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A HISTORY OF THE CHANTRIES WITHIN THE
COUNTY PALATINE OF LANCASTER: BEING
THE REPORTS OF THE OF THE ROYAL
COMMISSIONERS OF HENRY
VIII., EDWARD VI. AND QUEEN MARY.
INTRODUCTION PP. IV-XXXVII**

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F. R. RAINES

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A

History of the Chantries

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COUNTY PALATINE OF LANCASTER,

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Reports of the Royal Commissioners of Henry VIII.
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REV. F. R. RAINES, M.A., F.S.A.

RURAL DEAN, HON. CANON OF MANCHESTER, AND
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great or good had an opportunity of gratifying their feelings, not only at the time of the obsequies and on the commemoration day, but sometimes daily throughout the year. These posthumous honours were not temporary — they were designed to be enduring in the truest sense of the word; and names of celebrity were long remembered and enshrined in grateful hearts, and handed down to posterity as if written in the page of history. Sorrow was not always here a mere expression of deep feeling, but assumed a religious aspect, so that they who mourned were not dispirited; they had hope that their prayers and offerings were profitable and useful to the dead. The Church fostered the feeling, and by so doing acquired influence and dominion, but did not foresee with her usual sagacity that the time would come when every thing in religion would be judged, adopted, or rejected by its agreement with an infallible and inspired standard. The dead have always been regarded by all nations with reverential feelings, but

They are at rest.
We may not stir the heaven of their repose
By rude invoking name, or prayer address
In waywardness to those
Who in the mountain grotts of Eden lie,
And hear the fourfold river as it murmurs by.

The era of some of the Lancashire Chantries rises as high as the thirteenth century,¹ although the greater part of them may be assigned to the later Plantagenet and early Tudor period.

¹ page 31.

These were of two kinds — the permanently endowed and the precariously endowed chantry. For creating the former the licence of the Crown, to alienate lands in mortmain for the maintenance of the priest, was required after the statutes of 7 and 13 Edward I. and 15 Richard II.: nor could founders acquire lands for this purpose, unless held by other than soccage tenure or by knight's service, without the royal permission. These were called Foundation Chantries, and the incumbents, presented by patrons, were legally instituted, and the Ordinary exercised canonical jurisdiction over them. An example of the latter is where a chapel was built and an altar dedicated, but there was no foundation. This was called a "capella indotata;" and there were many such in Lancashire, which, not being endowed, as in numerous instances they ought to have been with the tithes of the district belonging to them, but supported by the voluntary offerings of private and individual piety, could not resist the fate which so precarious an income rendered ultimately certain. After having been sustained for a time by the payment of a monied rent, and without the ancient parochial organisation, some of them became neglected and fell into decay,² the altars being disused and sometimes actually removed, thus affording a striking demonstration of the weakness of the voluntary system. These insecurely endowed altars were described as chantries,³ although the officiating priests were generally styled stipendiaries⁴ and not incumbents. Their ecclesiastical position was lower than that of the regularly bene-

² pp. 78, 236.

³ p. 201.

⁴ pp. 204, 240, 241, 250, 251.

ficed chantry priests, as they were nominated, paid and removed by the family of the founder at their individual pleasure, which sufficiently accounts for the licence of the bishop not being obtained nor required. Had such been the case, a life interest in the appointment would have been conveyed, and the names of the incumbents recorded in the registers of the diocese. It is worthy of remark that several of these small private foundations having a chalice or a bell or some trifling article belonging to them, were not deemed too inconsiderable for the notice of the king's commissioners, and were eagerly seized by those sordid and quick sighted officials,⁵ for to them, as well as to the dragon of Wantley, "houses and chantries were geese and turkies."

Free Chapels were places of worship exempted from all relation to the mother church and also from episcopal jurisdiction, an exemption which was an equivocal privilege, obtained immediately from the Crown, or appended to ancient manors originally belonging to the Crown.⁶ There was only one chapel in Lancashire which possessed this privilege.⁷

Oratories also were built by private individuals, resident upon their property, at their own expense, for there never was a time in which voluntary effort was not active in the Church, and were generally little more than domestic chapels appurtenant to manor houses. They were located sometimes in quiet situations, remote from the mother church, which at some seasons was inaccessible, especially

⁵ pp. 260, 268, &c.

⁶ Tanner's *Notitia Monast.* pref. p. xxviii.

⁷ p. 208.

to the aged and infirm, owing to bad roads and bad weather; and were found convenient in large parishes for the dependents of the founders, as well as for the neighbouring population, which by this means had some of the ministrations of religion, if not all the public means of grace, carried to their homes and doors, and a grievous and dangerous evil thereby wisely averted. The consent of the Crown was not necessary; but it was requisite, before divine service could be performed in these chapels, to obtain the bishop's licence, which was always granted sparingly, out of regard to parochial communion rather than from fear of rivalry or from opposition to the parish church. It has been stated that an oratory was not built for saying mass, nor was it endowed, but simply ordained for prayer;⁸ and yet the "divine offices," for the solemnization of which licenses were granted, included the saying of mass by "a fit priest," and sometimes sermons and sacraments.⁹ A bell could not be put up either in an oratory or chantry without the permission of the diocesan, and we have many instances of this privilege being granted in Lancashire.¹⁰ There is evidence of some of these oratories having had chantries founded within them and of their having become, after the suppression, parochial chapels.

These rural chantries were always founded with some mark of dependence on the mother church, although the chaplains often aided the parochial clergy in the performance of divine service.¹¹ The inhabitants of a distant hamlet,

⁸ Lindwood, p. 233. ⁹ Bishop Gibson's *Codex*, p. 212.

¹⁰ pp. 260, 267. ¹¹ pp. 150, 239.