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Charlotte A. Stanford, *Commemorating the Dead in Late Medieval Strasbourg: the Cathedral's Book of Donors and its Uses (1320-1521)*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2011. xx + 327 pp. Figures, tables, notes, bibliography, and index. \$124.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-1409401-360.

Review by Emilia Jamroziak, University of Leeds.

The importance of commemoration is central to our understanding of the role of the whole spectrum of religious institutions throughout the medieval period. The desire for commemoration was the key element of the bonds between the laity and monasteries, mendicant communities, and parish churches. It had important textual, visual and liturgical manifestations of which only a small proportion have survived and they have received very uneven attention from the scholars. It is the oldest layer of commemorative practices which has been explored the most. The editions of the *libri vitae* from the Carolingian abbeys, the works of the Münster school, and seminal studies such as *The Phantoms of Remembrance* all explore the pre-1100 context of commemorating early medieval aristocracy of Western Europe.[1] In contrast, there has been much less interest paid to the traditional forms of commemorations, *libri vitae*, necrologies and similar types of lists, produced after 1300 when so many other forms of commemoration and devotional practices were available to the laity. It is therefore very good to see a study which engages with a neglected source material and offers an interpretation which is interesting to scholars who work not only on the history of Strasbourg.

Charlotte Stanford's book is centred on the book of donors of Strasbourg Cathedral created between 1320 and 1521. The source itself was never published and has been the subject of only a limited secondary literature, so the author gives a careful examination and explanation to its construction and history in the first chapter. With over 7000 names of identifiable individuals and more than 8000 specific gifts, the author was able to use the material to construct a methodologically credible statistical analysis of the social and economic status of the donors, and of the character and value of the gifts and requested spiritual services (for example, anniversary masses, alms, vigils, burials in the cathedral). Some of them were so elaborate that they created *de facto* chantries (see, for example, p. 66). The second chapter, "Architectural and Liturgical Context," is far less descriptive and dense than the first chapter and examines the material setting of the commemorative practices for the thousands of donors. Moreover, the building campaigns financed from these bequests are explained, showing the connection between liturgy and changing architecture, especially the addition of numerous chapels and furnishings.

The story of conflict, or at least tension over the control of space between different groups using the cathedral--the canons, vicars, and the city authorities--will be familiar to anybody working on the history of a large collegiate church in any urban setting, small or large. In a city of the size and economic importance of Strasbourg, the growth in the importance of the city authorities vis-à-vis the episcopal powers is a key element in the author's argument. Based on the logic implicit in this study, moving from the specific and descriptive to the more general and analytical, the author examines the changes observed in the space of the cathedral in the wider context of the social and political development of the city. Stanford explores the shifting political developments, from direct episcopal control to 1263, when the patrician families gained considerable influence, which was in turn challenged by a series of artisan revolts between 1308 and 1349.

The period of the plague, marked by massacres of Strasbourg's Jewish inhabitants, was followed by a period of political stability and economic prosperity. The gifts to the cathedral recorded in the book of donors were at its highest then and contributed to the impressive rebuilding of the west front of the building. This period of calm and prosperity came to an end in the fifteenth century when between 1439 and 1482, the city suffered considerably from attacks by mercenary armies looking for riches. At the same time, the oligarchic city government gained further powers at the expense of the archbishop. The end of the commemorative function of the book of the donors, the Virgin Chapel, and the removal of images and statues was also the decision of the Magistrate at the end of 1520s (who was strongly influenced by the ideas of the Reformation which opposed any forms of the cult of saints or of the Virgin Mary).

Chapter four returns to a close reading of the textual evidence. In "The Obituary History of Strasbourg Cathedral," Stanford traces the relationship of the book of donors to the older and contemporary commemorative lists produced in the same cathedral, effectively reflected in a diagram on p. 162. In this discussion of the problem of commemorative choices, especially between the canons, the choir, and the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary, changes in the liturgical practice and relationship between the different groups controlling the space of the cathedral become particularly clear. The final chapter, "Commemoration in Strasbourg's Other Churches," tries to place the cathedral in the devotional landscape of Strasbourg—a useful map of other church and monasteries is on p. 212—consisting of several parish churches, mendicant houses, Augustinian convents, Hospitallers and nunneries, which were all sites of individual commemoration. Stanford examines the family groupings, choices of burial site made by the city's inhabitants, and the nature of their bequests, comparing and relating them to the practices recorded in the cathedral's book of donors.

It is a very useful book and an important addition to a small Anglophone literature of late medieval religiosity of Strasbourg, but more importantly as a study of commemorative practices in a late medieval cathedral and, as such, a useful comparative case for future studies of a similar kind. At times, the author seems to be overwhelmed by the sheer vastness of data, and the desire to share this information with the reader means that analysis can be swamped periodically by the volume of dense details. Although the book strongly reflects its origins as a Ph.D. thesis by being so detailed, it makes material not otherwise accessible outside the French archives to a wider scholarly audience.

#### NOTE

[1] Patrick J. Geary, *The Phantoms of Remembrance: memory and oblivion at the end of the first millenium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

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