



Commemorating the Dead in Late Medieval Strasbourg: The Cathedral's Book of Donors and Its Use (1320-1521) (Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West)

Charlotte A. Stanford

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The Book of Donors for Strasbourg cathedral is an extraordinary medieval document dating from ca. 1320-1520, with 6,954 entries from artisan, merchant and aristocratic classes. These individuals listed gifts to the cathedral construction fund given in exchange for prayers for the donors' souls. The construction administrators (the Oeuvre Notre-Dame) also built a chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the nave that housed the book and showcased prayers and masses for the building benefactors. Chapel, book and west front project formed a three part commemorative strategy that appealed to the faithful of the city and successfully competed against other religious establishments also offering memorial services.

Charlotte A. Stanford's study is the first to comprehensively analyze the unpublished Book of Donors manuscript and show the types and patterns of gifts made to the cathedral. It also compares these gift entries with those in earlier obituary records kept by the cathedral canons, as well as other medieval obituary notices kept by parish churches and convents in Strasbourg. Analysis of the Book of Donors notes the increase of personal details and requests in fifteenth-century entries and discusses the different memorial opportunities available to the devout. This study draws a vivid picture of life in late medieval Strasbourg as seen through the lens of devotional and memorial practices, and will be of particular interest to scholars of art history, memory, and medieval urban life.

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