

GILBERT OF POITIERS

(c. 1076–1154)

Gilbert of Poitiers (Gilbertus Porreta, Gilbert de la Porée), the twelfth-century theologian and metaphysician, was born at Poitiers about 1076 and received his first schooling there. Next he went to study under Bernard of Chartres, and later (but before 1117) he devoted himself to theology under Anselm at Laon. He seems to have succeeded Bernard as chancellor at Chartres between 1126 and 1137 and, after a short period as a master in Paris, was elevated in 1142 to the bishopric of Poitiers. He died greatly esteemed in 1154, although in the 1140s he had been made to feel the hostility of other theologians, principally Bernard of Clairvaux, who brought him to trial to account for his opinions at Paris in 1147 and at Rheims in 1148.

Gilbert wrote much and acquired great fame for his scriptural and Boethian commentaries. The former were the fruit of his years at Laon and included major expositions of the Psalms and of the Epistles of St. Paul, as well as other biblical commentaries that have, with greater or lesser certainty, been ascribed to him. But the commentaries upon Boethius's four *opuscula sacra* (and especially that upon the *De Trinitate*) proved controversial. Although Gilbert was never officially condemned for theological error, after his trial in 1148 he appended a new preface to these commentaries professing his orthodoxy. In addition, the treatise *De Discretione Animae, Spiritus et Mentis* is now confidently ascribed to Gilbert. Highly uncertain, however, is Gilbert's authorship of the *Liber Sex Principiorum*. The six *principia* are the last six Aristotelian categories (place, time, situation, habit, action, and passion), which the writer of this treatise considered to be accessory forms (*formae assistentes*) or extrinsic circumstances of a substance. The first four categories, on the other hand, are either substance itself or necessarily inherent forms of a substance. This work enjoyed great authority in the Middle Ages as a completion of Aristotle's own *Categoriae*.

An understanding of Gilbert's authentic philosophical teaching must be based principally upon his Boethian commentaries and upon the literature inspired by his trial. Gilbert's doctrine of being and of the process of knowledge departs from a key distinction between substance and subsistence. A substance is an actually existing individual being that supports (*substat*) a number of accidents. Some beings, however—genera and species, for example—have no need of accidents and are more accurately described as subsistences than as substances. Forms

or Ideas in themselves are subsistences and do not come into contact with matter. Only copies (*exempla*) descend into matter. The human mind arrives at the knowledge of the eternal Ideas by first "collecting" from concrete, individual things their substantial similarity, that is, their created or "native" forms (*formae nativae*), to which Gilbert attributed universality. By perceiving the similarity of forms within a group, the mind arrives at the concept of species and then, by the same process, it arrives at the concept of genus. Finally, transcending all created forms, it attains the primary forms, which are in God. Thus, Gilbert inquired why concrete forms agree with one another, and he focused his attention upon the *intellectus* of the universal which is abstracted from singulars. He based his theory of knowledge upon the Platonic doctrine of Ideas but also employed the Boethian-Aristotelian doctrine of abstraction.

The divine work of creation involved the production of forms, which are images of the divine Ideas, and the uniting of these forms to matter. Gilbert described the created being as a compound of the *id quod est* ("what it is") and the *id quo est* ("that by which it is"). Socrates is a man (*id quod est*), but he is what he is by virtue of his humanity and corporeity (*id quo est*). The origin of this distinction is the grammatical rule that, *in naturalibus*, every name signifies both a substance and a quality. But whereas all created being is compound, the divine being is absolutely simple. In God, essence (*id quod est*) and divinity (*id quo est*) coincide. Nonetheless, Gilbert applied the distinction to God, describing divinity as the form in God by which he is God. Gilbert's opponents, such as Bernard of Clairvaux, would not accept this separation of God and his divinity; they maintained that divinity is God, and not that by which he is. Gilbert's position was a difficult one to maintain, but he had no desire to compromise the divine simplicity or unity, and his writings support his claim that he had not established a real distinction between God and his divinity.

In a similar manner, Gilbert's application of logical and grammatical principles to the problem of the Incarnation of Christ aroused suspicions. Gilbert was reluctant to say that the divine nature became flesh, preferring to say that a person, Christ, took a human nature. Other logicians of the day were similarly concerned to test various traditional formulations of the divine Incarnation in the light of Boethian concepts. If Gilbert slipped in his analysis of the person and natures of Christ, he did not intend to deny Christ's divinity or his humanity.

Gilbert's school of disciples survived as a strong force in the twelfth century and included John of Salisbury,

Otto of Freising, Alan of Lille, Nicholas of Amiens, Radulphus Ardens, and John Beleth. It blended at times with the dialectical tradition stemming from Abelard, and, by its investigation of the character of essences, the school of Gilbert perhaps helped to prepare the way for the influx of Avicennian philosophy.

See also Abelard, Peter; Anselm, St.; Bernard of Chartres; Bernard of Clairveaux, St.; Boethius, Anicius Manlius Severinus; Ideas; John of Salisbury.

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GILES OF ROME

(c. 1247–1316)

Giles of Rome, the scholastic philosopher whose real name was Aegidius Colonna Romanus, was born in Rome. Giles entered the Augustinian order of hermits in 1265 and subsequently studied at the University of Paris, where from 1268 to 1272 he was probably the pupil of Thomas Aquinas, who was then lecturing at the university as Dominican regent master. In 1277 the bishop of Paris made his far-reaching condemnation of 219 theses, mainly of Aristotelian origin but also including a number of Thomist propositions. Among these were Thomas's doctrine that each being contains only one substantial form, as opposed to the traditional Augustinian belief in a plurality of forms. Giles, a young scholar, joined in the ensuing controversy with the publication of a sharply worded defense of the Thomist view, the *Liber Contra Gradus et Pluralitatem Formarum*. He attacked the Augustinian doctrine as being contrary to both reason and faith. Upon his refusal of Bishop Tempier's demand for a retraction, Giles left Paris, perhaps for a cooling-off period, but returned in 1285 to take the first Augustinian chair in theology and to receive his license to teach. He remained a professor until 1292, when he was appointed prior general of his order. In 1295 Pope Boniface VIII appointed him archbishop of Bourges, in which office he remained until his death. In 1287 his teachings had become the official doctrine of the Augustinian order, although neither of the other great Augustinian thinkers of the fourteenth century, Thomas of Strasbourg and Gregory of Rimini (each a general of the order) followed his teachings.

METAPHYSICS

Giles's philosophical position still remains something of an enigma. The older view that he was strictly a disciple of Thomas has gradually been modified. While it is true that he reached substantially the same conclusions as Thomas on two of the burning issues of the day, the unity