

Margaret Willes. *In the Shadow of St Paul's Cathedral: The Churchyard that Shaped London*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022. xii + 299 pp. + 54 illus. \$35.00. Review by P.G. STANWOOD, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

This book is an exceptional compendium and encyclopedic survey of historic events and actions, of reflections and anecdotes about the great cathedral church and its environs in the heart of the City of London. The title is suggested by the dreamy thoughts of Charlotte Brontë's heroine Lucy Snowe in *Villette*. She spends her first night at the Old Chapter Coffee House in the Churchyard, and falls asleep hearing "a deep, low, mighty tone At the twelfth colossal hum and trembling knell, I said—'I lie in the shadow of St Paul's'" (241). Thus begins the narrative of the final chapter, "Lengthening Shadows," in which the author typically draws upon and evokes the variety of life in and about the Churchyard—in the broad and hugely capacious orders of literary, ecclesiastical, mercantilist, and political action. The twelve chapters of the book all suggest by their titles this history which Willes chronicles, neatly dividing Old Paul's from "New": 1. Setting the Scene; 2. The Times Newspaper of the Middle Ages; 3. The Centre of the Book World; 4. The Fires of Reformation; 5. The Children of Paul's; 6. The Twilight of Old St Paul's; || 7. Resetting the Scene; 8. Resurgam; 9. A Place to be Seen; 10. Literary Circles; 11. Theatre for London, Britain and the Empire; and 12. Lengthening Shadows.

The Churchyard itself, Willes writes, is not easy to define for there were at various times several "churchyards" within the cathedral precincts, and after the Great Fire of 1666, some activities moved several streets to the north. "So it is the *idea* of the Churchyard that forms my theme" (2). But the cathedral itself has always been at the immovable center of London life, embodying and radiating a kind of authority. There were three Anglo-Saxon cathedrals, the first in 604, destroyed by fire, followed by second and third structures in 675 and 962, this last also destroyed by fire in 1087. Now began and continued work on the great building, admired throughout the Middle Ages and Early Modern times. With the destruction of the medieval cathedral in the Great Fire, a new St Paul's rose in its place. Willes recalls some well known features of Old St. Paul's—such as the great steeple, destroyed

by lightning in 1561—whose existence is invisible yet palpable, and she sketches the achievement of Wren's masterwork, finally completed in 1708—the cathedral we know today.

The author orders her narrative mainly in chronological sequence, favoring eventful incidents, such as the disputes connected with the reformers John Wycliff and his Lollard followers, who commonly defined their theological positions in sermons preached in the cathedral precinct known as Paul's Cross. From this outdoor venue came not only words of royally and ecclesiastically approved substance, but often also principal news of the day. And so "the fires of Reformation" burned with the particular heat that emanated from this pulpit, markedly so in May 1521 when John Fisher preached *Against the Pernicious Doctrine of Martin Luther*, rightly described as "the first public assertion of orthodoxy, ushering in a century of further assertions that reflect the troubled religious times in which the nation was embroiled" (62). Later in the century, for example, Richard Bancroft, a canon of Westminster (afterwards Bishop of London in 1597, and Archbishop of Canterbury in 1604) preached at Paul's Cross in February 1588 a rousing denunciation of "heretical groups, such as Arians, Donatists, Papists, Libertines, Anabaptists, the Family of Love, sectaries and atheists" (82).

Such dramatic presentations were characteristic of many preachers at Paul's Cross. Most familiar and best remembered is John Donne's sermon of 1622, commonly known as the *Directions for Preachers*. Willes briefly summarizes its importance, and gives also some further account of Donne, details well known to readers of this journal. Paul's Cross would fall into disrepair and neglect in the mid-seventeenth century, and so sermons were given in the cathedral itself. In consequence, almost a century later, a notable sermon—recollecting those of former times—was preached in St Paul's. Henry Sacheverell, an Oxford scholar, delivered the traditional Gunpowder Plot sermon, on 5 November 1709. A zealous High Churchman and a determined Tory, he condemned non-conformists and Whigs in a memorable fashion, with terms that parallel Whitgift's denunciations: "These false brethren ... suffer'd to combine into bodies, and seminaries, wherein atheism, deism, tritheism, socinianism, with all the hellish principles of fanaticism, regicide, and anarchy are openly profess'd and taught,

to corrupt and debauch the youth of the nation” (202).

Willes turns to another kind of dramatic action in her description of the Grammar School of St Paul’s, which provided choristers for cathedral services who would also become actors known as the “Children of Paul’s.” Their familiar history and importance is helpfully summarized, resting especially on the boy players’ performances of Marston’s *Antonio and Mellida*, and Thomas Middleton’s *The Puritaine, or the Widdow of Watling Street*, this latter work notably targeting separatists. This chapter recalls a similar, contemporaneous survey by Roze Hentschell, *St Paul’s Cathedral Precinct in Early Modern Literature and Culture* (reviewed in *SCN* 79 (1& 2) 2021). Unlike Willes, Hentschell writes a more particularly focussed, essentially academic, and thesis driven socio-geographical study; Willes, while typically fluent and informative, displays the features of a more general narrative.

Whether church or churchyard, St Paul’s presided over the dynamic and varied life at the center of London. One recurrent theme shows the making of books, from Wynkyn de Worde and Richard Pynson to John Cassell and Hodder & Stoughton, and Oxford University Press, at Amen Corner. Willes devotes the early chapters of the book to the development of printing and publication, and returns frequently to literary concerns. The reception of the fiercely partisan Sacheverell sermon, for one example, proved immensely popular and enabled the bookseller Henry Clements at the Half Moon in St Paul’s Churchyard eventually to produce 50,000 copies, with reprints and pirated editions following, reaching a quarter of a million copies.

Willes writes in a pleasing, clear, and lively style that lifts the enormously varied and rapidly changing topics from mere recitation into a continuous, often absorbing narrative, well suited for the intended broad readership. There is little new in this book but very much that is familiar, its achievement resting mainly on the skillful selection and arrangement of incidents and anecdotes across a very long period, divided naturally between the Old St Paul’s and the New—the Great Fire of 1666 marking the change. There are links between them, obviously not so much of physical or structural continuity, but rather of the ever pervasive “shadow” cast over this busy center of London’s life. Willes generously acknowledges her sources, noting, for example, “pre-eminent sites” for the study of early modern

sermons, such as Mary Morissey's *Politics and the Paul's Cross Sermons, 1558–1642* (2011), and as contributing editor to *Sermons at Paul's Cross, 1521–1642* (2017), gen. ed. T. Kirby (with P.G. Stanwood and John King), a unique collection of significant sermon texts—in the brief bibliography, this textual edition appears falsely among secondary sources. *In the Shadow of St Paul's Cathedral* is attractively printed, with many excellent illustrations and an inserted section of fine color plates. This is an ambitious book that has nothing to prove but an engaging story to tell; its incidents are intelligently selected, and the result is a highly condensed history presented in an appealing way.

Chris R. Langley, Catherine E. McMillan, and Russell Newton, eds. *The Clergy in Early Modern Scotland*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2021. xviii + 270 pp. + 2 illus. \$99.00. Review by NEWTON KEY, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY.

From the pulpit to the pew and back again. The editors introduce this collection by noting historians' changing agenda for studying the first centuries of the Reformed Church in Scotland. A series of biographies and collected works of individual Scots clergy gave way to collective studies which highlighted clerical administration and finances, but historians despaired of using the resulting statistics to trace motives. Clergy were reduced to a "walk-on role" (4) regarding the Reformation's impact. Instead, a revolution in Scottish Reformation studies a quarter of a century ago—notably Michael F. Graham's *The Uses of Reform: "Godly Discipline" and Popular Behaviour in Scotland and Beyond, 1560–1610* (1997) and Margo Todd's *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (2003)—turned to parishioners' ideas and activities, that is, the bounds of lay religion. Only in the past decade has work, including that by several contributors to this volume, been redirected to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scots clergy. See, for example, the online clergy prosopographical project, Mapping the Scottish Reformation <https://mappingthescottishreformation.org/> initiated in 2017 and co-directed by contributors Chris Langley and Michelle Brock.