

= Robert of Cricklade =

Robert of Cricklade ( died after 1188 ) was a medieval English writer and prior of St Frideswide 's Priory in Oxford . He was a native of Cricklade and taught before becoming a cleric . He wrote a number of theological works as well as a lost biography of Thomas Becket , the murdered Archbishop of Canterbury .

= = Life = =

Robert was from Cricklade in Wiltshire , and was of Anglo @-@ Saxon descent . At some point he taught in the schools , where he was called " master " for his learning . He became an Augustinian canon at Cirencester Abbey before becoming prior of the priory of St Frideswide in Oxford , an office he occupied from sometime before the end of 1139 , when he is first securely attested in the office , until after 1174 , his last appearance as prior . In 1158 he went to Rome , extending his travels to Sicily and Paris on the same trip . Another trip was to Scotland in the 1160s . Possibly he also travelled to Rome in 1141 and Paris in 1147 , but these trips are not securely attested . Although earlier historians claimed that he was chancellor of Oxford , this office did not yet exist during Robert 's lifetime . There were students at Oxford in his lifetime , who probably did listen to Robert 's sermons and possibly his teaching at his priory . His successor was in office by 3 March 1185 .

= = Writings = =

Robert was the author of a number of works , including *De connubio Iacob* , which was dedicated to Lawrence of Westminster ; *Defloratio Historiae naturalis Plinii* , an epitome of Pliny the Elder 's *Natural History* which was dedicated to King Henry II of England ; *Honiliae super Exechielem* ; the *Speculum fidei* ; and *Vita et miracula Sancta Thomae Cantuariensis* , a story of the life and martyrdom of Thomas Becket . Two other works are attributed to him ? a commentary on the Psalms , and a saint 's life of Frideswide . A letter of his to Benedict of Peterborough also survives in quotations by Benedict . Of these works , the life of Thomas Becket has been lost . The others survive in manuscript , though only one has been published ? the *Defloratio Historiae naturalis Plinii* in the early 20th century .

The epitome of Pliny is of some importance in the transmission of Pliny 's ideas to medieval Europe . It appears to have originally been composed in the 1130s , perhaps as a text for his students , and only later dedicated it to King Henry . The *De connubio Iacob* was written while Robert was at Cirencester and was an allegorical treatment of the Jacob story from the Bible . The *Speculum fidei* was a theological work that mainly collected texts from the Old and New Testament discussing various theological concepts , only delving into great depth with the sections dealing with Robert 's refutation of the views of Peter Lombard 's theology . The *Honiliae super Exechielem* were 42 homilies on the Book of Ezekiel and were written about 1172 .

Robert 's life of Becket , written about 1173 to 1174 , was one of the main sources for an Icelandic saga on Becket titled *Thómas saga Erkibyskups* , which survives in a copy dating from the first half of the 14th century . This saga preserves a number of otherwise unknown details about Becket 's life and remains one of the main sources for Becket studies . Robert 's life also was a source for the work of Benet of St Albans , another biographer of Becket . From these sources , a modern historian reconstructed Robert 's biography partially and published the reconstituted work in the journal *Analecta Bollandiana* in 1966 . A major source for Robert 's work on Becket was the writings of John of Salisbury . Robert may have written the work on Becket because the saint cured the author 's bad leg .

= = Death and legacy = =

Robert died sometime after 1188 , and was probably buried in his priory . A modern biographer of Becket , the historian Frank Barlow , speculates that Robert 's biography was lost because it

favoured the king 's side of the story , rather than Becket 's . Besides his theological works , Robert also searched throughout England for Hebrew texts of the works of Josephus , according to Gerald of Wales , who claimed that Robert had a knowledge of the Hebrew language .