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Theology at Bec

That the monastery of Le Bec-Hellouin holds a notable place within the history of the western thought, and in particular of intellectual developments within the High Middle Ages (c.1050-c.1250), is both surprising and remarkable. In the persons of Lanfranc and Anselm this strict Benedictine house produced, or inspired, thinkers famous in their own lifetime and in the case of the latter until the modern-day. While Lanfranc might not be read very often outside scholarly circles his authority within the tradition of the liberal arts, especially the Trivium (Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric) was considerable, and his place in high medieval biblical exegesis important, if rather overtaken by the evolution of the Gloss in the following century. Anselm's thinking operates at an altogether more celebrated level, challenging doctrinal thinking in his rejection of the rights of the devil in the economy of salvation, powerfully fusing prayer and reasoned discourse, blending lyrical meditation with precise dialectic and rhetorical control. He was a skilled biblical exegete who compiled no specific exercises in exegesis and a Christian writer whose collected works deal with many if not most of the central questions of Christian thought: how the nature of God might be explored within human language, experience and rational capacity, the nature of human encounter with God, the Trinity, the Fall, Redemption and the Atoning work of Christ, the Holy Spirit, Grace, Predestination and Free Will.

It is important to note that neither Lanfranc, nor Anselm, spent their entire adult lives at Bec. Lanfranc was monk and the Prior from about 1042 until 1063, then Abbot of St Étienne, Caen, and then Archbishop of Canterbury 1070-1089. Anselm arrived at Bec in around 1059, was Prior in succession to Lanfranc, Abbot on the founder Herluin's death in 1077, and in 1093, again in succession to Lanfranc, became Archbishop of Canterbury. That said, the bonds between the communities of Bec, Caen and Canterbury, and perhaps especially Bec and Canterbury remained strong throughout the lifetime of both principals. Lanfranc was an important donor to Bec as Archbishop of Canterbury, mentor for Anselm, and instigated a period during which movement of personnel between Bec and Canterbury was common. Anselm's affection for Bec remained high throughout his archiepiscopal career, returning there during his second exile in the early 1100s, for a lengthy sojourn. That the enduring connections with Bec involved Christian thinking is also apparent. Lanfranc wrote to Anselm early in the 1070s requesting copies of various works from the library, including, probably, his own commentary on the Epistles of Saint Paul. One of Anselm's companions on his first exile, 1097-1100, during which he travelled to Rome, and stayed with another former monk of Bec, John, Abbot of Telesse, was Boso, monk of Bec. Boso would go on to become the fourth Abbot of Bec, but is perhaps better known to posterity as the interlocutor for Anselm's treatise on the atonement, the *Cur Deus homo* – 'Why the God-man?'. Bec remained significant for early copies of Anselm's works, some of which were made a little too hastily for his liking.

To call either Lanfranc or Anselm a theologian is, however, something of a misnomer, and some care needs to be used in its application. The term was not of common currency during the period from the foundation of Bec until the first quarter of the twelfth century. A direct contemporary of Lanfranc, John, sometime Abbot of Fécamp did make use of the term in his *Confessio theologica*. With some traces of the affective piety that Anselm would make his own, and a creative elision between prayerful exposition and expository prayer, John uses *theologia* and its cognates in the Patristic sense, especially amongst the Greek Fathers and particularly Gregory Nazianzen, of a piece of thinking directed to the Son as the second part of the Trinity. The emergence of theology as a discipline, and, in the medieval sense, a science, with its own principles and tools, took place far later than Anselm's lifetime. Where Abelard uses the term in various titles for his works of the 1120s, the *Theologia 'summi boni'*, the *Theologia christiana*, and the *Theologia 'scholarium'* it is not clear entirely what he meant by this: Bernard of Clairvaux, amongst other things, objected to Abelard's novel use of an unusual term. It was not until the 1230s that Robert Grosseteste was able to give a full discussion of the claims to theology as a science, or, as he prefers, a wisdom, in his *Hexaameron*. This reflected a more widespread attempt to address the issue of what theology was amongst Grosseteste's contemporaries, notably William of Auvergne and Alexander of Hales.

Semantically speaking to refer to Lanfranc and Anselm's theology or their activity as theologians does not conform to how they themselves, and their contemporaries, described their activities. Such descriptions are more precise, whether an exploration of the liberal arts, or of the sacred page (*sacra pagina*), or another variant on sacred learning and wisdom, or in response to particular activities, praying, preaching, or contemplating. Of course, these activities do, now, conform to a more general understanding of what theological endeavour consists. To that extent it is not unreasonable to describe both Lanfranc and Anselm's interests as theological, with the caveat that this creates some distortion as a result of modern perspectives and assumptions. A case in point is the purpose of learning in a Christian environment. Neither Lanfranc nor Anselm indulge in theological reflection for intellectual curiosity, or in an abstract, academic manner. Both insist on the rule of faith, as Anselm's famous statement runs, *Fides quaerens intellectionem* – faith seeks understanding, not the other way around.

That Bec was associated with Christian learning of a high order can be established from many different types of evidence, from the library holdings as revealed in the twelfth century catalogue, to the works produced within the monastery (although in this case works are very often preserved in other locations, the survival rate for Bec codices is low), and contemporary witnesses to the monastery's reputation for teaching and scholarly virtues. Amongst the latter, Orderic Vitalis, chronicler-monk of St Évroult, described Bec at the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries as notable for its learning and for its hospitality, linking the two together as follows:

A great store of learning in both the liberal arts and sacred learning was assembled by Lanfranc in the abbey of Bec, and magnificently increased by

Anselm so that the school sent out many distinguished scholars and also prudent pilots and spiritual charioteers who have been entrusted by divine providence with holding the reins of the churches in the arena of this world. So by good custom the monks of Bec are so devoted to the study of letters, so eager to solve sacred problems and compose edifying treatises, that almost all of them seem to be philosophers; and by association with them, even with those who pass as illiterates and are called rustics at Bec, the most erudite doctors can learn things to their advantage. The whole community is full of joy and charity in the service of God, and because true Wisdom is their teacher they are unflinching in their devotions. I cannot speak too highly of the hospitality of Bec. If you ask Burgundians and Spaniards and others coming from far and near they will reply by giving you a full account of the kindness they have received, and thereafter they do their best to faithfully imitate it. The doors of Bec are always open to any traveller, and their bread is never denied to anyone who asks for it in the name of Christ'.¹

By the time Orderic composed these words, that is around 1125, the house was well established, and it had produced other scholars than simply Lanfranc and Anselm, for example Gilbert Crispin, monk of Bec and then Abbot of Westminster and Ralph, Abbot of Battle Abbey. How Orderic's presentation of Bec's scholarly reputation should be interpreted is a complex question. Gilbert and Ralph produced their major works after their respective periods of time at Bec, and were both indebted to Anselm in various ways. That Bec had produced a significant number of monastic leaders is not in doubt. The composition of treatises and the extent to which the monastic environment was imbued with learning are comments which are more puzzling and intriguing. It is striking too, that Orderic places Christian learning as integrally connected to the practice of joy and charity. The role of the wider monastic community within these practices is a central theme in both Lanfranc and Anselm's works.

It is worth dwelling with Orderic's vision of Bec, and contextualising his remarks within his experience of the house. Bec features on a number of occasions in Orderic's *Ecclesiastical History*, and is mentioned more than most other houses, including Cluny. The attention is not wholly consistent with far more time being devoted to the foundation of Bec, and its first generation of monastic leaders, Abbots Herluin and Anselm and Prior Lanfranc than to the early-mid 12th century history of the house. The patchiness of reference may to some extent

¹ Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History* Bk IV (vol. ii, 296-297): 'Ingens in ecclesia Beccensi liberalium atrium et sacrae lectionis sedimen per Lanfrancum coepit, et per Anselmum magnifice crevit ut inde plures procederent egregii doctores et prouidi nautae ac spiritualium aurigae, quibus ad regendum in huius saeculi stadio diuinitus habentur commissae sunt ecclesiae. Sic ex bono usu in tantum Beccenses coenobitae studiis litterarum sunt dediti, et in questione seu prolatione sacrorum enigmatum utiliumque sermonum insistent seduli ut paene omnes uidentur inter eos illiterati ut uocantur rustici possint ediscere sibi commoda spumantes grammatici. Affabilitate mutua et karitatis dulcedine in Domini cultu gaudent, et indefatigabili religionis ut uera docet eos sapientia pollent. De hospitalitate Beccensium sufficienter eloqui nequeo. Interrogati Burgundiones et Hispani alique de longe seu de prope aduentantes respondeant et quanta benignitate ab eis suscepti fuerint sine fraude proferant, eosque in similibus imitari sine fictione satagant. Ianua Beccensium patet omni uisitori, eorumque panis nulli denegatur karitativae petenti'.

reflect the shifting focus of Orderic's narratorial scope and ambition as his *History* developed over the 1120s and 1130s. Where books III and IV, in which Bec receives most considered treatment, offered a vision of the re-creation of Norman monasticism, Orderic's later books either concentrate more on St Evroul and its properties, or a more general history of the Norman people, including their church history. Contemporary concerns, such as the debate between Cluny and Citeaux, occupy Orderic in his later writing, than Bec, or indeed other Norman houses. Nevertheless even in this context the abbots of Bec are dutifully recorded alongside those of other houses, and not all are so included.²

Orderic's own connections with Bec are a little more difficult to document precisely. As stated earlier he may have known sections of William of Poitiers's *Gesta Guillelmi* (also probably used by Milo Crispin in the *Vita Lanfranci*), now lost, that dealt with Lanfranc.³ Orderic may also have known the *Annales Beccenses*.⁴ He certainly knew the *Vita Anselmi* of Eadmer, and implies that he was familiar with the library of Bec in more general terms: 'If anyone wishes to read more about his deeds and words, he can find them described in his companion Eadmer's book at Bec, the abbey of his predecessor, Herluin'.⁵ In addition, and perhaps foremostly, the web of personal contacts, for example Roger le Sap, presumably provided the bulk of his general knowledge.

Why Bec, especially in the first 70-80 years of its existence, should occupy Orderic to the extent that it does can be suggested for a number of reasons. These include the reputations of Bec's leaders, its traditions, its more particular reputation for learning (closely allied to the fame of its leaders), its stability and wealth and its place a mother-house. The interplay of personnel and place is crucial here; Bec is not mentioned much by Orderic after, on the one hand its foundation, and, on the other the lives and careers of few key personnel. Bec itself does not sustain his interest, it is rather the manner in which certain individuals lived ideals so as to be worthy of emulation that holds his attention.⁶

² Abbot William does not receive much attention from Orderic, but the death of Boso is recorded 'who had governed the abbey admirably for about 10 years...after a long illness which the learned man had patiently endured' and the succession to the abbacy of Prior Theobald (Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk XII (vol. vi, 465)); and the promotion of Theobald to Canterbury, and the promotion of Leutard as abbot of Bec (² Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk XII (vol. vi, 529)).

³ Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. ii, 'Introduction', pp. xviii-xxi.

⁴ *Annales Beccenses*, ed. A. Porée. Early in Book V of his *Ecclesiastical History* Orderic recapitulates in an annalistic style the history of Bec's foundation, the death of Herluin and the succession of Anselm, where the *Annales* appear to be his source (Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History* Bk V (vol.iii: 13).

⁵ Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk X (vol. v: 253): Chibnall notes, although on what precise ground is not specified, 'The library of the abbey of Bec was always accessible to monks of St Evroul; and it was here that Orderic saw Eadmer's Life of St. Anselm and possibly also Lanfranc's *De corpore et sanguine Domini*', ⁵ Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. ii, 'Introduction', p. xvii.

⁶ For more on the importance of place to Orderic see Amanda Jane Hingst, *The Written Word: Past and Place in the Work of Orderic Vitalis* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009).

Lanfranc and Anselm are numbered high amongst such individuals. Orderic's description of Bec highlights the extent to which Christian learning within the community was dominated by these two figures; the foundation of learning and its magnificent increase attributed to each in turn. Nevertheless, other voices are acknowledged by Orderic, and Bec's reputation for learning is held against its reputation for hospitality quite deliberately. The two activities are part of the same monastic whole, learning is only fulfilled in the context of charity; charity is understood and made explicable through learning. Orderic's evocation of the welcome to travellers is essentially Christological, echoing perhaps the Sermon on the Mount, evoking wider image of monastic life as pilgrimage, and deeper paradigmaticism of help offered by the community to that offered in salvation history by God.⁷ Both learning and hospitality ultimately, are directed towards the best practice of monastic life that the individuals and community can muster. Orderic concludes his evocation of Bec with the injunction that 'My He who freely creates and sustains the good that shines for the in them keep them in their holy ways, and bring them safely to the harbour of salvation'.⁸

Community and Learning

The role of the community, as individuals and in groups, in formulating, shaping and testing Christian teaching at Bec is important to recall. Lanfranc's *Constitutions*, which very probably mirror his experience from Bec as well as incorporating Cluniac customs, give instructions for Lenten readings and the return of books from the previous year as demanded by the Rule of St Benedict. Each monk on hearing his name should return the book given to him to read. Lanfranc goes on to state that 'anyone who is conscious that he has not read in full the book he received shall confess his fault prostrate and ask for pardon'.⁹ The new books for the year are then distributed. The particular role of the Cantor in taking care of the books of the house is indicated, with the caveat that this is the case only if his interest and learning make him suitable for the task.¹⁰

A more intimate insight into the way in which the community involved itself in Christian learning is to be found in evidence surrounding the production of Anselm's various treatises. As the prefaces to both the *Monologion* and the *Proslogion* insist the audience played an active role in the creation and

⁷ Matthew 7.7-10: 'Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is there among you, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? Or if he shall ask him a fish, will he reach him a serpent? [petite, et dabitur vobis: quaerite, et invenientis: pulsate, et aperietur vobis. Omnis enim qui petit, accipit: et qui quaerit, invenit: et pulsanti aperietur. Aut quis est ex vobis homo, quem si petierit filius suus panem, numquid lapidem porriget ei? Aut si piscem petierit, numquid serpentem porriget ei?']

⁸ Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk IV (vol. ii, 296-297): 'Ipsos in bonis perseuerantes custodiat, et ad portum salutis incolumes perducatur qui gratis coepit peragitque bonum quod in eis choruscat'.

⁹ Lanfranc, p. 19: 'Et qui cognouerit se non perlegisse librum quem recepit, prostrates culpam dicat, et indulgentiam petat'.

¹⁰ Lanfranc, *Constitutions*, p. 82.

dissemination of Anselm's thoughts in written form. In the case of the *Monologion* Anselm recalls that:

Certain brothers have frequently and earnestly entreated me to write out for them, in the form of a meditation, certain things which I had discussed in non-technical terms with them regarding meditating on the Divine Being and regarding certain other [themes] related to a meditation of this kind.

The same brothers entreated Anselm to explain his ideas in an unembellished and simple style, so that they could follow. The author attributes to the community also, the methodological point of the treatise, that nothing in the meditation should be argued through Scripture, but rather through reason. This does not, in any way, mean that he regarded Scripture as less authoritative than reason, quite the opposite. It was, however, a bold move within Bec to discuss matters connected the divine nature with an appeal to reason. As will be seen Lanfranc's dispute with Berengar of Tours over the Eucharistic formulae had taken been based around the same issues: scripture and patristic writing were enshrined by Lanfranc authorities. It is perhaps for this reason that Anselm states in the preface that he had not found in the treatise anything inconsistent with the Fathers and especially Augustine.

Whether Anselm's invocation of the community was defensive, and designed to elicit a sense that he did not proceed without the authority of those around him, the production of his Bec works does appear to have involved, quite closely, members of the community. The community are present, although in a more distant way in the preface to the *Proslogion*. Reminding his readers that the *Monologion* had been written at the entreaty of others, Anselm described the process by which he came to generate the *Proslogion*. At the end of the process he committed his thoughts to writing:

Supposing, then, that if what I rejoiced to have discovered were written down it would please its readers, I wrote the following work on this [subject], and on various others, in the role of someone endeavoring to elevate his mind toward contemplating God and in the role of someone seeking to understand what he believes

According to Eadmer, Anselm's remembrancer, the *Proslogion* endured a rather contested reception of the *Proslogion*, in which earlier versions on wax tablets went missing, or were smashed. It was probably the critical reception that prompted Anselm to seek the approval of the papal legate for the *Proslogion*, recorded at the end of the preface. This episode, as well as that of the *Monologion* do, perhaps, speak to a community in which ideas were an important currency for the identity and management of the abbey.

Lanfranc¹¹

¹¹ The essential guides to Lanfranc's life and career remain M. T. Gibson, *Lanfranc of Bec* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); H. E. J. Cowdrey, *Lanfranc: Scholar, Monk and Archbishop* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Ann Collins, *Teacher in Faith and Virtue - Lanfranc of Bec's Commentary on Saint Paul* (Leiden: Brill, 2007). See also, M. T. Gibson, ed. Milo Crispin,

Lanfranc's arrival at Bec was accorded some considerable importance in the memory of the house, in both the *Life of Herluin* and in the *Life of Lanfranc* whose author, Milo Crispon, made extensive use of the earlier work. Lanfranc's scholarly fame derived from his status as trained in the Italian schools of the liberal art and law. From his background and upbringing in Pavia, he had journeyed across the Alps, to Normandy, as many others before and after him, and converted to the monastic life at Bec. Lanfranc's organisational gifts, and his pedagogical skills were put to good use in the recently founded community. An external school founded in the 1040s proved attractive and an important source of income for the young community.

Lanfranc's earlier training, so far as can be suggested, appears to be in the rhetorical tradition of the Italian liberal arts, especially Cicero.¹² Arriving at Bec, however, initiated a new phase in Lanfranc's intellectual interests. He devoted himself, probably soon after 1042 and into the later 1040s to the Bible and sacred study. Later glosses survive of a commentary on the Psalms but the main monument to this period of study is the commentary on the epistles of St Paul.¹³ The bulk of the evidence for Lanfranc's writing emanates from Christ Church, Canterbury, but it was from Bec that these works had been requested originally. As an exegete Lanfranc developed his skills as the commentary proceeds, as Collins clearly and engagingly demonstrates in her extended study. Dependent on a collection of Augustine by Florus of Lyon, Augustine's commentary on Galatians, and the Ambrosiaster – a Latin translation of Theodore of Mopsuestia, and the Latin Chrysostom. Lanfranc's commentary is exemplary of an early phase of glossing; his remarks are short and focused on an explanation of the biblical verse in questions.

Although Lanfranc's sources are limited, his engagement with them deepened over the course of his biblical studies, and the commentary illustrates very much 'a search for the meaning of faith'.¹⁴ A more strongly and overtly articulated Christology emerges with the commentary on Hebrews, blending Ambrose (and Ambrosiaster) with Chrysostom. It is Augustine, however, who ended up as most significant for Lanfranc's enterprise. Increasing quotation from his most authoritative source shifted Lanfranc's views on law, sin, grace and will. Again as identified by Collins, Lanfranc gained a new sense of the limitations of the law, it alone is not sufficient for salvation.¹⁵ With respect to sin he connected more tightly the individual human sins to the sin of Adam, a connection which made the atoning sacrifice of Christ necessary. The justification of grace emerges as another prominent theme, and as another counterpoint to the works of the law:

Vita Lanfranci, in Giulio d'Onofrio, ed. *Lanfranco di Pavia* (Rome: Herder, 1993); *The Letters of Lanfranc Archbishop of Canterbury*, eds and trans. H. Clover and M. T. Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). Major editions of Lanfranc's works are *Beati Lanfranci Cantuariensis archiepiscopi opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. J. A. Giles, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1844) and in the *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 150; D. Knowles, *The Monastic Constitutions of Lanfranc* (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1951 – with subsequent reprints by Oxford University Press).

¹² Collins, *Teacher in Faith and Virtue*, pp. 20-22; Gibson, *Lanfranc*, pp. 4-22.

¹³ B. Smalley, 'La *Glossa Ordinaria*: Quelques prédécesseurs d'Anselme de Laon', *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 9 (1937), 375.

¹⁴ Collins, *Teacher of Faith and Virtue*, p. 180.

¹⁵ Collins, *Teacher of Faith and Virtue*, pp. 168-171.

The law confined all under sin either because it did not free anyone perfectly from sin, or because what it decreed was so difficult, that when it was not able to be fulfilled, it constituted all humans as sinners.¹⁶

Both law and human will are limited; grace necessary to move beyond these limitations.

A similar compilation of authorities can be observed in Lanfranc's responses to Berengar of Tours over the definition and identity of the bread and wine of the Eucharistic celebration as the body and blood of Christ.¹⁷ Lanfranc's contribution to the debate, his treatise *De corpore et sanguine Domini*, is not strictly speaking, theological, and post-dates his time at Bec, written during the early years of his abbacy at Caen. Lanfranc was writing more by way of response to the conciliar judgement meted out to Berengar, rather than a full-blown examination of the theological implications of the arguments about whether bread or wine could, in reality, be two things. That Lanfranc took a more legal and pastoral approach to the subject is shown in a story from his youth which was repeated by his contemporary and fellow-opponent of Berengar, Guidmond of Aversa. The story concerned the miraculous appearance of flesh and blood to a priest in Italy:

For when a certain priest celebrating Mass found true flesh upon the altar, and true blood in the chalice, according to the proper species of flesh and blood, he was afraid to consume it, and, seeking counsel, immediately made the matter known to his bishop.¹⁸

The bishop, after consulting with others, covered the chalice and sealed it in the middle of the altar, to be reserved 'as the greatest of relics'.¹⁹

The treatise on the body and the blood by Lanfranc can, as Gibson points out, be easily exaggerated.²⁰ Guidmond's treatise from the early 1070s is the first to try

¹⁶ Quoted in Collins, *Teacher of Faith and Virtue*, p. 170.

¹⁷ On Berengar and the Eucharistic controversy see in particular: J de Montclos, *Lanfranc et Bérenger: la controverse eucharistique du XI^e siècle* (Louvain, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1971); H. Chadwick, 'Ego Berengarius' *Journal of Theological Studies* 40 (1989), 414-445; *Auctoritas und ratio: Studien zu Berengar von Tours*, P. Ganz, R. B. C. Huygens and F. Niewöhner eds. (Wiesbaden, 1990); T. Holopainen, *Dialectic and Theology in the Eleventh Century*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 54 (Leiden: Brill 1996), B. Pranger, 'La sacrement de l'euchariste et la prolifération de l'imaginaire aux XI^e et XII^e siècles' in *Fête-Dieu (1246-1996) 1. Actes du colloque de Liège, 12-14 septembre 1996*, ed. A. Haquin (Louvain, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1999) 97-116; H. E. J. Cowdrey, *Lanfranc*, esp. 59-74 and C. M. Radding, *Theology, rhetoric, and politics in the Eucharistic controversy, 1078-1079: Alberic of Monte Cassino against Berengar of Tours* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003). For Berengar's own responses, R. B. C. Huygens, ed. *Rescriptum contra Lanfrannum / Berengerius Turonensis; im Auftrag der Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel herausgegeben*, Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio mediaevalis, 84 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1988).

¹⁸ Guidmond, *De corporis et sanguinis Christi veritate in eucharistia libri tres*, Book II, PL 149, 1427-94, at 1450 (English Translation II. 9): 'nam cum presbyter quidam missam celebrans, inventam super altare veram carnem et verum in calice sanguinem, secundum propriam carnis et sanguinis speciem, sumere trepidaret, rem protinus suo episcopo consilium quaesiturus aperuit'.

¹⁹ Guidmond, *De corporis et sanguinis*, 1450 (English translation II.8): '...pro summis reliquiis...'

²⁰ Gibson, *Lanfranc*, p. 98.

to treat the issues that Berengar raised in the round. For Lanfranc the emphasis was on patristic authority, and to that extent the treatise provided a very useful compendium of patristic thought on the matter. When it came to the definition of what happens at the Eucharist, Lanfranc reserves judgement for the mystery: how the change occurs in the body/bread and blood/wine is beyond human understanding:

We believe, therefore, that the earthly substances, which on the table of the Lord are divinely sanctified by the priestly ministry, are ineffably, incomprehensibly, miraculously converted by the workings of heavenly power into the essence of the Lord's body. The species and whatever other certain qualities of the earthly substances themselves, however, are preserved, so that those who see it may not be horrified at the sight of flesh and blood, and believers may have a greater reward for their faith at their sight. It is, nonetheless, the body of the Lord himself, existing in heaven at the right side of the Father, immortal, inviolate, whole, uncontaminated, and unharmed. Truly it is possible to say that it is the same body that was assumed from the Virgin, and also not the same body, which we receive. Indeed, it is the same body as it concerns its essence, true nature, and its own excellence. It is not the same body in its appearance, however, if one is considering the species of bread and wine and the rest of the qualities mentioned above.²¹

Lanfranc did not wish to analyse further the 'truth of faith according to its own terms of reference'.²² This was the achievement of Anselm.

Anselm

It was, however, Lanfranc who provided a major attraction for Anselm also. According to Eadmer Anselm 'went to Normandy to see, to talk to, and stay with a certain master by the name of Lanfranc, a truly good man and one of real nobility in the excellences of his religious life and wisdom'.²³ Lanfranc's fame, in this account, brought to Bec students from a diversity of places ('from all parts of the world'), and it was within this environment that Anselm flourished, fast becoming an intimate amongst Lanfranc's pupils. Anselm devoted himself to his studies, teaching others as well as following a programme of reading programme

²¹ Lanfranc, *De corpore et sanguine Domini adversus Berengarium Turonensem*, PL 150, 407-442, at 430, c.18: 'Credimus igitur terrenas substantias, quae in mensa Dominica, per sacerdotale mysterium, divinitus sanctificantur, ineffabiliter, incomprehensibiliter, mirabiliter, operante superna potentia, converti in essentiam Dominici corporis, reservatis ipsarum rerum speciebus, et quibusdam aliis qualitatibus, ne percipientes cruda et cruenta, horrerent, et ut credentes fidei praemia ampliora perciperent, ipso tamen Dominico corpore existente in coelestibus ad dexteram Patris, immortalis, inviolato, integro, incontaminato, illaeso: ut vere dici possit, et ipsum corpus quod de Virgine sumptum est nos sumere, et tamen non ipsum. Ipsum quidem, quantum ad essentiam veraeque naturae proprietatem atque virtutem; non ipsum autem, si species panis vini que speciem, caeteraque superius comprehensa'.

²² Gibson, *Lanfranc*, p. 88.

²³ Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi* i.5: 'Normanniam vadit, quondam nomine Lanfrancum, virum videlicet valde bonum, praestanti religione ac sapientia vere nobilem videre, alloqui et cohabitare volens'.

guided by Lanfranc. Study under Lanfranc became part of an internal debate for Anselm as to how and where he might express his monastic vocation.

Well then, I shall become a monk. But where? If at Cluny or at Bec, all the time I have spent in study will be lost. For at Cluny the severity of the order, and at Bec the outstanding ability of Lanfranc, which is a monk there, will condemn me either to fruitlessness or insignificance.²⁴

Chastising himself for vain-glory Anselm chose Bec. God, and his contemplation is the end of Christian learning, not the fame of the scholar.

Lanfranc's contemporary fame was mentioned by a correspondent of Anselm. The monk Avesgotus, monk of Saint Peter's Cultura (now Solesmes, near Sablé between Le Mans and Angers) wrote to Anselm inquiring why Anselm's name was less famed than that of Lanfranc or Widmund. Anselm's response was that '...it is because no other flower emits a fragrance like the rose, even if it deceives by having the same redness'.²⁵ Within the exchange Avesgot quoted a line from Persius's *Satires* to the effect that 'All you know is nothing unless someone else knows you know it', coupled with a reminder of Christ's teaching to his disciples that no man should leave his light under a bushel. Anselm notes the proper context for the Persius line, the Stoic injunction against flattery and immoral boasting. Lanfranc's fame was not, in this context, a relevant topic for consideration.

It is noticeable, however that during his years as Monk, Prior and Abbot of Bec, c. 1059 to 1093, Anselm did not engage with the Eucharistic controversy at all. The controversy involved many members of the northern French clerical establishment, especially in Normandy. Lanfranc himself, his pupil Guidmond, later bishop of Aversa, and Anastasius of Mont-St Michel all became involved, as did Rainald, Abbot of St-Cyprien, Poitiers.²⁶ With all of these but Guidmond Anselm is known to have been directly in contact.²⁷ The only comments on the Eucharist made by Anselm during his time at Bec are to be found in his *Prayer before Receiving the Body and Blood of Christ*. The prayer contains absolutely no reference to the controversy. It is instead an invocation, to the redeeming sacrifice the Eucharist celebrates, and the invitation it opens to the believer to become part of Christ's body, the church.²⁸

²⁴ Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, i. 5: "Ecce" inquit "monachus fiam. Sed ubi? Si Cluniaci vel Becci totum tempus quod in discendis litteris posui, perdi. Nam et Cluniaci districtio ordinis, et Becci supereminens prudentia Lanfranci qui illic monachus est me aut nulli prodesse, at nichil valere comprobabit'.

²⁵ Anselm, *Ep.* 20: 'utique quia non quilibet flos pari rosae fragrat odore, etiam si non dispari fallat rubore'.

²⁶ Lanfranc, *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini*, *M.P.L.*, 150, 407-442; Guidmond, *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini*, *M.P.L.*, 149, 1427-1497 - for his career see Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, ed., Chibnall, M., 6 Vols, Oxford, 1969-1980, Vol. ii., 270-280; Anastasius of Mont-St-Michel, *Epistola ad Geraldum Abbatem De Veritate Corporis et Sanguinis Domini*, *M.P.L.*, 149, 433-436; Lanfranc, *The Letters of Lanfranc Archbishop of Canterbury*, eds., Gibson, M.T., and Clover, H.V., Oxford, 1979, *Ep.*, 46 to Rainald. For a complete list of texts in the dispute see Montclos, *op.cit.* pp. xxi-xxx.

²⁷ Contact with Lanfranc is obvious. Anselm, *Ep.*, 3, for Anastasius, and *Ep.*, 83, for Rainald.

²⁸ Anselm, *Or.*, 3 *ad accipiendum corpus domini et sanguinem*.

Instead, Anselm he composed a sequence of significant treatises, shorter works, prayers and meditations, and letters, dealing with core issues of Christian teaching, and moving between biblical exegesis, rational discourse and meditation. Whether Lanfranc approved of these efforts, or rather the impact of his disapproval can be debated.²⁹ That Anselm was creating a very different approach to theological questions, that would have resonance far beyond the walls of his monastery is beyond dispute. The list of works composed at Bec includes: *De grammatico*, *Monologion*, *Proslogion*, *De veritate*, *De libertate arbitrii*, *De casu diaboli*, and probably the early drafts of the *Epistola de incarnatione Verbi Dei*. Together with a long series of letters as Prior and Abbot, and the bulk of the Prayers and Meditations, this is a considerable output, about half of what he would go on to produce. Moreover, the importance of Boso to the *Cur Deus homo* has already been mentioned, and the second period of exile at Bec in the first years of the twelfth century may well have been instrumental for the production of the *De processione spiritus sancti*. Bec was a central feature in Anselm's habitual landscape.

There is a vast literature on elements of Anselm's thought. For the present purpose attention will be paid to the context at Bec and to the way in which Anselm locates and grounds his theological thinking within and around the purposes of his community. A brief excursus to the theme of Marian devotion show some of the layered, shimmering nature of Anselm's theological vision, produced in the peace and calm of monastic life at Bec, the lack of which as Archbishop he regularly lamented.

Anselm's thought emerges from a nexus of individual contemplation and teaching. Like Lanfranc, although perhaps not to the same degree, Anselm was also well known for his abilities in the latter category. In his letter outlined above, Avesgot had other intentions in writing to Anselm. The first part of his concerned a request for that he might send his nephew to Anselm for instruction in grammar: 'I can send him to other scholars but I have more faith in you than in any other living person'.³⁰ Anselm's reply was to refuse: 'For I have neither the freedom of choice now nor the inclination nor the opportunity as was once the case, or as your sanctity believes it still to be, for the kind of study from which your believed, about whom you write, could benefit'.³¹ Anselm assures Avesgot that the bonds of friendship would remain between them.

Anselm took more concentrated interest in his own monks. He wrote to the monk Maurice who had moved to Christ Church, Canterbury exhorting him to read with Arnulf of Beauvais, a master turned monk, and to learn diligently.

²⁹ See Giles E. M. Gasper, 'Envy, Jealousy and the Boundaries of Orthodoxy: Anselm, Eadmer and the Genesis of the Proslogion', *Viator*, 41 (2010), 45-68.

³⁰ Anselm, *Ep.* 19: 'Ad alios doctores ipsum mittere possum. Sed maiorem fiduciam in te haberem quam in aliquo vivente'.

³¹ Anselm *Ep.* 20: 'Non enim eiusmodi studii, in quo possit proficere dilectus ille vester, de quo scripsistis, est mihi nunc licentia nec intentio vel opportunitas, sicut fuit olim vel putat vestra sanctitas'.

Anselm exhorts Maurice to read with Arnulf and learn diligently, noting especially that 'I have also heard that he is excellent in grammar, and you know that teaching the boys grammar has always been a burden to me, and I know that for this reason you made less progress in your knowledge of grammar than you should have'.³² Even if Maurice does not feel he needs this level of instruction he is to persist. 'In this way what you do know you will grasp more firmly by listening to him; if you are mistaken about something you will correct it and by his teaching you will also learn what you do not know'.³³ Personal negligence is not any form of excuse as far as Anselm was concerned. More specifically Anselm instructs his younger friend to encourage Arnulf to teach him about Vergil and other authors which he had not studied with Anselm, except in cases where they refer to indecent things. If Maurice is unable to study with Arnulf, then he, Maurice should try to study the grammar of the books he has read, 'right from the beginning to the end' and to 'work on as many as you can for as long as you can'.

Another of this correspondence comes in Anselm's letter to Arnulf of Beuvais on his monastic vocation, and the reminder that monastic learning has different priorities to secular: '...you do not choose a place where you can profit others and teach others, but rather where you can make progress through others and can learn about spiritual service from others. This is how you will make orderly progress if you strive to be taught before you teach'.³⁴ The community emerges clearly as the forum, location and, to some extent, the end of learning. Its material support for spiritual exercise, as Orderic Vitalis noted, allowing the conditions in which Anselm's theological vision flourished.

Eadmer lays very clear emphasis on the fact that it was the immersion of Anselm in spiritual exercises that formed the basis for what might, by modern disciplinary standards, be referred to as his theological reflection.

And so it came about that, being continually given up to God and to spiritual exercise, he attained such a height of divine speculation, that he was able by God's help to see into and unravel many most obscure and previously insoluble questions about the divinity of God and about our faith, and to prove by plain arguments that what he said was firm and catholic truth. For he had so much faith in the Holy Scriptures, that he firmly and inviolably believed that there was nothing in them that deviated in any way from the path of solid truth. Hence he applied his whole mind to this end, that according to his faith he might be found worthy to see with the eye of reason those things in the Holy Scriptures which, as he felt, lay hidden in deep obscurity.

³² Anselm, *Ep.* 64: 'Audiui quoque quod ipse multum valeat in declinatione, et tu scis quia molestum mihi semper fuerit pueris declinare, unde valde minus quam tibi expediret, scio te apud me in declinandi scientia profecisse.'

³³ Anselm, *Ep.* 64: 'Nec pudeat te sic in hoc studere, etiam quibus te putas non indigere, quasi nunc id recentissime incipias. Quo et ea quae scis, eius auditu confirmata securius teneas, et eo docente, si in aliquo falleris, id corrigas et quod ignoras addiscas.'

³⁴ Anselm, *Ep.* 38: 'nec locum ubi vos aliis prodesse alios que instruere, sed ubi vos per alios proficere et ab aliis ad spiritualem militiam instrui possitis, eligatis. Sic enim ordinate proficietis, si prius doceri quam docere appetieritis'.

The scriptural basis for Anselm's reflections here is worth noting, as well as the application of reason where appropriate, and to questions in which it could legitimately be used. Catholic truth is not, in this sense, inimical to plain arguments; indeed the purpose of Anselm's treatises, as expressed in the prefaces to the *Monologion* and *Proslogion* was to explain for others the joy that he had achieved in grasping, however fleetingly the truth of a matter.³⁵ The experience was not, however, confined to the cerebral. At least for Eadmer, it was rooted and grounded in the regular life of the monastery, and in a world where the miraculous was close to hand:

Thus one night it happened that he [Anselm] was lying awake on his bed before matins exercised in mind about these matters; and as he meditated he tried to puzzle out how the prophets of old could see both past and future as if they were present and set them forth beyond doubt in speech or writing. And, behold, while he was thus absorbed and striving with all his might to understand this problem, he fixed his eyes on the wall and – right through the masonry of the church and dormitory – he saw the monks whose office it was to prepare for matins going about the altar and other parts of the church lighting the candles; and finally he saw one of them take in his hands the bell-rope and sound the bell to awaken the brethren. At this sound the whole community rose from their beds, and Anselm was astonished at the thing which had happened.

The lesson of the story for Anselm was that it might, indeed, be a very small thing for God to show the past and future to prophets if he could enable Anselm to see through walls. The emphasis here is, however, firmly on community: Anselm's experience is related to the physical surroundings of his house, and to the members of his community in their quotidian tasks.

Mary

A similar grounding of theological reflection in a more holistic spiritual life is evident in Anselm's devotion to Mary. This was both physical and in written form. Eadmer records that at Rouen in 1106 Anselm received, reverently and with great joy, the gift of several hairs of the Virgin Mary from Ilgyrus, a friend from his youth who had gone on Crusade with Bohemond of Taranto, and had procured the relics from the Patriarch of Antioch.³⁶ Mary is discussed by Anselm primarily with respect to her position as the mother of Jesus and as such she plays a significant role in pointing towards the importance of Christology. In this connection the titles used by Anselm for the Virgin are of interest, and are to be

³⁵ See Eileen Sweeney, *Anselm and the Desire for the Word* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012) for discussion of Anselm's movement between emotionally charged extremes of joy and despair as an operative and structural element within his thought.

³⁶ Eadmer, *Historia Novorum in Anglia*, ed., Rule, M., Rolls Series, London, 1884, pp.180-181 '*Hic ab adolescentia sua notus Anselmo multa fuerat eius beneficia consecutus.*' Chibnall in Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 6 Vols, Oxford, 1968-1980, Vol. v, p.178-180, suggests an identification of Ilgyrus with Ilgor Bigod, a son of Roger Bigod, and is followed in this by Riley-Smith in 'The motives of the earliest Crusaders and the settlement of Latin Palestine' *EHR*, 98, 1983. It might be wondered if the friendship existed before Anselm's move to Normandy, and so whether Ilgyrus was a North Italian.

found in his three prayers in which she is addressed - Prayers Five, Six and Seven in Schmitt's edition. These prayers caused Anselm unusual difficulties in expression and it took three attempts before he was satisfied, as he outlined in a letter to Gundulf then monk at Caen, in about 1072, which also gives a *terminus ante quem* for their composition.³⁷ Even then he was not entirely happy, and Southern, following Wilmart, has pointed out that Anselm continued to refine the final version for some time afterwards.³⁸

It is an interesting reflection in view of the dissatisfaction Anselm felt about the first two prayers that they contain few epithets for Mary—*genetrix vitae* used in the first.³⁹ The third prayer offers more: *genetrix vitae* is used, as well as, in various forms, *genetrix dei*, the more usual western form of the Greek Θεοτοκος *Theotokos*. Anselm does not use the Greek word, this in contrast to his neighbour John of Fécamp, who did, in his *Confessio Fidei*.⁴⁰ Anselm does, however, describe Mary as '*parens...salutis et salvatorum* - parent of salvation and of the saved.'⁴¹ This comes close to the Latin Marian title *Deiparens*, the rare, but more literal translation for *Theotokos*. Whether or not Anselm had this in mind is open to question. Whatever the details of that case, the emphasis on her 'God-bearing' attributes is the decisive feature of the way in which Anselm directs his language towards Mary. Mary is the 'mother of him who cleanses the world', 'mother of him who is the light of my heart', 'mother of the life of my soul', as well as she who 'gave birth to the restorer of the world'.⁴²

Anselm's approach is illustrated at the peak of the third prayer, where he proclaims,

Nothing equals Mary, nothing but God is greater than Mary. God gave his own Son, who alone from his heart was born equal to him, loved as he loves himself, to Mary, and of Mary was then born a Son, not another but the same one, that naturally one might be the Son of God and of Mary. All nature is created by God and God is born of Mary. God created all things, and Mary gave birth to God. God who made all things made himself of Mary, and thus refashioned everything he had made. He who was able to make all things out of nothing refused to remake it by force, but first became the Son of Mary. So God is the Father of all created things, and Mary is the mother of all re-created things. God is the Father of all that is established, and Mary is the mother of all that is re-established. For God gave birth to him by whom all things were made and Mary brought forth him by whom all are saved. God brought forth him without whom nothing is, Mary bore him without whom nothing is good.⁴³

³⁷ Anselm, *Letter 28*, Schmitt, iii. 135-136.

³⁸ Southern, *St Anselm A Portrait in a Landscape*, pp.107-109.

³⁹ Anselm, *Oratione*, 5, l. 8, Schmitt, iii. 13.

⁴⁰ John of Fécamp, *Confessio Fidei*, III.8, Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 101, 1059.

⁴¹ Anselm, *Orat*, 7, ll. 125-126, Schmitt, iii. 23.

⁴² Anselm, *Orat*, 7, ll. 15, 18, 28, 57-58, Schmitt, iii. 18-20.

⁴³ Anselm, *Orat*, 7, ll. 93-106, Schmitt, iii. 21-22.

The Theotokos aspects to Anselm's approach to Mary are clear. It is from her position as the bearer of God, the salvation of the world, the creator who takes his creation to himself, that her theological significance is derived. Anselm is categorical in his emphasis that God made himself of Mary; she was the bearer only. In other words, Anselm's Mariology is part and parcel of his Christological frame, and points us towards an essential direction of Anselm's thought. It is in the re-establishment and re-creation in Christ that Anselm finds Mary's place, in the context of the saving work of her son. Anselm's approach to Mary in its Christological focus carries echoes from various theological traditions, Greek and Latin.

The breadth of Anselm's theological sympathies, and an encompassing and generous spirit of engagement with the Greek church emerges in his defence of Greek and Latin terminologies for the Godhead in the *Monologion*. During the years at Bec, he also laid the foundations for an ecclesiology that was firmly based in faith, and in reasoned understanding, which would dictate many of his dealing with secular authorities. The issues emerges, ironically, in Anselm's correspondence towards the end of his life on the Eucharist. The correspondent on this occasion was bishop Walram of Naumberg whose see lay near the eastern marches of Germany, in Thuringia. Walram wrote to Anselm in the early twelfth century. A precise date is impossible, Schmitt the great editor of Anselm's works made an estimate of c.1105-7 based only on the position of the letters within the collection. The correspondence consists of two letters of Anselm and one of Walram. Walram's questions to Anselm concern points of ecclesiastical practice and custom. The first exchange, of which Walram's letter is missing, concerns the use of unleavened or leavened bread at the Eucharist and the relative merits of both practices. The former is associated with the Latins, the latter with the Greeks. Anselm sets out the question and leans towards the Latin arguments though he is careful to assert that the question is not one of critical importance: 'He [Christ] did not specify leavened or unleavened [bread], because both kinds are equally bread.'⁴⁴ Both sides, in Anselm's opinion, would do well to resist extremes.

Walram's second letter pursues the question of different sacramental practices throughout the church and reveals a strong reaction against such diversity,

Diversity in the Church is directly opposed to unity. And what proceeds against itself by dissension among its parts cannot remain standing for long.⁴⁵

This reaction is reminiscent of Carolingian insistence on unity of faith, in order to preserve the fabric of society, and is in many respects a hallmark of Latin ecclesiological thinking.⁴⁶ Anselm in answer adopts a broader perspective. Although unity of practice would be praiseworthy, it is important to keep such matters in their context. There are, Anselm points out,

⁴⁴ Anselm *Epistola de Sacrificio Azimi et Fermetati*, 1.

⁴⁵ Anselm *Epistola Waleramni ad Anselmum*, 1.

⁴⁶ See Runciman, S., *The Eastern Schism*, Oxford, 1956, pp. 7-11.

many differences which do not conflict with the fundamental importance of the sacrament or with its efficacy or with faith in it; and these cannot all be brought together into one practice. Accordingly I think that these differences ought to be harmoniously and peaceably tolerated rather than being disharmoniously and scandalously condemned. For we are taught by the holy Fathers that, provided the unity of love is preserved within the catholic faith, a different practice does no harm.⁴⁷

Differences in practice, Anselm goes on, arise from differences in human disposition. The truth of the matter in this instance is not affected by disagreements - a significant remark on Anselm's theological attitude. The truth of the sacrament is not affected by human action; nor does Anselm seek to impose one theological interpretation necessarily over another. Southern portrays Anselm as finding diversity puzzling, but ultimately accepting it as deriving from human weakness.⁴⁸ From a different angle though his attitude towards diversity points to an ecclesiology, given the circumstances of the period, of considerable generosity.

That position was born from his experiences and thinking at Bec. What emerges in Anselm's Christian thinking is a vibrant sense of the overarching unity of the Christian faith. It is that faith which sustains, creates and upon which is grounded the church. As Karl Barth put it, Anselm's *credo* has an objective grounding in the *CREDO* of the church, that is the community and body, living and departed, who are witness to the Christian proclamation, and assent to it.⁴⁹ Faith is the awareness of this greater whole. Moreover, at Bec, this universal was put into immediate context, practically and spiritually. On many occasions Anselm stressed the centrality of the monastic life, over an above learning for its own sake. To the monk Arnulf, a noted teacher, Anselm wrote between 1073 and 1078: 'you should know that it will do you no good to devote your life to scholarly study, which is why you renounced the world, if you consider both the goal of your vow and the training by which this goal is reached'.⁵⁰ To the monk Hunfrid Anselm wrote in a similar period on how much better it would be to give up the world for the cloister than to live in the world, and with respect to learning, that 'even if you perhaps paid a man to teach you, he could jar upon your ears, but he would not open your heart to understanding without God'.⁵¹ Anselm was no particular advocate for the contemporary schools. As Abbot he instructed his own monks at the Bec dependency of Conflans-Saint-Honorine to ensure that Benedict, monk of Saint-sur-Dives should return to his home community and not linger in Paris because of the schools. Benedict had

⁴⁷ Anselm *Epistola de Sacramentis Ecclesiae*, 1.

⁴⁸ Southern, *Portrait*, p.174.

⁴⁹ Barth, K., *Fides Quaerens Intellectum: Anselm's Proof of the Existence of God in the Context of his Theological Scheme*, trans, Robertson, I.W., London, 1960, p.16.

⁵⁰ Anselm, *Ep.* 38: Praeterea quod studio scholarum vitam vestram, ex quo saeculo renunciastis, impenditis, nullatenus vobis expedire cognoscetis, si et vestri finem propositi, et quo exercitio illuc perveniatur, consulitis

⁵¹ Anselm, *Ep.* 81: 'Nam etsi ab homine forsitan ut vos doceret emistis, auribus quidem instrepere ille potuit, sed cor ad intelligendum aperire non potuit nisi deus'.

been staying on in Paris against the will of his abbot, and to the detriment of proper learning.⁵²

Learning at Bec under Herluin, Lanfranc and then Anselm was integrally connected to the rest of monastic living. Although, perforce, it is the figures of Lanfranc and Anselm that loom over the intellectual landscape, both ground, in their different ways, their reflection in the community. In Lanfranc's biblical work the exegete emerges, in Anselm's the astonishing movement to bridge the use of reason within discussion of sacred subjects. Yet, for both, the achievement was for the edification of their confrères. Bec did sustain intellectual interests after Anselm's departure, not least in the library collection, and, perhaps, in the works of those who had embarked on their monastic life there, before being moved to other offices and duties. Gathering more detailed evidence is challenging: William Bona Anima and Boso are remembered in their Lives as wise and learned men, Robert of Torigni, at Mont-St-Michel developed historical and well as bibliophilic interests. The anonymous author from Bec of the treatises on monasticism contributes to the broader cycles of monastic polemic in the 1120s and an emerging theology of monastic life. The relative dearth of textual evidence for the twelfth century serves however to highlight how extraordinary Anselm and his master were and that it is possible to trace their thinking, its location and their purpose to so fine a degree. Bec, in this sense, fully deserved, and fully reflects, the judgement of Orderic Vitalis.

⁵² Anselm, *Ep.* 104.