

**LIBER VITÆ ECCLESIAE  
DUNELMENSIS;  
NEC NON OBITUARIA  
DUO EJUSDEM ECCLESIAE**

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Liber Vitæ Ecclesiæ Dunelmensis; Nec Non Obituaria Duo Ejusdem Ecclesiæ by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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Durham cathedral.

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At a meeting of the COUNCIL of the SURTEES SOCIETY,  
on the 5th day of January 1841, it was

RESOLVED,—That the LIBER VITE ECCLESIE DUNELMENSIS,  
in the Cottonian Library, be printed under the superintend-  
ence of Mr. Stevenson.

JAMES RAINE, *Secretary.*





## P R E F A C E.

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The "Liber Vitæ" formerly preserved at Durham, § 1; its value, § 2; meaning of the term, § 3; instances of its use, § 4; modifications, § 5, 6; description of the manuscript, § 7; arrangement of its contents, § 8; its binding, § 9; plan of the present edition, § 10, 11; appendices, § 12.

§ 1. THE following passage is extracted from a book entitled "The Ancient Rites and Monuments of the Monastical and Cathedral Church of Durham, collected out of Ancient Manuscripts about the Time of the Suppression."<sup>1</sup>

"There did lie on the High Altar an excellent fine book, very richly covered with gold and silver, containing the names of all the benefactors towards St. Cuthbert's Church from the very original foundation thereof, the very letters of the book being, for the most part, all gilt, as is apparent in the said book till this day. The laying that book on the High Altar did show how highly they esteemed their founders and benefactors; and the quotidian remembrance they had of them in the time of Mass and divine service. And this did argue, not only their gratitude, but also a most divine and charitable affection to the souls of their benefactors, as well dead as living; which book is yet extant, declaring the said use in the inscription thereof."

§ 2. The volume now presented to the members of the Surtees Society contains an imprint of the manuscript here alluded to; and it has many claims upon their attention.

<sup>1</sup> "Published by J. D[avies], of Kidwelly. Tempora mutantur.—London: printed by W. Hensman, at the King's Head in Westminster Hall, MDCCLXXII." Small octavo, pp. 164.

It is the only document spared by time which throws light upon the benefactors of Durham during the period anterior to the Norman Conquest; and during the period after that event it furnishes us with many particulars, of which we should otherwise have been ignorant. It is interesting, as affording materials whence may be gathered information respecting the successive colonization of the ancient kingdom of Northumbria, and from its pages a philologist may obtain a few valuable hints regarding the structure and peculiar formation of the language there spoken. It is natural to regard with some interest a document which, for more than six centuries, lay upon the High Altar of the Cathedral Church of St. Cuthbert, whether at Lindisfarne, Chester-le-Street, or Durham, and which presents a connected, though a brief, record of the piety and generosity of our ancestors during that period.

§ 3. It will be observed, that the volume is described on its title as the "Liber Vitæ" of the Church of Durham, and by this appellation it, and similar compilations, were known during the period in which they were in use in the Church. The fact of the benefactor's name being recorded in the "Liber Vitæ" belonging to the particular church which he assisted by his liberality, was coupled with the hope, and the prayer, that the same name might at last find a place in the "Book of Life" in which those are enrolled who shall be faithful unto death.

§ 4. We have evidence of the very remote origin of the custom which has been mentioned<sup>3</sup> as prevailing at Durham, in accordance with which the names of benefactors were read from the High Altar during Divine Service. Of this there

<sup>3</sup> The term is clearly scriptural, and is founded on such passages as Phil. iv. 3; Rev. iii. 6; xvii. 8; xx. 12; xxii. 19. See also Exod. xxxii. 32; Pa. lxi. 29.

<sup>2</sup> See § 1.

are traces in Tertullian,<sup>4</sup> and a clear proof in Cyprian,<sup>5</sup> who commands that the name of Geminus Victor should no longer be included among those read by the priest at the altar. The custom was general in both the Greek and the Latin Church, and was, in all probability, introduced by Augustine into England. We certainly find traces of it, in a somewhat modified form, in the Prologue to the Life of St. Cuthbert, addressed by the Venerable Beda to Eadfrith, bishop of Holy Island, in which the writer requests that his name may be inserted in the "Album" of that congregation.<sup>6</sup> Bertran, bishop of Sens, in like manner, in his will, requests that his name may be placed in the "Book of Life" belonging to a monastic establishment to which he was a benefactor.<sup>7</sup>

§ 5. As the system progressed, it became customary for various ecclesiastical societies to enter into arrangements among themselves by which the benefactors to any one establishment reaped the benefit to be derived from the prayers of the whole association. This custom certainly prevailed as early as the time of Boniface, archbishop of Metz. In one of his letters, addressed to abbot Aldhere, (probably an Englishman,) we find him sending by a messenger a list of those whose names he wished to have commemorated in the prayers of his correspondent.<sup>8</sup> In a letter from Kineheard, bishop of

<sup>4</sup> Tertull. de Corona Militis, cap. iii: Oblationes pro defunctis, pro natalitia annua die facimus.

<sup>5</sup> Neque enim apud altare Dei meretur nominari in sacerdotum prece, qui ab altari sacerdotes et ministros voluit avocare. Ep. 1. p. 2, edit. Gersdorf, Lips. 1838.

<sup>6</sup> . . . . . sed, et me defuncto, pro redemptione anime mee, quasi familiaris et vernaculi vestri, orare, et missas facere, et nomen meum inter vestra scribere dignemini. Nam et tu, sanctissime antistes, hoc te mihi promississe jam retines, in cujus etiam testimonio future conscriptionis religioso fratri vestro Gudfrido mansuetorio precepisti, ut in Albo vestre sancte congregationis meum nunc quoque nomen apponeret. Ven. Beda Opp. Hist. ii. 47, edit. Lond. 1841.

<sup>7</sup> Rogo Abba illustris loci illius, ut nomen meum in Libro Vitae recitetur. Testam. Bertranni, ap. Mabill. Vet. Analecta, p. 257, edit. fol. Par. 1723.

<sup>8</sup> Similiter, ut pro dormientium fratrum animabus, qui nobiscum laborant in Do-