

= Robert of Melun =

Robert of Melun ( c . 1100 ? 27 February 1167 ) was an English scholastic Christian theologian who taught in France , and later became Bishop of Hereford in England . He studied under Peter Abelard in Paris before teaching there and at Melun , which gave him his surname . His students included John of Salisbury , Roger of Worcester , William of Tyre , and possibly Thomas Becket . Robert was involved in the Council of Reims in 1148 , which condemned the teachings of Gilbert de la Porrée . Three of his theological works survive , and show him to have been strictly orthodox .

Robert returned to England in 1160 , and was appointed Bishop of Hereford in 1163 . King Henry II of England appointed him to the see , or bishopric , and was influenced by in his decision by Pope Alexander II and Thomas Becket . Following his consecration , Robert became involved in the dispute between Becket and the king , during which he generally took the king 's side . He also served as a papal and a royal judge .

= = Early life = =

Robert was born in England , probably in about 1100 . Nothing else is known of his background . He owed his name to the place where he taught , Melun in France . Robert studied under Peter Abelard and Hugh of St. Victor at the University of Paris , where in 1137 he succeeded Abelard as a teacher in the school on Mont Ste @-@ Geneviève . John of Salisbury and William of Tyre were among his pupils in Paris . King Henry II of England 's cousin , Roger of Worcester , later the Bishop of Worcester , was another of Robert 's students . He probably also taught Thomas Becket , later Archbishop of Canterbury , although this is not certain .

Robert went to Melun in 1142 to direct a school , but returned to Paris in 1147 . He took part in the condemnation of Gilbert de la Porrée at the Council of Rheims in 1148 , working with Peter Lombard to secure Porrée 's recantation . A small consistory court was held after the ending of the council 's deliberations , and was attended by Bernard of Clairvaux and Suger of St Denis , along with Robert and Peter . This court forced Porrée to repudiate his views on the Trinity . A fellow scholar , Herbert of Bosham , described Robert as a great teacher , who " sent forth from himself , like rays of his light , a great and learned host of students " .

= = Appointment to Hereford = =

After teaching as a master of arts in Paris for over forty years , Robert was recalled to England by King Henry II in 1160 , and was appointed Bishop of Hereford in 1163 . He was consecrated at Canterbury on 22 December by Archbishop Thomas Becket . Becket had been prominent among those recommending Robert for the vacancy at Hereford ; one of Becket 's later biographers said that Becket urged the king to find benefices for Englishmen living abroad . There is some evidence that Pope Alexander III had a hand in Robert 's election , as Becket in 1166 reminded Robert and Roger of Worcester that they both owed their episcopates to Alexander .

Little evidence of Robert 's activities survives from his time as bishop , although it is known that he acted as a papal judge @-@ delegate in 1165 . Five documents survive from his time at Hereford , as well as confirmations of gifts by previous bishops to Llanthony Priory , which he augmented with another grant of tithes . He also served as a royal judge .

= = Role in the Becket dispute = =

In 1163 , a conflict arose between the king and the new Archbishop of Canterbury , Thomas Becket , over the rights of the king in the English church . At a council held at Westminster in October 1163 , the king and Becket contended over the question , with the bishops supporting Becket against the king . Robert was involved in the conflict not only as a bishop @-@ elect , but as an envoy to Becket from the pope , as he accompanied Philip of Aumone , a French abbot , who was sent by Alexander to Becket in after the Council of Westminster to urge Becket not to inflame the situation . Robert

went with Philip , probably because it was hoped he would be able to influence Becket .

Robert was present in January 1164 when the king summoned a council of the barons and the bishops to Clarendon , where the king demanded that both groups swear to uphold the royal rights of Henry 's grandfather , King Henry I , without any reservations or conditions . Although Becket at first attempted to resist , he eventually submitted , and then forced the other bishops to swear also . In October 1164 , Becket was accused of denying justice to a royal vassal , tried at a council held at Northampton , and was found guilty although he did not accept the sentence . During the trial , Robert attempted to moderate Becket 's behaviour , by persuading him from having his archiepiscopal cross , a symbol of spiritual authority , carried in front of him when he entered the court , which would have been an insult to the king . Shortly after the trial , Robert interceded with the king to order that no injury be done to Becket , who went into voluntary exile .

Early in Becket 's exile , Robert received a papal censure for not doing more to support Becket . In summer 1165 , Robert accompanied Gilbert Foliot , the Bishop of London , on a papal mission to King Henry , to convey to the king Pope Alexander 's complaints about the king 's behaviour . The king had been preventing his subjects from visiting or appealing to the papacy , and Alexander wished to protest against that , as well as against the king 's treatment of Becket . In 1166 , Becket tried to convince Robert to switch sides , writing to Robert in conciliatory tones . John of Salisbury , a supporter of Becket 's , prevailed upon two French academics to write to Robert , criticising him for hypocrisy .

In October 1166 , Becket ordered Robert and Roger of Worcester to attend him in France , so they could give him guidance on his dispute with the king . When they informed the king of their intended journey he forbade them to leave England . Nevertheless , they attempted to sneak out of the country in February 1167 . They were apprehended on 2 February , and ordered to remain in England not only in the king 's name , but also in Alexander 's .

= = Theology = =

Robert 's theology is expressed in his three surviving works , the *Quaestiones de divina pagina* , *Quaestiones de epistolis Pauli* , and the unfinished *Sententiae* . The dating of the works is problematic , but it appears that the first two works were composed between 1145 and 1157 . The *Sententiae* was revised twice , probably during the 1150s and the 1160s . His works , especially the *Sententiae* , cover the entire subject of theology and are strictly orthodox in Christian doctrine .

Robert 's *Sententiae* , or *Summa Theologica* , was well known in his time , and has been considered a key connection in theology between Robert 's own teachers ' works and the works of Peter Lombard . Robert is the first commentator on St Paul to say that resistance to a tyrant might be vindicated by the Bible . Robert also opined that a king might be excommunicated if royal actions harmed the church . Robert used Gratian 's works as sources for his own , citing the *Decretum Gratiani* . Although he used this work , which dealt with church law , he does not appear to have been considered a lawyer , and his training was that of a theologian . Furthermore , his years as a student predated the establishment of canon law as a distinct discipline in the European schools . Robert 's views of the glossators , and their main work *Glossa Ordinaria* was that they had shortened their glosses to such a point that they made them unintelligible . Robert was also known as a logician , and John of Salisbury named him one of the leading disputatores , or a person who used rhetoric and logic to debate in public .

Although Robert condemned Gilbert Porée in conjunction with Peter Lombard , he did not agree with Lombard 's Christology , or views on the nature of Jesus Christ . Likewise , although he disagreed with some of Abelard 's teachings , he defended Abelard against charges of heresy . Robert did , however , agree with some of Abelard 's teachings and methods . The introduction to the *Sententiae* proclaims Robert 's desire to harmonise the writings of two unnamed scholars , who have been identified by modern writers as Hugh of St Victor and Abelard .

= = Death and legacy = =

Robert died on 27 February 1167 . William fitzStephen , one of Becket 's supporters , wrote that Robert died of grief because he was unable to visit Becket in exile . He was buried in Hereford Cathedral . Robert enjoyed a good reputation on the continent , for his knowledge and teaching ability , as well as for his personal qualities . Before his appointment to Hereford , John of Salisbury had praised him , but Robert 's conduct during the Becket controversy soured John 's attitude towards his old teacher .

Robert 's works have been published in four volumes , edited by R. M. Martin . His episcopal documents are in Hereford 1079 ? 1234 : English Episcopal Acta Number 7 , published in 1993 .

= = = Translations = = =

= = = Other sources = = =