

Book Reviews

Clive Burgess, *The Right Ordering of Souls: the Parish of All Saint's Bristol on the Eve of the Reformation*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2018, pp. xx + 463, £60.00, ISBN: 978-1-78327-309-6

For roughly forty years, Clive Burgess has been a leading scholar of the late medieval English parish, working chiefly on churchwardens and their accounts. His particular focus—and springboard—has been the extensive pre-Reformation archive of the small inner-urban parish of All Saints', Bristol. That research, the basis for several notable and influential articles, together with his edition of the archival corpus (in three substantial volumes published by the Bristol Record Society), underpins this long-anticipated book. It will be widely welcomed and much used.

Predictably, the volume is almost a commentary on the archive, but that is an inadequate summary of its content. First, however, it is necessary to say what the book is *not*. It firmly is not an expansive analysis of balance sheets, a detailed dissection of income and expenditure and trends over the century with attendant statistics. Nor (and thwarting expectations potentially aroused by its main title) is it an overall assessment of parochial spirituality and pastoral care. While the parochial clergy are not ignored (some are important figures, and the church's small clerical foundation known as the 'Kalendars' is treated at some length), their sacramental and pastoral activities are largely absent. In line with much of Burgess's previous work—and much other recent scholarship in the field—'the parish' here is largely a lay body, the churchwardens and those for whom they acted.

What the book aims to be appears in the Acknowledgements: a case study of a specific parish which 'offers neither a narrative history of the parish nor [...] attempt[s] the social history of its inhabitants', but seeks 'to formulate [...] an understanding of parishioners' religious motivation and behaviour at a time when [...] the nation's devotional attainment was remarkable [...] but [...], ordinarily, finds little by way of archival detail or explanation' (p. xi). Achieving that goal—local, but with latent national applications and implications—generates a lengthy volume. The titles of the five Parts and subtitles of the eleven chapters usually identify their key themes. Part I ('For the increase of divine service') comprises just one chapter, concerned with 'Placing the late medieval English parish' in the broader historical context of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, of England in general and its church in particular. Part II narrows down to 'All Saints',

Bristol, and its parishioners', looking in turn at 'Circumstances and sources' (chapter 1) and 'Reading testamentary evidence' (chapter 2), with chapters 3 and 4 offering an examination of widows' wills and an analysis of one particular family's benefactions and their subsequent tribulations. Part III, 'Commemorating the dead', gives a general overview of mechanisms for 'Securing commemoration in the parish' in chapter 5, with chapter 6 turning specifically to 'The Halleways' chantry' (whose accounts survive within the All Saints' archive). A brief 'Coda' (pp. 252–8) draws out themes developed thus far. Part IV ('Leaders and administrators') deals first (chapter 8) with 'Clergy as mentors' before examining the laity as 'Leaders, managers and parishioners' (chapter 9). The two chapters of Part V ('Ordering the parish') address material and spiritual provision, the goals of 'Enhancing the parish church' (chapter 10) and 'Increasing divine service in All Saints' (chapter 11). The Conclusion offers a summary recapitulation, perhaps inevitably using the Reformation to bring down the final curtain.

Based on a considerable bibliography and intense engagement with the All Saints' archive, the end result is a book detailed, informative, argumentative, and provocative. Unsurprisingly, many of the themes developed here recall, reassert, and refine interpretations of parish structure and organisation developed in Burgess's previous work. His depiction of the parish's stratification between managers and followers, and the pecking order of lay parochial leadership, restates and confirms his long-held view that churchwardens were not the real leaders, with that role going to a group of 'masters' among the elite—although here as a group they appear rather more nebulous and fluid than perhaps previously hinted. *Post mortem* anxieties, the desire for commemoration through prayers and memorialisation as benefactors, are much discussed. The role of chantries as endowments which conveyed resources and responsibilities to enhance (or challenge) churchwardens' balance sheets and administrative capabilities, and the contribution of chantry priests (endowed or stipendiary) to the enhancement of parochial liturgy, also provide major themes—admittedly with a certain amount of repetition (and some tetchiness when debating choral liturgy).

This is a valuable volume, but also one with limitations, and giving less complete an assessment of All Saints than its title may suggest—either as a discrete parish or within Bristol's broader ecclesiastical complexity. Here the one-sidedness of the available evidence arguably undermines the goal: the view from the nave cannot be complemented by the view from the chancel. Despite their prominence in chapter 8, the clergy remain background figures. The specific nature of the benefice—a vicarage, in a wholly urban parish appropriated to the local abbey of St Augustine—invites questions about funding and how

the abbey saw its role as patron-cum-rector, and about how such issues shaped relationships with and among the lay parishioners. The depiction of All Saints' as one of Bristol's elite parishes, with a significant concentration of lay wealth (not itself indicative of a wealthy benefice), raises other questions about urban political structures and council oversight and wider economic and ecclesiastical contexts: the elite's wealth was not generated within the parish, their investment at All Saints' was of resources derived from elsewhere. Dependence on the 'nave' archive pushes attention towards aspects of parochial management which highlight the elite, the managers, but leaves the majority of this densely-inhabited parish's inhabitants in the background, unless they intrude from the shadows and into the evidence.

While ecclesiastical, such broader areas of social and economic history are not Burgess's real concern; their mention here may be inappropriate. Yet they indicate the provocation in a book which often points towards wider questions still inadequately addressed in the overall scholarship, and to investigations still needed. This book may be ostensibly about one parish, but it is also an important contribution to the ongoing reconstruction of the fuller pre-Reformation English church.

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Jens Holger Schjørring and Norman A. Hjelm, eds., *History of Global Christianity, volume I: European and Global Christianity, ca. 1500–1789*, translations by David Orton, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017, pp. x + 458, €180.00/\$210.00, ISBN: 978-90-0434192-0

Thanks in no small measure to the distinguished work elsewhere of several of the contributors to this volume, the need to consider the history of Christianity as a global phenomenon has become something of an historiographical given. However, the editors' choice of the term 'Global Christianity' over and against the label 'World Christianity' with its emphasis on indigenous (non-western) translations/appropriations of Christianity—famously favoured by Lamin Sanneh—together with the volume's chosen periodisation, draws attention to the fact that for all its impressive global coverage, it remains essentially a Eurocentric account of its topic.¹

¹ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).