officers should understand how these buildings were used, the artefacts they contain and how they have evolved over the centuries, because, as he says, ‘if we want to preserve a building and adapt it for new purposes, it is wise to find out all we can about it and what it contains’. His ‘long essay’ uses a mix of musical and social archaeology to further that deeper understanding. My concern about this ‘essay’ is that neither of these two aims is fully and satisfactorily realised, but this is of less consequence if the promised more comprehensive studies are in the pipeline. Indeed, it may be better to begin with an accessible introduction such as this if the hope is that the CSAs and FSOs envisaged by the Taylor Report will buy it and read it.

There is much stimulating and useful material in the book; in particular, Renshaw’s ‘big idea’ that there was much more musical activity and performance in our medieval parish churches than historians have allowed for. Renshaw believes that he has discovered evidence of organs and musical activity in at least half of all churches and chapels in England, and his research highlights the fact, sometimes overlooked, that these buildings were ‘performative spaces’, places of often complex and elaborate ritual, as priest and people celebrated the seasons of the liturgical year together. Renshaw is good at interpreting chancels to tease out evidence for this that has been largely neglected. He also draws our attention to the acoustics of churches and has interesting things to say about access doors to chancels. In some places he speculates beyond the evidence, as in his suggestion that string courses are the visible representation of ‘the girdle of Christ’ that binds together the community of the church. However, such speculation only adds to the stimulus and passion to think afresh about our medieval churches that is evident throughout the book.

Renshaw ends by proposing his response to the Taylor Report: to allow the naves of our churches to revert fully to community and secular use, while retaining the chancels for the worshipping community, returning them to the dignity and state of the late medieval church, as outlined earlier in the book, and reinstating the organ once more within the chancel space. This is an interesting kite to fly, but poses considerable legal, practical, aesthetic and financial problems, which, I suspect, most church communities will find challenging, if not impossible, to face. The debate will no doubt continue about the tension between sustainability, liturgical need and heritage conservation. Renshaw’s book is a timely contribution to that debate, and hopefully the prelude to detailed studies on the role of music and organs in our late medieval parish churches.

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The appearance of Nigel Saul’s Lordship and Faith is timely. A surge of interest in parish church studies in England has manifested in recent long-term research projects (the Norwich Parish Churches project), conferences (for example, Harlaxton 2017, ‘Church and City in the Middle Ages’ and, in the same year, ‘Towards an Art History of the Parish Church’ at The Courtauld Institute of Art) and books (such as Sally Badham’s Seeking Salvation (2015) on commemoration in late medieval parish churches). Despite its focus on the knightly class, this book necessarily widens its mandate in order to adequately address the gentry’s involvement in the parish church. Lack of scholarly attention to the English parish church has been lamented for some time, and Saul’s book is a welcome addition to the landscape of parish church studies, which has long been dominated by broad, general surveys, or ones concerning only the later Middle Ages (such as the important contributions of Eamon Duffy, Clive Burgess and Katherine French).

Saul’s initial chapters approach his material chronologically. After the introductory chapter, Chapter 2, ‘Churching the Landscape’ (a reference to Richard Morris’ critical 1989 book, Churches in the Landscape) shows evidence for minster churches, the proto-parish system whereby a group of priests stationed in a central location would travel to settlements to administer pastoral care. Saul couples his rundown of the familiar literature on the minster system with a look at the way contemporary gentry engaged with these systems and created field chapels on their land – convenient for themselves and their tenants. As these proprietary churches became increasingly common, their owners began staffing them with permanent chaplains, forging an enduring relationship between priests and the gentry.
Chapter 3 examines the impact of the Norman conquest on pastoral care, a major result of which was the collapse of the minster system. The minsters had been supported by tithes, but the transfer of many churches to Norman ownership and subsequent redirection of tithes undermined the minsters’ coffers, and much of the wealth achieved by those Norman lords was returned to Normandy. Furthermore, Domesday Book provides evidence that Norman lords were granting churches and their incomes to monasteries in Normandy. In addition to acquiring existing churches, Norman lords also built new churches in England, having brought with them a mature Romanesque style from the Continent. In spite of lay involvement in this period, the Norman gentry were devoted to monastic foundations, and almost always chose them for burial.

Moving forward, Saul approaches most chapters thematically, though in a logical chronology. Chapters address topics such as the gentry’s relationship with monasteries, the friars, domestic chapels, chantry chapels and burial. Particularly interesting is Saul’s discussion of collaboration between parties: between gentry donors of parish churches and the monasteries they gave them to, such as in the case of Kilpeck, which likely had continued involvement from Hugh de Kilpeck after it was alienated to St Peter’s Abbey Gloucester in 1134 (pp 58–9), as well as between multiple members of the gentry, and between gentry patrons and clergy for projects such as chancel rebuilding (pp 320–22).

The poverty of previous scholarly publications considering the parish church as a genre forces Lordship and Faith to perform a double duty, explaining the mechanics of English parish churches in general, not just the type Saul sets out to analyse. The result is that, at times, it reads as a state of the field report on English parish church studies – necessary to provide sufficient context for his topic. Lordship and Faith is both architectural and social history, and readers from either camp may be frustrated at times by its hybridity. However, that Saul’s book is a major contribution to the study of both the medieval parish church (as a building and an institution) and the gentry is incontestable, and a welcome indication that scholars are now moving towards taking the parish church seriously as an object of study.

Badham, S 2015, Seeking Salvation: commemorating the dead in the Late-Medieval English parish, Paul Watkins Publishing, UK

Morris, R 1989. Churches in the Landscape, J M Dent & Sons Ltd, UK

Meg Bernstein

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On 7 October 2017, a conference marked the launch of this volume of essays relating to Buckfast Abbey in Devon. Chaired by the volume’s editor, the Rev Dr Peter Beacham FSA, both book and conference were fitting celebrations to mark the abbey’s millennium in 2018. For those of us who were fortunate to attend, it was a full and memorable day, rich in scholarship relative to the cultural history of the pre- and post-Dissolution abbey buildings and its exceptional collection of metalwork.

Like the abbey itself, this book is a remarkable achievement. It should not come as a great surprise that Peter Beacham, whose publications include the revised edition of Buildings of England: Cornwall (2014), has heroically pulled together a sumptuous, authoritative and diverse collection of thirteen chapters, written by eleven eminent historians. Chapters are arranged in chronological order and are beautifully illustrated, ensuring that the overall narrative is easy to follow.

The first four chapters, by Nicholas Orme, David M Robinson, Stewart Brown and John Cherry, perfectly portray the archaeology, architecture and history from its foundation in 1018, through to the abbey being absorbed into the Cistercian Order in 1147, and culminating at its dissolution during the Reformation. These chapters are wonderfully complementary and build a clear picture of the abbey’s grandeur using excavated evidence, reconstruction drawings and plans, comparative analysis with other abbey complexes, and early documentary sources. From the Dissolution, Cherry lucidly portrays the abbey site devoid of monks, using antiquarian and artists’ sources, perhaps the most famous being J M W Turner’s 1826 watercolour Buckfastleigh Abbey, Devonshire. Several images, dating from c 1806, show a