

government and the Church – provide a reminder (if needed) that villages and hamlets existed within many frameworks; these exerted differing levels of control, all of which changed and evolved through time. Cuxham, from the prairie lands of the Central Province, is used as an example, offering a valuable summary of the work of Paul Harvey (pp. 106–11); here, the eight villeins, each holding a half-virgate and owing onerous services and dues to the lord, lived on the south side of the village street; the thirteen cottars, on the other hand, who held no land in the open fields but had lesser obligations to the lord, lived on the north side and down-side turnings. Wharram Percy logically and inevitably appears, and about the only instance I noted of a piece of revisionism having been missed is the phasing of the church here, as given in *Wharram XIII* (2012). As a contrast, Bolton Priory's West Yorkshire estates are used to show how, in more upland areas, different landscapes and conditions necessitated different strategies and responses.

I close by noting how well written the book is, managing that rare trick of being accessible and, above all, interesting as well as authoritative. It's about as near to a page-turner as local history gets!

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Going to Church in Medieval England. By Nicholas Orme. 16 x 24 cm. xi + 483 pp, 59 colour and b&w pls and figs. London & New York: Yale University Press, 2021. ISBN 978-0-300-25650-5. Price: £20.00 hb.

Books about the history and architecture of Christian churches are innumerable, but the title of this one is unlike any other, and so are the contents. The complexity of religious life in the Middle Ages, the long-abandoned rituals that it embraced and the obscure terminology accompanying them, are unfamiliar to the vast majority of people in Britain today. But medieval churches survive in their thousands and are much visited. In order to understand what one sees both within, and outside, a church it is essential to have at least a basic understanding of the liturgical practices and religious cycle in the average English parish. No-one is better qualified to provide that fundamental introduction than Nicholas Orme, and he has done so here, giving us the benefit of his encyclopaedic scholarship, expressed with great lucidity.

Chapter 1 introduces the origins of churches and parishes, beginning with the Augustinian mission, and explains the differences between the various types and their spheres of influence: monasteries, minsters, cathedrals, parochial churches and chapels. The proliferation of parishes, patronage, the operation of the tithe system, and payment obligations for the maintenance and repair of churches are all explained. The next chapter describes the staffing of churches, how that was funded, the duties of those involved and the vexed issue of clergy celibacy.

In Chapter 3 a clear and concise account of church buildings, their component parts, plans, seating and other major furnishings is provided, without discoursing deeply into architectural history; it also touches on the churchyard and secular activities that took place within

it. This is followed by a discussion of the people who attended – or did not attend – daily and weekly church services and festivals, noting how the laity participated, codes of dress, behaviour and the treatment accorded to different ranks of society, and to children. In the fifth chapter, Professor Orme leads us gently into what, for many, is the bewildering world of medieval liturgy: the daily and weekly cycle, the format of services, the Divine Office, the celebration of mass, processions, communion, confession and sermons. That is followed by an account of the yearly cycle, relating to the seasons and the great festivals: Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter.

The human life-cycle and its associated sacraments is the subject of Chapter 7, beginning with birth and baptism, and the demeaning treatment of women in the process of 'churching' that followed. The author reminds us that the nomination of godparents – popularised since Victorian times – originated in the late Saxon period. The cycle then moves on to describe confirmation and the sacrament of marriage, together with the prescribed arrangements for weddings; finally, it turns to the rites offered by the Church for sickness, death and burial.

In the penultimate chapter Orme gives a succinct account of events in the first half of the sixteenth century, when almost every aspect of church life was rent asunder during the rapacious reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI. He explains how the Reformation attempted to expunge mystery and superstition from the liturgy and the fabric of the buildings, with English replacing Latin as the language of the English Church.

Many of the fine illustrations provided are of medieval stained glass and paintings, as well as architecture and ecclesiastical artefacts. The volume is well referenced throughout, with examples widely drawn from across the country, accompanied by a large and useful bibliography; equally valuable is the explanatory list of technical terms. As well as being highly instructive, this is an enjoyable volume to read, and should be on every church archaeologist's bookshelves.

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