

FOUNDATIONS

**THE CUSTOMARY  
OF THE SHRINE OF  
ST. THOMAS BECKET  
AT CANTERBURY  
CATHEDRAL**

**LATIN TEXT AND TRANSLATION**

Edited and translated from Latin by

**JOHN JENKINS**

**ARC** HUMANITIES PRESS



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To my parents



Digital reconstruction of the shrine of St. Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral ca. 1408. Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, University of York, 2020.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I FIRST BECAME aware of the Customary of the Shrine though a footnote, probably in Ben Nilson's excellent *Cathedral Shrines in Medieval England*. From there I realized that the (now) Rev. Dr Peter Rowe had undertaken a transcription and translation of the Customary for his MA thesis at the University of London in 1990. Peter was extremely generous in sharing with me his thesis, his subsequent thoughts, and the advice he had been given by other scholars, and in giving his blessing to proceed on a new edition. I am profoundly thankful, along with so many others with an interest in medieval Canterbury, for the work he undertook, which for the last three decades has underpinned much of the of research on the cult of Thomas Becket in the later medieval cathedral. Few other MA theses can have had so much impact on a field. I started working on this new edition of the Customary in 2015, while engaged as a postdoctoral research assistant on the "Pilgrimage and England's Cathedrals: Past and Present" project at the University of York funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The Customary was a key source for the digital reproductions of Becket's shrine made in the course of that project, a still from which is reproduced opposite. It is testament to the extraordinary scope and vision of that project that the research outputs far exceeded expectations, and this edition is one of the unexpected surprises. The Principal Investigator on that project, Dee Dyas, has been a constant source of support and encouragement, and this edition would not have happened without her. Many of my ideas about how the shrine chapel was organized and furnished, and which provide the context to this edition, came about through the collaborative process of making the models, in discussions with the digital archaeologists who created the models of the shrine, Anthony Masinton, Geoff Arnott, and Patrick Gibbs, with invaluable input from Eamon Duffy and Louise Hampson.

Setting the Customary within the context of the later medieval cathedral involved a substantial amount of work in Canterbury Cathedral Archives over several years. My thanks are due to all the archivists and library staff, current and past, at Canterbury Cathedral Archives (hereafter CCA), particularly Cressida Williams and Daniel Korachi-Alaoui, who have not only gone to great lengths to help with the specificities of my queries, but also have made my research trips such fun. Thanks also to Chris Crooks, the Cathedral Vesturer, who showed me all the back rooms and upper spaces, and enthusiastically shared his vast knowledge of how the cathedral worked, and who first suggested to me that the wax chamber, now the vesturer's office, had a different function to the one traditionally ascribed. My thanks are also due to the staff of the British Library, and particularly of the Manuscripts Reading Room, I look forward to getting back there soon.

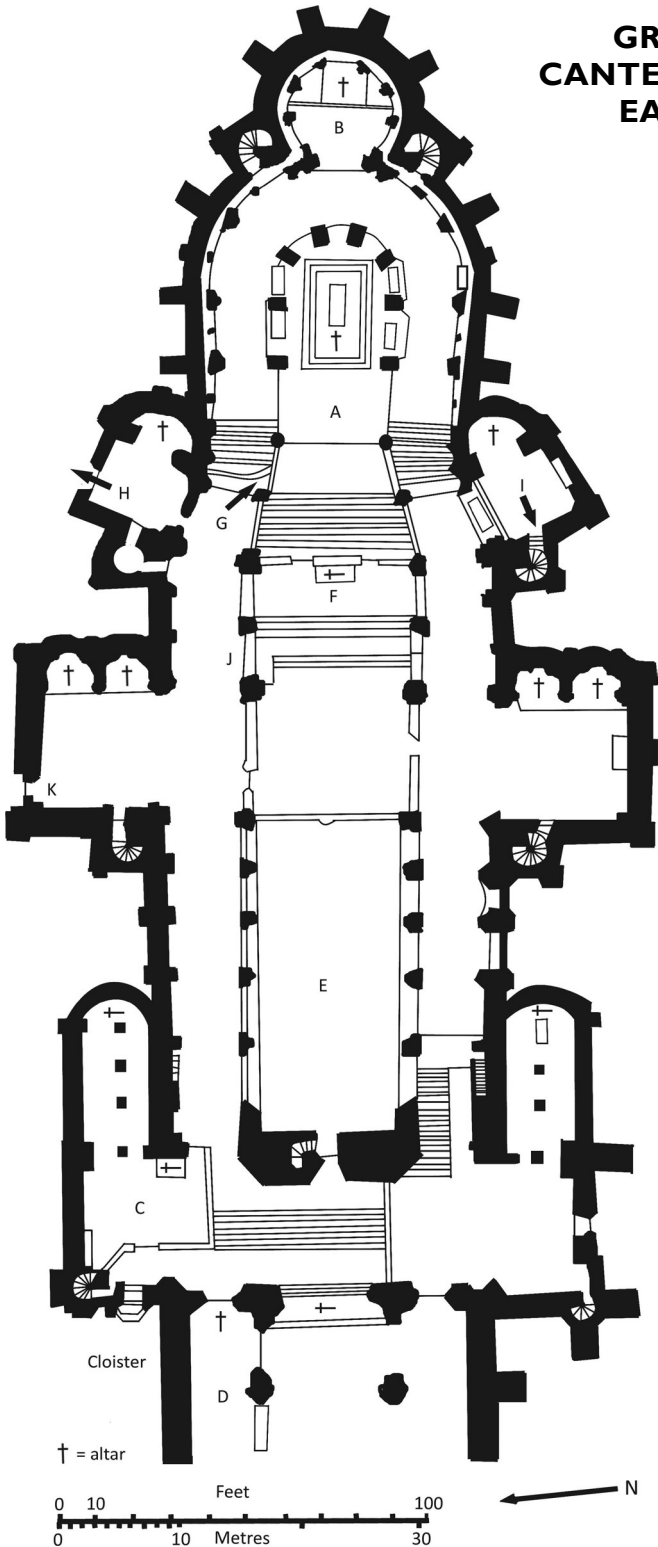
I would like to extend particular thanks to Anne Bailey, Anne Duggan, Kay Slocum, and Cressida Williams, along with the anonymous reader and the series editor, Chris Jones, who gave thorough, incisive, and generous comments on this edition in draft form. Any remaining errors in the text are my fault.

In deciding on a publisher, it was always my desire to have the Customary produced in a text-and-translation format. I am delighted that it could find a home in Arc Humanities Press's Foundations series, and offer my sincere thanks to my editor, Anna Henderson, for her support and forbearance. I am grateful to the Marc Fitch Fund for a grant towards the costs of publishing this book.

My principal thanks as ever are due to Sarah and my parents, for everything.

York, October 2021

# GROUND PLAN OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL, EAST END, IN 1428



- A: Shrine Chapel of St. Thomas, with central shrine on raised platform. Surrounding tombs are (clockwise from north) King Henry IV (d. 1413); conjectural double tomb of the Earl of Somerset (c. 1410) and the Duke of Clarence (d. 1421); Archbishop Courtenay (d. 1396); Archbishop Walter (d. 1205; against outer wall); The Black Prince (d. 1376).
- B: Corona Chapel with head shrine of St. Thomas.
- C: Martyrdom Chapel with Altar of the Sword's Point. Tomb of Archbishop Peckham (d. 1292) in northeast corner, door to crypt in southeast corner.
- D: Lady Chapel in the nave, with tomb of Archbishop Islip (d. 1366).
- E: Monks' choir, with the site of the great desk for readings marked on the steps to the east.
- F: High Altar. To the immediate north was the shrine of St. Alphege, to the south the shrine of St. Dunstan, and on a beam over the altar the shrine of St. Blaise.
- G: Door to the shrine vestry and wax chamber under the High Altar platform.
- H: Door to main vestry, through St. Andrew's Chapel.
- I: Steps up to shrine-keepers' rooms and watching chamber above St. Anselm's Chapel.
- J: Great relic cupboard in the north choir aisle.
- K: Door to the monks' night passage to the dormitory.