

The Use of Hereford

**A Medieval Diocesan Rite
Reconsidered**

William Smith

Cover image: Beginning of Vespers for the feast (20 May) of St Ethelbert king and martyr (right-hand column), from the Hereford noted breviary, 1262 x 1268, commencing with the antiphon *Diem festum celebremus*. This manuscript belonged to Hereford Cathedral until the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, when it was removed to the parish church of Mordiford in Herefordshire, where it may have remained until 1549. If so, it clearly escaped the legislation of Edward VI ordering the surrender and destruction of service-books of the old Latin rite for statutory replacement by the *Book of Common Prayer* first published that year.

Hereford Cathedral Library MS P. ix. 7, fol. 261v

By courtesy of the Mappa Mundi Trust and the Dean and Chapter of Hereford Cathedral

Acknowledgements: My thanks are due to my wife Helen for reading and commenting on this paper, and to Bishop Colin Buchanan, Dr James Steven and other members of the Alcuin Club Joint Liturgical Studies Editorial Committee for kindly accepting it for publication. Their interest is greatly appreciated.

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Introduction

I have endeavoured especially to show the different rites and the particular practices of the churches I have seen, and have every reason to believe that one will look upon them with some kind of satisfaction, and that those who travel in the places I mention will want to stop and hear High Mass or Vespers in the cathedral churches. They will then be edified by the ceremonies performed there, and, properly instructed, will have learnt the true meaning and spirit of the Church's rituals in its prayers.¹

The purpose of this monograph is to provide a *résumé* of the author's recent book,² which lists and discusses the known sources for the medieval Use of Hereford. While this lengthy work is intended to be as comprehensive as possible, there are inevitably areas that remain unexplored, in particular the musical aspects of the rite, here plainchant as found mainly in the thirteenth-century noted breviary³ and the fourteenth-century gradual.⁴ Since the author cannot claim to be a musicologist, this has to be left to those competent in this specialized field. His interest lies principally in the content and history of the manuscript and printed texts representative of the rite, especially the extant missals, breviaries and gradual that provide the mass and office portions integral to the Use of Hereford. The cults of saints associated with Hereford, in particular St Ethelbert and St Thomas Cantilupe, the Cathedral's principal *festi loci sancti* and focuses of pilgrimage even today,⁵ have also been examined,⁶ as well as vestments,⁷ relics,⁸ liturgical plate,⁹ and processions.¹⁰

The nature and extent of the sources discussed at considerable length in the book will be examined here in less complex and more accessible

detail. While sufficient has survived to allow some understanding of the distinctive features of the Use of Hereford, what remains is meagre in quantity and variety compared with the more copious material available for the medieval uses of Salisbury (more commonly known as Sarum) and to a lesser degree York. For Hereford one has to scratch around, so to speak, if one wishes to discover sources beyond those already familiar. While most of its surviving service-books, namely two of the missals (the printed edition of 1502 collated with one single manuscript),¹¹ breviaries, ordinal, collectar, and psalter¹² have long been known through dated and, by modern standards, unsatisfactory printed editions, the products of a less critical age of liturgical scholarship, the existence of other material is generally less familiar. Some of this will be examined here.

Before proceeding further, the term 'use' in a liturgical context should be explained. A 'use' may be defined as the local variation of a standard or parent rite, which in the West came to be regarded pre-eminently as the Roman Rite, particularly since the reign of Charlemagne (768-814). Early uses arose partly through the adoption of Gallican features by the Roman Rite as it became established throughout Europe, and partly through local developments in that Rite itself following its reform as a curial liturgy (that is, the liturgy of the papal court, or *curia*) during the pontificates of Innocent III (1198-1216) and his successor Honorius III (1216-27).¹³ The great eras of cathedral building, the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, were decisive periods in the development of the distinctive local uses, which became consolidated and codified in customaries representative of the great churches in which they evolved. As collections of established liturgical customs these were as individual as the architecturally unique foundations that created them, with carefully worded directions relating to ritual and ceremony, vestments, and the regulation of feasts, including the local cults contributing to their spiritual and regional identity. Provided they did not conflict with the ancient traditions, customs and authority of the Roman Church in matters of doctrine, jurisdiction, discipline, and sacramental theology,

uses were entirely acceptable, and indeed encouraged from early times, as valid local expressions of an historically evolved faith that formed the fabric of *ecclesia universa*. The chief characteristic of a liturgical 'use,' therefore, was that it was representative of a particular foundation, usually a cathedral, and the area under its authority, usually a diocese.

1. 'Je me suis attaché principalement à marquer les differens Rits & les pratiques particulières des Églises que j'ai vûes; & j'ai tout lieu de croire qu'on les lira avec quelque sorte de satisfaction, & que ceux qui voyageant dans les mêmes lieux que je cite, voudront bien s'arrêter à entendre la grand' Messe ou les Vêpres dans les Églises Cathédrales, seront édifiez des ceremonies qui s'y font, parce qu'ils seront instruits & prévenus, & qu'ils auront appris les raisons littérales des pratiques & des cérémonies de l'Église, & son esprit dans ses prières' (Le Sieur de Moleon [Jean-Baptiste Le Brun des Marettes], *Voyages Liturgiques de France, ou Recherches faites en diverses Villes du Royaume ... contenant plusieurs particularitez touchant les Rits & les Usages des Églises: avec des Découvertes sur l'Antiquité Ecclesiastique & Payenne* (Paris: Florentin Delaulne, 1718), Préface, iii).
2. William Smith, *The Use of Hereford, The Sources of a Medieval English Diocesan Rite*, 2015 (see Bibliography 1). Many of the references found in the book are omitted from this article.
3. Hereford Cathedral Library MS P. ix. 7, described by Frere, *The Hereford Breviary* 3, 1915 (see Bibliography 1) *passim* and especially lv-lxi; Mynors and Thomson, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Hereford Cathedral Library*, 1993 (see Bibliography 3), 124a-125b, with Plate 51; Smith, *Use of Hereford*, Ch. 4, *The sources*, I *Manuscript/Breviaries*, 241-2.
4. London, British Library Harley MS 3965 (Smith, *Use of Hereford*, Ch. 4, *The sources*, I *Manuscript/The Hereford Gradual*, 259-83).
5. Michael Tavinor, *Shrines of the Saints in England and Wales*, 2016 (see Bibliography 2), 152-8.
6. Smith, *Use of Hereford*, Ch. 14, *Principal Hereford cults*.
7. *Ibid.*, Ch. 17, *Conclusion: 'Not entirely as they do at Salisbury'*, 694-6.
8. *Ibid.*, Appendix II, *Primary and secondary relics, surviving and untraced, of St Thomas Cantilupe*.
9. *Ibid.*, Appendix III, *Surviving and untraced medieval liturgical plate*.
10. *Ibid.*, Appendix IV, *Hereford processions and processional crosses*.
11. Edited by Henderson, *Missale ad usum percelebris ecclesiae Herfordensis*, 1874 (see Bibliography 1).
12. The Hereford ordinal, collectar and psalter are discussed by Frere in addition to the breviaries (*The Hereford Breviary* 3, lxii-lxvii, with excerpts, 65-7, 68-81, 82-3, 84-9 (ordinal); lxvii-lxviii, with abstract of text, 3-36 (collectar); lxii (psalter), with collation in Hereford Breviary 1, 1-29); and Smith, *Use of Hereford*, Ch. 4, *The sources*, I *Manuscript/Ordinal/Collectar/Psalter*, 288-90 (ordinal), 291-305 (collectar), 306-12 (psalters), at 309.
13. Smith, *Use of Hereford*, Ch. 1, *Introduction*, 1.