

In more practical terms balloons posed a challenge to nationalist sensibilities: the peak of balloon madness came at a point when Britain was still bruised from the humiliation of the loss of America. The fact that the balloon was the invention of the Montgolfier brothers and that the most successful aeronauts were French was sufficient to arouse hostility and national affiliations were frequently vociferously expressed in the balloons' decorations. But aerial flight raised new questions—could the regions of the air belong to any one nation?—and, in the prelapsarian innocence of the 1780s before revolution swept away all old certainties of the ancien régime, they seemed to represent the great potential for mankind's common endeavors, undivided by national rivalries. Such irenic possibilities were never realized of course; moreover, aerial flight—as contemporaries recognized—had the potential to change the rules of engagement for nation states and warfare. Conventional borders and fortifications would be rendered redundant by airborne fleets (the language of aerostatics always borrowed from the navy).

This is a book rich in detail, and the mania for balloons that gripped the nation from 1783 to 1786 is securely tethered to the social, cultural, and political context. But context is not everything: following Rita Felski, Brant looks for the lines of affect and affection in understanding how we connect with the texts and objects of the past. This is not simply a survey of the phenomenon of the balloon but, as Brant brings to the fore in her final chapter, a meditation upon what balloons continue to mean for us in the present.

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CLIVE BURGESS. *The Right Ordering of Souls: The Parish of All Saints', Bristol, on the Eve of the Reformation*. Studies in the History of Medieval Religion 47. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018. Pp. 463. \$99.00 (cloth).
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Clive Burgess has already made All Saints, Bristol, a parish well known to students of English late medieval devotional history. Through his multivolume edition of the church's archive—that is to say, the so-called Church Book, the wills and churchwardens' accounts, and the Hallelway Chantry Deeds—he has made available a corpus of source material of quite unrivalled extent for the study of any English pre-Reformation parish. Over the years he has also published a portfolio of articles based on the All Saints' evidence, which between them argue a powerful case for the strength of lay investment in the late medieval parish and the complexity of the structures that underpinned its management. To this already considerable output he has now added a substantial monograph which offers the reader an overview of All Saints' history in the century before the Reformation and, alongside it, an evaluation of what the church's records teach us about English urban religious life more generally. If there is relatively little here that is new—Dr. Burgess having trailed many of his conclusions in earlier publications—whatever novelty the reader may feel is lacking is more than made up for by the impressive scale of the evidence. Here, in a series of chapters covering such topics as lay testamentary bequests, the foundation of chantries and anniversaries, maintenance of the church fabric, and the lay management of the parish, he lays bare the rich tapestry of All Saints' devotional life. We learn of the women who were benefactors of the church: Agnes Fyler, for example, who left her property in the High Street to the incumbent on condition of the celebration of her anniversary each year; Alice Chester, widow of the merchant Henry Chester and a significant businesswoman in her own right, who established a

chantry in the church and who in the fifteen-year interval between her husband's death and her own was to be a generous donor of decorated cloths, Mass vestments and altar vessels; and Maud Spicer, yet another wealthy widow who, after her husband's death, became a vowess. We are told the intriguing story of the rise and fall of Richard Haddon, heir to a leading Bristol dynasty and a parishioner, who paid for the rebuilding of the north aisle and founded a chantry in the church, but who later in life sank into debt and whose memory was to be expunged from the Church Book. We also learn of the clergymen who made a mark on All Saints' life: Maurice Hardwick, for example, in whom Agnes Fyler confided and who was to be instrumental in persuading her to leave her property to the church; and John Thomas, an assiduous record keeper whom Dr. Burgess suggests was the compiler of the Church Book.

In the course of his study, Dr. Burgess repeatedly emphasizes many of the points that he has made in his articles over the years. He draws attention, for example, to the inadequacy of some of the key sources we rely on for reconstructing medieval parish history, notably wills, which he says are partial, and churchwardens' accounts, which illuminate only the lower routines of parish administration. He is at pains to stress that perpetual chantry foundations should be seen not so much as private but as communal institutions, their worship integrated into the wider devotional and liturgical life of the church. And he again urges on us the case for what he calls "the remaking" (413) of the parish in the fifteenth century, as the steady increase in staffing resulting from chantry foundations invested the church with something of the character of a college. Dr. Burgess's achievement here is to supply a new dimension to our understanding of the late medieval English Church. He makes the point that Eamon Duffy, in his acclaimed *Stripping of the Altars* (1992), considers only the sentiment and ritual conduct of traditional English religion; he does not take into account the institutional context in which that religion flourished. It is that deficiency which Dr. Burgess makes good in this book, and he does so with both skill and sensitivity.

Inevitably, the question arises of how far the experience of All Saints' can be taken as characteristic of English parish life more generally in the pre-Reformation period. Dr. Burgess's argument is that, at least in an urban context, the richness and vibrancy of All Saints' devotional life were probably not unusual. The parish, he says, can hardly be considered an exceptional one; indeed, it was quite small, and its church architecturally undistinguished. If richness on this scale could be achieved in a parish a few hundred yards square, then how much more could be achieved in one very much larger? The mistake, he says, would be to be misled by the accident of the survival of the parish archive. In arguing on these lines, Dr. Burgess may well be right. But a larger question remains: could the experience of an urban parish, such as All Saints', have been replicated in parishes in the countryside where wealth was less concentrated and wealthy patrons may have been lacking? In his reply to this point, Dr. Burgess argues for the working of a trickle-down effect—that is to say, for developments in urban parishes percolating down to their more remote and less affluent rural counterparts, perhaps under the influence of active diocesans. Whether or not there is truth in this hypothesis, only further research will tell. Certainly, no evidence for it is produced here. It is a measure of the importance of Dr. Burgess's excellent study, however, that it raises a good deal more questions than it answers.

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