

Reviews

SAINT ANSELM: A PORTRAIT IN A LANDSCAPE by R.W. Southern, *Cambridge University Press*, 1990. Pp xix + 493. £40.

This study began life as a revision of the author's *St. Anselm and his Biographer* (Cambridge University press, 1963), intended for a second edition. It has become a new book, although portions of the original are still to be found in it. It therefore presents the reviewer with the difficulty of deciding whether to treat it as a *retractatio*, and compare it with its first incarnation, or to take it on its present merits as a book in its own right. There is this significant difference from an Augustinian *retractatio*: that while Augustine, on reflection, rarely wanted to change much, much has altered here. It seems to respect the author's intention best to consider this latest 'work in progress' (p. xvi) for itself. It is the culmination of a remarkable story of the relationship of two great scholars born nine hundred years apart, and there is a nice irony in Southern's admission that he found himself writing a new book because he had been 'always dissatisfied' with the structure of the first (which attempted to combine an introduction to the *Vita Anselmi* of Eadmer with a modern Life of Anselm). These were much the sentiments expressed by Anselm himself when he attempted the *Proslogion* because he was dissatisfied with the comparative untidiness of what he had achieved in the *Monologion*.

The treatment is leisured and broadly chronological, Southern tells a story which grips from the beginning, of Anselm's early life and how he came to go to France and settle at Bec in the years when Lanfranc was a famous master there. We hear a good deal about Lanfranc himself, and indeed there is material here which needs to be read in conjunction with Margaret Gibson's excellent *Lanfranc* (Oxford, 1978). We are then taken inside Anselm's struggle to find his way spiritually and professionally, and his decision to stay at Bec is seen to emerge much as it must have done for him. There followed a period of unequalled happiness in Anselm's life, when all his deepest intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs were satisfied as they were never to be again. Southern speaks here of the 'radiant years', as he takes us through the composition of the early prayers and meditations, the 'great meditations' of the *Proslogion* and *Monologion*. The *Monologion* is portrayed as the product of 'talk among friends', yet this was no easy conversation, but rigorous and disciplined common enquiry after truth in the context of seeking to know God. The *Proslogion* is placed as it should be, as a 'supplement' to the first book and as a work of profound spirituality, at least as much as it is a philosophical exercise. Gradually we move with Anselm out into a wider world, whose wideness he did not much like, through an extended discussion of Anselm's conception and experience of friendship. He puzzles the modern reader in his capacity simultaneously to feel the most intense and particular affections, and to preserve a detachment which must sometimes have hurt the young monks who were to discover it at the heart of his friendship with them. Southern's discussion of the psychology and historical context of this pattern is especially

successful.

Anselm became Archbishop of Canterbury, and his life changed. The axis of Part III of the book is strung between the two poles of 'liberty' and 'obedience'; monastic and episcopal obedience; liberty in the Church and in the monastic community and of the Canterbury See and its primacy. The tone of the book subtly changes here, as does that of Anselm's own correspondence, so that we are perforce looking at Anselm's outer man as much as the inner. The heart of this section lies in the chapter on the *Cur Deus Homo*, the work of the early years of the Archbishopric, in which Anselm himself was struggling intellectually with exactly the issues of obedience and liberty, will, power and necessity in the context of his study of incarnation and redemption, with which he was confronted in practice in his life as Archbishop.

Eadmer now occupies Part IV, where he is joined by others among Anselm's friends and disciples who wrote themselves, or were in various ways mediators of his thought and influence. Here, too, is a discussion of the way in which Anselm's talk and sermons as well as his letters were gathered up and preserved. The final chapter sees Anselm balanced 'between two worlds', as, by historical change, he was, for after him the twelfth century schools were to flourish like young trees and grow into a forest and change the climate of thought.

Southern's interest in Anselm began in 1934 with an exploration of the possibility of editing his letters. This plan was abandoned because Schmitt's projected edition was to include the *opera omnia*. It is a fitting elegance that the story should end with an appendix covering the history of Anselm's letters, about which several mysteries remain unresolved. Anselm's disciples played a part in the making of the collections and in their transmission which is as yet clear only in outline. This is indeed work in progress and it lays a tempting project before some future scholar.

It is hard to know what to say in brief summary about the qualities of this book. It is immensely rich, a plum cake in which one is constantly finding some new ingredient by way of an insight or a piece of information. The reader need not agree at every point with conclusions drawn to find the whole incomparably satisfying. Perhaps the best compliment the book can be paid is to say that it has about it that air of *rectus ordo* and fittingness (*convenientia*) for which Anselm himself always strove; and above all, that it has a freshness which is perhaps its most remarkable achievement, encapsulating as it does fifty years of thought and work.

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MYSTERIUM PASCHALE, THE MYSTERY OF EASTER, by Hans Urs von Balthasar, translated with an introduction by Aidan Nichols, OP, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1990.

This work represents the English version of the long essay on the paschal mystery which Balthasar wrote for the multi-volumed theological encyclopedia *Mysterium Salutis* and which appeared in German in 1969. We should be extremely grateful to have this fine English translation, for it offers an English-speaking public one of the best introductions to 246