

Godescalc of St. Martin and the Trial of Gilbert of Poitiers

Otto of Freising contrasts the trial of Peter Abelard at Sens in 1140 with that of Gilbert of Poitiers at Rheims in 1148: *Nec eadem causa nec similis erat materia*¹). He compares not only the issues, but also the two great masters against whom Bernard fought, as he believed, for the security of the souls of faithful Christians who were in danger of being led astray²). Bernard was not successful at Rheims as he had been at Sens in carrying all before him so that opinion turned decisively against the accused³). Pope Eugenius accepted Gilbert's recantation gladly, and sent him back to his diocese with honour (*honoris plenitudine*)⁴). 'Whether the abbot of Clairvaux was deceived like a mere man, out of the frailty of human weakness, or the bishop escaped the proposed judgement of the Church by cunning concealment... it is not for us to discuss or to judge', comments Otto⁵).

At Sens, Bernard had been guided in putting together his case by a list of *capitula* provided by his friend and admirer William of St. Thierry⁶). Indeed, it was William who first drew his attention to Abelard's teaching and pointed out to him where Abelard was in error; he provided a commentary upon his *capitula* so that Bernard would understand their implications fully⁷. When Bernard was preparing for the trial of Gilbert of Poitiers he was helped by the Premonstratensian abbot, Godescalc of St. Martin, who drew up a list of four points for him, and searched out patristic quotations which would support his case. The importance of Godescalc's contribution in providing a framework for the trial has often been overlooked. His *capitula* remained the principal points under

1) OTTO OF FREISING, *Gesta Friderici*, I, 53, ed. F.J. Schmalc (Darmstadt, 1965), p. 236.
15-6.

2) *Ibid.*, I, 53; p. 235.

3) *Ibid.*, I, 53; pp. 236-8.

4) *Ibid.*, I, 56.

5) *Ibid.*, I, 57.

6) PL 184.249-82.

7) It was upon William's list that Bernard based his letters to Churchmen pointing out the dangers of Abelard's teaching: Letters 187, 188, 189, 190, 192, 193, etc., *Bernardi Opera Omnia*, ed. J. Leclercq and H. Rochais, III (Rome, 1977).

discussion throughout the trial and afterwards; he put his finger upon several major questions raised by Gilbert's complex and often obscure teaching.

Among the accounts of the trial, those of Bernard's new secretary Geoffrey of Auxerre, John of Salisbury, who was at that time in the papal entourage, and Otto of Freising, a former Cistercian, present events from different points of view. Geoffrey's sympathies are entirely with Bernard. Otto, too, presents Gilbert as a heretic and a villain, but with the aid of a technically detailed account of the issues in which he displays his own capacities as a scholar. John is more judicious. He finds it hard to believe that the master whose lectures he had himself heard, and the bishop of whose piety he had come to think highly, could be working actively against the faith and trying to undermine sound doctrine⁸). It is Geoffrey who tells us of Godescalc's part in the affair, and shows us how it appeared to Bernhard himself. It is from his account that we can perhaps best approach Bernard's own thinking.

Geoffrey made his first journey with Bernard (as his secretary) in 1145. They went to Toulouse, passing through Poitiers, where they met Gilbert, and perhaps his two archdeacons, Calo and Master Arnald Quinon-Ridet, who was known for his humourlessness⁹). In 1146, Gilbert held a synod at Poitiers. During a sermon preached at this time, he made some remarks on the Trinity to which Arnald made public objection. The circumstances brought the conflict in the cathedral Chapter at Poitiers to public notice.

Geoffrey describes the way in which the unsmiling archdeacon Arnald brought about Gilbert's trial, in a letter written many years later to Cardinal Albinus of Albano, when Geoffrey himself was in extreme old age. (Albinus knew that Geoffrey had been a student in Paris at the time of Abelard's trial and that he had been an eye-witness of the trial of Gilbert, and he approached him as the best living witness to be had of the events of the 1140s¹⁰). Geoffrey reports that archdeacon Arnald appealed to Rome for a judgement on Gilbert's teaching. Eugenius suggested that they both submit themselves to him for arbitration at

⁸) JOHN OF SALISBURY, *Historia Pontificalis*, ed. M. Chibnall (Oxford (London, 1956), p. 27.

⁹) PL 185.313B, *Vita Prima* III. vi. 17.

¹⁰) The letter appears to have been written in the 1090 s. See N.M. Häring's edition of Geoffrey of Auxerre's writings against Gilbert of Poitiers, *Analecta Cisterciensia*, 22 (1966), 13.

Viterbo¹¹). When he heard them debate their differences before him, he was unable to reach a decision, so he ordered them to present themselves again at Paris at Easter, 1147. On this occasion, Bernard was present¹²).

An 'inquisition' was to be made upon Gilbert's exposition of the theological treatises of Boethius. These short works had long been neglected because they appeared obscure and difficult. Their author himself says that he has deliberately made one of them, the *De Hebdomadibus*, difficult to understand, so that only those worthy to do so should penetrate to the truth it contained¹³). The *opuscula* became more popular as texts to be lectured on in the schools as the advances of the early twelfth century in the study of dialectic made them more intelligible. Thierry of Chartres commented upon them at the same time as Gilbert, but in a relatively straightforward manner, with the intention of helping his students to understand them¹⁴). For Gilbert they were a starting-point for philosophical reflections. But it was said by unkind critics that Gilbert's gloss was 'more obscure than the text'¹⁵).

Gilbert was interested above all in what Boethius had to say about the Trinity¹⁶), and about the Nature and Person of Christ¹⁷), because of the bearing it had upon the possibility of talking about God at all, even in the most technically exact language man can devise. When he was asked to produce a copy of his commentary, Gilbert said that he had none to hand. After some search, a portion of the commentary was found in a copy in the possession of Gilbert's pupils (*apud scholares*). This *particula quaedam*¹⁸) was found to contain teaching on the Trinity, to which Arnald was able to point as an example of the way in which Gilbert was leading his pupils astray.

Gilbert had drawn a comparison between the way in which we might say of a man that he is 'wisdom personified' and the way in which such a statement might be made about God. His intention seems to have been to show by contrast how differently language must be used when we apply it

¹¹) *Ibid.*, p. 4 and cf. Otto of Freising, *op. cit.*, I, 49; pp. 22-4.

¹²) *Epistola ad Albinum*, 2, 4-5 and cf. *Libellus* III, 10; PL 185, 487C-D.

¹³) BOETHIUS, *Theological Tractates*, ed. H.F. Stewart, E.K. Rand and S.J. Tester (London, 1973), p. 38.

¹⁴) THIERRY OF CHARTRES, *Commentaries on Boethius*, ed. N.M. Häring (Toronto, 1971).

¹⁵) GEOFFREY OF AUXERRE, *Libellus*, 40; PL 185, 609B.

¹⁶) *Theol. Tract.*, pp. 2-31.

¹⁷) *Ibid.*, pp. 73-129.

¹⁸) PL 185, 588B.

to God. A man is a compound being. Many different things come together in his existence (*diversa conferunt ut sit*). Nevertheless, we sometimes say, singling out one of the qualities of a particular man: *nihil nisi sapientia es*: 'You are nothing but wisdom'. How much more is God said to 'be' his wisdom, his goodness, and so on (*dicitur esse sapientia sua, bonitas sua*), for in him different things do not come together to bring him into existence (*cui diversa non conferunt ut sit*)¹⁹). God is all one. The reported account of this passage corresponds almost exactly with that in the complete text of Gilbert's commentary which has come down to us²⁰).

This extract was placed before the gathering, and Bernard disputed with the Bishop. Gilbert's statement was, he said, a *grave verbum et enorme*. Bernard seems to have understood Gilbert's contrast as a comparison, designed to illustrate a resemblance rather than to demonstrate a difference. He calls it a *similitudo*. He insists that any such comparison is remote from the case of God: *procul a Deo*. We cannot say that God 'is' his wisdom in just the same way as a man may be said to 'be' his wisdom. In the case of a man we are speaking of a quality as though it were a substance, in a form of *emphatica locutio*. In the case of God we speak of his 'being' wisdom, or divinity, *vere et substantive*, truly and substantively, because we speak of his substance, not a quality²¹). Bernard had, it appears, understood Gilbert to be saying precisely the opposite of what he had intended to say.

In an attempt, perhaps, to make his position clear, Gilbert denied that he had taught, or ever believed, or proposed in writing, that divinity was not truly and substantially God, or that the form and essence of God were not themselves God, but qualities like human qualities, although of a higher order. He produced as his witnesses several former pupils: the bishop of Evreux; Rotold, future bishop of Rouen; Ivo, of Chartres. But on the written evidence of the text, and on Bernard's interpretation of it, it was felt that there was a case to answer. Gilbert was summoned to trial at Rheims in the following year²²).

It was at this point that Pope Eugenius turned to Godescalc, at that time Premonstratensian abbot of St. Martin, and later to be bishop of

¹⁹) PL 185.588B.

²⁰) GILBERT OF POITIERS, *Commentaries on Boethius*, ed. N.M. Häring (Toronto, 1966), p. 90.30-6.

²¹) PL 185.588B-C.

²²) PL 185.588C.

Arras from 1150. There was no question of Bernard himself preparing the case in advance. He was busy in the months before the trial in travel and negotiation. The choice of a Premonstratensian is not in itself surprising. Relations between Norbert's canons and the Cistercians had always been close, and in 1142 an act of confraternity strengthened the bond²³). Several Premonstratensians were present at the Council when it met at Rheims, including Milo, bishop of Théroutanne and abbot Hugo, Norbert's successor as head of the Order²⁴). Godescalc did not make a name for himself as one of the major scholars of the Order²⁵). There can be no doubt, however, that he had a clear mind and was well-fitted for the task Eugenius gave him, and it is probable that Bernard himself recommended him.

Godescalc set about his task rather as William of St. Thierry had embarked upon his list of points of error in Abelard's writings, noting *capitula*, and looking up quotations from the Fathers to show that Gilbert was in error at each of the points in question. These he brought to the Council at Rheims, and presented them to Eugenius, together with the copy of Gilbert's book he had been sent²⁶). If there was no correspondence beforehand — and nothing is known to have survived — it is possible that Bernard received these unseen. Godescalc did not himself conduct the disputation against Gilbert. It may be that he was already suffering from the illness to which Pope Alexander refers in a letter to the archbishop of Rheims in 1162²⁷). Whether as a result of a speech impediment, or because he was not naturally eloquent (Geoffrey's term is *nimis elinguis*)²⁸) Godescalc was judged unsuitable to act as advocate, and the list of *capitula* with the *testimonia ei contraria* was handed over to Bernard.

Otto of Freising sums up Godescalc's points like this: Gilbert had taught that the divine essence is not God (*Quod videlicet assereret divinam essentiam non esse Deum*); that the properties of the Persons

²³) J.B. VALVEKENS, *Les actes de confraternité de 1142 et de 1153 entre Cîteaux et Prémontré: Analecta Praemonstrensia*, 40 (1964), 193-205; and *Actus confraternitatis inter Ordinem Praemonstratensium et Ordinem Cisterciensem, Analecta Praemonstratensia*, 42 (1966), 326-30.

²⁴) *Analecta Praemonstratensia*, 43 (1967), 352-3.

²⁵) M. FITZTHUM, *Die Christologie der Prämonstratenser im 12 Jahrhundert (Marienbad, 1939)*, discusses some of the leading scholars of the day.

²⁶) PL 185.589A.

²⁷) Alexander III, Letter III; PL 200.182D.

²⁸) PL 185.589B.

were not themselves the Persons (*Quod proprietates personarum non essent ipse persone*); that the Persons could not be predicated in any statement (*Quod theologice persone in nulla predicarentur*); that the divine nature was not incarnate (*Quod divina natura non esset incarnata*)²⁹). Geoffrey also lists and discusses the *capitula*, with an implied compliment to Godescalc for discovering these errors running consistently through Gilbert's commentaries like a twisting serpent hidden from the casual glance: *pluribus tamen locis, sinuosis quibusdam voluminibus caput contegens serpentinum*³⁰). The *initium malorum*, the root of the trouble, lies, says Geoffrey, in Gilbert's imputing a *forma* to God, 'by which' God is, but which is not itself God; as if he were a man, whose *forma* is *humanitas*, 'by which' he is a man, but which is not itself the man. This is Godescalc's first objection. Gilbert has been teaching that that 'by which' God is, his very essence, is not itself God³¹). Geoffrey enlarges upon Godescalc's second and third points, as they are described by Otto³²), and his account of the fourth *capitulum* coincides closely with that of Otto, but again it is dealt with at greater length³³).

To his *capitula* Godescalc had added a number of patristic quotations, and the whole appears to have been arranged in a *schedula* in such a way that the patristic texts formed the body of the work, with the headings probably set out in the margin, so as to make them subordinate to the texts³⁴). Even with the texts thrown into prominence in this way the whole collection made up a slender body of evidence in comparison with that which the supporters of Gilbert were able to bring. They carried in large volumes containing complete texts of the Fathers, as a demonstration of the substantial nature of their case and the flimsiness of the attack. Bernard cut short their sneers, but the impact of their arrival with their evidence massively displayed for everyone to see was not lost on him³⁵). Nevertheless, the *schedula*, slight though it was, had to stand. It provided a structure for the debate. Bernard could not better it with the time and resources at his command.

We can see Bernard's views at a stage when he had begun to put them

²⁹) OTTO OF FREISING, *op. cit.*, I, 53; p. 236.29-238.2.

³⁰) PL 185.595C.

³¹) PL 185.597D.

³²) PL 185.604A.

³³) PL 185.609A.

³⁴) PL 185.613D-614A.

³⁵) PL 185.589B; HÄRING, *Analecta Cisterciensia*, 22 (1966), 20-1.

³⁶) PL 185.589D.

into his own words, in one of his sermons on the *Song of Songs*, which was preached shortly after the trial at Rheims. Gilbert and his disciples, he says, teach that the greatness by which God is great, the goodness by which God is good, the justice by which God is just, the divinity by which he is divine, are not God. In this they are 'innovators', and not even innovating dialecticians, but innovating *heretici*³⁷). Bernard fastens upon the way in which this technically 'proper' way of putting it (as Gilbert sees it)³⁸) will mislead the simple. He accuses Gilbert of denying something about the divinity of God itself, not of questioning the way in which we commonly *speak* of his divinity; of asking a question about *res*, not about *verba*. 'If God's divinity is not God, what is it?' asks Bernard (*si Deus non est, quid est?*). He is happy to accept Gilbert's way of putting things. Certainly God is 'by' his divinity. But he is also himself that same divinity by which he is: *sed eandem divinitatem, qua est, Deum nihilominus assero*³⁹). It is perfectly proper to speak as Gilbert does (*proprie dici possit*), but it may more correctly and fittingly (*rectius, congruentius*) be said that God is 'greatness', 'justice', 'wisdom' than that he is 'great', 'just', 'wise'. Bernard speaks as though Gilbert had impugned the very divinity of God, questioned whether God is divine, cut away, in short, the very foundations of the faith. Bernard describes in his sermon how, recently, at the Council of Rheims, he has maintained this position against Gilbert⁴⁰).

In his sermon Bernard deals with the underlying principle at stake in Godescalc's first three *capitula*, as Otto states them. He reads Gilbert's teaching as a challenge to God's very existence. 'Who is he whom my soul loves?' he asks in the words of the *Song of Songs*. The answer is of course: 'He who is' (*qui est*), the God who identifies himself by saying 'I am that I am'⁴¹). In this statement are summed up all the attributes of God. However many attributes are listed, it is impossible to add to what is already implied in saying that God exists. When we have said that God exists we have not only said the first thing we know about him, but also all that can be known about him. There can be nothing true of God which is not itself God.

³⁷) BERNARD, *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum*, 80,6; *Opera Omnia*, II (1958), p. 281.9-10.

³⁸) GILBERT OF POITIERS, *ed. cit.*, p. 90.28.

³⁹) *Song of Songs*, Sermon 80,7.

⁴⁰) *Ibid.*, Sermon 80,8.

⁴¹) Exodus 3.14.

Bernard was still pursuing Godescalc's points in the last book of his *De Consideratione*, which he wrote in the last years of his life as a handbook for Pope Eugenius⁴²). There, he makes use of a version of the principle which furnished Anselm with his ontological argument for the existence of God in the *Proslogion*⁴³). Bernard constructs an argument of his own to show that God's divinity, 'by which' Gilbert says God has his being, is nothing but God himself; that there is in fact nothing but God in God. God is that than which nothing better can be thought: *nihil melius cogitari potest*. It is 'better', Bernard maintains, to say that divinity is nothing other than God himself, than to say that it is that 'by which' God is God: *at melius illam divinitatem, qua dicunt Deum esse, non aliud quam Deum esse fatemur*⁴⁴). It is not only self-evidently 'better'; it must also be true, since God is, by definition, that than which nothing better can be thought. This is crude stuff in comparison with Anselm's argument, but is in keeping with Anselm's declared intention that this *argumentum* shall serve to prove the existence of God also everything else we can know about him⁴⁵).

Bernard was not alone in adapting Anselm's *argumentum* in this way the first half of the twelfth century. Gilbert Crispin, for example, had made use of the principle in his *Disputatio* between a Jew and a Christian. There, the Jew argues that if God is that than which nothing greater can be thought, it is inconceivable that he could be compelled by any necessity to make himself part of the human race, and to suffer man's ills with him⁴⁶). The principle has undergone some modification: *maius* is accompanied by *sufficientius*. God is 'that than which nothing greater or more sufficient can be thought'. But it is being used as Bernard uses it, to prove something that we wish to know about God, over and above the points Anselm demonstrates in the *Proslogion*. Gilbert Crispin is able to demolish the Jew's objection, and to show that God became man without in any way offending against his greatness⁴⁷). Bernard certainly knew something of Gilbert. At the meeting of Bishops Bernard convened before the Council of Rheims met, Gilbert Crispin's name was men-

⁴²) *De Consideratione* V.v.13; *Opera Omnia* III, (1966), 477.

⁴³) *Anselmi Opera Omnia*, ed. F.S. Schmitt, I (1938), 101.5-6.

⁴⁴) *De Consideratione* V.vii. 15; *Opera Omnia* III, 479.

⁴⁵) *Anselmi Opera Omnia*, I.93.6-10.

⁴⁶) GILBERT CRISPIN, *Disputatio Judei cum Christiano*, ed. B. Blumenkranz (Antwerp, 1956), p. 43. 19-21.

⁴⁷) *Ibid.*, p. 43.27-8.

tioned among the foremost theologians of recent times⁴⁸). His reputation rested largely upon this single work⁴⁹). Bernard had a precedent for his adoption of the Anselmian argument in another context.

It is clear from the sermon on the *Song of Songs* and from the *De Consideratione* that in putting a finger on Gilbert's seeming challenge to the very existence of God and his apparent denial that God's divinity is God himself, Godescalc had provided Bernard with a key to Gilbert's writings. Otto of Freising says that Bernard's zeal for the faith made him *credulus*; he was easily persuaded that those masters who placed an emphasis upon the use of reasoning which he thought disproportionate were misleading simple Christian souls⁵⁰). Bernard saw no advantage in arguing *iuxta logicorum regulam*⁵¹). 'This scandal began', he says to Gilbert, 'with the assertion of many people that you believe and teach that the divine essence or nature, the divinity of God,... is not God, but a "form" by which God exists'⁵²). Gilbert's exact meaning — for he undoubtedly had been teaching in these or similar words — remains a matter for dispute. Probably he intended only to try to find a means of making statements about the divine nature which, by means of a circumlocution, enlarged the powers of expression of human language about created things, and provided a means of talking about God in a language more 'proper' for the purpose.

Gilbert was much concerned, as were many contemporaries, with this question of the special properties of theological language. He held that everything which exists has its own distinct form, which is an aggregate of the form of its substance and the forms of all its accidents. He does not accept the existence of universal or common forms, in which all members of a given species participate⁵³). Those things which exist in the natural world differ from higher, 'abstract' existences, such as those of mathematical truths. In mathematics, or in discussing abstractions, forms are abstracted from specific concrete examples. We understand 'whiteness is a colour' by abstracting whiteness from specific concrete examples of white objects, much as we grasp the idea of a triangle by looking at many

⁴⁸) JOHN OF SALISBURY, *Historia Pontificalis*, ed. cit., p. 19.

⁴⁹) Gilbert Crispin's works mostly survive in a single manuscript, London, British Library, MS. Add. 8166.

⁵⁰) OTTO OF FREISING, *op. cit.*, I, 50.

⁵¹) *Ibid.*, 1.56; p. 246.6.

⁵²) PL, 185.590A.

⁵³) L. NIELSEN, *On the doctrine of logic and language of Gilbert Porreta and his Followers: Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen-Age Grec et Latin*, Copenhagen, 17 (1976), 45.

three-sided figures⁵⁴). In abstracting it, we take white 'from' something (*a quo*). In theological statements, that is, statements, about God, the 'form' is different again. We say that God is divine 'by divinity': *a divinitate*, and thus we explain what he is substantially by means of this 'form', but the 'form' remains a convenience for labelling only. It is not something which exists in its own right. Thus it is that Gilbert can say that the *forma dei*, the form of God, or *divinitas* is that 'by which' (*qua*) God exists, and not itself God.

When we set this beside Bernard's accusation, it is clear at once that Bernard was reading Gilbert's words in a quite different way. Bernard is talking, not about the problem of theological language, the *verba*, but about the content of what is expressed, the *res*. He believes Gilbert to be saying, not merely that the word *divinitas* or the word *essentia* is not God, but that the actual divine essence or nature is itself not God. It is as though Gilbert had said that God is not divine. 'If this is what you believe', challenged Bernard, 'declare it openly, or deny it'. On trial, Gilbert dared to reply (*ausus est*, says Geoffrey), in the terms of his original statement; 'The form of God and the divinity by which God is, is not itself God'⁵⁵).

Bernard now had the confession he wanted. 'See', he said, as Geoffrey reports it, 'We have what we were looking for. Let that confession be written down. Pen and writing materials were fetched and Gilbert's words were recorded. 'Let it be written with an iron pen in ink of adamant', insisted Bernard.

The discussion which followed turned decidedly upon the *res* and not the *verba*. Someone pointed out that if Gilbert's mode of expression were to be used for *sanctus*, it would amount to saying that that 'by which' God is, is at the same time that which proceeds from him⁵⁶). Someone else, perhaps Bernard himself, was able to find exactly the parallel which was needed in Augustine's *De Trinitate*⁵⁷). 'God is great' says Augustine, 'by that magnitude which is what he is himself. Otherwise that magnitude will be greater than God'⁵⁸). The first *capitulum* was discussed throughout the first day. Geoffrey reports with some pride that it was he himself who pointed out to the bishop 'in the hearing of everyone' that he had

⁵⁴) *Ibid.*, 67.

⁵⁵) PL, 195.590A.

⁵⁶) PL, 185.590..

⁵⁷) AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, V.x.11.

⁵⁸) PL, 185.580.

totally denied that he had taught or written those very words which he had now confessed within the same year in Paris, before the lord Pope and the majority of the senior persons now present, and produced witnesses to confirm that he had never believed or taught such things. If indeed the disputants had failed to understand Gilbert's intention technically speaking and were piling misunderstanding upon misunderstanding with anything of the glee Geoffrey suggests, then it is not difficult to understand Gilbert's apparently contradictory responses. At Paris he had denied that his teaching was intended to undermine orthodoxy. Nothing he had said had been meant in that way. But now, when he was pressed upon the exact terms of his statements, he stuck by his formulation and asserted that those were indeed the very words in which he had expressed his view of the *divinitas* of God. 'Whatever I then said', Gilbert maintained, 'I say now'. Geoffrey 'sighed' and turned to the assembly, to whom, taken at its face value, Gilbert's confession looked like a volte-face⁵⁹).

The discussion moved on to the second *capitulum*, in which it was claimed that Gilbert had been teaching that the three Persons are not one God, or indeed one anything, but that they are 'by one divinity': they are *unum, id est uno*. Again, it was the apparent offence against orthodoxy rather than the exact underlying meaning of Gilbert's statement with which the assembly was concerned. First he had apparently said that God is not divine; now he was saying that the three Persons are not one God. That, at least, was the interpretation many readers would put upon his words. As in the case of the text of Augustine on 'greatness', so here a text was found which denied so blatant a heresy plainly; but it could not, in the nature of things, meet Gilbert on his own terms, since those were new technical terms, formulae freshly-minted by Gilbert himself. Bernard and his supporters quoted 'Athanasius' (Vigilius of Thapsus), who said that the 'songs of the heavenly powers confirm that one is three and three one'⁵⁹). If Gilbert had simply been saying that God was not three in one, the text would have served its purpose.

The trial was adjourned at this point to the next day, when Bernard and his party brought so many books to the disputation that Gilbert's supporters were dumbstruck (*obstupescerent*)⁶⁰). They could not longer claim that Bernhard's party had no more than a flimsy *schedula*, while

⁵⁹) PL, 185.590C.

⁶⁰) PL, 185.590D.

⁶¹) PL, 185.591D.

they themselves had come in scholarly readiness. But Geoffrey describes how Gilbert's supporters found a way of restoring their apparent superiority. They produced witnesses from among the Greek fathers whose words were all but incomprehensible (*verba minus intelligibilia*)⁶²), and mystified the opposition. Geoffrey gives the impression that Gilbert's party simply wanted to create confusion in their opponents' minds by making the discussion obscure. But it may be that more was at stake. There is no reason to suppose that Gilbert wanted to win the case in such an absurd manner. What we know of him suggests that he was a man who needed to be roused to give of his best, but, as John of Salisbury describes him, once his mind was engaged with a problem, he became fiery and passionate⁶³). Geoffrey's account suggests that perhaps that is what has happened here. Gilbert stood his ground when he was challenged. He asserted his position. And the use of so empty and all-but irrelevant a passage from 'Athanasius', and of the previous text from Augustine, may have angered him enough to urge him to try to explain himself properly, and with technical exactitude. In order to do so, he was obliged to use forms of words and formulae which sounded obscure to the ears of those who had not been his pupils and did not understand his technical language, and to draw upon texts in Origen and elsewhere which had helped him reach his conclusions. The root of the difficulty lay in the fact that no patristic authority could support Gilbert in the matter of formulae and technical terminology, because his language was so new. Yet Godescalc's *schedula* ensured that the debate should be conducted in these terms, by authorities, not by reasoning.

By the end of the second day of the trial, the discussion had reached the fourth *capitulum*. Here many *patristica* were ready to hand to support the case put forward by Bernard's supporters. Gregory, Augustine, Leo and others were quoted. Perhaps it was here above all that Godescalc's list of authoritative texts proved useful⁶⁴). After a lengthy discussion, the trial was adjourned for the judgement.

The next day archbishops and bishops and abbots and a great multitude of masters met *apud Bernardum*. They agreed to write out the *capitula: totidem quam expressius potuere*, together with the words of Gilbert's confession, and the objections which had been made against the

⁶²) PL 185.591A, and see N.M. HÄRING *The Porretani and the Greek Fathers: Mediaeval Studies*, 24 (1962), 182 ff.

⁶³) JOHN OF SALISBURY *Historia Pontificalis*, ed. cit., p. 27.

⁶⁴) PL, 185.591B.

capitula. When it had been signed, the document was taken to the Pope and the Cardinals by bishops Hugh and Milo and abbot Suger of St. Denys⁶⁵). When Gilbert's errors were set out for all to see in this way, Geoffrey comments, even if any one had wanted to stand by him as a person, no one wanted to stand up for his teaching: *si stare visi fuerant aliqui pro persona, sed non stabant aliquatenus pro doctrina*⁶⁶). Gilbert was summoned. Under interrogation, he freely renounced each *capitulum*, saying, 'If you believe otherwise, so do I; if you say otherwise, so do I; if you write otherwise, so do I'⁶⁷). Then Eugenius condemned the *capitula*, giving strict orders that Gilbert's book was not to be read or copied. Gilbert himself went home, as we have seen, with honour.

The accounts of Gilbert's trial which survive are the work of partial witnesses, except that of John of Salisbury, who believed Gilbert to be no trouble-maker, but a man of peace whose teaching had been misunderstood. Geoffrey's account of the *schedula*, his *Libellus* in which he sums up the discussion, and his letter written in old age, even the chapter of the *Vita Prima* of Bernard himself in which he discusses the trial⁶⁸), were written by a frankly prejudiced polemicist, who shared Bernard's zeal for the safety of Christian souls at risk. Godescalc's claim to have made a contribution to the condemnation rests upon Geoffrey's evidence. When we look at the way in which the evidence is presented it becomes clear that Godescalc's part is described without elaboration, and with no attempt to make more of it than it deserves. Geoffrey simply tells us that Godescalc was asked to draw up a list of headings, and that he did so, adding quotations from the Fathers, and brought the resulting *schedula* to Rheims. What happened to Godescalc's list after that was not his responsibility, and Geoffrey does not mention him again. It is for this reason, perhaps, that Godescalc is given no credit by the authors of other accounts of the trial.

Nevertheless, his contribution was of the first importance. No fresh *capitula* were added. His list proved adequate to the needs of the accusers of Gilbert. And when the bishops and abbots drew up their list after the trial they ended with a confession of faith which exactly mirrors Godescalc's four points:

'We believe and trust that God is the simple nature of divinity, and

⁶⁵) PL, 185.591C-D.

⁶⁶) PL, 185.592A.

⁶⁷) PL, 185.592B.

⁶⁸) *Vita Prima*, III. v. 15; PL 185.312.

that it cannot be denied in any catholic sense that God is divinity and divinity is God'.

'When we speak of the three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we say that they are themselves one God, one substance; and, on the contrary, when we speak of one God, one divine substance, we state that that very one God, one divine substance, is three Persons'.

'We believe that only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit is eternal, and that all other things, whether relations, properties, singularities, or unities, or anything of this sort which are in God and are eternal, are God'.

'We believe that that divinity, whether we call it divine substance or nature, was incarnate, but [only] in the Son⁶⁹).

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⁶⁹) *Libellus*; PL 185.617-8, cf. OTTO OF FREISING, *op. cit.*, p. 257.