

shipwrecked, shed light on regional and political influences behind miracle collections, but also the cults themselves. The closing chapters of the volume take a more detailed look at the miracle narratives themselves. Van Mulder introduces the reader to the complex topic of dreams and visions in Low Countries miracle collections and their use in narratological construction. Csepregi completes the volume by focusing on the narratives in the collections produced for St Margaret of Hungary, showing how they reflect both wider practices of adapting lived experiences into written record, and the particular noteworthiness of Margaret's canonisation. As such, this final chapter brings the volume full circle back to Wilkinson's initial reflections on the juxtaposing nature of these collections as being both individual materials and part of a long-standing tradition.

This book will be of interest to those beginning to explore miracle collections as well as subject experts more familiar with materials. As such it is a welcome addition for researchers of medieval hagiography, lived religion and more socially-focused topics such as healthcare.

UNIVERSITY OF READING

RUTH J. SALTER

*Going to church in medieval England.* By Nicholas Orme. Pp. xii + 483 incl. 59 colour and black-and-white ills. New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2021. £20. 978 0 300 25650 5

*JEH* (74) 2023; doi:10.1017/S0022046922002445

This is an excellent, elegant and useful history of the English parish church and its associated chapels from the perspective of the people who used them. At the end the author notes the importance of length and breadth, in chronology and sources. The long time-span, from the mission of Augustine to the accession of Elizabeth I, allows the reader to see change in context and there is a hint that a more significant ending would have been the Toleration Act of 1689 which removed the obligation to attend the parish church. By being a book that elides 'medieval religion' and 'the Reformation', it warns against over-emphasising the Reformation division while reporting in its last chapter the radical changes that did occur. It is free from the dead hand of theory, allowing the sources to provoke and answer questions, but it is attentive to questions of landscape, the experience of marginalised groups and the use of space. It is also attentive to regional variations and builds on the large number of local studies, with a slight inclination to the south-west. This last points towards its strength, as it is the fruit of decades of work on the religious history of the period in England by a scholar who knows the sources and has himself made a major contribution to many of the areas studied. It will remain a standard work on the subject, but it is more than just a work of synthesis.

There are eight chapters: on the parish and its origins, the staff, buildings and congregation of the parish, parish events during a week, a year and a lifetime, and on the Reformation. The author always explains the terms and concepts used and at the end is a useful list of technical terms, but even one experienced in this field never feels patronised. There is also an awareness of the limits of the evidence. We do not know how a congregation went up to receive holy communion (p. 285), we have difficulty discerning whether 'kneeling' meant what the

verb means today or a brief genuflection (p. 175) and, while noting how much can be learned about what women did in church, even occasionally serving at the altar (p. 77), the penultimate observation of the book is that 'the only really elusive element in church is that of children' (p. 405), a subject about which the author knows more than anyone.

Just as in Scottish pre-Reformation church history we have discovered that holding benefices *in commendam* is not necessarily a sign of neglect and corruption, so the author is aware of the danger of hidden modern prejudices, such as that an educated clergy is necessarily a good one: 'we tend to judge people in the past by their education because of its importance in our society' (p. 55). Another modern misconception, rooted in the nineteenth century, is that medieval parish churches deliberately hosted secular community activities, but the author effectively refutes this by pointing to legislation against it, which both shows that it happened but was not seen by the Church as desirable, and also noting the creation of the 'church house' for such activities. Like any great work of history, the book does not only correct misconceptions but also opens up new areas for research, for example the author notes the need for new studies of church dedications (p. 92), as he has done for the south-west, and for a new appreciation of continuity at the time of the Protestant Reformation.

A particularly interesting part of the book is its treatment of liturgy. The concern is with the mass, daily office, sacraments and other services in the ritual as they were actually celebrated and so a wide range of sources are used to determine what actually happened. This in itself is part of a development in our understanding of medieval worship, marked by the 2009–13 AHRC-funded project 'The Experience of Worship in Late Medieval Cathedral and Parish Church' at the University of Bangor. The author concludes that 'writing this book has made it clear that the study of church liturgy cannot be based on liturgical sources alone' (p. 403). With Richard Pfaff in *The liturgy in medieval England: a history* (Cambridge 2009), he concludes that the late-Victorian editions of the uses of Salisbury and York impose an overly static view of liturgical development and he adds that even surviving liturgical books do not show how much vernacular was used in parish liturgy (p. 201). The parish mass was a cut-down version of cathedral liturgy and one question that the author raises is why did no one create a 'parish missal' comparable to the priest's 'ritual'? This did not happen until the Book of Common Prayer of 1549 and it raises that key question of this book: continuity over the Reformation period. The author notes the obvious discontinuities but also outlines the many continuities – parish structure, patrons, infant baptism, infrequent communion, gestures such as standing for the Gospel – that would have been experienced by the person in the pews; pews which themselves provided continuity: 'the Reformers aimed to change what happened in people's heads, but wisely avoided interfering with what they did with their bottoms' (p. 398).

A key premise of this study is that, after 597 AD, Christianity reached the English people through churches (p. 1), and most of the book is a study of the working of the parish church in its local context concluding with an examination of how it survived the upheavals of the mid-sixteenth century. At a time when the parish system is under threat in the Church of England, it is a timely reminder of how English society is built upon it and thus it was not surprising that Nicholas Orme was

invited to speak at the 'Save the Parish' conference during the July 2022 General Synod. This book, however, is not a religious and social manifesto. It is an outstanding work of history which will make a lasting mark on our understanding of medieval and Reformation religion in England. It will be useful to those who enjoy visiting old churches, to students and especially doctoral students who are not familiar with medieval church life and buildings, and anyone with an interest in religious and social history. It represents the triumph of a shift in our way of appreciating medieval churches from form to function, from attention to worked stone to attention to how the buildings were used. Dating tracery can be useful but it is just part of our understanding of a medieval church, perhaps comparable to trying to understand the Christian Scriptures by historical-critical analysis alone. Unlike Eamon Duffy's *The stripping of the altars* (New Haven 1992) this work is the product of a lifetime's study, but I suspect it will have a similar influence on our understanding of medieval and Reformation religion in England.

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*Manchester cathedral. A history of the collegiate church and cathedral, 1421 to the present.*

Edited by Jeremy Gregory. Pp. xxii + 472 incl. 101 colour and black-and-white  
ills. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021. £30. 978 1 5261 6126 0  
*JEH* (73) 2022; doi:10.1017/S0022046922001208

This volume is the latest in a line of multi-authored English cathedral histories over the past forty-five years embodying recent research on religious, architectural, liturgical and musical history in relation to cathedrals. Manchester differs from England's ancient monastic and secular cathedrals in originating as the parish church of a vast Lancashire parish, re-founded and richly endowed as a collegiate church in 1421 by royal, local, aristocratic, mercantile and episcopal interest, only becoming a cathedral in 1847. Although the adjoining college buildings for the Warden and Fellows survive (as Chetham's School of Music), it is not set apart in a walled close or precinct, but lies at the heart of the life of a regional centre which became a manufacturing and commercial metropolis. This volume sets the account of its complex institutional and religious evolution in the wider context of national and regional political, economic and social events as well as religious history. It draws on a wide range of sources beyond the cathedral's own extensive archives (re-ordered for this project) including biographies, social documentation, parliamentary papers, newspapers (including the *Manchester Guardian*) and the material culture of the building's fabric and furnishings, in the context of the extensive secondary literature of the relevant periods. It is an important contribution to understanding the history of religion in northern industrial and post-industrial centres from the late Middle Ages.

Beyond Jeremy Gregory's introductory essay seven narrative chapters discuss the institutional history of the college and cathedral. Peter Arrowsmith investigates the limited evidence for the pre-collegiate parish church. Lucy Wooding describes the church's refoundation in 1421, amidst the hopes and fears following the English victory at Agincourt, through strong renaissance and humanist influences