

Reviews of books

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Marie-Hélène Rousseau, *Saving the Souls of Medieval London: Perpetual Chantries at St Paul's Cathedral, c. 1200–1548*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011. xiv + 242pp. 3 figures. 5 tables. Bibliography. Appendices. £65.00. doi:10.1017/S0963926812000284

Commemoration of the dead, and its underpinning theory of purgatory, has long been recognized as a highly significant influence on the pre-Reformation psyche. Whereas Huizinga saw it as casting a long shadow over the Middle Ages, recent historiography has embraced the positive contributions of commemorative activity, in respect to liturgy, education, community and music. The most widely known commemorative foundations were perpetual chantries, established with a landed endowment to employ a priest to pray for a founder's soul in perpetuity. Detailed study often reveals that fixed-term chantries established with only a lump-sum of money, or obits consisting of only a single commemorative service each year, were also very common. Those most often studied by historians have been those located in parish churches; Rousseau's book addresses the relatively neglected subject of perpetual chantries founded within cathedrals, taking London's St Paul's cathedral as a case study. Rousseau employs the copious records of the cathedral, including chapter act books, and bishops' registers, along with records such as founders' wills and the 1548 Chantry Certificates. The study is extremely logically arranged, divided into six chapters entitled 'Founding chantries', 'Managing chantries', 'Housing chantries', 'Monitoring chantries', 'Serving chantries' and finally 'Dissolving chantries'.

The introduction provides a very comprehensive summary of the history of chantries, from their theological origins to their dissolution in England in 1548. Thereafter, the author focuses entirely upon St Paul's. The first chapter provides a thorough survey of the individual founders of the cathedral's chantries, from the first in 1180, to the last in 1535. Amongst the 84 chantries identified, more than 60 originated before the Black Death, and the vast majority of founders were in fact members of the cathedral clergy, although London merchants often assisted as executors and in some cases London Companies acted as trustees of foundations. Subsequent chapters focus upon the cathedral chapter's relationship with its chantries. While founders in the later fifteenth and earlier sixteenth centuries often specified great detail regarding their management, earlier

foundations often left much to the cathedral authorities to decide. Rousseau emphasizes the proactive role taken by the dean and chapter in ensuring the effective continued chantry provision for all founders, most notably in the case of the consolidation of foundations by Bishop Braybrooke in 1391. The dean and chapter were responsible for the appointment of virtually all chaplains, as well as for their discipline. The management of chaplains is characterized as relatively enlightened, emphasizing arbitration in cases of dispute, and correcting behaviour of errant chaplains, who subsequently went on to sustain long and successful careers. While chantries are commonly regarded as synonymous with 'chantry chapels', the author emphasizes that while many founders specified a particular altar or chapel, these were not exclusive relationships, and the dedication of a chantry need not have even matched that of the altar. With 22 altars in the cathedral in *c.* 1320, they were clearly shared. While the altars used by many of the chantries are detailed in the appendix, it is unfortunate that it has not been possible to reconstruct locations of these altars within the diagram of the pre-Great Fire cathedral that is provided.

The fifth chapter, 'Serving chantries', provides an intriguing prosopographical study of the men who served as chaplains. In total, 810 chaplains were identified, most of whom originated in the diocese of London, although 13 other English, and 2 Welsh, dioceses were also represented. Their appointments were primarily the result of personal networks of patronage, and a significant number clearly used an appointment as chaplain as a stepping-stone toward higher ecclesiastical office. Nonetheless, 55 per cent of chaplains remained long enough to have died in their post. Refuting Chaucer's characterization, few St Paul's chaplains also held rural parishes, although in 1366, 25 of 74 chaplains were pluralists, and many also had connection to London parishes. The eventual dissolution of St Paul's chantries in 1548 is described in detail. The Chantry Certificate for the cathedral recorded 35 chantries (with a gross annual value of £650, and a working profit of £200), while in fact 64 chantries had survived. The details of the dispersal of the estates of 50 of the chantry foundations are given, including the adoption of St Peter's College (the collegiate accommodation provided for chantry chaplains) by the Stationers' Company as their hall.

The volume provides an exemplary study of the chantries of St Paul's, yet it is slightly disappointing, especially to the urban historian, that it lacks consideration of the wider context outside the walls of the cathedral precinct. Recent scholarship on medieval commemoration emphasizes the importance of individual features, such as chantry foundations, within wider individual 'strategies for salvation'. Many Londoners simultaneously instituted commemorative activities throughout the city, at locations including their parish churches, the friaries and St Paul's. Consideration of the position of the chantries of St Paul's within this wider commemorative landscape thus remains a point for future study. Nonetheless, this book addresses a clear gap in the existing literature, providing a comprehensive consideration of cathedral chantries, and a very soundly based study of the practical administration of chantries and their personnel, which should prove relevant to scholars of commemoration in all urban environments.

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