Herbert of Bosham (c.1120–c.1194) was one of the most brilliant, original and versatile thinkers of the twelfth century. Herbert was Thomas Becket's closest confidant, a theologian, biblical commentator, historian, letter-writer and Hebrew scholar; he wrote a Life of St Thomas unlike any other contemporary biography, produced one of the most visually-arresting illuminated Bible books of his age, and composed a commentary on the Psalms inspired by Jewish scholarship. His uncompromising character, and the originality and complexity of his thought, meant that Herbert's works were largely ignored during his lifetime and forgotten for centuries, but more recently they have begun to receive the attention and approval that their author insisted they deserved.

The chapters in this book, the first to be devoted to Herbert's life and works, examine his eventful and troubled life, his remarkable corpus of works, and how they came to be neglected and rediscovered. They provide an introduction to his life, writings and legacy, direction to existing scholarship on the subject, and new insights on, interpretations of and discoveries about an idiosyncratic representative of the 'twelfth-century renaissance'.

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Herbert of Bosham
YORK MEDIEVAL PRESS

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Herbert of Bosham
A Medieval Polymath

Edited by
Michael Staunton

The University of York

York Medieval Press
# Contents

*List of Illustrations*  vii

*List of Contributors*  viii

*Editorial Preface*  xii

*List of Abbreviations*  xii

1. An Introduction to Herbert of Bosham  
   *Michael Staunton*  1

2. Master Herbert: Becket’s *eruditus*, Envoy, Adviser, and Ghost-writer?  
   *Anne J. Duggan*  29

3. Herbert of Bosham and Peter Lombard  
   *Matthew Doyle*  55

4. Pages Covered with as Many Tears as Notes: Herbert of Bosham and the Glossed Manuscripts for Thomas Becket  
   *Laura Cleaver*  64

5. Scholarship as a Weapon: Herbert of Bosham’s Letter Collection  
   *Julie Barrau*  87

6. Time, Change and History in Herbert of Bosham’s *Historia*  
   *Michael Staunton*  104

7. John Allen Giles and Herbert of Bosham: The Criminous Clerk as Editor  
   *Nicholas Vincent*  127

8. The Missing Leaves of Arras MS 649: A Tale of Lost and Found  
   *Sabina Flanagan*  156

9. Encounters with Herbert of Bosham  
   *Christopher de Hamel*  168

Appendix: A New Letter of Herbert of Bosham (1175 x 1178)  
   *Nicholas Vincent*  184

*Select Bibliography*  189

*Index*  195
Illustrations

Laura Cleaver, *Pages Covered with as Many Tears as Notes*

4.1  Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.5.4, fol. 1. By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.  
71
75
76
77
78
4.6  Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.5.4 fol. 82. By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.  
79
4.7  Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Auct E Infra 6 fol. 84. By permission of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.  
80
82
4.9  Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.5.4 fol. 180. By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.  
83
4.10 Cambridge, Trinity College MS B. 5. 7 fol. 70. By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.  
85

Christopher de Hamel, *Encounters with Herbert of Bosham*

9.1  Recto of the leaf of the former Canterbury copy of the *Liber melorum*. By permission of Christopher de Hamel.  
172
9.2  Verso of the leaf of the former Canterbury copy of the *Liber melorum*. By permission of Christopher de Hamel.  
173
9.3  Leaf of the *Liber melorum* used in a binding at Magdalen College, Oxford. By permission of Christopher de Hamel.  
183
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Herbert of Bosham often complained that he was unappreciated. But how can one properly appreciate someone who advised Thomas Becket and rebuked Henry II to his face, who wrote a Life of Becket that is unlike any contemporary work of hagiography or history, whose theological expertise and ambition led him to produce one of the most visually arresting illuminated Bible books of his age and who also happened to be one of the most skilled Christian Hebraists of the Middle Ages?

Not that Herbert made it easy on himself. His stance on church–crown relations was sometimes so intemperate that Thomas Becket had to rein him in. When the church sought reconciliation with Henry II after Becket’s murder, Herbert continued to rail against both king and ecclesiastics. While others who knew Thomas much less well were writing Lives of the saint amid the glow of martyrdom, Herbert was writing a work in honour of Peter Lombard just at the time that Peter’s work was being condemned as heretical. When Herbert finally wrote a Life of St Thomas, a decade and a half later, he ignored the miracles that still drew crowds to Thomas’s tomb at Canterbury, and focused on the cause for which he had died, thus reopening wounds that others had chosen to soothe. Though a learned and inventive theologian, Herbert never wrote a full-length work of theology. Instead he buried his proofs of the existence of God and his disquisitions on mystic theology in the middle of the Liber Melorum, a celebration of the concordances between Christ and St Thomas that has remained largely unread to this day. Herbert’s letter collection, apparently put together by his own hand, does not include any correspondence between the mid-1170s and the late 1180s, a period of his life about which we have hardly any information from any source. And we would not have known that Herbert apparently had a better grasp of Hebrew than any known western Christian contemporary, were it not for the discovery in the middle of the twentieth century of a work written in obscure exile at the end of his life.

Herbert presents other problems for those who seek to approach his work today. The scholarly, linguistic and cultural challenges that face anyone who seeks to grapple with the world of a twelfth-century intellectual are compounded by the erudition, originality and range that he displays. If an understanding of any of his works requires application and knowledge, how much more does a rounded appreciation demand? Yet this is something worth striving for. As long ago as 1951, Beryl Smalley urged that Herbert be studied in the round as a twelfth-century man of letters. Since then, it has become all the more apparent that there is overlap

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1 Full references to and discussion of the works referred to in the Foreword may be found in Chapter 1.
between the different facets of Herbert of Bosham’s life and work. It is this recognition – that while each aspect of his life and work requires individual expertise, the different dimensions of Herbert of Bosham inform each other – that has prompted the contributors here to collaborate in this book.

Herbert has always suffered from criticism, dismissal and neglect, but he has also had his champions. Though he was spoken of as a difficult character, he was employed by Henry II and by Thomas Becket, Pope Alexander III gave him a glowing reference, and his scholarly work was supported first by the archbishop of Sens and later by the bishop of Arras. Though he complained of the English, ‘I have no friends in that land of forgetfulness’, the monks of Canterbury remembered him in their obituary list as ‘our brother’. His works fell into relative obscurity for centuries, and he was only remembered, if at all, for his association with Becket, until John Allen Giles undertook to edit the Historia, the Liber Melorum and the Letters. Giles’s editions gained further currency when they were used by Jean-Paul Migne in his Patrologia Latina, and by James Craigie Robertson in his Rolls Series edition. Though Giles and Robertson showed impatience at Herbert’s theological digressions, they realised that he was both an outstanding witness to his times and an original talent. The discovery of the commentary on Jerome’s Hebrew psalter prompted a new interest in Herbert the theologian, starting in the 1950s with Beryl Smalley and Raphael Loewe, and developed in subsequent decades by Smalley, the single individual most responsible for the modern appreciation of Herbert’s work. Most importantly, she drew the connection between Herbert the theologian and Herbert the politician.

Around the turn of the century Herbert’s work suddenly became the subject of sustained scholarship. Within the space of two years, three PhD dissertations were completed on the subject of Herbert of Bosham: Deborah Goodwin and Eva De Visscher’s studies of the Psalterium cum commento, and Jessica Weiss’s study of the Liber Melorum. Goodwin and De Visscher’s quite different and complementary studies have since been published. At the same time, others were at work on different aspects of Herbert’s life and work: as a letter-writer, historian and hagiographer; as a pupil of Peter Lombard and a reviser of his work; as the supervisor of a lavish project of illustrations. In 2006 an e-mail group was set up with the aim of putting those scholars working on Herbert of Bosham in contact with each other, and the following year a meeting was held at the International Medieval Congress at Leeds. Then, in 2013, a conference on Herbert of Bosham was held at Cambridge, sponsored by the Association for Manuscripts and Archives in Research Collections and hosted by the Parker Library, Corpus Christi College. This was accompanied by an exhibition of almost all the known manuscripts of Herbert’s works. The papers in this volume all derive from this collaboration over the past decade or so. Some were first delivered at the conference in Cambridge and since revised; others are more recent.

The title of the first paper, ‘An Introduction to Herbert of Bosham’, is self-explanatory. It provides a survey of what is known of Herbert’s life, and a brief discussion of each of his works. It is aimed at those coming to Herbert for the first time, but also at those who know about some aspects of his work and would like to know more, and seeks to provide direction to existing scholarship on the subject.
Anne Duggan’s paper, ‘Master Herbert: Becket’s eruditus, Envoy, Adviser, and Ghost-Writer?’ takes a closer look at the various roles that Herbert undertook in the service of Thomas Becket, surveying his witness to acta, his letter-writing and his diplomatic activities. Though an odd-man-out among the archbishop’s learned men, Herbert had a significant place in Thomas’s life. A loyal and outspoken friend and counsellor, his advice had a direct impact on Thomas’s course of action, but he would struggle to find a role after his master’s death.

The next two papers look at Herbert’s less well-known relationship with his first master – Peter Lombard. Matthew Doyle, in ‘Herbert of Bosham and Peter Lombard’, notes that studies of Peter’s school have often failed to take Herbert into account, while specialist studies of Herbert have tended to downplay his intellectual formation at the school of the Lombard. Yet his first major work, a revision of Peter’s commentaries on the Psalms and Pauline Epistles, can, he argues, be seen as part of a wider enterprise in the 1160s and 1170s involving the students of Peter Lombard.

Laura Cleaver’s paper, ‘Pages Covered with as Many Tears as Notes: Herbert of Bosham and the Glossed Manuscripts for Thomas Becket’, looks at Herbert’s revision of the Great Gloss from a different angle. These lavishly illustrated volumes are testament to Herbert’s awareness of the power of visual appearances and fondness for fine things. Here the evidence for their production is revisited, and the case is made for identifying an image of a semi-naked figure as a representation of Herbert himself, bereft after the departure of the martyr.

One of the more neglected of Herbert’s works is his letter collection, the subject of Julie Barrau’s paper, ‘Scholarship as a Weapon: Herbert of Bosham’s Letter Collection’. She provides, for the first time, an analysis of the collection, its production and its contents, and highlights certain themes that run through them. The letters show Herbert engaged in arcane theological controversies, denouncing his enemies and developing elaborate parallels between biblical figures and participants in the Becket dispute.

Michael Staunton’s paper, ‘Time, Change and History in Herbert of Bosham’s Historia’, looks at Herbert’s narrative of Thomas Becket’s life, usually referred to as the Vita S. Thomae but called by Herbert the Historia. It addresses the theme of time and change in Herbert’s work and shows how his portrayal of Thomas dwelled on both the archbishop’s change of life and how his struggle and martyrdom changed those around him, including his biographer Herbert.

Nicholas Vincent’s paper, ‘John Allen Giles and Herbert of Bosham: The Criminous Clerk as Editor’, looks at the career of Herbert’s first editor and the circumstances in which his work was first edited. During his long and tragic life, John Allen Giles published nearly 180 books, among them a two-volume edition of Herbert of Bosham’s Historia, Liber Melorum and letters. Giles, more than anyone, was the person responsible for bringing Herbert’s works to wider attention, and his editions remain the main point of access for the Liber Melorum and the letters.

Even though Herbert’s manuscripts are about ten times more rare than complete Gutenberg Bibles, they have led lives as eventful and troubled as their author. The most notorious incident concerning Herbert’s manuscripts is the mutilation and theft of a large number of leaves from Arras MS 649, the fullest copy of his
composite work on Thomas Becket, the Thomus. Sabina Flanagan’s paper tracks down the ‘unscrupulous librarian’ responsible for the theft of the leaves, and traces the story of how, over a period of two centuries, and involving various collectors, editors and scholars, the leaves were lost, found, lost again and rediscovered.

Christopher de Hamel is in the highly unusual position not only of having handled most of the surviving manuscripts of Herbert, but also of identifying newly discovered ones, and owning a number of them himself. Here he provides a personal recapitulation of his encounters with Herbert’s manuscripts, outlining the remarkable series of events that put them in his possession – even though, as he admits, it took him many years to realise what they were.

The final item in this volume is an edition by Nicholas Vincent of a newly discovered letter by Herbert of Bosham, his confirmation of a legal settlement made at Paris by Cardinal Peter of Pavia, sometime between 1174 and 1178. Even in such a technical document, Herbert’s personality comes through, designating himself as a former clerk to the glorious martyr and associating himself with St John the Evangelist.

This book is not meant to be the last word on Herbert of Bosham. Contributors were still making discoveries about his life and work as the book was going to press, and it is clear that much remains to be discovered about him. It is hoped that the papers included here will encourage others to explore the career of a fascinating and unusual medieval polymath whose works oscillate between public and private concerns, the rational and mystical, the worldly and the spiritual. Perhaps it will also mark the first step towards new editions of his works, many of which remain unedited.

I am grateful to all the contributors to this volume, and to all those who have otherwise participated in this collaborative enterprise. Special thanks go to Anne Duggan, who supported the collaboration from the outset, to Christopher de Hamel, who generously hosted the conference at the Parker Library, and to Caroline Palmer and Pete Biller for all their help in bringing the book to completion. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the late Jennifer O’Reilly, who introduced me to the Lives of Thomas Becket and suggested that I take a closer look at Herbert of Bosham.

Michael Staunton
### Abbreviations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>CCCC</td>
<td>Cambridge, Corpus Christi College</td>
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<td>CCCM</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis</td>
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<td>CCSL</td>
<td>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSEL</td>
<td>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EHR</td>
<td>The English Historical Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fitzstephen</td>
<td>William Fitzstephen, Vita Sancti Thomae</td>
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<tr>
<td>HB</td>
<td>Epistolae Herberti de Boseham in persona S. Thomae Cantuariensis et aliorum scriptae, 2 vols., ed. J. A. Giles (London, 1845–46); repr. in PL 190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>The Great Roll of the Pipe (Pipe Roll Society)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RS</td>
<td>Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores (‘Rolls Series’), 251 vols (London, 1858–96)</td>
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Chapter One

An Introduction to Herbert of Bosham

Michael Staunton

Herbert of Bosham (c. 1120–c. 1194) was Thomas Becket’s closest advisor and confidant, his inseparable companion through his exile and the most enthusiastic champion of his cause. A pupil of Peter Lombard and almost certainly of the school of St Victor, he was a skilled and original biblical scholar. He produced a lavishly ornamented revision of Peter Lombard’s *Great Gloss* on the Psalms and Epistles and a commentary on the literal sense of Jerome’s *Hebraica* version of the Psalms, a project that reveals him as more learned in Hebrew than any known Christian contemporary. When he wrote about recent events in his letters, and in his two works devoted to Thomas Becket, the *Historia* and the *Liber Melorum*, he brought to them the skills and preoccupations of a theologian. Herbert’s own works and the writings of contemporaries give us a wealth of information about his career, but he was also a very self-reflective writer who revealed much about his own feelings and motivations. He was a person who would attract admiration and patronage, but also a difficult character, who complained of being shunned and neglected. His works and reputation have had a similarly chequered path, though the more attention that has been paid to his writings, the more his depth of learning, his versatility and originality have been appreciated. What follows is intended to provide a guide to the uninitiated, and direction to those who would like to know more about Herbert’s life and work.1

Early life and education

At the end of the Historia, Herbert gives a list of Thomas's eruditi, his 'learned men'. Last and least of these, he says, is 'the disciple who wrote these things, Herbert by name, English by nation, and from birth and surname “of Bosham”'. This is the name that others give him too, and there is no reason to doubt that he came from that seaside town in West Sussex, two miles west of Chichester. Herbert's birth is conventionally dated to c. 1120, which would make him a close contemporary of Thomas Becket, but this is rough estimation. Nothing is known of Herbert's mother, but his father, it seems, had once been a priest. When he and Henry II met at Angers in May 1166, the king angrily dismissed him as the son of a priest, to which Herbert replied, 'I am not the son of a priest, since I was not born to a priest, although later my father became a priest.'

For a man of such impressive learning and of such frequent self-reference, Herbert gives us frustratingly little information on his education. His first teacher in theology was Peter Lombard, master of the cathedral school of Notre Dame in Paris, and author of the Sentences, whom Herbert called 'my master of pleasant memory, Peter, bishop of Paris'. Herbert paid tribute to his distinguished teacher in his first major work, a revision of Peter's Great Gloss on the Psalms and Epistles, and in the preface to that work he described him as 'that great doctor … the man who first taught me in such things'. Herbert could have studied at Paris as early as the mid-1140s and as late as the mid-1150s. Before that he must have acquired a strong foundation in grammar and rhetoric, but where or in what manner he did so we do not know. In old age he mentioned that he had begun to learn Greek and Hebrew in

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3 Smalley, Becket Conflict, p. 59, suggests this date on the grounds that Herbert’s friend William le Mire, abbot of St Denis, called him ‘senex’ in a letter of 1173x1176, and that Herbert says he knew William of the White Hands (1135–1202) when the latter was a little boy. The letter is printed by H. H. Glunz, History of the Vulgate in England from Alcuin to Roger Bacon (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 346–7.

4 Fitzstephen, MTB, iii, 101: ‘neque filius sum sacerdos, qui non fuit genitus in sacerdotio, licet postea sacerdos fuerit pater meus’.


7 Smalley, Becket Conflict, p. 62, thought likely a date of c. 1150, but Doyle, Peter Lombard and His Pupils, pp. 199–200, has suggested that Herbert may have been one of his first pupils, enrolling in his school c. 1145 and studying with him long enough to gain the title.
his youth.\footnote{Dedicatory letter to Psalterium cum commento, ed. Smalley, ‘Commentary on the Hebraica’, pp. 30–1.} Though his Greek studies do not seem to have got very far, his Hebrew, at least later in life, was more advanced.

This is what Herbert himself says about his education, but it is clear that the school of St Victor in Paris played a very significant role in shaping his thought, even though he does not acknowledge that debt directly or make any reference to study there. Peter Lombard had close connections to St Victor, so it is not surprising that Herbert should have encountered the canons and their teaching. Even if he had not met Hugh of St Victor before his death in 1141, he could have been introduced to his thought by his pupils, Andrew and Richard. Hugh’s influence is especially evident in the mysticism of the Liber Melorum, but his views on the importance of the literal sense of scripture also underpin Herbert’s approach to the Psalterium cum commento. The latter work has been seen as connected to, if surpassing, Andrew’s engagement with Jewish scholarship, and the language of Herbert’s prologue recalls that of Andrew’s preface to his commentary on the prophets. Beryl Smalley suggests that Herbert could have attended Andrew’s lectures before 1147 or after 1154/5. Deborah Goodwin sees it as especially likely that he knew Richard of St Victor, a supporter of Becket during his exile.\footnote{See Smalley, Becket Conflict, p. 62; Goodwin, ‘Take Hold of the Robe’, pp. 12–14.}

Our first sighting of Herbert in any public capacity occurs at the end of September 1157 at Frederick I’s court at Würzburg, where the emperor welcomed embassies from many realms, including England. Frederick’s biographer Rahewin recorded the assembly and inserted a flattering letter from Henry II to Barbarossa, which ends with the words, ‘Regarding the hand of St James about which you wrote to us, Master Herbert and our clerk William will give our reply to you in person. Witnessed by Thomas the chancellor at Northampton.’\footnote{Ottonis episcopi Frisingensis et Rahewini Gesta Frederici, ed. F.-J. Schmale (Darmstadt, 1965), p. 406: ‘De manu beati Iacobi, super qua nobis scripsistis, in ore magistri Heriberti et Wilhelmi clerici nostri verbum posuimus. Teste Thoma cancellario aput Northamt.’ See Smalley, Becket Conflict, pp. 59–60; K. J. Leyser, ‘Frederick Barbarossa, Henry II and the hand of St James’, EHR 356 (1975), 481–506.} It has long been assumed that this refers to Herbert of Bosham. His presence at the German court might explain William Fitzstephen’s description of him, about twelve years later at Angers, ‘wearing a tunic and cloak of green cloth of Auxerre, hanging from his shoulders in the German style’.\footnote{Fitzstephen, MTB, iii, 99–100: ‘habens de quodam panno viridi Autisiodorensi tunicam et pallium, ab humeris more Alamannorum deprendens.’} The envoys were charged with politely refusing the emperor’s request for the return of the hand of St James, which had been at Reading abbey since the return of Henry II’s mother, Matilda, to England in 1126 after the death of her husband, the emperor Henry VI. This letter suggests that Herbert had returned to England from Paris as ‘master’, that by 1157 he was established as a royal servant long enough to be entrusted with delicate and high-level diplomacy, and that he was likely attached to the chancellor’s office.
The next time we see Herbert is in early summer 1162 in the company of Thomas Becket, recently elected archbishop, on the road from London to Canterbury for consecration. As Herbert reports it, Thomas told him of a dream in which a venerable person stood beside him and offered him ten talents. At the time Herbert hesitated to give an interpretation, but he later understood that the vision signified the man of the gospel parable who received five talents, traded with them, and gained five more. Next Thomas asked Herbert to watch out for him in his new role as archbishop: to tell him in private what others were saying about him, and that if he should be deficient in his work, to point out his failings, frankly but in confidence. Although Herbert says that Thomas enjoined this task on others too, all the signs are that he quickly gained a special position in the archbishop’s household. Years later he would refer to himself as ‘your servant, who ministered to you in the chains of the gospel’, and early on it seems that his role was as a scriptural advisor. William Fitzstephen calls him Thomas’s ‘master in the holy page’, and Herbert describes how, every morning, and sometimes even when travelling, the new archbishop would summon him to guide him in the mysteries of the scriptures. As Anne Duggan shows, Herbert appears as witness to a few archiepiscopal acta, but he is usually well down the list.

Herbert accompanied Thomas to the papal council of Tours in May 1163, where the archbishop was received with great honour. He was also present at the public confrontations of 1163 and 1164 that exposed the growing tensions and then the collapse in relations between the archbishop and the king, and he later recorded them in the Historia. He attributes to Thomas a lengthy speech in defence of ecclesiastical liberties at the council of Westminster of October 1163, adding, in the words of St John the Evangelist, “This is the disciple who gave testimony concerning these things and heard and wrote these things.” He gives full details of the Council of Clarendon in January 1164, and says that on the road back to Canterbury, Thomas privately confessed to Herbert his guilt at his insufficient defence of the church’s rights. Herbert reassured him, and advised him that, like David, Peter and Paul, he should learn from his misdeeds, and after a fall rise up all the stronger. Herbert was with his master at Northampton in November 1164, and describes himself on the last day of the conference as sitting at the archbishop’s feet, holding the cross, as

13 MTB, iii, 185–6.  
15 MTB, iii, 58: ‘ait archiepiscopo suus in divina pagina magister Herbertus.’  
16 MTB, iii, 204–6; see also 376, 379; Liber Melorum, PL, 190.1362.  
17 Below, pp. 32–5.  
18 MTB, iii, 253–5.  
20 MTB, iii, 292.
courtiers glared and pointed at them threateningly. The archbishop said to Herbert, ‘I fear for you now, but you should not fear for yourself, for you will yet share in my crown.’ Herbert reassured Thomas that, like Constantine, with the cross as their triumphal standard, they were sure to be victorious. When another witness, William Fitzstephen, heard Herbert urging Thomas to excommunicate his enemies should they lay their hands on him, he intervened to advise the archbishop instead to follow the example of the apostles and martyrs, and pray for his persecutors and bear anything they might impose on him. It is an early sign of how Herbert’s trenchant advice would sometimes be countered by more moderate voices.

Fitzstephen adds that in the hurried departure from the council, the pressure of the crowds meant that Herbert was unable to get on his horse, so he jumped on Thomas’s horse and rode with him to their lodgings. ‘That night, the archbishop looked meaningfully at his disciple when the reading at dinner included the line from the gospel, “When they shall persecute you in this city, flee into another,” and Herbert was one of a handful whom Thomas informed of his plan to flee England. They did not flee together; rather, Herbert was sent to Canterbury to take what he could from the archbishop’s revenues and cross the sea and await him at the monastery of St Omer at St Bertin’s. There they reunited a couple of weeks later, where Herbert revealed that he had been able to retrieve only 100 marks and a silver vessel to support their exile. By now, the king’s envoys had crossed the sea on a mission to Louis VII of France and Pope Alexander III. Herbert and an unnamed companion were charged with following behind them, and they were received well by the French king at Compiègne, and later by the pope at Sens, where they laid the ground for Thomas’s own meetings with these men.

The pope directed the exiles to the Cistercian monastery of Pontigny, south-west of Sens, and there they remained for two years. This, wrote Herbert, was the time of rest from action that Thomas had always longed for, when he was able to devote himself to prayer and meditation and the study of scripture, canon law and theology, with Herbert as his teacher. He says that the Psalms and the Epistles were never out of the archbishop’s hands, and it was at Pontigny that Thomas encouraged Herbert to revise Peter Lombard’s commentary on those books, a work that would be completed after the archbishop’s death. Though Herbert could see the value of this retreat from the world, it did not suit him – he describes it as living in solitude between the monks

21 MTB, iii, 307: “‘Timeo’, inquit, ‘jam tibi: veruntamen tu non timeas; adhuc enim coronae meae particeps eris’.
22 MTB, iii, 307–8.
23 MTB, iii, 58.
24 MTB, iii, 68.
28 MTB, iii, 332–5.
29 MTB, iii, 357–9, 379; Glunz, History, p. 342.
and the stones. When Henry II forced their expulsion from Pontigny, Herbert enthusiastically proposed that they should take up King Louis’s standing offer of hospitality at the Benedictine abbey of St Columbe, just outside Sens, and although Thomas was concerned that his disciple was too eager to return to courtly and urbane delights, he was finally persuaded, and they remained there for the rest of the exile. Herbert goes into exuberant praise of his host country, ‘sweet France’ (dulcis Francia), sweet on account of its clement weather, but more truly for the innate morals of the people, the goodness of the princes and the gentleness of the kings.

Herbert’s revenues were confiscated, along with those of the other exiles, when he fled into exile. In May 1166 he, along with two other of the archbishop’s clerks, met King Henry at Angers to plead for their restoration. In William Fitzstephen’s famous account, John of Salisbury first made his case before the king, graciously but unsuccessfully. Next Herbert was called in, and as he entered the king said to his men, ‘See, here comes a proud one’. Herbert proceeded to lecture his host on the necessity to correct an erring king, and the king’s astonishing error in putting his royal customs in writing. When the king snapped at him that he would not listen to such words from the son of a priest, Herbert said that one who is not born to a priest is not the son of a priest, just as one who is not born to a king is not a king’s son (Henry’s father was Geoffrey, count of Anjou). This quip provoked amusement even among Henry’s courtiers, but Herbert later complained that it brought repercussions from the king.

In 1165 Pope Alexander wrote to Henry, bishop of Troyes, proposing Herbert for the provostship of that church, but nothing came of it. Instead he spent the exile at Thomas’s side, acting in various guises on his behalf. He wrote letters for him, though his drafts often seem to have been rejected in favour of more diplomatic versions, and he continued as his theological guide. Most important, perhaps, was his role as one of Thomas’s erudite ‘companions in battle’ in stiffening the archbishop’s resolve. With the exception of his decision to issue censures against his enemies at Vézelay in 1166, Thomas tended to consult his eruditii at every turn, and we regularly see Herbert presenting his advice individually or as part of a group. Herbert presents himself at the peace conference at Montmirail pushing his way through the crowd of distinguished persons and whispering in the ear of

30 MTB, iii, 366, 379, 381.
31 MTB, iii, 401–2, and for his praise of Sens, 403. Herbert’s interview with King Louis: CTB, i, no. 108.
32 MTB, iii, 407–8.
33 MTB, iii, 99: ‘En videbitis quendam superbum intrare’.
34 MTB, iii, 100–1.
35 HB, no. 1, PL 190.1422.
36 MTB, v, no. 132, pp. 241–2. He called him a man ‘renowned for his learning and reputation’ (‘pro litteris et honestate sua celebris’).
37 See below, pp. 29–54.
38 MTB, iii, 390–1.
39 MTB, iii, 400–1.
the archbishop, urging him to tread carefully in giving concessions, and to learn the
lesson of how he had given in to the royal customs at Clarendon. The archbishop
was immediately swallowed up by the crowds, but remained looking at Herbert, and
in the end he took the stance that the disciple had advised.40

In July 1170 a peace settlement was made between king and archbishop at
Fréteval that also included Herbert and Thomas’s other clerks. In August Herbert
went with John of Salisbury to King Henry’s court near Domfront in Normandy
to secure the promised restoration of their possessions, but the king addressed his
remarks to John and gave them no satisfaction.41 Herbert led a mission to organise
the restoration of the exiles’ English properties in early October 1170, including a
visit to the Young King’s court,42 but was soon back in France. Herbert was with
Thomas when he was at the port of Wissant, preparing to sail to England, and heard
the pilot’s warning that they were going to face certain death. While one of their
companions, Gunther, advised that they should delay, Herbert said that the choice
was either to withdraw in disgrace or proceed manfully.43 He describes Thomas’s
triumphant return to his own church of Canterbury as a presage of glorious
martyrdom,44 but this was the last of Thomas’s public triumphs that Herbert would
witness. On 27 December Thomas told his disciple that he had decided to send him
to King Louis, the archbishop of Sens and other princes of France to inform them
of the new persecutions the returned exiles were enduring.

Years later, Herbert recalled his last conversation with his master. Unable to
control his tears, he said, ‘Holy father, why have you decided this, why do you do
this? For I know for certain that I will never again see you in the flesh. I offered to
stand with you loyally, but as it seems to me, you wish to defraud me of the fruit
of your consummation, I who have up to now been with you in your trials. Now
I see that I who was a companion in your struggle will not be a companion in
your glory.’45 The archbishop, equally tearfully, agreed that he would never see him
again in the flesh but assured him that he would not be deprived of the fruit of
his glory. And he added that he wished him to leave because ‘the king sees you as
more troublesome than others in the cause of the church’.46 So, on 27 December, the
feast of St John the Evangelist, the disciple took leave of his master. At this point in
his narrative he writes, ‘I pray with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my
strength, that I be found worthy to see in heaven him whom I will never see again

40 MTB, iii, 421–3.
41 MTB, iii, 468.
42 CTB, ii, no. 311; MTB, vii, no. 685, p. 342.
43 MTB, iii, 472–6.
44 MTB, iii, 479–80.
certus sum me de caetero te in carne ista non visurum. Ego quidem proposui vobiscum
fideliter stare; veruntamen, ut mihi videtur, fructu consummationis tuae defraudare me
quaeis, qui hucusque tecum in tentationibus tuis permans; ne ero, sicut nunc video,
socius gloriae, qui fui socius poenae”.
46 MTB, iii, 486: ‘rex habeat te in causa ecclesiae caeteris suspiciorem.’
in this world, and share in his crown, I who was a companion in the battle.’ Later he would report a vision in which the martyr appeared to him. Herbert said that it was perhaps better that he had not been present at the time of the murder, since as a sinner he would have perished spiritually, but Thomas insisted that he would not have perished – he would have been baptised in the martyr’s blood.

Writing alone and mourning alone

Herbert lived on for more than twenty years after Thomas’s murder and during this time he would produce the bulk of his writings, but he would never forget the battle and his companionship with his master. One of the earliest surviving responses we have to the murder is written by Herbert to the pope in the name of William, archbishop of Sens. He begins: ‘In writing this, or rather before writing, I stopped and hesitated, still unsure what kind of expression I could use to bring before you the horrifying and savage murder of the Lord’s anointed.’ Herbert also made his own views on the murder clear when he wrote on his own behalf to the pope demanding that the king and his son suffer censure and lose their royal privileges. To Cardinals Albert and Theodwin, commissioned to pass judgment on the king, he complains that the ‘Satan of the North’ is fleeing to Ireland to escape. He reports an interview with King Louis, who lamented the apparent impunity of the killers, and says that he had heard that the pope had relayed a secret message to King Henry saying the church wanted reconciliation. In another letter he urges the pope to order that a mass for St Thomas be celebrated in every church.

These positions are consistent with Herbert’s views before the murder, and many of them are echoed by contemporaries. The king initially appeared unrepentant for his role in the murder and prepared to contest any restrictions imposed on him by the church, and his visit to Ireland was widely regarded as an evasion of his reckoning with the papal commissioners. But such opinions were voiced less freely after the settlement at Avranches in 1172, and especially after the king’s penance at Thomas’s tomb in 1174. Herbert’s principles also determined the course

47 MTB, iii, 486: ‘id toto corde, tota anima, et totis viribus deprecor, ut quem deinceps non sum visurus in tempore videre merear in aeternitate, et fieri particeps in corona, qui socius fui in pugna.’

48 MTB, iii, 502.

49 HB, no. 33, PL, 190.1465=MTB, vii, 429 no. 735, ‘Inter scribendum haec, immo prius quam scriberem, mox steti et haesi, dubius admodum quo dictionis genere nuper patrati sceleris atrocitatem, et supplicii in christum Domini recenter illati immanitatem, clementiae vestrae oculis praesentarem.’

50 HB, no. 34. This section is not printed in PL: see Cambridge Corpus Christi College [henceforth CCCC] MS 123, f. 53v.

51 HB, no. 39, PL, 190.1469–70 (1469): ‘Aquilonaris ille Satanas’.

52 HB, no. 40, PL, 190.1471.

of his life after the murder. In his letter to the pope he complains that Thomas's clerks are being forced to swear that they will keep the king's peace, do nothing to his detriment and not leave his lands without his licence or send letters across the sea. Others, he says, including John of Salisbury and Gunther, had been forced to take the oath, but Herbert's refusal has meant his exclusion from England. The pope wrote to Herbert calling him 'a devoted and special friend of the church', acknowledging his current difficulties and expressing the hope that the cardinals' mission would settle the status of Thomas's clerks and their restoration to England. But, as Herbert writes to John, bishop of Poitiers, men were remonstrating with him to return, saying that his was a foolish exile when peace had been offered. John of Salisbury told Herbert that the archdeacon of Canterbury was accusing him of indulging in a voluntary absence, not a true exile. Herbert responds that his exile is just and is justified by the mandate of a higher authority. Throughout all his difficulties, he was comforted by the appearance to him in a vision of the neomartyr Thomas, commending to him the verse of the Psalm, 'Redeem me from the calumnies of men, so that I keep your mandates'.

So Herbert stayed in France and, apart from a period in the late 1180s, he would seem to have spent the rest of his life there. When Thomas had sent Herbert away in December 1170 he had directed him to the archbishop of Sens, William of the White Hands, and we find him in the aftermath of the murder writing letters on his behalf. Herbert had known William since he was young, he had previously written letters on behalf of his brother, Henry the Liberal, count of Champagne, and it is likely that William was the lord whose business Herbert said kept him from returning to England. William led the campaign to bring King Henry to heel, threatening an interdict on his lands and writing to the pope in urgent terms, and he also played an important role in the production of Herbert's first major work, his edition of Peter Lombard's *Great Gloss* on the Psalms and Pauline Epistles. Current opinion holds that although the work was begun at Pontigny at Thomas's suggestion, it was completed either at Sens or at Paris between 1172 and 1176. Though the project was coordinated by Herbert, it required the work of others, most likely professional artists from Paris, and was thus an expensive and ambitious undertaking. Herbert dedicated the work to William of Sens and it may be that he, also a pupil of Peter Lombard, provided the necessary support.

Herbert's edition was a fitting memorial to his teacher at a time when his reputation was under attack. It stands as early evidence of Herbert's biblical

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54 *HB*, no. 34, *PL*, 190.1466–7 and CCCC MS 123, ff. 52v–53r.
55 *HB*, no. 41, *PL*, 190.1471.
56 *HB*, no. 28, CCCC MS 123, ff. 55r–v.
57 *HB*, no. 35, *PL*, 190.1467.
58 Glunz, *History*, p. 344; see Ps. 117:134: 'Redeime me a calumpniis hominum, ut custodiam mandata tua'. Here the context appears to be criticism of his revision of Peter Lombard's *Great Gloss*; but he also refers to this reading in *HB*, no. 38, to John of Poitiers, CCCC MS 123, f. 55r, and in the *Liber Melorum*, *PL*, 190.1404.
59 *MTB*, vii, 512 no. 769; Smalley, *Becket Conflict*, p. 71.