline of neighbourliness’, there are problems also at the other. Notions of the inexorable rise of individualism have fallen foul of those historians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who have demonstrated the continuing reality of the many constraints that remained on the expression of individualism, the limits of individualism as a motive for action or a touchstone of personal identity, and the enduring significance of a variety of forms of cooperation and mutuality. If the economic world of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was indeed more competitive and more thoroughly permeated by market relations, it was also (in the absence of an adequate money supply) based upon ubiquitous credit relations which fostered a strong cultural emphasis on “trust and the maintenance of human obligation”. In the emergent credit economy “a strong notion of reciprocity in exchanges and communal bonds of neighbourliness coexisted with the free movement of prices”, crudely self-interested motivation was regarded with hostility, and “a reputation for honesty, trustworthiness and good neighbourliness became an attribute of wealth”, vital to the maintenance of the credit-worthiness of both the ‘middling sort of people’ and the labouring poor.<sup>14</sup> Forms of informal support, including those of neighbourliness, remained vital.<sup>15</sup> If ‘independence’ was a much valued attribute among England’s commercial ‘middling sort’, they remained enmeshed in “hidden dependencies”, and individualism was not their prime mode of self-identification.<sup>16</sup> The emergent industrial cultures of the manufacturing districts were shaped as much by the development of “community networks of mutual obligation” as by the dynamics of labour markets.<sup>17</sup> And we have only to glance ahead to find a considerable historical and sociological literature on forms of neighbourhood in the working class communities of modern Britain.<sup>18</sup> In sum, reports of the death of neighbourliness in early modern England would appear to have been greatly exaggerated.

All this considered, historians of early modern England have good reason to have grown cautious about the concept of the ‘decline of neighbourliness’; and that caution is reflected in their current reluctance to make bold sallies when it comes to interpreting medium- to long-term change in social relations in

this period. Nevertheless, they have reasons to be cheerful also; for the more abundant documentary evidence available from the sixteenth century offers us our first real opportunity to explore many types of social relationship and forms of social identity among the mass of the English population that can only be conjectured for earlier centuries. What can it tell us about neighbourliness – a relationship of which we have long been aware, yet which has been described as recently as the 1980s as still “a relatively untheorized phenomenon” in the social sciences?<sup>19</sup> And can a clearer understanding of the historical characteristics of neighbourliness help us to re-address the process of social change in the local communities of this period? These are the central questions of this paper.

## II

The evidence surviving for the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries abundantly demonstrates the vitality of the concept of neighbourliness as both a centrally important social relationship and a primary social ideal. The term, and its variants are encountered frequently. Of equal significance is the fact that its implications appear to have been so widely understood that contemporaries seem to have felt no need to define it closely. A trawl through the early dictionaries of the period, for example, reveals no entry for ‘neighbour’ or ‘neighbourly’ before the early eighteenth century.<sup>20</sup> Nor, despite the efflorescence of didactic literature in this period, do there appear to be any ‘conduct books’ directly devoted to advice on the practice of neighbourliness. Among the printed works of the period, however, what we do have is the catechetical literature devoted to religious instruction by question and answer, and here at last the question of neighbourliness figures prominently.

As Ian Green reminds us in *The Christian’s ABC*, the exposition of the Commandments of the Second Table (commandments five to ten) was conventionally taken to involve the conveying of one’s duties to one’s neighbour.<sup>21</sup> These could be summed up pithily. In response to the question “What is thy dutie towards thy neighbour”, for example, the official catechism included in the Church of England’s first Prayer Book of 1549 (as part of the service of confirmation) provided the response: “My dueties towards my neighbour is, to love hym as myselfe. And to do to al men as I would they should do to me”. This further involved the specific duty “to ordre myself lowlye and reverentlye to al my betters” (honouring father and mother, obeying the king and his ministers, submitting to governors, teachers, and spiritual mentors) and more generally the obligations:

To hurte no bodie by worde nor dede. To be true and just in al my dealing.  
To beare no malice nor hatred in my heart. To kepe my hands from picking  
and stealing and my tongue from evill speaking, liyeng, and slandrings. To  
kepe my bodie in temperance, sobreness, and chastitie. Not to covet nor

desire other mennes goods. But learne and laboure truely to geate my  
Owne living, and to doe my duetie in that state of life: unto which it shal  
Please God to cal me.<sup>22</sup>

That was it, in a nutshell. But as Green points out, the many authors of supplementary catechisms liked to extend the lesson and apply it. The Fifth Commandment (“Honour thy father and thy mother”) usually got most attention because of its general application to all relationships of authority and subordination. But the Sixth (“Thou shalt not kill”) was extended to embrace not only the prohibition of quarreling and hostile thoughts and deeds, but also the complementary need to love and succour one’s neighbours and to be reconciled to them. In Dod and Cleaver’s best selling *Plain and Familiar Exposition of the Ten Commuanedments* it also included the duty “to pay the due wages and recompense for the worke of any poore man”. The Eighth (“Thou shalt not steal”) was extended to all forms of covetousness and “unlawful gain”, including usurious lending, and oppression of the poor by the rich – Dod and Cleaver inveighed against hard bargains “under cover of law” and the enclosure of common land – and also to denounce idleness. The Ninth (bearing false witness) was extended to backbiting, any action occasioning loss to one’s neighbours, and the duty to try to think well of them and defend their good name. The Tenth (against covetousness) reinforced the Eighth and further forbade evil thoughts and malicious actions towards one’s neighbour. All in all it was a tall order, and one, as the Prayer Book realistically observed, that could scarcely be accomplished without God’s “speciall grace”. And in all of this, Green argues, there was little variation between writers who took different positions on issues of theology or church government. This was utterly traditional Christian moral teaching, and in its essentials it persisted throughout the early modern period.<sup>23</sup>

### III

When they raised the question “Who is my neighbour”, the catechists tended to offer a very broad definition: anyone we know, friends and enemies alike, and even those we do not know; even people of other nations and faiths (as in the parable of the Good Samaritan).<sup>24</sup> ‘Neighbour’ in this context was a comprehensive category of moral obligation. It had become so, as Naomi Tadmor has demonstrated, as a result of a semantic shift whereby a variety of terms used in the original Hebrew texts to distinguish relationships of amity, relationships based on proximity, and broader conceptions of human fellowship, had been rendered into English by biblical translators with the single word ‘neighbour’.<sup>25</sup> This conflation of meaning is a matter of the first importance, to which we will return. But in daily practice duties towards one’s neighbour were owed and enacted in rather more specific contexts. The general implication of most uses of the term both within and beyond the catechetical literature was that

neighbours were in the first instance those with whom one associated regularly within an immediate locality.

This accords with the Old English roots of the word, which is a compound formed of “neah” (near/nigh) and “gebur” (dweller) – as in the tenth century version of Luke i, 65, in the Lindisfarne Gospels, which renders as “alle neheburas” the phrase which the 1611 translators gave as “all that dwelt round about them”.<sup>26</sup> And it is consonant with the first dictionary definition known to me, which defines ‘neighbour’ as “one that dwells or is seated near to another” and ‘neighbourhood’ as “the Place near that one lives in, or the whole Body of Neighbours”.<sup>27</sup> More generally, the common usages of the term also seem to emphasize the importance of place and proximity. The neighbours alluded to in such sources as petitions, court depositions, diaries or letters are usually near-dwellers, fellow parishioners, tenants of the same manor, inhabitants of the same street, and so on. Such neighbourhoods might or might not have clearly defined geographical parameters. They might be more, or less, institutionally structured. They were certainly not rigidly bounded, or autonomous: their members moved for a variety of purposes in larger worlds and they were subject to external authorities. Yet clearly the common use of the term was indicative of a peculiarly significant kind of local social space, be it a nucleated village, the scattering of farmsteads in an upland valley, or one of the “mosaic of neighbourhoods” that constituted the city of London.<sup>28</sup> To be accounted a neighbour seems to have implied a specific sense of belonging; it conferred an identity through membership of a localized grouping.

In addition, the notion of neighbourhood implied a community not only of place, but of knowledge. The manorial jurors who pronounced upon the rightful descent of land held by copyhold of inheritance, for example, could demonstrate an intimate knowledge of the genealogies of particular families. Reputations were formed amongst neighbours such as those who attested in 1623 that John Freestow of Kidderminster was “reputed...amongst us, being his neighbours” to have “ever been of honest conversation” and “esteemed a man of good sufficiency”, “which opinion us of our knowledge do know he hath justly merited”.<sup>29</sup> Conversely, Ralph Gibson was “commonly evill thought of in the parish of Wolsingham”, while John Gibson was judged “a lewd person of evill conversacon” and “commonly reported to be of no credit”.<sup>30</sup> ‘Common fame’ of misconduct spread amongst neighbours who assessed its likelihood on the basis of prior knowledge. Christopher Stockton of Hurworth had known Robert Ward for twenty years when Robert was accused of fathering a bastard child, and “shuld love the said Robert better, bycause he is commed of honest folks”. But like others familiar with the “dyn...amongst neighbours”, he feared the worst, for they knew that the pregnant woman “was never in name with any other man”. Thomas Colson knew, “as all his neighbors doe”, that

Edward Johnson and Jenet Slater had been meeting suspiciously at Edward's mill. There was a "common voic[e] and fame among neighbors" in Burnhope that Thomas Hopper had raved deliriously upon his deathbed and was not of sound mind when his supposed will was drawn up. "The observing neighbours" is an apt phrase of Ben Jonson's.<sup>31</sup>

Both propinquity and familiarity also implied frequent interaction and certain reciprocities – the myriad of forms of practical and moral support characterized by one observer in 1616 as "the mutuall comforts of neighbourhood and intercourse one with another".<sup>32</sup> In the manorial communities of the northern hills they used the expression to "do neyburhead" (1556) or "doinge...neighbureheade" (1602).<sup>33</sup> I have not encountered that phrase elsewhere. But of course people 'did' neighbourhood everywhere. The lists of small debts and credits dictated by dying men and appended to their inventories – "for a cow", "for a bushel of rye", "for wintering of two oxen", "lent money" – attest laconically to how neighbours 'trusted' one another in daily economic dealings; a trust, as Craig Muldrew observes, that was "based on moral knowledge". They were set down so that they could be honoured, and on occasion they were 'forgiven'.<sup>34</sup> Neighbours also heard and bore witness to marriage contracts, deeds, and wills. William Laborn of Cornforth was sent for by Janet Ferry's father "with many more of neighbours" to witness her 'handfasting' in 1559. William Hogg of Barnard Castle, "being next neighbor to Ralph Pinckney...did goe to visit him sundrye tymes in his sicknes", and Ralph "did send for him on the daye he made his will" and asked him and three other witnesses to "be frinde his...wife" in her widowhood.<sup>35</sup> They provided immediate support in times of crisis. When Thomas and Mary Allen were wrongfully imprisoned in 1638 their three small children "were redy to perish...had not their neighbors forth of their compassion relieved them". Ann Wenar took in the sick, unemployed, drayman Thomas Wood "that he might warm him at her fyer" - "being her neighbour". And when she found him hanged a day later, she alerted his wife who "came running...wyth other of the neghbores...to cutte him down to see if hee mighte bee recovered".<sup>36</sup>

These were relatively dramatic instances of what Bernard Capp calls a neighbourhood "economy of mutual favours". The "small change of neighbourliness" might be better represented by Elizabeth Aeckley calling on her neighbour Isabel Rawdon "to borrow some flower...for want of her owne", and on another morning "to gett a coale of fire" to kindle her hearth.<sup>37</sup> But as Capp observes, "every small favour reinforced the bonds of friendship and trust, and made it more likely that help would also be forthcoming in a major crisis".<sup>38</sup>

The expectations underlying all this are clearly expressed in the conventional language of neighbourhood. Neighbours were customarily described as 'kind', 'gentle', 'true', 'honest',

‘faithful’, or ‘loving’. And the term was also used in couplings which implied equivalences with other relationships of powerful obligation: “concord of brethren and love of neighbours”; “his neighbour and his friend”; “kynn, neighbour, friend”; “neighbours and friends”; “friends and neighbours”. There were proverbs too: “who hath a good neighbour hath a good morowe”; “a nere neyghbour is better than a farre frende”.<sup>39</sup>

Of course there were limits to what could be expected of neighbours. Jeremy Boulton’s work on the survival strategies of London’s poor suggests that “there was a hidden hierarchy of the types of care that kin and neighbours might provide”, that of neighbours being mainly confined to short-term aid and credit.<sup>40</sup> William Burton’s sermons on standing as a financial surety for others advised caution, for God “would not have thee help thy neighbour without any care to save thyselfe”.<sup>41</sup> The “imprecise or diffuse reciprocity” of neighbourliness was riddled with ambiguities regarding the extent of obligation.<sup>42</sup> As Mildred Campbell noted in one of the earliest discussions of the subject, neighbourliness was “not based wholly upon a social or beneficent impulse”. It was “partly grounded in hard-headed, practical, common sense”, including a frankly recognized “note of self-interest”: a great deal might depend on the likelihood of a future return.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, not to belong to the networks of neighbourliness was to suffer tangible disadvantages. When John Belman refused to join in an attack on enclosures in the Forest of Gillingham erected by one Mr Bruncker, he was asked “will you loose the love of all your neighbours for him, he is amongst us but a stranger here today gone tomorrow...the townsmen wilbe yor friends alwayes if you goe with the rest...{Y}ou must live by your neighbours...or els you will be hated of all your neighbours lik{e} a doge”.<sup>44</sup> The psychological stresses of such exclusion were frequently complained of by the victims of slanderous allegations, like Elizabeth Ranson, whose good name was “impaired and diminished and she worse thought of amongst her neighbours who thought well on her before”, or Elizabeth Hodgekin whose “honest neighbours refraineth to resort to her house or to kepe her company as they accustomable have done”.<sup>45</sup> As a network of support, a reference group and a moral community, the neighbourhood mattered, and the good standing in the neighbourhood that could prove crucial in life was recognized in death also. Eleanor Watson of Whickham, like many testators, left money in 1585 for what she called “my outbringing honestilie amonge my neighbours” – a final act of recognition of and by those among whom she had lived her adult life.<sup>46</sup>

#### IV

That the neighbourhood was a sphere of reciprocity in which ‘social capital’ was generated is easily exemplified.<sup>47</sup> Yet at the same time, there was another strand in the practice of ‘good

neighbourliness'. For the neighbourly qualities most commonly alluded to in the sources related not only to active expectations of one's neighbours' aid, but also to certain passive qualities of restraint amongst neighbours – above all to the avoidance of open discord and disharmony: less a matter, perhaps, of 'doing neighbourhood' than (in another contemporary phrase) of 'keeping neighbourhood'.

This is very evident in the "lay political ideas" revealed in the language of local court records.<sup>48</sup> Thus, testimonials or recommendations for good neighbours tended to stress that they were "honest", "civill", "of good behaviour" or "good carriage", and often enough added that a person was hard working ("labouring hard for his living"/"followeth a godly and painful course to live") and economically "sufficient". These could be described as qualities implying a kind of meritorious containment. And they might go on to stress the ways in which the good neighbour refrained from impacting negatively on the community: "not litigiously given, no drunkard, quarreler, contentious or profane person"; "civil, quiet and peaceable"; "harmless"; or simply a "quiet" liver. ('Quietness' was frequently emphasized).<sup>49</sup> A bad or 'ill' neighbour, in contrast, was characteristically idle, the maintainer of a disordered household, and above all one who was, by word or deed, or other "evill example", "a trouble amongst the neighbours"; "a great disturber and disquieter of his neighbours"; "annoying of his neighbours"; "a source of strife amongst her neighbours"; "guilty... of great offence to neyhbours"; one setting "discord and dissention...betwixt lovinge neighbours", or who "disquiets the townsmen".<sup>50</sup>

The lowest common denominator of neighbourliness in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, then, may have lain less in specific forms of active mutuality than in the maintenance of an 'honest', 'quiet', self-sufficiency and in abstention from behaviour liable to cause injury or provoke disquiet. At its most formal, that aspiration was encapsulated in the by-laws laying down "the order of the neighbourhood" as a law community in active manorial courts. The 'byrlaw courts' of the North Pennines and Cumbria, for example, set rules "layd in by all the nebus" which were centrally concerned with the management of the common grazings on the fells, but which extended to "almost any activity where it was possible that the interests of neighbours might collide". They were expressive of "a strong moral imperative that an individual's action should not be to the detriment of his neighbours", in which "the clinching aspect of anti-social behaviour was that it was 'to the injury of neighbours (ad nocumentum vicinorum).'" The "pains" of Cotherstone, drawn up in 1540, even forbade "facing nor bracing amonges...neighbores" (i.e. aggressive demeanour) or "letting" (i.e. hindering) them in their legitimate activities.<sup>51</sup>

More generally, the neighbourhood in action most commonly appears when it (or its representatives) took steps to preserve or restore harmony through a range of forms of intervention in local personal relations. That might mean the expression of disapproval, as when a Durham man intervened in a public quarrel crying out “Fye, thes ar no meet wordes or communication emongest neighbours”, or when a Staffordshire man warned a fellow villager that “he would be well thought of emonges neighbors” if he changed his ways.<sup>52</sup> It might mean mediation. Charles Shaw was one of several men who “movyd and wyshed” two Durham tradesmen in dispute “to be frends and lovers together”, to shake hands and drink together, being “a mover thereoff as a neighbour”; and it was similar “intrety of neighbors” that persuaded William Walker to take back his errant wife.<sup>53</sup> If such informal intervention failed, a range of formal sanctions could be brought to bear, from presentment at the court leet, or to the church courts, to petitioning the magistrates to have a person bound over to be of good behaviour or even formally charged.<sup>54</sup>

In all of this, it is striking that a person who enjoyed recognition as a neighbour was not simply excluded in the first instance.. Neighbours could be surprisingly tolerant. When the parson of Lawton, Cheshire, objected to the election of one Beach as churchwarden in 1611, the parishioners came to his defence. He was a good neighbour, “an honest man and a great peacemaker”, though they admitted that “sometimes [he] will be verie merrie with drinke, butt nott in anie sorte to give occasion of offence”.<sup>55</sup> Forty-five men of Wednesfield, Staffordshire petitioned the justices in 1602 to bind over “Richard Nycolls o[u]r neighbor” (*still* ‘our neighbour’) who had a history of pilfering and other misdemeanours. They explained that he “now being a howsholder and maryed”, they “dyd hope of his Amendement” and had hitherto proceeded mildly against him, “wee hoping that this smale publycke punishment might have wrought some shame and Repentaunce with hym”. That had failed, but even now they asked for him to be bound over, not charged with theft.<sup>56</sup> Again, Rober Whitby of Weston-on-Trent in the same county first appears in the court records when his alehouse was suppressed in January 1596 for “sondry contempts and misdemeanours: But six months later a group of Weston people petitioned for a renewal of the license of “our power neyborz Roger Whitbie and his wife”, urging that the Whitbys were now “fullie resolved to alter all former courses” and “hoping they wilbecome neybourlie and honest in all yer actions”. They didn’t; and three years on we learn that eventually “thenhabitauntes theare gave him a some of money...to avoyd his dwelling from Amongst them for ever”. (We learn this from a petition from the village of Little Sandon, where Roger and his family had taken up residence in an illegally erected cottage.<sup>57</sup>

The Whitbys got no second chance in Little Sandon. They were proceeded against as “lewd, wilfull, and desperate people” to be removed whence they came. But amongst recognized neighbours, the

prime aim of disciplinary intervention was clearly reform and reconciliation; the restoration of a state of harmony in the neighbourhood. Indeed, this inclusive impulse could be evident even in the circumstances which might be deemed the most drastic breach of neighbourly relations – suspected witchcraft. One of the reasons that formal witchcraft trials were relatively uncommon in most of England may have been the persistence of a preference for settlement within the neighbourhood. When Elizabeth Lamb of Readnes, Yorkshire, was suspected of bewitching a child, the child's mother "did fall downe on her knees, and asked her forgiveness and the child did soone after recover". John Wright, also a suspected victim, called Elizabeth to his sickbed and told her, "Bess, thou hast wronged me. Why dost thou soe. If thou wilt doe soe no more I will forgive thee".<sup>58</sup> She said nothing and he died a week later. But the familiar mode of address and use of the second person singular tell their own story here, and the emphasis on forgiveness is a reminder of the continuing *spiritual* significance of neighbourliness.

## V

We might logically distinguish between a religious definition of one's neighbour as a comprehensive category of moral obligation, and the more pragmatic requirements of conducting social relationships within particular geographical neighbourhoods. Yet as we have seen, the two had been wholly elided in English biblical translations, and they certainly bled into one another in the wash of daily social relations. Spiritual duties had practical applications, and commonplace social relations could have spiritual consequences.

The neighbourhood as a spiritual entity was best exemplified, of course, in collective participation in common prayer, and in the sacrament of holy communion, above all the 'general communion' required once a year at Easter.<sup>59</sup> Every version of the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer issued between 1549 and 1662 contained the warning to communicants that in receiving the elements unworthily "we eate and drinke to our owne damnacion". From 1552 the Ten Commandments were read aloud and members of the congregation were urged to examine their lives using the commandments as their guide. They were exhorted that "yf ye shal perceive your offences to be such as be not only against god, but also againste your neighbours: then ye shal reconcile your selves unto them", and likewise show readiness "to forgeve other that have offended you". Then came the invitation "You that do truly and earnestly repente you of your synnes, and be in love and charitie with your neighbours, and entende to leade a newe lyfe....Draw near".<sup>60</sup>

As is well known, one of the most powerful sanctions brought to bear against those parishioners

deemed unworthy by virtue of their ignorance of doctrine, sin, or being ‘out of charity’ with their neighbours was the threat of exclusion from the communion.<sup>61</sup> The 1559 prayer book specifically required the curates of parishes to warn any “open and notorious evyll lyver” or any known to “have done any wronge to his neighbours by woorde or deede” not to presume to come until he had “openly declared himselfe to have truly repented and amended his former naughtie life”, and “recompenced the partyes whom he hath done wronge unto”. In addition he was to seek out “those betwyxte whom he perceiveth malice and hatred to rayne, not suffering them to be partakers of the Lords Table untyll he know them to be reconciled”.<sup>62</sup> That they frequently acted upon these is clear. In 1579, for example, Elinor Awde of Elwicke, County Durham, was presented to the church courts for not receiving communion since “she is not in love and charitye with her neighbour Isabell Warden...neither would she forgive nor ask forgiveness of the sayd Isabell when the curate and churchwardens...did exhort”, and Margaret Cliftone of Winston was “debarred from the lords table for diffaminge one of her neighbors, not beinge hable to be reclaymed”.<sup>63</sup>

The curate’s duty was clear, but equally clearly this was not a matter simply imposed by ecclesiastical authority. The function of the sacrament as an instrument of reconciliation was deeply embedded in popular religious culture.<sup>64</sup> Parishioners themselves could take a hand in marking the boundaries of the moral community, as when the churchwardens of one Sussex parish presented their own minister in 1625 for admitting Robert Taylor, “being an open contender, and having sued many of his neighbours for matters of small valew,...and will not reconcile himself, though it hath bin sought by some of the parish”.<sup>65</sup> But most striking of all are those who chose to exclude themselves, voluntarily holding back from communion. The Kentish woman Agnes Davye did so since she was “not in peace with one Hodges...who had withheld a legacy”, and was admonished to reconcile herself and receive. At the other end of the country, four members of the Lazenby family of Auckland St Andrew, Co. Durham, also held back in 1580 because the head of the household, George Lazenby was “not at concorde” with John Welburye, and Janet Browne of Staindrop abstained because “she is at variencie with hire neighbours” (though she later appeared to declare that she was now “in charitye and so redy to receive the communion”).<sup>66</sup>

To be ‘out of charity’ placed the individuals concerned, and by extension the whole community, in spiritual jeopardy.<sup>67</sup> It struck against what the church’s Homily *Of the Worthy Receiving and Reverent Esteeming of the Sacrament*, issued in 1563, called the “strait knot of charity” that should “knit together” neighbours in unity, “so joined by the bond of love in one mystical body, as the corns of that bread in one loaf”. To fail in this was to risk “the heavy and dreadful burden of God’s displeasure”.<sup>68</sup> It was clearly so understood, and that understanding was periodically reinforced by

the ceremony of ‘Commination’ in which unrepentant sinners were ritually cursed by the entire congregation. Ten curses were read out, each to be endorsed by all present, including: “Cursed be he that removeth away the mark of his neighbours land. *Amen*”; “Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. *Amen*”; “Cursed are the unmercifull, the fornicators and aduouterers, the covetous persones, the wurshyppers of images, slaundersers, drunkards, and extortioner. *Amen*”.<sup>69</sup> It was for these reasons that a bad neighbour was sometimes characterized as ‘unchristianlike’, or admonished to behave “honestlie and neighbourlie as a christian should and ought to doo”<sup>70</sup>

## VI

Neighbourliness, then, as represented in Elizabethan and Jacobean sources. Can be said to have involved a combination of *place*, personal *knowledge*, active *reciprocity* (within certain limits), the *avoidance of conflict* (or at least its *reconciliation*) and aspirations towards a condition of Christian *charity*. Like the gift relationships analyzed by anthropologists, it had “a multi-dimensional meaning, combining social with religious and utilitarian with sentimental elements”.<sup>71</sup> It represented an ideal, but often enough it was clearly an *operative* ideal.

At the same time, however, it has to be recognized that the sources tend to provide us with scattered glimpses of neighbourly relations. They reveal all too little about the actual patterning of social relations on a day to day basis. It is perfectly possible (indeed, it seems to me likely) that the neighbourhood was always to some degree segmented, and there is little room for doubt that its patterns of interaction were inflected by differences of rank, wealth, gender, age, and rootedness within the locality.

In a society that witnessed a good deal of population mobility, Ann Mitson has emphasized the role of the “stayers”, the local “dynastic families” (usually people of property) in the shaping of “neighbourhood areas”.<sup>72</sup> And where there was such a core, there was also a periphery: the substratum of transient and elusive sub-tenant and labouring families who were rarely related to established landholders and left few traces even in the parish registers, or the servants who moved on with the expiration of their annual hiring contracts. “Edward...servant to Mr John Taylor...whose sirname we know not”, runs one archdeaconry presentment.<sup>73</sup>

There were those termed ‘near’ neighbours and those who by implication were not so near, in social as well as residential terms. Jan Pitman’s analysis of will-making in north Norfolk parishes shows that testators chose their witnesses carefully, and sometimes reached across the social scale in doing

so, but that labourers were comparatively rarely called on in this role; a pattern indicating sub-groupings of association within the neighbourhood influenced by “socio-economic status or the social and economic networks which accompanied an estate of a certain size”.<sup>74</sup> Again, studies of participation in local office tend to reveal that while there were many local variants, and access to minor roles in the administration of parishes or townships was fairly widespread, leading offices tended to be held (often repeatedly) by men of relative wealth and standing: those termed the ‘chief’ or ‘principal’ inhabitants.<sup>75</sup> Manorial institutions conferred rights, required participation, enforced obligations and provided a collective identity. But they did so only for the landholding tenants of the manor, and excluded those termed “strangers”, “forriners” or “out men” (non-tenants), “inmates” or “byholdes” (lodgers), “self-hulles” (squatters), or “byfires” (cottagers who made illegitimate use of manorial fuel resources). One such person revealed acceptance of his exclusion when he confessed in 1620 that he could say nothing of the customs of the manor of Whickham “by reason he is no copiholder nor farmer but onlie liveth by his owne industrie and paines”. Another tried to claim inclusion when he was caught by a leading yeoman “getting turves” on the common at Taddington, Derbyshire, and pleaded “yowe must beare with me, I am yor neyghbor borne”. It was a good try, but it got him nowhere.<sup>76</sup>

In Whickham and Taddington, as elsewhere, there were degrees of belonging, and a hierarchy of belonging. A person might be a neighbour for some purposes, but not all. And within the neighbourhood there were other distinctive milieux. There was certainly a women’s sphere, evident in the female networks of Crich, Derbyshire through which the news spread in 1599 that George Wilson was mistreating his wife; in the cluster of women neighbours to whom Jennet Merriman distributed her personal goods in 1580 (including Elizabeth Harrison “the mittwyfe”, who got Jennet’s cap and her second best kerchief); in the way the women of Hurworth came to the aid of the pregnant and abandoned Janet Spence when she fell into labour in the village street in 1575, one of them providing a coverlet and helping her indoors “for honestie of womanheid”. As Bernard Capp observes, being a good neighbour was “one of the very few *active* virtues commended in the female sex”.<sup>77</sup> There was a sphere of youth too – frequently alluded to in the complaints made about the alehouses where householders’ children and servants gathered at night, and vividly illuminated by the diary of the apprentice Roger Lowe.<sup>78</sup>

The neighbourhood *as a whole* was perhaps represented only on certain occasions of collective celebration, at Easter communion, or at parish feasts and festivals – and even in such moments of collective worship, celebration, or commensality its complex internal architecture was doubtless visible. Nevertheless, one can still say that neighbourliness existed, not only as an ideal, but as a

relational mode, a way of negotiating community. It provided a set of values and expectations that could be appealed to by all - by the enforcers of norms, the mediators of disputes, and those who sought aid or redress - and the evidence shows that often enough it was appealed to successfully.<sup>79</sup> As Natalie Zemon Davis has said of the gift, it provided a repertoire of means “for softening relations among people of the same status and of different status, and for preventing their closure”.<sup>80</sup>

## VII

It is possible, then, to provide a synchronic sketch of neighbourliness in being at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Is there any good reason to believe that this social and cultural complex was under exceptional stress, or even unraveling in the period as a whole?

The first point to make is that many contemporaries certainly *thought* that there was. Behind Christopher Hill’s account of the direction and tendencies of social and cultural change lies not only the historical conjectures of classical social scientific theory, but also the interpretative judgment of earlier generations of historians in a tradition stretching back through Tawney, Ashley, Cunningham, and Marx, and beyond them to the moral commentary of the period itself - a literature which deeply influenced these historians’ vision. In short, its roots lie in *contemporary* perceptions of change.<sup>81</sup>

Those of the religious moralists who attributed the economic and social ills of their time to a rampant covetousness and selfishness that threatened to break ‘the link of charity’ that should bind the members of a commonwealth, provide the most obvious examples – a discourse of motives and values stretching from the Tudor ‘Commonwealthsmen’ of the 1540s to the radicals of the English Revolution, but by no means confined to those periods of especially urgent complaint.<sup>82</sup> But there was also a broader sense of the prevalence of sin, disorder, disharmony and moral deficit. It is vividly represented in the sermons and pamphlets of those who called, from the 1570s, and again from the 1680s, for a ‘reformation of manners’. It surfaced in the catechetical literature, as we have seen. It can also be found more subtly in the didactic and casuistical literature of the period, especially in those works adopting a dialogic form, or which dealt at length with ‘queries’ and ‘objections’. “Yet I say...that men must live, men must lay for this world...And as for that which you call covetousness, it is but good husbandry”. “May not a landlord take as much for his land as it is worth?” “May one take a House over anothers head (as they speak)?” “Must I love everyone as much as myself...or only some?” “May we not hate the enemies of God?”<sup>83</sup> Such works were multi-vocal. They set out views inimical to orthodox moral teaching for the purpose of refuting them, but they also provide clues to the dilemmas people faced; to the alternatives current in their society.

Of course all such moralistic writing can be held to have greatly exaggerated the challenge actually posed to traditional values. And any ideal like 'good neighbourhood' is likely to be located in a past golden age (or a future fantasyland). But even complaint has a history. It waxes and wanes. In this period it flourished, and it is worth stressing the significance of that fact. All historians are now well schooled in the notion that discourse not only reflects, but also actively constitutes reality. If so, then a pervasive sense of social and moral disharmony and of the prevalence of attitudes inimical to the practice of good neighbourliness was very much part of the reality of the times. It could shape people's apprehension of their world and influence their actions.

Secondly, we now know much more about the actual contours of economic and social change in this period than was the case the 1960s and 1970s. To provide the briefest of sketches: from roughly the second quarter of the sixteenth century, demographic growth and price inflation galvanized economic life. Urban growth, the development of a more productive and capitalistically structured agriculture, and commercial and industrial expansion, contributed to the emergence of a sophisticated commercial economy in which market relations were central and impinged on the lives of all. These processes involved a gradual reconfiguration of the social order: marked shifts in the distributions of land, wealth and power; growth in the numbers and collective wealth of the landed gentry; the expansion and elaboration of the commercial and professional 'middle sort of people' (merchants, manufacturers, commercial farmers, lawyers); a huge increase in the numbers of the population primarily dependent on wage labour in agriculture or in urban and rural industries; increased poverty and marginality. Meanwhile, from the 1530s the Reformation pushed the enforcement, defense, and definition of English Protestantism to the center of the political stage, and entailed a long process of adaptation to the teachings and demands of the new religion. All this was actually or potentially productive of conflicts of interest: between landlord and tenant; master and journeyman; adherents of different religious positions; the rich and the poor, or merely local rivals for wealth, power and influence. And in the course of meeting such threats, the role and effective reach of the English state were gradually extended. There was more centralized direction, a plethora of regulative legislation, and greatly enhanced activity in local government, a process which not only transformed relationships between the monarch and the ruling class of gentlemen, but also impinged on every township and parish, above all through the introduction and enforcement of the poor laws.<sup>84</sup>

This was a society undergoing gradual, but cumulatively transformative change, and it is evident that the processes could place considerable strain upon inherited social structures, values, and social relations. If the ideals and practice of neighbourliness as I have described them had in all likelihood

crystallized in the conditions of the later middle ages, then what might have been the effects on both of such changes in their “original defining contexts”?<sup>85</sup>

First, demographic growth, enhanced population mobility, urbanization, and the emergence of densely peopled industrial districts may have had significant implications for the social networks of particular localities, people’s sense of place, and their knowledge of their neighbours. Laura Gowing suggests, for example, that in the rapidly growing city of London – and presumably in other growing urban centres – more people were now “living in communities where they had a relatively short personal history and no family past; to their neighbours they were, to some extent, an unknown quantity”. By the early eighteenth century the expression to know someone “as a neighbour” had come to mean in London that one did not know that person very well at all, as when Martha Pierce declared in 1715 that she knew another woman “by sight and as a neighbour...but never had any acquaintance with her”.<sup>86</sup> This is intriguing; layers of meaning have been stripped from the word, rendering it a mere indicator of residential propinquity. And comparable realities may have obtained elsewhere. In the coalfield parish of Whickham, Co Durham, for example, rapid industrialization in the course of the seventeenth century, rendered the population larger, denser, more mobile, more diverse and more sharply differentiated in occupation, wealth and living standards and considerably less intimate. The pattern of settlement was radically redrawn. It was no longer a single, manorially focused community, but several overlapping communities, in which relationships between the inhabitants were no longer conducted within a single focused ‘neighbourhood’ but within several intersecting neighbourhoods, each with its own distinctive characteristics.<sup>87</sup>

Secondly, people’s sense of place in both geographical and social terms, and by extension their sense of belonging, may have been affected by the emergence of greater economic and social differentiation and the social distancing that they entailed. To be sure, society had always been hierarchical, but by the early seventeenth century pre-existing differentials had been massively exaggerated in many communities by the concentration of land into fewer hands and the emergence of a substantial population of landless labourers whose domestic economies were tenuous at best. Agrarian change could affect social relationships as well as patterns of landholding and land use. Engrossment of holdings could reduce the numbers of manorial tenants to a minority of householders, with all that this meant in terms of both rights and obligations. It could also facilitate enclosure by aligning the interests of substantial yeoman farmers with those of their landlords, rather than with their neighbours. (The decline of open resistance to enclosure has been plausibly attributed to such realignments). Enclosure, when it came, eradicated common use rights, a loss with psychic as well as economic implications – the cottagers of Middle Claydon said Sir Ralph Verney’s “taking away all their feeding of either hog or

other beast” made them “as strangers”.<sup>88</sup>

Equally striking is the abundant evidence of tension between the more substantial inhabitants of rural parishes and growing numbers of the labouring poor, a tension exacerbated when the poor laws made the rate-paying householders of the parish responsible for financing and administering relief for their poorer neighbours. This might involve sympathetic attention to the needs of the known, local, unambiguously deserving poor: the widowed; the orphaned; the aged. Yet it also involved enhanced levels of social regulation, “Relief presupposed membership of a community”, but its “terms and boundaries” were set by the “chief inhabitants”. The power to grant or withhold it was manipulated to demand that actual or potential recipients conform themselves to the stereotype of the deserving poor: a “redefinition of reciprocities as discriminatory and discretionary charity”. It commonly extended also into attempts to control the composition of the neighbourhood, through the banning of ‘inmates’, control of the marriages of the poor, and manipulation of the settlement laws which determined eligibility. Through such processes of inclusion and exclusion, parish authorities “redrew the parameters of belonging in the community of the parish, a redrafting to which the poor, in particular were subject”.<sup>89</sup>

Thirdly, we might consider the impact of the Reformation upon both the instinct to avoid conflict in the neighbourhood and the social institutions that traditionally encouraged a sense of community. For many English parishes the religious changes of the Reformation era constituted “a series of conforming experiences” in response to the dictates of authority. As Christopher Marsh puts it, they ‘held their peace’.<sup>90</sup> Elsewhere, however, religious change introduced fierce animosities; initially between religious traditionalists and Protestant ‘gospellers’, later between those who struggled over the definition of English Protestantism – the Puritans who sought to push beyond the Elizabethan settlement of 1559; Arminians; the sects of the Civil War era; Restoration Anglicans and Dissenters. All of this provided ample opportunity for zealots of whatever stripe to neglect “the laws of charity and of human society” and “dash the first table [duties to God] against the second [duties to one’s neighbour]”.<sup>91</sup> Religious hostility could set clergyman against their parishioners and parishioners against each other.<sup>92</sup> It could inspire a sense of separation from the ungodly or the indifferent, extending sometimes to the practice of ‘shunning’ them, the formation of “exclusive fellowship[s] of spiritually sympathetic families”, and (ultimately) congregational separation from the territorial parish.<sup>93</sup> It could also fuel sharp disciplinary campaigns aimed at the reformation of local society in which religious and social antagonisms became inseparably intertwined.<sup>94</sup>

Closely associated with all this was withdrawal from, or active suppression of, a variety of occasions of

celebration and commensality which were traditionally held to be forms of “neighbourly meeting” which contributed to “the maintenance and increase of love and charity amongst them”.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, it could be said that in many parts of post-Reformation England a kind of institutional defoliation was in progress. Religious fraternities were abolished. Seasonal feasts and festivals were suppressed or abandoned in many parts of England. The open hospitality periodically extended by the gentry, clergy and substantial householders to all comers gave way to more discriminating and less personalized forms of charity. Communal funerals accompanied by commensality and a dole to the poor declined in favour of more selective gatherings of family and friends.<sup>96</sup> And insofar as the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw the emergence of an alternative world of association, in the form of clubs and societies, journeymen’s associations and the ‘box clubs’ of industrial workers, these novel institutions were largely urban, based upon voluntary participation rather than residence, and class rather than community. They represented alternative frames of reference to those of the neighbourhood.<sup>97</sup>

Fourthly, all of these changes could have implications for patterns of association within communities, for the extent to which different sections of local populations inhabited different worlds, for the likelihood that common identification as neighbours could overcome the fault lines running through communities and reconcile rivalries and conflicts of interest. Such matters are exceedingly difficult to approach historically, but there are at least two indications that it may have been so.

One is provided by the records of the courts. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries witnessed enhanced levels of prosecution in local courts, notably for property offences.<sup>98</sup> And the same period saw a massive increase in inter-personal dispute, rendering it perhaps the most litigious period in English history. Much of this involved disputes over debts, the fall out of a more commercial economy. But it also embraced a higher incidence of agrarian disputes, ‘swearing the peace’ against neighbours. There was evidence of status competition too - battles over the right to occupy particular prestigious pews in church, and an extraordinary growth in litigation over defamatory words (which demonstrates the continuing importance of ‘good name’ in the neighbourhood, but also indicates a willingness to wage law rather than be reconciled).<sup>99</sup> Whatever the specific causes of this plethora of contention, it surely bears witness to a greater willingness to suppress the traditional assumption that litigation was to be avoided as a breach of charity, and to involve public authority in the handling and settlement of disputes. Was such resort to judicial action needed because informal mediation was no longer in itself a sufficient means of resolving personal rivalries and conflicts of interest?<sup>100</sup>

Another further indication of a recasting of social alignments and identities may be provided by the

manner in which this period was so prolific in social labeling and categorization. Some of the terms to be found in the records were proudly adopted: ‘the better sort of people’; ‘the chief inhabitants’; ‘the most sufficient’; ‘good and well disposed Christians’; those ‘well affected to religion’. Others were directed outwards with implications of hostility, condescension or contempt: ‘papists’; ‘puritans’; ‘the ungodly’; ‘fanaticks’; ‘those weekly relieved’; ‘objects of charity’; the ‘poorer/ meaner/ ruder/ simpler/ rustical sorts of people’.<sup>101</sup> These were all ways of seeing (and perhaps also *not* seeing) others in relation to ones self, and the proliferation of such language may imply something about shifts in the perceptual aspects of neighbourhood.

By the seventeenth century, the leaders of parish society were apt to refer to themselves in their public statements as the ‘inhabitants’, the ‘townsmen’ or even ‘the parish’, an appropriation to themselves of the identity of the entire community. And intriguingly, this was often echoed by their inferiors, as in the comments of labouring men that “the townsmen” or “the parish” would not “suffer” them to settle or marry.<sup>102</sup> These usages imply a great deal about the sense of belonging of both groups. One wonders how many parishes were becoming, as Patrick Collinson puts it, less “face to face” than “back to back” communities.<sup>103</sup>

## VIII

Taken together, such developments could clearly have consequences for the sense of place, personal familiarity, patterns of reciprocity, conflict avoidance, and aspirations towards a condition of Christian charity which appear to have constituted the neighbourly ideal of the age. To say that is not to attempt to revive the notion of the ‘decline of neighbourliness’ in the form that it was originally proposed – as a linear, once-and-for-all, process of social transition driven by the cultural prime mover of the ‘rise of individualism’. But it is certainly to suggest that the view that this period witnessed significant change in the structuring of neighbourly relations should not be dismissed – especially if that dismissal takes the form of scoffing at the inadequacies of an old ‘grand narrative’ of social change without making any seriously constructive effort to present a better account of social process in its place.

For what its worth, my own sense is that structurally many neighbourhoods did undergo what has been variously described in the recent literature as process of recasting, reconstitution, realignment, refashioning, or rearticulation, as a result of a complex of demographic, economic, social structural, religious and political changes, all of which coincided in time, and many of which influenced or interacted with each other.<sup>104</sup> I have no doubt that neighbourly relations persisted, but my feeling is that they did so in a manner that was more sharply segmented socially. The obligations of neighbourliness perhaps became more narrowly defined and more confined in their applicability; its reciprocities more

restricted in their accessibility. There is good reason to believe that there were changes in the boundaries of social recognition and identification (some tightened, some erased) and that there were shifts also in the boundaries of obligation and expectation both within and between particular groups within the neighbourhood. In addition, the neighbourhood as previously constituted was perhaps losing something of its significance as a reference group central to self-identity, and as a moral community, to be replaced by more socially-selective groupings (and for some, more selective social milieux, which might extend well beyond the boundaries of a particular rural settlement or urban district. All this would no doubt have proceeded at different paces and to different degrees in different places. Every localized pattern of neighbourliness must have had its own career and history. The very fact that I can both describe aspects of neighbourliness in being, and sketch aspects of neighbourly relations in disarray and dissolution for the same period demonstrates this. But it is not just a matter of the perennial push and shove of social relations. Some of the most central changes that I have described were national in scope, permanent, cumulative, and ongoing (though of course there were innumerable variants in a society of some ten thousand parishes and even more villages and hamlets). In short, I think there was a trend.

These developments could be described as change in the boundaries and practice of the pragmatic dimensions of neighbourliness. That matters in itself. But I also suspect that neighbourliness was changing in its meaning. In discussing the cultural emphasis placed on harmony, on 'being in charity' with one's neighbours I have stressed the spiritual significance of neighbourliness; the manner in which it brought the full weight of biblical injunction to bear on quotidian social relations within small communities. This was surely a legacy of late-medieval piety, of a world in which the maintenance of charity was essential to the efficacy of the sacraments and of intercession. Arguably, that was the essence of neighbourliness as a communal ideal of comprehensive significance.

The Church of England tried to retain much of that, despite its Protestant theological emphasis on the communion service as a means to demonstrate and strengthen individual faith rather than as a collective event focused on reconciliation and the promotion of charity.<sup>105</sup> But was that "spiritual incentive for parish harmony" gradually diminished in the long process of Protestantization, and perhaps more specifically with the eventual fragmentation of English Protestantism into a plurality of discrete and sometimes mutually antagonistic denominations?<sup>106</sup> Neighbourliness had traditionally provided an answer to two needs: practical cooperation among people dwelling in proximity, and the achievement of personal salvation. If the latter role had been rendered redundant, then its meaning was diminished. It was no longer a communal ideal to be struggled for, but a practical option and its expression was perhaps more vulnerable to the part conscious, part intuitive, calculation of costs and

benefits that affects all relationships of exchange. Did neighbourliness become a less morally-charged relationship in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Was this the beginning of its transmutation into what has been described as a relationship of “wary mutuality”, tinged with circumspection, “framed by proximity and little else”?<sup>107</sup> If so, then perhaps neighbourliness did indeed decline in early modern England.

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<sup>1</sup>Notes

A. Macfarlane, Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England. A regional and comparative study (1970), 2<sup>nd</sup> edit. (London, 1999), p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> K. Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic. Studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth and seventeenth century England (London, 1971), p. 561.

<sup>3</sup> C. Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England (London, Panther edn., 1964), esp. ch. 14, quoting pp. 469, 471.

<sup>4</sup> L. Stone, “Interpersonal Violence in English Society, 1300-1980”, Past and Present, 101 (1983), pp. 31-2; K.A. Lockridge, A New England Town. The First Hundred Years. Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636-1736 (New York, 1970), chs. 5-9; P.J. Grevan, Four Generations. Population, Land and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts (Ithaca & London, 1970), p. 57 and chs. 7-8; D.G. Allen, In English Ways: The Movement of Societies and the Transferral of English Local Law and Custom to Massachusetts bay in the Seventeenth Century (Chapel Hill & London, 1981), p. 7. For a survey of the ‘declension model’ of New England’s development, see J.P. Greene, Pursuits of Happiness. The Social Development of early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture (Chapel Hill & London, 1988), ch. 3.

<sup>5</sup> For some cogent statements on these points, see e.g. R.M. Smith, “‘Modernization’ and the corporate medieval village community in England: some skeptical reflections”, in A.H.R. Baker and D. Gregory eds., Explorations in Historical Geography (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 150-3; C. Muldrew, “From a ‘light cloak’ to an ‘iron cage’: historical changes in the relation between community and individualism”, in A. Shepard and P. Withington eds., Communities in Early Modern England. Networks, place, rhetoric (Manchester and New York, 2000), pp. 158-9; G.B. Nash, “Social Development”, in J.P. Greene and J.R. Pole eds., Colonial British America: essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era (Baltimore, 1984), p. 250; W. Hunt, The Puritan Moment. The Coming of Revolution in an English County (Cambridge, Mass. & London, 1983), pp. 130-1.

<sup>6</sup> J.A. Raftis, Tenure and Mobility. Studies in the Social History of the medieval English Village (Toronto, 1964), p. 129; R.B. Goheen, “Social Ideals and Social Structure: Rural Gloucestershire, 1450-1500”, Histoire Sociale-Social History 12 (1979), p. 268.

<sup>7</sup> E.B. Dewindt, Land and People in Holywell-cum Needingworth. Structures of Tenure and Patterns of Social Organization in an East Midlands Village, 1252-1457 (Toronto, 1972), pp. 263; C. Dyer, Lords and Peasants in a Changing Society. The Estates of the Bishopric of Worcester, 680-1540 (Cambridge, 1980), p. 372.

<sup>8</sup> Z. Razi, “Family, Land and the Village Community in Later Medieval England”, Past and Present, 93 (1981), pp. 16. 29-34.

<sup>9</sup> See M. Kowaleski, “Introduction”, pp. 377, 338-9, and C. Dyer, “The English Medieval Village Community and Its Decline”, pp. 418, 419-24, both in Journal of British Studies, 33 (1994).

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- <sup>10</sup> J. Bossy, "Blood and Baptism: Kinship, Community and Christianity in Western Europe from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries", in D. Baker ed., Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and The World (Oxford, 1973), pp. 130, 136, 142.
- <sup>11</sup> P. Withington and A. Shepard, "Introduction", in Shepard and Withington eds., Communities in Early Modern England, p. 6; Muldrew, "From a 'light cloak' to an 'iron cage'", p. 158.
- <sup>12</sup> E. Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580 (New Haven & London, 1992), ch. 4, quoting pp. 131, 138; J. Bossy, Christianity in the West, 1400-1700 (Oxford, 1985), p. 57; S. Brigden, "Religion and Social Obligation in Early Sixteenth-Century London", Past and Present, 103 (1986); R. Hutton, The Rise and Fall of Merry England. The Ritual Year 1400-1700 (Oxford, 1994), chs. 1-2.
- <sup>13</sup> Raftis, Tenure and Mobility, p. 207.
- <sup>14</sup> C. Muldrew, The Economy of Obligation. The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England (Basingstoke and New York, 1998), pp. 124-7; C. Muldrew, "'Hard Food For Midas': Cash and its Social Value in Early Modern England", Past and Present, 170 (2001), pp. 98, 105.
- <sup>15</sup> Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, "Gifts and Favors: Informal Support in Early Modern England", Journal of Modern History, 72 (2000), esp. pp. 315, 330-1. The continuing vitality (and changing patterns) of relationships of mutuality and obligation is also the central theme of my own "Mutualities and Obligations: changing social relationships in early modern England", forthcoming in the Proceedings of the British Academy for 2005.
- <sup>16</sup> S.D'Cruze, "The Middling Sort in Eighteenth-Century Colchester: Independence, Social Relations and the Community Broker", in J. Barry and C. Brooks eds., The Middling Sort of People. Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800 (Basingstoke, 1994), p.183; M. Mascuch, "Social Mobility and Middling Self-Identity: the ethos of British autobiographers, 1600-1750", Social History, 20 (1995), pp. 54-5. For the gradual emergence of a discourse of the individualist self, see also M. Mascuch, Origins of the Individualist Self. Autobiography and Self-Identity in England, 1591-1791 (Cambridge, 1997).
- <sup>17</sup> The phrase quoted is from J. Bohstedt, Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales, 1790-1810 (Cambridge, Mass. & London, 1983), p. 168. For a recent survey of these matters, see K. Wrightson, Earthly Necessities. Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain (New Haven & London, 2000), ch. 14.
- <sup>18</sup> See e.g. R. McKibbin, Classes and Cultures. England 1918-1951 (Oxford, 1951), pp. 179-198, and the works referred to there. For a valuable overview of the sociological literature, see M. Bulmer, Neighbours. The Work of Philip Abrams (Cambridge, 1986), chs. 2-3.
- <sup>19</sup> Bulmer, Neighbours, p. 45.
- <sup>20</sup> I examined Robert Cawdry, A Table Alphabeticall of Hard Usual English Words (1604) Facsimile edit. (Gainsville, Fla., 1966); Thomas Blount, Glossographia or a Dictionary Interpretating all such Hard Words (London, 1656) and subsequent editions to 1681; and available editions of Edward Phillips, The New World of Words. Or a General English Dictionary (London, 1678). 'Neighbour', 'neighbourhood' and 'neighbourly' do not appear in the earlier works, or in the first edition of Phillips' work, but are defined in the seventh edition of 1720.

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- <sup>21</sup> I. Green, The Christian's ABC. Catechisms and Catechizing in England, c. 1530-1740 (Oxford, 1996), p. 451.
- <sup>22</sup> The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI, Everyman edit. (London and New York, 1910), p. 249. The same words were used in the subsequent Prayer Books of 1552, 1559, and 1662.
- <sup>23</sup> Green, Christian's ABC, pp. 451-67; J. Dod and R. Cleaver, A Plaine and Familiar Exposition of the Ten Commaundements (London, 1612), pp. 256, 305-6, 310-14; First and Second Prayer Books, pp. 249-50.
- <sup>24</sup> Green, Christian's ABC, p. 463.
- <sup>25</sup> N. Tadmor, "Friends and neighbours in early modern England: biblical translations and social norms", unpublished working paper November 2003. Dr Tadmor shows that this process began with the Greek Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate texts of the Bible, but was greatly accentuated in the English translations produced between the Wycliffite translations of the late fourteenth century and the Authorized, or 'King James' Bible of 1611. I am grateful to Dr Tadmor for allowing me to refer to work from her important ongoing project on 'The Social Universe of the English Bible'.
- <sup>26</sup> I am grateful to Bill Griffiths of the Centre for Northern Studies, Newcastle-upon-Tyne for his advice on Old English usages.
- <sup>27</sup> Edward Phillips, The New World of Words, Or a General English Dictionary, 7<sup>th</sup> edit. (London, 1720).
- <sup>28</sup> Quoting J. Boulton, Neighbourhood and Society. A London Suburb in the Seventeenth Century, (Cambridge, 1987), p. 293.
- <sup>29</sup> J.W. Willis-Bund ed., Worcestershire County Records. Division I. Documents Relating to Quarter Sessions. Calendar of the Quarter Sessions Papers. Vol. I. 1591-1643 (Worcester, 1900), p. 367.
- <sup>30</sup> Durham University Library, Archives and Special Collections [henceforward D.U.L.] DDR/EJ/CCD/1/3, fols. 159-159v (1592).
- <sup>31</sup> J. Raine ed., Depositions and Other Ecclesiastical Proceedings from the Courts of Durham, Surtees Society, 21 (Durham, 1845), pp. 271, 303, 312; S.L. Bates, A Concordance to the Poems of Ben Jonson (Athens, Ohio, 1978), p. 487.
- <sup>32</sup> Quoted in C. Holmes, Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire (Lincoln, 1980), p. 29.
- <sup>33</sup> A.J.L. Winchester, The Harvest of the Hills. Rural Life in Northern England and the Scottish Borders, 1400-1700 (Edinburgh, 2000), p. 46.
- <sup>34</sup> D. Levine and K. Wrightson, The Making of an Industrial Society. Whickham 1560-1765 (Oxford, 1991), p. 287; Muldrew, Economy of Obligation, p. 150.
- <sup>35</sup> Raine ed., Depositions and Other Ecclesiastical Proceedings, pp. 241-2; D.U.L. DDR/EJ/CCD/1/11, fo. 13.
- <sup>36</sup> Greater London Record Office [henceforward G.L.R.O.] Westminster Sessions Rolls, WJ/SR (NS) 29/9, 51/41.
- <sup>37</sup> B. Capp, When Gossips Meet. Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England (Oxford, 2003), p. 56; D.U.L. DDR/EJ/CCD/2, Folder 20.i.1637-6.v.1637, fol. 22.

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<sup>38</sup> Capp, When Gossips Meet, p. 57.

<sup>39</sup> The language quoted represents the usages most frequently encountered in the sources, and I n concordances of the Authorized Version of the Bible (1611) and of the works of Sidney, Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, Webster and Milton. The proverbs can be found under 'neighbour' in the Oxford English Dictionary.

<sup>40</sup> J. Boulton, "'It Is Extreme Necessity That Makes Me Do This': Some 'Survival Strategies' of Pauper Households in London's West Eng During the Early Eighteenth Century", in L. Fontaine and J. Schlumbohm eds., Household Strategies for Survival 1600-2000: Fission, Faction and Cooperation, International Review of Social History Supplement 8 (Cambridge, 2000), p. 64.

<sup>41</sup> Muldrew, Economy of Obligation, p. 160.

<sup>42</sup> For the phrase quoted and further discussion of the ambiguities of neighbourly obligation, see D.C. Beaver, Parish Communities and Religious Conflict in the Vale of Gloucester, 1590-1690 (Cambridge, Mass. And London, Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 50, 56-7.

<sup>43</sup> M. Campbell, The English Yeoman Under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts (New Haven, 1942), p. 383.

<sup>44</sup> A. Wood, Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England (Basingstoke and New York, 2002), p. 108.

<sup>45</sup> D.U.L. DDR/EJ/CCD/1/8, fol. 28v; D. O' Hara, Courtship and Constraint. Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England (Manchester & New York, 2000), p. 42. For the significance of neighbourly relations for psychological well-being, as revealed in the Richard Napier's notes on his mentally disturbed patients, see M. MacDonald, Mystical Bedlam. Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 105-11.

<sup>46</sup> Levine and Wrightson, Making of an Industrial Society, p. 293.

<sup>47</sup> See also M. Macintosh, "The Diversity of Social Capital in English Communities, 1300-1640 (with a Glance at Modern Nigeria)", Journal of Interdisciplinary History, 29 (1999), p. 460.

<sup>48</sup> The phrase is borrowed from Susan Reynolds, Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300 (Oxford, 1984), p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Examples of these terms and attributes can be found in any series of local court papers. Those quoted are from Willis-Bund ed., Worcestershire County Records, pp. 223, 366, 367, 459 ; S.A.H. Burne ed., The Staffordshire Quarter Sessions Rolls, Vols. III (1594-97) & IV (1598-1602) William Salt Archaeological Society (Kendal, 1933 & 1936), Vol. III, pp. 102, 103, 109, 136; Vol. IV, p. 229 ; G.L.R.O. Westminster Sessions: WJ/SR (NS) 46/211, 51/44, 51/48, 52/1, and WJ/SP/1645/7.

<sup>50</sup> Again, the examples are legion. Those cited (and many others) can be found in Raine ed., Depositions and Other Ecclesiastical Proceedings, p. 105; Willis-Bund ed., Worcestershire County Records, pp. 210, 211, 222-3, 305, 726A; Burne ed., Staffordshire Quarter Sessions, Vol. III, pp. 103, 136; Vol. IV, p. 133; G.L.R.O., Westminster Sessions, WJ/SR (NS) 17/20, 20/3, 34/68; D.U.L. DDR/A/ACD/1/1, 14 May 1601, 17 June 1602, 20 Oct. 1603, 10 April 1617. Cf. I Archer, The Pursuit of Stability. Social Relations in Elizabethan London (Cambridge, 1991), p. 76.

<sup>51</sup> Winchester, Harvest of the Hills, pp. 46-7.

<sup>52</sup> Raine ed., Depositions and Other Ecclesiastical Proceedings, p. 244; Burne ed., Staffordshire Quarter Sessions, Vol. III.

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p. 102.

<sup>53</sup> Raine ed., Depositiona and Other Ecclesiastical Proceedings, pp. 205-6, 224.

<sup>54</sup> For similar realities in Elizabethan London, see Archer, Pursuit of Stability, pp. 77-8.

<sup>55</sup> Cheshire Record Office, EDC 5 (1611) 5. I am grateful to Andy Wood for this reference.

<sup>56</sup> Burne ed., Staffordshire Quarter Sessions, Vol. III, p. 102.

<sup>57</sup> Burne ed., Staffordshire Quarter Sessions, Vol. III, pp. 156-7, 177-8; Vol. IV, p. 133.

<sup>58</sup> J. Raine ed., Depositions from the Castle of York Relating to Offences Committed in the Northern Counties in the Seventeenth Century, Surtees Society, 40 (Durham, 1861), p. 58. For the circumstances of witchcraft accusations see the classic works by Macfarlane and Thomas, cited in notes 1 and 2 above. The most authoritative recent survey of the problem is J. Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness. Witchcraft in England, 1550-1750 (London, 1996).

<sup>59</sup> C. Marsh, "'Common Prayer' in England, 1560-1640: The View from the Pew", Past and Present, 171 (2001), esp. pp. 76-7; A. Hunt, "The Lord's Supper in Early Modern England", Past & Present, 161 (1998), pp. 41-3.

<sup>60</sup> The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI, Everyman edit. (London and New York, 1910), pp. 215, 378-9, 384-6. These passages were carried over into the prayer book of 1559 with only minor modification, despite the significant changes famously made in the implied doctrine of the eucharist. They were also retained in 1662.

<sup>61</sup> This has been much commented on in recent years. See e.g. Hunt, "Lord's Supper", pp. 46-9; C. Haigh, "Communion and Community: Exclusion from Communion in Post-Reformation England", Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 51 (2000).

<sup>62</sup> The Booke of Common Praier (1559). These instructions are given at the beginning of "The Order for the administration of the Lordes Supper or holy Communion".

<sup>63</sup> J. Raine ed., Injunctions and other ecclesiastical proceedings of Richard Barnes, Bishop of Durham, 1575-1587, Surtees Society, 22 (Durham, 1850), p.125; D.U.L. DDR/EJ/CCA/2/1. fo. 39.

<sup>64</sup> Hunt, "Lord's Supper", p. 47-8. John Bossy has suggested that Archbishop Cranmer was unhappy with the doctrine underlying these aspects of the prayer book service, but included them as a concession to the strength of the tradition of reconciliation before communion: J. Bossy, Peace in the Post-reformation (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 74-5, 77.

<sup>65</sup> H. Johnstone ed., Churchwarden's Presentments (Seventeenth Century). Part I, Archdeaconry of Chichester, Sussex Record Society, 49 (Chichester, 1947-8), p.116.

<sup>66</sup> A.J. Willis ed., Church Life in Kent, being Church Court Records of the Canterbury Diocese, 1559-1565, (London & Chichester, 1975), p. 25; D.U.L. DDR/EJ/CCA/2/1, fos. 86v, 92v.

<sup>67</sup> B. Kumin, The Shaping of a Community. The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish, c. 1400-1560 (Aldershot &

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Brookfield, VT, 1996), p. 223. The essential point was that unworthy receivers not only risked their own damnation but also destroyed the grace of the community, thereby threatening God's judgment.

<sup>68</sup> "Of the Worthy receiving and reverent esteeming of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ" (1563), in Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the time of Queen Elizabeth of Famous Memory, S.P.C.K. edit. (London, 1864), pp. 481, 482.

<sup>69</sup> The Communion was originally appointed to be read on Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, but from 1552 was described as "to be used dyvers tymes in the yere; The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI, pp. 280-1, 430. It was retained in this form in the prayer books of 1559 and 1662.

<sup>70</sup> See, e.g. K. Wrightson, "The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England", in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle eds., The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 19, 21; D.U.L. Probate, Will of Robert Fawdon of Greenlaw, 18 April 1603.

<sup>71</sup> Bulmer, Neighbours, p. 106.

<sup>72</sup> A. Mitson, "The Significance of Kinship Networks in the Seventeenth Century: South West Nottinghamshire", in C. Pythian-Adams ed., Societies, Cultures and Kinship, 1580-1850 (Leicester & London, 1993),

<sup>73</sup> G. Nair, Highley. The Development of a Community, 1550-1880 (Oxford, 1988), pp. 55-8, 64, 66; D.S. Reid, The Durham Crown Lordships in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and the Aftermath (Durham, 1990), p. 93; Johnstone ed., Churchwarden's Presentments, p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> J. Pitman, "Status and Participation in Early Modern England: A case study from North Norfolk, 1580-1640", unpub. PhD thesis, University of East Anglia (1999), ch. 4, quoting p. 259.

<sup>75</sup> There are now many such studies. See e.g. K. Wrightson and D. Levine, Poverty and piety in an English Village. Terling 1525-1700, 2<sup>nd</sup> edit. (Oxford, 1995), pp. 106-6; J.R. Kent, The English Village Constable, 1580-1642. A Social and Administrative Study (Oxford, 1986), pp. 82-122; N. Alldridge, "Loyalty and Identity in Chester Parishes, 1540-1640", in S.J. Wright ed., Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion (London, 1988), pp. 106-7; Archer, The Pursuit of Stability, pp. 64-9; J.S. Craig, "Cooperation and Initiatives: Elizabethan Churchwardens and the Parish Accounts of Mildenhall", Social History, 18 (1993), pp. 363-4. The phrase quoted is from J. Pitman, "Tradition and Exclusion: Parochial Officeholding in Early Modern England. A Case Study from North Norfolk, 1580-1640", Rural History, 15 (2004), pp. 38, 42.

<sup>76</sup> Levine and Wrightson, Making of an Industrial Society, pp. 204, 279; Winchester, Harvest of the Hills, pp. 47-8, 78, 79-80, 125; Public Record Office, Duchy of Lancaster Depositions, DL4/69/57 (I am grateful to Andy Wood for this reference).

<sup>77</sup> Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/C/5/1599 (I must thank Andy Wood for this reference); D.U.L., Probate, Regr. IV, fo. 163v, Will of Jennet Merriman, 1580; Raine ed. Depositions and Other Ecclesiastical Proceedings, p. 302; Capp, When Gossips Meet, p. 27. Professor Capp's book provides a rich and comprehensive guide to the female sphere.

<sup>78</sup> See e.g. K. Wrightson, "Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590-1660", in E. and S. Yeo eds., Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure (Brighton & Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1980), p. 8; W.L. Sachse ed., The Diary of Roger Lowe (London, 1938), *passim*. See also, P. Griffiths, Youth

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and Authority. Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640 (Oxford, 1996), esp. pp. 166-7, 188-213; A. Shepard, meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England (Oxford, 2003), ch. 4.

<sup>79</sup> Archer, Pursuit of Stability, p. 74. For vivid illustration of appeals to the sense of neighbourly obligation in sustaining the poor, especially in times of shortage, see J. Walter, "The social economy of dearth in early modern England", in J. Walter and R. Schofield eds., Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Society (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 96-106, and S. Hindle, "Dearth, Fasting, and Alms: The Campaign for General Hospitality in Late-Elizabethan England", Past and Present, 172 (2001).

<sup>80</sup> N.Z. Davis, The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France (Oxford, 2000), p. 9.

<sup>81</sup> For a brief account of the long term development of the historiography of economic and social change in early modern England, see Wrightson, Earthly Necessities, pp. 2-20.

<sup>82</sup> For the 'Commonwealthsmen' see e.g. A. McRae, God Speed the Plough. The representation of agrarian England, 1500-1660 (Cambridge, 1996), ch. 1. The best short introduction to the radicals of the English Revolution remains C. Hill, The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution (London, 1972).

<sup>83</sup> Quoting from A. Dent, The Plaine Mans Path-way to Heaven (London, 1601), p. 95; R. Baxter, A Christian Directory: Or A Summ of Practical Theologie and Cases of Conscience, 2<sup>nd</sup> edit. (London, 1678), pp. 220, 221, 243.

<sup>84</sup> The literature on the developments alluded to here is massive. For broad interpretative overviews of particular dimensions, see e.g. Wrightson, Earthly Necessities; P. Collinson, The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625 (Oxford, 1982) and The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Basingstoke, 1988); S. Hindle, The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c. 1550-1640 (Basingstoke and New York, 2000); M.J. Braddick, State Formation in Early Modern England, c.1550-1700 (Cambridge, 2000).

<sup>85</sup> The notion of 'original defining contexts' is borrowed from J. Axtell, Natives and Newcomers. The Cultural Origins of North America (New York and Oxford, 2001), p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> Gowing, Domestic Dangers, p. 20; R.B. Shoemaker, "The Decline of Public Insult in London, 1660-1800", Past and Present, 169 (2000), p. 126. Cf. Jeremy Bouton's skepticism about the extent of neighbourly reciprocity among the London poor in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century: "It is extreme necessity", p. 65

<sup>87</sup> Levine and Wrightson, Making of an Industrial Society, pp. 295-6, 303, 340-1.

<sup>88</sup> Wood, Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics, pp. 88-95; J. Broad, Transforming English Rural Society. The Verneys and the Claydons, 1600-1820 (Cambridge, 2004), pp 76-7. For some vivid examples of the appeal to the concept of neighbourliness in popular resistance to agrarian change, see J. Walter, "Public transcripts, popular agency and the politics of subsistence in early modern England", in M.J. Braddick and J. Walter eds., Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society. Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland, (Cambridge, 2001), esp. pp.134-7.

<sup>89</sup> The literature on the poor laws is now immense. This paragraph refers specifically to Walter, "Social Economy of Dearth", quoting p. 123, 126.128, and a series of important recent articles by Steve Hindle, "Exclusion Crises: Poverty, Migration, and Parochial Responsibility in English Rural Communities, 1560-1660", Rural History, 7 (1996); "The Problem of Pauper Marriage in Seventeenth-Century England", Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 6<sup>th</sup> series, 8 (1998); "A sense of place? Becoming and belonging in the rural parish, 1550-1650", in Shepard and Withington eds., Communities in Early Modern England, quoting p. 97. Hindle's recent On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in

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Rural England, c.1550-1750 (Oxford, 2004) is a sustained exploration of the issues raised here and its bibliography provides an admirable guide to the historiography of the poor laws..

<sup>90</sup> M.S. Byford, "The Price of Protestantism: Assessing the Impact of Religious Change on Elizabethan Essex: The Cases of Heydon and Colchester, 1558-1594", unpublished D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford (1988), p. 426; C. Marsh, Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England. Holding their Peace (Basingstoke, 1998).

<sup>91</sup> Francis Bacon, quoted in N. Jones, The English Reformation. Religion and Cultural Adaptation (Oxford, 2002), p. 191.

<sup>92</sup> The literature on such conflicts is simply immense, including almost every study of the local history of the Reformation. For some particularly telling examples, see: Collinson, The Religion of Protestants, ch. 5; Collinson, The Birthpangs of Protestant England., ch. 5; S. Brigden, London and the Reformation (Oxford, 1989); D. Beaver, Parish Communities and Religious Conflict in the Vale of Gloucester, 1590-1690 (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1998), chs. 4-5; D. Spaeth, The Church in an Age of Danger. Parsons and Parishioners, 1660-1740 (Cambridge, 2000); J. Craig, Reformation Politics and Polemics. The Growth of Protestantism in East Anglian Market Towns, 1500-1610 (Aldershot and Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2001); E.H. Shagan, Popular Politics and the English Reformation (Cambridge, 2003).

<sup>93</sup> P. Seaver, Wallington's World. A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London (Standord, 1985), pp. 20-22; P. Collinson, The Puritan Character. Polemics and Polarities in Early Seventeenth-Century English Culture, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library Lecture (Los Angeles, 1989), p. 37; Beaver, Parish Communities, p. 18.

<sup>94</sup> For the debate over the social impact of Puritan efforts at local reformation, see Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, pp. 197-220 and the many works cited there.

<sup>95</sup> Such phraseology was often used in this context: see e.g. J. Goring, Godly Exercises or the Devil's Dance? Puritanism and Popular Culture in Pre-Civil War England, Friends of Dr Williams' Library, 37<sup>th</sup> Lecture (London, 1983), p. 15ff. Cf. G. Rosser, "Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England:", Journal of British Studies, 33 (1994), p. 431.

<sup>96</sup> J.J. Scarisbrick, The Reformation and the English People (Oxford, Blackwell, 1984), pp. 666-7; Duffy, Stripping of the Altars, pp. 454-5; D. Underdown, Revel, Riot and Rebellion. Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985), ch. 3; R. Hutton, The Rise and Fall of Merry England. The Ritual Year 1400-1700 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994), chs. 3-6; F. Heal, Hospitality in Early Modern England (Oxford, 1990) p. 93ff; Archer, Pursuit of Stability, pp. 93, 94, 96; Hindle, On the Parish, p. 104ff; C. Gittings, Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England (Beckenham, Croom Helm, 1984), esp. chs. 2 and 7; K. Wrightson and D. Levine, 'Death in Whickham', in J. Walter and R. Schofield (eds.), Famine, disease and the social order in early modern society (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 162-5; R. Houlbrooke, Death, Religion and the Family in England, 1480-1750 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998), ch 9.

<sup>97</sup> P. Clark, British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800. The Origins of an Associational World (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2000), chs. 2, 3, 7; J. Barry, "Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort", in Barry and Brooks eds., The Middling Sort of People; M. Chase, Early Trade Unionism. Fraternity, Skill and the Politics of Labour (Aldershot & Brookfield, VT, 2000), ch. 1.

<sup>98</sup> J.S. Cockburn, 'The Nature and Incidence of Crime in England 1559-1625: A Preliminary Survey', in J.S. Cockburn (ed.), Crime in England 1550-1800 (London, Methuen, 1977); J.A. Sharpe, Crime in Early Modern England 1550-1750 (Harlow, Longman, 1984) esp. chs. 3-4; Hindle, The State and Social Change, chs. 5.

<sup>99</sup> C.W. Brooks, Pettyfoggers and Vipers of the Commonwealth. The 'Lower Branch' of the Legal Profession in Early

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Modern England (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986), chs. 4-5; Muldrew, Economy of Obligation, ch. 8; Hindle, The State and Social Change, ch. 4; C. Marsh, 'Order and Place in England, 1580-1640: The View From The Pew', Journal of British Studies, 44 (2005), pp. 7-24. For defamation litigation, see J.A. Sharpe, Defamation and Sexual Slander in Early Modern England: The Church Courts at York, Borthwick Papers, 58 (York, University of York, 1981); M. Ingram, Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640 (Cambridge, 1987), ch.10; Gowing, Domestic Dangers, chs. 2-4; A. Shepard, "Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in Early Modern England, c. 1580-1640", Past and Present, 167 (2000) p. 83ff.; Shoemaker, "The Decline of Public Insult".

<sup>100</sup> As suggested by Muldrew, "From a 'light cloak'", p. 165. Court action was frequently accompanied by mediation, and was sometimes undertaken in order to provide pressure leading to informal settlement. The fact that it was undertaken at all, and so frequently, however, remains significant. As Gowing remarks, litigation was not a means of seeking reconciliation, but a means of confrontation: Domestic Dangers, p. 136-7.

<sup>101</sup> See e.g. the examples from local petitions quoted in Wrightson, "Alehouses, Order and Reformation", p. 18, and from many sources in K. Wrightson, "'Sorts of People' in Tudor and Stuart England", in Barry and Brooks eds., The Middling Sort of People.

<sup>102</sup> For the 'chief inhabitants', see H.R. French, "Social Status, Localism, and the 'Middle Sort of People in England, 1620-1750", Past and Present, 166 (2000), esp. pp. 75-7. For the labourers quoted, see Wrightson and Levine, Poverty and Piety, pp. 80, 133.

<sup>103</sup> Collinson, Puritan Character, p. 37.

<sup>104</sup> For these terms, see e.g. Withington and Shepard, "Introduction", p. 7; Hindle, "A Sense of Place?", p. 98; Archer, Pursuit of Stability, p. 96.

<sup>105</sup> Hunt, "Lord's Supper", p. 60 emphasises the uneasy coexistence in the post-Reformation church of "two fundamentally different understandings of the communion service, focused on the same ceremony yet having little else in common". Cf. Beaver, Parish Communities, p. 135.

<sup>106</sup> B. Kumin, The Shaping of a Community. The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish, c. 1400-1560 (Aldershot & Brookfield, VT, 1996), p. 258. The history of the communion service might suggest that. Exclusion from communion on the grounds of being out of charity with one's neighbours appears to have become rare by the 1630s (though examples can be found as late as the 1670s). By then, however, massive absenteeism had become the norm, perhaps because people were in greater awe of the risks of receiving unworthily, more likely because, after the massive disruption of parochial religion during the Civil Wars and Interregnum, it had, in Arnold Hunt's judgment, "ceased to be an important event in most people's lives.": Haigh, "Communion and Community", pp. 10, 13 in **online version but check printed version**; Spaeth, Church in an Age of Danger, p. 176-185, 193; Hunt, "Lord's Supper", pp. 81-2; Beaver, Parish Communities, 219, 234.

<sup>107</sup> McKibbin, Classes and Cultures, p. 181, 185; Bulmer, Neighbours, p. 87.

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