The Customary of the Shrine of St. Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral

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The Afterlife of the Customary

The manuscript of the Customary bears witness to the Reformation, as the name and titles of St. Thomas have been carefully erased from the first page and all the marginal headings. It may seem curious that the Customary to the shrine was kept, being dutifully amended according to the Henrician statute, when the shrine itself was destroyed. It may be that it was preserved on the chance that the shrine would be restored in future, and the erasures carried out to disguise its function from a cursory and poorly-Latinate inspector. After the Dissolution of Christ Church Priory and the destruction of the shrine to which it belonged, the manuscript, along with the French Lives of Becket with which it is bound, was in the library of the recusant Roman Catholic Hawkins family of Nash Court near Faversham in Kent. It was presumably Thomas Hawkins (1487–1588) who acquired the documents, whose epitaph in nearby Boughton-under-Blean church states that he had served Henry VIII well and had been generously rewarded by the king, living to the ripe age of 101. The document may have served a similar fashion to that posited for the Rites of Durham: “a source of nostalgia” and a reminder of the pre-Reformation forms of religious practice. It may also have allowed the owners a route into an imagined pilgrimage to the lost shrine of St. Thomas. It is possible that the family had a particular devotion to Becket, as their eldest sons were invariably called Thomas until the extinction of the male line in 1800, and many younger sons left to become Jesuit priests or Benedictine monks on the Continent. The Hawkins family remained at Nash Court until the nineteenth century, although the house was attacked by a Protestant mob during the Jacobite uprisings of 1715, and their library burnt. Although Hasted claims the entire library was lost, some books were saved, perhaps indicating their particular value to the family. Notably these included the volume of the Customary with the two verse lives, and BL Add. MS 11307, a fifteenth-century manuscript containing three English verse meditations. After the death of Thomas Hawkins in 1800 the estate was split amongst his daughters. The remaining library was sold in 1806 and several books, including the pre-Reformation manuscripts, purchased by the antiquarian and bibliophile Joseph Haslewood (1769–1833). He gives the first notice of the Customary as a text, identifying in the volume “a Latin introduction [to the verse life of Guernes] enumerating the festivals and ceremonies to be kept in honour of the Saint.” Haslewood put up many of his early books and manuscripts for auction in May 1809, where the

196 Brydges, Censura Literaria, 4:394.
Customary manuscript was purchased by his friend and fellow Roxburghe Club member Richard Heber (1773–1833) for £3 6s. Following Heber’s death the manuscript was purchased at auction by Thomas Phillipps (1792–1872), “the greatest collector of manuscripts ever,” and catalogued in his library as MS 8113.\(^\text{197}\)

**Note on Text and Translation**

The Latin text has a number of later medieval characteristics, many of them common including the rendering of -ae as -e and the interchangeability of “t” and “c.” The scribe writes the enclitic conjunctive -que (and) as a separate word, sometimes abbreviated and at other times written out. At some points in the text this makes it difficult to distinguish from the pronoun quae, which the scribe also renders either as que or with the same abbreviated form as used for -que. I have distinguished between these by attaching -que enclitics to their preceding words in the text. Otherwise, throughout I have rendered the Latin as it appears in the manuscript, retaining original spellings and offering corrections to errors in footnotes. Deleted and damaged text has been restored within square brackets where it has been possible to reconstruct the original text, or with ellipses in square brackets where this has not been possible. Punctuation and capitalization are retained as closely as possible. Marginal headings from the manuscript are placed within the Latin text as closely as possible to their positions, and indicated in bold italic font, but paragraph spacing has been retained. In the translation each side heading forms the start of a new section.

Given the official and technical nature of the document, and in order that the text and translation might be compared for accuracy, I have attempted as closely literal a translation as possible. Some of the larger sentences have been broken up for the purposes of readability in the translation. Individual technical terms relating to the liturgy or monastic life are glossed in footnotes, while for more complex concepts or practices readers are pointed to relevant sections of the introduction.

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