

# *The vindication of teaching and theology in a monastic community: Lanfranc of Le Bec and his students Anselm and Ralph*

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*Monastic schools such as Le Bec played a major role in the making of systematic and even philosophical theology in the middle ages. While the monastic life is regarded as a continued experience in learning in the Benedictine tradition, institutional schools are not essential to it and monks often had to justify their engaging in teaching and theology over and above the study of the Bible. After sketching the problem with a special focus on Anselm, I take a look at the genesis and rise of the school of Le Bec following the arrival of Lanfranc, and give a short outline of what we can gather about him as a teacher. I then turn to Ralph of Battle, one of Lanfranc's closest associates and a notable theologian in his own right, and explore his relation to Anselm. His recently edited *De inquirente et respondente* provides us with a vivid image of what teaching on an advanced level could have been like at a monastic school in the Lanfrancian tradition. In this dialogue, Ralph endeavours to adjust the discussion of theological topics to the spiritual commitments of master and disciple alike, in what may be termed a thoroughly "altruistic" model of teaching and learning, and aims to demonstrate how speculative theology and the monastic life are not only compatible with each other, but complement each other in important ways.*

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## *1. Learning and the monastic life*

The "regular" life of a Benedictine monk has a primarily eschatological goal. It is a form of existence designed to cultivate a desire for perfect happiness through communion with the divine. And it is meant to ensure that this desire will come true after one's physical death<sup>1</sup>. At its core is a "devotion to heaven"<sup>2</sup> with the monastic community regarded as an anticipation of the heavenly life. Like

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. *Benedicti Regula*, in particular Prologue, 17-21; 42-44; ed. R. Hanslik, CSEL 75, Vienna, Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1960, p. 4; 8.

<sup>2</sup> J. Leclercq, *L'amour des lettres et le désir de Dieu: Initiation aux auteurs monastiques du moyen âge*, Paris, Cerf, troisième édition corrigée, 1990, pp. 55; 67.

almost everything else, teaching, learning and the activities of the intellect quite generally, are placed in the service of and seen as subordinate to that ultimate goal. The monastic literature, accordingly, is for the most part of a practical, personal and edifying nature. Its more theological works mainly concern the historical and allegorical interpretation of the Bible, whilst theological or even philosophical speculation, if it is entered into at all, is not pursued for its own sake. Generally speaking, «the monks like writings that deal with facts, with experiences rather than with ideas»<sup>3</sup>. If there is an intrinsic value to knowledge, it certainly was not easy to recognize for a medieval monk. Any literary output from the cloisters was supposed to be either necessary or useful – useful, that is, for one's own or at least one other person's attainment of their ultimate goal. The desire to ponder things that are ultimately useless to know, by contrast, was regarded as the essence of *curiositas* – an intellectual vice of which the *Liber Anselmi de humanis moribus*, for instance, distinguishes no less than sixteen different kinds<sup>4</sup>. While virtue and pleasure are regarded by Anselm as intrinsic goods, knowledge is not<sup>5</sup>. Even knowledge of God is only prayed for insofar as it is expedient<sup>6</sup>. Monastic literary production was supposed to satisfy the requirements of humility and simplicity, although a more exalted style was deemed acceptable with devotional texts, in letters or in hagiography. If we add to this the reverence towards the past so characteristic of the monastic sphere, in particular of the doctrines of the Church Fathers captured in the *sententiae* and their exegesis of the Bible, we seem to get a fairly low *a priori* probability of innovation with regard to systematic theological thinking, let alone rational theology, within these bounds.

And yet the work of Anselm of Le Bec and Canterbury seems to belie these expectations in a rather spectacular way. An expo-

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> Pseudo-Anselm (Boso of Montivilliers?), *Liber Anselmi Archiepiscopi de humanis moribus per similitudines* 26, ed. R.W. Southern, F.S. Schmitt, in *Iid.* (eds.), *Memorials of Saint Anselm*, ABMA 1, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 47: «Curiositas est studium perscrutandi ea quae scire nulla est utilitas. Huius autem sedecim sunt genera [...]».

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Anselm of Canterbury, *De casu diaboli* 12, ed. F.S. Schmitt, *Sancti Anselmi opera omnia*, vol. 1, Seckau, Abtei Seckau, 1938, repr. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Frommann, 1984<sup>2</sup>, p. 255; Alexander of Canterbury, *Dicta Anselmi IV*, ed. R.W. Southern, F.S. Schmitt, in *Iid.* (eds.), *Memorials of Saint Anselm*, cit., p. 122.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion* 2, ed. F.S. Schmitt, *Sancti Anselmi opera omnia*, vol. 1, cit., p. 101: «Ergo, Domine, qui das fidei intellectum, da mihi, ut, quantum scis expedire, intelligam, quia es, sicut credimus, et hoc es, quod credimus».

ment of Benedictine monasticism if there ever was one, Anselm is almost unanimously regarded as one of medieval Christianity's most original and accomplished theologians. We find in his writings a variety of strategies to justify his intellectual quest, apparently frowned upon by many of his *confrères*. It is not necessary to claim that his works played a crucial part in the making of scholastic theology in order to retain the importance of his thought<sup>7</sup>. His immediate influence certainly looks stronger today than traditional historiography of theology had it<sup>8</sup>; it still seems to have been fairly limited: given the considerable number of other monastic, cathedral and secular schools, it does not, perhaps, seem altogether absurd to suppose that the scholastic method might have developed and prevailed in a similar fashion even if Lanfranc and Anselm had never taught or published anything. Be that as it may, it was the monastic community and school of Our Lady of Le Bec under Abbot Herluin and Prior Lanfranc and later under his own priory and abbacy that provided the soil for the majority of Anselm's writings, most of which grew out of his teaching. We can get a glimpse of the teaching methods he employed from his writings, from Eadmer's biography and from a few other sources, though, as in the case of Lanfranc, they do not provide us with anything like an exact picture. I am using "teaching" in a narrow sense here, meaning the imparting of knowledge and insight by a teacher through speech. In a wider sense, the whole monastic existence may be interpreted – following the Rule of Benedict – as an educational way of life, a lifelong expe-

<sup>7</sup> The traditional view of Anselm as "father of scholasticism" is defended by A.J. Novikoff, *The Medieval Culture of Disputation*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, who claims that the scholastic dialectical methods «have their origins within the general milieu of monastic learning», and in particular in «Lanfranc's and Anselm's engagement with dialogue and disputation at the school of Bec» (p. 35; also in Id., *Anselm, Dialogue, and the Rise of Scholastic Disputation*, «Speculum», 86 (2011), p. 389); see also S.N. Vaughn, J. Rubenstein, *Introduction: Teaching and Learning from the Tenth to the Twelfth Centuries*, in Id. (eds.), *Teaching and Learning in Northern Europe, 1000-1200*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2006, p. 7: «it is a central contention of this volume that the story of the development of education must pass through the monasteries, and particularly the abbey school of Bec»; cfr. similarly S. Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens im Früh- und Hochmittelalter: Autorität, Wissenskonzepte und Netzwerke von Gelehrten*, Cologne, Böhlau, 2011, p. 975. One can deny these strong claims while maintaining the great importance of Anselm's contributions to the history of both theology and philosophy.

<sup>8</sup> Cfr. G.R. Evans, *Anselm and a New Generation*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980, pp. 139-208; B. Goebel, *Einleitung*, in Id., *Im Umkreis von Anselm: Biographisch-bibliographische Porträts von Autoren aus Le Bec und Canterbury*, Würzburg, Echter, 2017, pp. 11-29.

rience in learning<sup>9</sup>. With regard to the abbot, the *Regula* states that he is to “teach” the divine commandments and values in a twofold way, «more by deeds than by words»<sup>10</sup>. According to their biographers, Anselm and Lanfranc both excelled in this task<sup>11</sup>, though it is probably only moral knowledge that can be produced in this way. It is a legitimate and still very much open question how teaching in the narrower sense was imparted by Lanfranc and Anselm. For, indeed, «the idea of all parts of a religious community’s life becoming a total education could and did coexist with structural schooling»<sup>12</sup>. If any “pattern” of the latter’s teaching emerges, not from studying his theological writings, letters and the written testimony of those who had spent half their lives listening to him, but rather from looking at Guibert of Nogent’s erratic reports of his sporadic encounters with Anselm, rehearsing library catalogues post-dating his life and reviewing the many historical works produced at Le Bec, it is unlikely to be a complete one<sup>13</sup>. From Anselm’s letters we can take it that he did not like to teach the arts<sup>14</sup>, although he considered a profound knowledge in the arts as desirable for a young monk<sup>15</sup>; that he did not regard teaching and scholarly studies as a value in itself; that he considered it more important for a monk to be taught than to teach<sup>16</sup>; and that he thought it wrong for a teacher to aspire to fame<sup>17</sup>. But the most instructive source

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. *Benedicti Regula*, Prologue, 45, cit., p. 8: «Constituenda est ergo nobis dominici scola servitii»; and see M. Chibnall, *The World of Orderic Vitalis: Norman Monks and Norman Knights*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984, pp. 86-87.

<sup>10</sup> Cfr. *Benedicti Regula* II, 11-12, cit., p. 21.

<sup>11</sup> See P.D. Watkins, *Lanfranc at Caen: Teaching by Example*, in S.N. Vaughn, J. Rubenstein (eds.), *Teaching and Learning*, cit., pp. 71-97; and S.N. Vaughn, *Anselm of Le Bec and Canterbury: Teacher by Word and Example, Following the Footprints of His Ancestors*, in B. Pohl, L.L. Gathagan (eds.), *A Companion to the Abbey of Le Bec in the Central Middle Ages (11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries)*, Leiden, Brill, 2017, pp. 57-93.

<sup>12</sup> E. Kuhl, *Education and Schooling at Le Bec: A Case Study of Le Bec’s Florilegia*, in B. Pohl, L.L. Gathagan (eds.), *A Companion to the Abbey of Le Bec*, cit., p. 252.

<sup>13</sup> For such an account, see S.N. Vaughn, *Anselm of Bec: The Pattern of his Teaching*, in S.N. Vaughn, J. Rubenstein (eds.), *Teaching and Learning*, cit., pp. 98-127.

<sup>14</sup> Cfr. Anselm of Canterbury, *Ep.* 64, in Id., *Epistolae*, ed. F.S. Schmitt, *Sancti Anselmi opera omnia*, vol. 3, Edinburgh, T. Nelson, 1946, repr. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Frommann, 1984<sup>2</sup>, p. 180.

<sup>15</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. Anselm of Canterbury *Ep.* 38, in Id., *Epistolae*, cit., pp. 148-149; see also *Ep.* 104, cit., p. 237.

<sup>17</sup> Cfr. Anselm of Canterbury *Ep.* 20, in Id., *Epistolae*, cit., pp. 126-127. However, there is no indication in this letter (as S. Steckel believes, cfr. her *Kulturen des Lehrens*, cit., p. 965) that the teaching of the arts has been suspended at Le Bec. For Anselm’s attitude towards studying and teaching the arts, see P. Riché, *La vie scolaire et la pédagogie au Bec au temps de Lanfranc*

for Anselm's way of teaching is by far his biography. According to what Eadmer writes, Anselm's preferred teaching method at Canterbury – and, one may infer, at Le Bec – seems to have been the informal discussion of theological and philosophical matters with advanced students, one-to-one or in small intimate circles<sup>18</sup>:

At other times also he (sc. Anselm) talked privately with the more intelligent among them, raising deep questions concerning both sacred and secular books, and giving his answers to their problems. [...] He (sc. Boso) talked therefore to Anselm and laid bare the perplexities of his heart; and he received from him all the answers he required without leaving a shadow of uncertainty. As a result he was moved to admiration and captivated by a profound love for Anselm. [...] he (sc. Anselm) received all who came to him with a gracious readiness, and replied helpfully to them all, whatever their business. You might have seen those who were in difficulties over Biblical texts and problems having an explanation given to them and their problems resolved; others, who had been doubtful about some point of morals, being no less readily instructed. [...] sometimes, being asked about some useful or necessary subject, he satisfied both the enquirer and all who heard him with the wonderful graciousness of his replies<sup>19</sup>.

This method is reflected by those five of his writings that are couched in the form of a dialogue. Although their number has recently been miscounted and Anselm's use of the dialogue and its impact somewhat exaggerated<sup>20</sup>, his *Cur deus homo* is undeniably one of the most outstanding medieval works in this genre. The two interlocutors Anselm and Boso – the dialogue figures, that is –, both of whom are monks but one of whom represents the “unbelievers”,

*et de saint Anselme*, in R. Foreville (ed.), *Les mutations socio-culturelles au tournant du XIe-XIIe siècles. Études anselmiennes (Spicilegium Beccense II)*, Paris, CNRS, 1984, pp. 213-227; and, more recently, G.E.M. Gasper, *Theology at Le Bec*, in B. Pohl, L.L. Gathagan (eds.), *A Companion to the Abbey of Le Bec in the Middle Ages*, cit., pp. 206-227, here pp. 217-227.

<sup>18</sup> Cfr. S. Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*, cit., p. 965: «das informelle Gespräch über theologische Themen im vertrauten Kreis».

<sup>19</sup> Eadmer, *Vita Sancti Anselmi* I, 29; 34; II, 9; 12, ed. and transl. R.W. Southern, London, T. Nelson, 1962, second edition, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972, pp. 50; 60-61; 72; 79.

<sup>20</sup> Cfr. A. Novikoff, *Anselm, Dialogue, and the Rise of Scholastic Disputation*, cit., pp. 387-418; Id., *The Medieval Culture of Disputation*, cit., p. 42, notes 50-51: «Anselm went on to write more dialogues than any Latin Christian author since Augustine. [...] No fewer than seven works of Anselm take the literary form of a dialogue, as well as several others attributed to him but of dubious authenticity. [...] This total counts only works that are overtly cast as dialogues between two characters».

are intellectually very much on a par with each other and both play an active role in the enquiry; as Anselm, the dialogue figure, puts it he does not want so much to demonstrate what is requested of him as to embark on a quest together with his partner<sup>21</sup>. As the argument progresses, Anselm and his pupil, Boso, go through states of anxiety and despair that almost anticipate Kierkegaard<sup>22</sup>. And yet, in his four other, earlier dialogues *De grammatico*, *De veritate*, *De libertate arbitrii* and *De casu diaboli*, we do find that clear asymmetry between the roles and contributions of the interlocutors, typical of a medieval dialogue between teacher and student, with the parties revealing very little in the way of emotions when they speak<sup>23</sup>. Despite Anselm's statement that the last three of these dialogues relate to the study of the Bible, their preoccupations seem to be almost purely intellectual. The tone is friendly but matter-of-fact, while monastic, spiritual and even exegetical concerns take a back seat if they are present at all, just like in *Cur deus homo*. They seem to be predominantly literary works, quite a far cry from the real teaching Anselm imparted to the more gifted students in his monastic community.

The situation is different in the case of Ralph of Battle, a student of Lanfranc's who over the last few decades has gradually emerged from anonymity and oblivion. For despite its straightforward title, his recently edited *De inquirente et respondente* provides us, probably more than any other work from Lanfranc's circle, with a vivid image of what teaching theology on an advanced level could have been like at a monastic school in the Lanfrancian tradition<sup>24</sup>. Ralph's dialogue also testifies to an elaborate effort to adjust the discussion of theological topics to the spiritual commitments of master and disciple alike, both of whom are clearly monks, and in doing so, highlights their personal and emotional bonds. It depicts a way of transferring knowledge that to many a modern scholar has

<sup>21</sup> Cfr. Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur deus homo* I, 3, ed. F.S. Schmitt, *Sancti Anselmi opera omnia*, vol. 2, Rome, Sansaini, 1940, repr. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Frommann, 1984<sup>2</sup>, p. 50: «quod quaeritis non tam ostendere quam tecum quaerere».

<sup>22</sup> See B. Goebel, V. Höhle, *Reasons, Emotions and God's Presence in Anselm of Canterbury's Dialogue Cur deus homo*, «Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie», 87 (2005), pp. 189-210.

<sup>23</sup> See E.C. Sweeney, *Anselm of Canterbury and the Desire for the Word*, Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 2011, p. 179: «There is in this a kind of blanching, a kind of spiritualization and depersonalization of reasoning. Teacher and student are not particular individuals with particular concerns, prejudices or temperaments».

<sup>24</sup> Cfr. Ralph of Battle, *De inquirente et respondente/Der Fragende und der Antwortende*, ed. S. Sönnensyn in cooperation with B. Goebel and S. Niskanen, transl. B. Goebel, in *Iid.* (eds.), *Ralph von Battle, Dialoge zur philosophischen Theologie*, Freiburg, Herder, 2015, pp. 80-241.

appeared superior to the more impersonal, competitive and restrictive approach that was soon to take its place<sup>25</sup>. This kind of higher monastic education has been compared to the cathedral school model of “charismatic” teaching, based on friendship, virtue and example, aiming at the cultivation of *litterae* and *mores* alike<sup>26</sup>. Yet while one can certainly make out some common features here, there is also something quite distinctive about Ralph’s vision of teaching and his specifically Benedictine justification for engaging in theology. In the remainder of this essay, I propose to take a brief look at the genesis and rise of the abbey of Le Bec’s school following the arrival of Lanfranc, and give a short outline of what we can gather about him as a teacher. I will then sketch a portrait of Ralph, one of Lanfranc’s closest associates, a successful administrator, prolific writer and notable theologian in his own right, and explore his relation to Anselm. Finally, I will focus on one of Ralph’s major works, his dialogue *De inquirente et respondente*, interpreting it as a piece of monastic theology while at the same time a reaction to the intellectual changes of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, as these did not stop short of the cloisters. Even as such, it betrays an acute awareness of the need to prove its regard for humility and its *usefulness* in the above-mentioned terms, and I will look at Ralph’s various ways to vindicate his intellectual project, which may be compared to and contrasted with those employed by Lanfranc’s more famous student Anselm, although such a comparison is beyond the scope of this paper.

## 2. Lanfranc’s conversion and the school of Le Bec

According to Milo Crispin’s *Vita Lanfranci*, composed about half a century after his death (1089), Lanfranc, «perfectly imbued with every secular science», was teaching at Avranches when he underwent

<sup>25</sup> Cfr. e.g. S.N. Vaughn and J. Rubenstein, *Introduction*, cit., p. 17: «The 11th century was subtler, less restricted, more emotional, more personal, more humane and possibly grander in its achievement».

<sup>26</sup> Cfr. e.g. M. Münster-Swendsen, *Regimens of Schooling*, in R. Hexter, D. Townsend (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Latin Literature*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 403-422; E. Kuhl, *Education and Schooling*, cit., pp. 253-254. For the educational model characteristic of the cathedral schools and its perpetuation by the community of canon regulars at St Victor, see C.S. Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950-1200*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994, pp. 76-117; 244-268.

a religious conversion. He had already turned his mind and aspirations (*animum convertit et studium*) from the ephemeral to the eternal when, while abducted by a gang of brigands in a wood near Rouen, he made a vow to the effect that he would enter the religious life if he were to survive. Having hitherto lost his time in learning (*discendo*) and literary studies (*in studiis litterarum*), so he confesses in a desperate prayer, he had neglected his relationship to the divine<sup>27</sup>. His vow itself is remarkable in that it is deliberately couched in scholarly terms, highlighting thus his conversion from the world of secular learning to the monastery conceived as a school of religious life: «I will, with your help, see to it to correct (*corrigere*) and arrange (*instituire*) my life so that I am able and know (*sciam*) how to serve you»<sup>28</sup>. Becoming a monk at the recently founded house of Le Bec, renowned for its solitude and austerity, was for him to renounce his love of letters for the love of Christ. This is brought out rather drastically by an anecdote recounted by Milo: when his impeccable pronunciation of Latin was criticized by the illiterate prior, he would rather comply and set aside the laws of prosody, considering it more important to «obey to Christ than to Donatus»<sup>29</sup>. So wholeheartedly did he embrace the monastic ideals according to his biographer that he soon antagonized some of his more worldly minded brethren<sup>30</sup>. Even after having been made archbishop of Canterbury almost thirty years later, he did not cease to regard himself as a monk. In his monastic constitutions for the cathedral priory the monk-bishop is invariably referred to as “abbot”<sup>31</sup>, and in a letter to Pope Alexander II, Lanfranc requested permission to return to

<sup>27</sup> Milo Crispin, *Vita beati Lanfranci*, ed. J.-P. Migne, PL 150, col. 30B-31A [ed. M. Gibson, in G. d’Onofrio (ed.), *Lanfranco di Pavia e l’Europa del secolo XI*, Roma, Herder, 1993, pp. 661-715, at pp. 668-669]. I quote from Migne’s text, who reproduces d’Achery’s first edition from 1648, as this is based on a *codex pervetustus*, now lost, which was presumably older than the (very similar) 15<sup>th</sup> century manuscript used by Gibson; the quotations are followed by page references to Gibson’s edition. For an assessment of these and other sources for Le Bec’s early history, see J.-H. Foulon, *The Foundation and Early History of Le Bec*, in B. Pohl, L.L. Gathagan (eds.), *A Companion to the Abbey of Le Bec*, cit., pp. 11-37.

<sup>28</sup> Cfr. Milo Crispin, *Vita beati Lanfranci*, cit., col. 31A [G 669]: «Libera me de hac tribulatione; et ego, te auxiliante, sic vitam meam corrigere, et instituere curabo, ut tibi servire valeam et sciam».

<sup>29</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, col. 32C [G 672]: «At vir sapiens sciens magis obedientiam Christo deberi quam Donato, dimisit quod bene pronuntiaverat, et dixit quod non recte dicere jubebatur».

<sup>30</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*, col. 33A-B [G 672-673].

<sup>31</sup> See H.E.J. Cowdrey, *Lanfranc: Scholar, Monk, Archbishop*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 158.

the cenobitic life, which, as he writes, he loved «before all things»<sup>32</sup>. While he apparently composed no prayers or spiritual treatises, the introductory letter to his *Decreta* contains the quintessence of his Benedictine spirituality, condensed in a list of monastic virtues and customs:

This is, however, most cautiously to be taken care of, so that those things, without which the soul cannot be saved, are being observed uninjured in every way, to wit: faith, contempt of the world, charity, chastity, humility, patience, obedience, repentance for the faults committed and their humble confession, frequent prayers, appropriate silence and much more in this vein. Where these are being observed, the Rule of Saint Benedict and the order of the monks can most rightly be said to be observed, in whatever way the other things that have been arranged in different monasteries according to the judgement of different people may be varied<sup>33</sup>.

Significantly, the list does not include learning. However, in Lanfranc's description of the various offices, the precentor is said to take care of the monastery's books, if sufficiently qualified by «learning and knowledge» (*si eius studii et scientiae sit*)<sup>34</sup>; and several letters written by Anselm testify to Lanfranc's anxiety to acquire a copy of Gregory's *Moralia in Iob* and other books for his library at Canterbury<sup>35</sup>.

As a matter of fact, it was not as if Lanfranc's conversion from scholarly to religious life at Le Bec had put an end to his studies. Rather, their focus had shifted from the liberal arts to theology – to the study, that is, of Scripture<sup>36</sup>. Herluin, Le Bec's founder and abbot, had learned to read and write at the advanced age of around for-

<sup>32</sup> Cfr. Lanfranc, *Ep.* 1, ed. H. Clover, M. Gibson, *The Letters of Lanfranc of Canterbury*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1979, pp. 32-33.

<sup>33</sup> Lanfranc, *Decreta*, ed. D. Knowles, in K. Hallinger (ed.), *Corpus Consuetudinum Monasticarum*, vol. 3, Siegburg, Franz Schmitt, 1967, pp. 3-4: «Illud tamen cautissime attendendum est, ut ea sine quibus anima saluari non potest omnibus modis inuiolata seruentur, fidem dico, contemptum mundi, caritatem, castitatem, humilitatem, patientiam, obedientiam, de perpetratis culpis paenitentiam earumque humilem confessionem, frequentes orationes, competens silentium multaque in hunc modum. Haec ubi seruantur, rectissime potest dici regulam sancti Benedicti et monachorum ibi ordinem custodiri, quoquo modo uariantur caetera, quae pro arbitrio diuersorum in diuersis sunt cenobiis instituta».

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>35</sup> Cfr. Anselm, *Ep.* 23; 25; 26, in: Id., *Epistolae*, cit., pp. 130-134.

<sup>36</sup> Cfr. Gilbert Crispin, *Vita Herluini* 58, ed. A. Sapir Abulafia, G.R. Evans, in *Ead.* (eds.), *The Works of Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster*, ABMA 8, London, Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 196; vgl. Milo Crispin, *Vita Lanfranci*, cit., col. 31D-32A [G 670]: «humillime ad omnia parebat, attendebat, mirabatur et praedicabat quam ipsi in intelligendis Scripturis gratiam Deus concesserat».

ty; this was some years before Lanfranc's arrival at Le Bec in about 1042. According to his biographer Gilbert Crispin, Herluin had nevertheless managed to acquire considerable exegetical skills through spending his nights reading the Bible and studying the works of its interpreters (while never neglecting the divine services)<sup>37</sup>. He disliked intellectual laziness and would emphasize the importance of religious knowledge, albeit less from love of knowledge than from affection for his monks<sup>38</sup>. Herluin made Lanfranc his prior and entrusted him with setting up a school, teaching, collecting books and correcting their texts<sup>39</sup>. The school would have been an exclusively interior one for the instruction of monks at the outset, but already in the 1040s or at any rate in the early 1050s, Lanfranc may have admitted external students<sup>40</sup>, clerks and laymen alike, probably out of economic necessity while the monastery had to be moved to a new site for the second time<sup>41</sup>. Some of these students would eventually become monks like Saint Anselm, but many others went on to public and higher ecclesiastical offices. Although there is ample evidence that Lanfranc, once he had become a monk, was reluctant to re-engage in secular studies, the curriculum of his school included an advanced study of the arts of the *Trivium*. It probably included legal and administrative training as well. He was also entreated by others, first of all by the reformed papacy. In a letter dating from 1059, Nicholas II enjoins Lanfranc, with his papal authority (*ex parte sancti Petri*), to teach «dialectic and rhetoric» to two imperial and papal chaplains although he was, as the Pope understood,

<sup>37</sup> Cfr. Gilbert Crispin, *Vita Herluini* 28, cit., p. 190.

<sup>38</sup> Cfr. *ibid.* 106, p. 205: «Si quem inter fratres segnem, si quem sui ordinis ac studii litterarum negligentem [...] deprehendebat, hunc omnino inuisum habebat; semper inquebat: homo litteratum et mandatorum dei nescius, quid praestat? [...] plerosque plus ad studium incitabat illius fauor quam scientie illius amor».

<sup>39</sup> Cfr. Milo Crispin, *Vita Lanfranci*, cit., col. 55B-C [G 711]: «omnes tam Veteres quam Novi Testamenti libros, nec non etiam scripta sanctorum Patrum, secundum orthodoxam fidem studuit corrigere. Et etiam multa de his quibus utimur nocte et die in servitio Ecclesiae ad unguem emendavit, et hoc non tantum per se, sed etiam per discipulos suos fecit» (quoted almost literally by Robert of Torigny in his *Chronicle*, ed. L. Delisle, vol. 1, Rouen, Le Brument, 1872, p. 74).

<sup>40</sup> While Gibson argued that the exterior school only rose to international fame in the late 1050s, more recent scholars have reverted to an earlier date for the period at which it flourished as depicted by Gilbert, Milo and William of Malmesbury. This earlier dating had already been suggested by A.A. Porée (cf. *Histoire de l'abbaye du Bec*, vol. 1, Évreux, Charles Hérissey, 1901, pp. 80-81) and J.M.F.J. de Crozals (cf. *Lanfranc, Archevêque de Cantorbéry, sa vie, son enseignement, sa politique*, Paris 1877, Sandoz et Fischbacher, pp. 61-62).

<sup>41</sup> Cfr. Milo Crispin, *Vita Lanfranci*, cit., col. 38A-B [G 679]: «et ea quae a scholasticis accipiebat abbati conferebat, abbas operariis dabat».

«fully occupied with the study of the Bible»<sup>42</sup>. At about the same time, Duke William, who, as Southern puts it, had made Lanfranc his «chief adviser in religious matters»<sup>43</sup>, likewise began to draw on Lanfranc's teaching. In consequence, the school of Le Bec, like that of the newly founded ducal abbey at Caen, became an *Ecole Nationale d'Administration* of sorts for the duchy of Normandy and later for the kingdom of England. It now continually produced «clerks thoroughly schooled in the arts to be available for the service of both ecclesiastical and lay rulers»<sup>44</sup>, while the exterior school does not seem to have been a permanent institution before, since Milo writes that Lanfranc «once again» ran a school (*iterum scholam tenuit*) with Herluin's permission when the new monastery was being built<sup>45</sup>. Lanfranc acquired an international reputation of combining the teaching of the arts with the study of sacred Scripture. When Pope Alexander II, probably an early student of Lanfranc at Le Bec, asked him in ca. 1061/63 to take on his nephew as a pupil in the liberal arts, he salutes his former master as being versed in both secular and sacred study (*utriusque sapientiae gratia repleto*), commending him on having transferred to the search for true wisdom<sup>46</sup>. As archbishop, Lanfranc states that he had taught sacred as well as secular subjects while still at Le Bec and Caen<sup>47</sup>. Shortly after his departure from Caen, the instruction of external students apparently moved away from St Etienne and its school; it was carried on for another two or three decades by a series of masters who were rather less sympathetic to the monastic life<sup>48</sup>.

The controversy on the Eucharist confronting him with Berengar must also have gone towards his renewed focus on the arts,

<sup>42</sup> «We have heard that you are now fully occupied with the study of the Bible. If this is the case, we order you, in the name of St Peter and ourselves, to give us your obedience in teaching the two chaplains those subjects for which we have sent them to you». For an edition of the letter, see R.W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 32-33; the translation is at pp. 20-21.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14; this assessment is based on the words of Pope Nicholas, in the letter quoted above, that «we have heard that the Count our friend follows your advice in all things» (p. 21).

<sup>44</sup> H.E.J. Cowdrey, *Lanfranc*, cit., p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> Milo Crispin, *Vita Lanfranci*, cit., col. 38A-B [G 679].

<sup>46</sup> Alexander II, *Epistola ad Lanfrancum*, ed. J.-P. Migne, PL 146, col. 1353A (no. 70); and see H.E.J. Cowdrey, *Lanfranc*, cit., p. 20.

<sup>47</sup> Lanfranc, *Ep. 1*, in: Id., *Letters*, cit., pp. 32-33.

<sup>48</sup> Cfr. M. Gibson, *Lanfranc of Bec*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 102-105; D. S. Spear, *The School of Caen Revisited*, «Haskins Society Journal», 4 (1992), pp. 55-56. It is, however, a matter of debate whether their teaching took place at a "school" in the institutional sense or not.

in particular on logic, since Lanfranc took Berengar to be a heretic and – on the authority of Augustine<sup>49</sup> – the science of dialectic to be a useful tool for the rebuttal of heresy; and Lanfranc certainly was not overcautious when using dialectical arguments, including sophisms, against his adversary, often for purely rhetorical purposes<sup>50</sup>. Although he was adamant that dialectic was not to be studied for its own sake and that theology was not to be based on logic but on authority<sup>51</sup>, it was above all as a subtle teacher, or ex-teacher, of logic that he was remembered by contemporary and subsequent writers<sup>52</sup>. Even when Lanfranc had become archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm still thought it good to address to him a skillful letter with erudite allusions to the logical works of Aristotle recalling the *De grammatico*, his most “profane” work dating probably from his early years under Lanfranc at Le Bec. While occupied with ecclesiastic affairs at Canterbury, Lanfranc did indeed not only keep up his readings<sup>53</sup>, but also continued to regard himself as a potential teacher: «If God in his goodness ever grants me release», he declares to Abbot Rainald of Poitiers, «I shall always be willing to teach». Yet from his conversion on, teaching for him had acquired a larger sense than mere classroom activity, as can be seen by the fact that he immediately adds: «[...] and to be taught»<sup>54</sup>. As a monastic superior, Lanfranc was supposed to teach not merely by words, but also by example<sup>55</sup>; and his teaching was supposed to aim no less at his pupils’ moral than at their intellectual progress. What is more, the teacher was held to progress morally and intellectually himself. At Le Bec and Caen, Lanfranc assimilated a tradition that has been

<sup>49</sup> Cfr. Lanfranc, *De corpore et sanguine Domini*, ed. J.-P. Migne, PL 150, col. 417B.

<sup>50</sup> See Gibson, *Lanfranc*, cit., pp. 84-88; T. Holopainen, *Dialectic and Theology in the eleventh century*, Leiden, Brill, 1996, pp. 59-67; Id., *L’héritage intellectuel de Lanfranc revisité*, in J. Barrow et al. (eds.), *Autour de Lanfranc (1010-2010): Réforme et réformateurs dans l’Europe du Nord-Ouest (XI<sup>e</sup>-XII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Caen, Presses universitaires de Caen, 2010, pp. 107-115.

<sup>51</sup> See B. Goebel, *Autorités sacrées ou raisons dialectiques? La querelle sur la méthode dans la théologie du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in O. Boulnois, P. Capelle-Dumont (eds.), *Philosophie et théologie au Moyen Âge*, vol. 2, Paris, Cerf, 2009, pp. 109-111.

<sup>52</sup> See de Crozals, *Lanfranc*, cit., pp. 60-61.

<sup>53</sup> Cfr. Milo Crispin, *Vita Lanfranci* 15, cit., col. 55B [G 711]: «Lectioni erat assiduus et ante episcopatum, et in episcopatu, quantum poterat».

<sup>54</sup> Lanfranc, *Ep.* 46, in: Id., *Letters*, cit., p. 142; cfr. A. Collins, *Teacher in Faith and Virtue: Lanfranc of Bec’s Commentary on Saint Paul*, Leiden, Brill, 2009, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> See above, note 11, and see Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis* III, 40, ed. F. Rommel, vol. 2, SC 382, Paris, Cerf, 1992, p. 530: «ut praedicator quisque plus actibus quam vobis insonet, et bene vivendo vestigia sequacibus imprimat quam loquendo quo gradiantur ostendat». See Watkins, *Lanfranc*, cit., *passim*.

referred to as “the old learning”, characteristic of eleventh century monastic and cathedral schools, an educational model based on virtue and charitable love between master and student<sup>56</sup>. In his *Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*, Lanfranc’s mention of the various obligations of a Christian teacher (*doctor*) bear witness to this ideal: to «live well and to talk well», to procure both the moral and intellectual education of his students, to «instruct his subjects by conduct and by words», to induce in his disciples an «upright life», and to live a life and die a death that make for «the edification of his pupils»<sup>57</sup>.

It is true that unlike his students Anselm and Ralph, Lanfranc did not venture into philosophical theology or try to arrange the subject matter of theology into a coherent whole: the principal task he set himself was that of commenting on and understanding Biblical authorities with the help of patristic authorities and the liberal arts – his other major work having been a lost commentary on the Psalter, a key text of monasticism. However, Lanfranc’s one extant commentary has only recently been more fully appreciated as a work expanding on many central issues of Christian theology, propounding a doctrine of justification, a theory of redemption, a Christology and an ethics not limited to the life of a monk<sup>58</sup>. While his notes on the *De civitate Dei* of St. Augustine and the *Moralia* of Gregory the Great may take us right into his classroom<sup>59</sup>, there is, unlike with Anselm, practically no descriptive evidence as to what Lanfranc’s oral teaching was like; and it is difficult to say in what special way he treated his most gifted student Anselm, who was soon to become «more familiar» with him than «the rest of his disciples» and perhaps even something in the way of an associate running the school with him<sup>60</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> Cfr. C.S. Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, cit., *passim*; Id., *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999, pp. 59-81; M. Münster-Swendsen, *The Model of Scholastic Mastery in Northern Europe c. 970-1200*, in S.N. Vaughn, J. Rubenstein (eds.), *Teaching and Learning*, cit., pp. 307-342; see also S. Steckel, *Kulturen des Lehrens*, cit., *passim*.

<sup>57</sup> Lanfranc, *In Omnes Pauli Epistolas Commentarii* 1 Cor 3,22, ed. J.-P. Migne, PL 150, col. 167A; 2 Tim 4,5, *ibid.*, col. 367A; Titus 2,10, *ibid.*, col. 370B; 2 Tim 4,5, *ibid.*, col. 367A. See H.E.J. Cowdrey, *Lanfranc*, cit., pp. 52-53, and A. Collins, *Teacher*, cit., pp. 98-102.

<sup>58</sup> Cfr. H.E.J. Cowdrey, *Lanfranc*, cit., pp. 53-54; 76; A. Collins, *Teacher*, cit., pp. 117-157.

<sup>59</sup> Cfr. M. Gibson, *Lanfranc’s Notes on Patristic Texts*, «Journal of Theological Studies», 23 (1971), pp. 435-450.

<sup>60</sup> Eadmer, *Vita Sancti Anselmi* I, 5, cit., p. 8. There seems to be too little evidence, however, to substantiate T. Holopainen’s claim that Anselm rather than Lanfranc was the true

### 3. *Ralph of Battle, a monastic theologian and philosopher, and his relation to Anselm*

Seven years Anselm's junior, Ralph became a novice at Le Bec probably in 1062, just two or three years after Anselm did<sup>61</sup>. When Prior Lanfranc was made abbot of St Étienne by Duke William in 1063, Herluin appointed Anselm as his successor, while Ralph accompanied Lanfranc from Le Bec to Caen, which is where he took his vows<sup>62</sup>. This and a letter from Anselm to Ralph written in the 1070s, from which we can gather that Ralph had pleaded Anselm to ask archbishop Lanfranc for permission to join his community at Le Bec and that he had addressed to him questions that Anselm thought required discussion (*colloquio*) rather than written responses<sup>63</sup>, may indicate that Ralph had entered Lanfranc's school a few years before entering the religious life, perhaps at about the time Anselm also did. Ralph, who would have become prior of St Étienne by the time he wrote the letter which prompted Anselm's response<sup>64</sup>, had furthermore lamented that his duties did not leave him sufficient time for in-depth lecture and prayer (*legendi vel orandi instantia*), and in an earlier letter to Anselm had expressed his disappointment about Le Bec's librarian having called upon him to return several books to the monastery<sup>65</sup>. Anselm sent his apologies and responded that the request had been dispatched unbeknownst to him, that he had only realized what was going on when the books were being brought back and that Ralph and his community were not only welcome to keep all the books that were still with them as long as they wished but also to borrow more if needed. Anselm writes that this poli-

author of *De corpore*, although this remains a possibility; cfr. T. Holopainen, *L'héritage*, cit., pp. 113-115.

<sup>61</sup> For Ralph's life, see B. Goebel, *Ralph von Battle*, in T. Bautz (ed.), *Biographisch-bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. 34, Nordhausen, Traugott Bautz, 2013, col. 1192-1200; and Id., *Umkreis*, cit., pp. 155-173.

<sup>62</sup> Cfr. Milo Crispin, *Vita Lanfranci IV*, 10, cit., col. 38B [G 680]: «unum duxit secum, qui nuper habitum suscepserat, sed professionem nondum fecerat, nomine Radulfum, qui postea in eo loco fecit professionem [...]».

<sup>63</sup> Cfr. Anselm, *Ep. 13*, in Id., *Epistolae*, cit., pp. 117-119.

<sup>64</sup> Cfr. Milo Crispin, *Vita Lanfranci IV*, 10, cit., col. 38B [G 680]: «[...] et procedente tempore, ejusdem ecclesiae Cadomensis prior exstitit, ad ultimum abbas de Bello obiit»; see also Schmitt's note to Anselm, *Ep. 12* (to Ralph), in Id., *Epistolae*, cit., p. 115: «Videtur fuisse prior (S. Stephani Cadumensis?), cum "reverendus" vocetur et vices monasterii gerat»; and see the commentary in *Letters of Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. S. Niskanen, vol. 1: *Litterae Becenses*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2019, no. 1, 10, pp. 32-37.

<sup>65</sup> Cfr. Anselm, *Ep. 12*, in Id., *Epistolae*, cit., pp. 115-117.

cy had been authorized by Abbot Herluin, decreed by himself and was backed by the entire community (*nullo fratrum resistente*); but although another letter of Anselm shows that the lending of books to other monasteries was not an uncommon practice at Le Bec<sup>66</sup>, the alleged concurrence of wills cannot have been overwhelming after what had happened. It is tempting to place this book lending affair, implicating Le Bec's and Caen's leading intellectuals, in the wider context of a certain resistance amongst the brethren at Le Bec in view of Anselm's, Ralph's and their adherents' theological aspirations, foreshadowing perhaps or even coinciding with the excitement caused by the circulation of the early drafts of Anselm's *Monologion*<sup>67</sup>. Another incident recounted by Eadmer – the theft and shattering of wax tablets containing the argument of the *Proslogion* – likewise suggests that engaging in theology over and above the study of the Bible was not always met with enthusiasm at Le Bec in the 1070s<sup>68</sup>: Anselm's intellectual efforts seem to have initially been discouraged by some members of the community of Le Bec, as were those of Ralph. Even if we do not know what kind of texts Ralph was prompted to return, it shows that he took a keen interest in books while at Caen. His special devotion to teaching and to writing books is confirmed by the *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*. After Lanfranc had taken him, a man «most sagacious in religion and prudence», to England, he served as his chaplain<sup>69</sup> and as prior of Rochester before being made Battle's fourth abbot in 1107<sup>70</sup>. Apart from unreservedly praising his religious fervour, exemplary life, charity and administrative skills, the Battle chronicler notes that Ralph urged holiness and “learning” (*doctrina*)<sup>71</sup>. He made the abbey flourish

<sup>66</sup> Cfr. Id., *Ep.* 26, in Id., *Epistolae*, cit., p. 134.

<sup>67</sup> See in particular Anselm's letter to Abbot Rainald of Poitiers, *Ep.* 83, in Id., *Epistolae*, cit., pp. 207-208, and see T. Holopainen, *The Proslogion in Relation to the Monologion*, «Heythrop Journal», 50 (2009), pp. 590-602.

<sup>68</sup> Cfr. Eadmer, *Vita Sancti Anselmi* I, 19, cit., pp. 30-31. For an interpretation along these or similar lines, see G.E.M. Gasper, *Envy, Jealousy, and the Boundaries of Orthodoxy: Anselm of Canterbury and the Genesis of the Proslogion*, «Viator», 41 (2010), pp. 45-68, in particular p. 62: «It is possible to interpret the smashing of the *Proslogion* drafts as the actions of a person or persons convinced that Anselm's theological methods were too dangerous and risky to be allowed to take written form and be preserved».

<sup>69</sup> Cfr. *Textus Roffensis*, ed. T. Hearne, Oxford 1720; *facsimile edition*, ed. P. H. Sawyer, *Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile*, vols. 7, 11, Copenhagen, Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1957-1962, no. 3.

<sup>70</sup> Cfr. *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. and transl. E. Searle, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980, pp. 116-119. See also B. Goebel, *Umkreis*, cit., pp. 155-163, for Ralph's life and works.

<sup>71</sup> *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, cit., pp. 118-119.

inwardly and outwardly<sup>72</sup>, adding lands to those already held, and became, as it were, «a spiritual farmer too, cultivating the earth of the heart with the plough of teaching, in the many books he wrote (*doctrine multorum quos scripsit librorum*), calling them to a harvest of good work in a style that was low but fertile in its expression of morality»<sup>73</sup>. If Ralph remains a relatively unknown figure to this day and is hardly ever mentioned other than in passing even by scholars specializing in Anglo-Norman studies<sup>74</sup>, this is for the most part due to the fact that his writings were not identified as such until well into the twentieth century<sup>75</sup>. They were rarely made the object of closer studies and have only recently begun to be edited in greater numbers<sup>76</sup>. As a consequence, most scholars failed to recognize Ralph as the rather exceptional writer he was. His works prove to be profoundly influenced by those of Anselm. Ralph's famous friend's impact on him becomes most conspicuous perhaps when we take a look at his works in their entirety, not only with regard to their subject matters but also the literary forms he employs. Indeed, a survey of Ralph's works reveals a pervasive tendency to take up Anselmian themes and concerns in a variety of Anselmian literary forms. Thus, Ralph's theological prayers and meditations came to be regarded for centuries as Anselm's<sup>77</sup>. Moreover, Ralph also composed dialogues, one of which (*De nesciente et sciente*) confronts a Christian with a non-Christian, providing an atheist's point of view<sup>78</sup>. Yet while the inclusion of an atheist in Ralph's dialogue certainly is innovative, it does not seem to be a radical departure from Anselm's method. A

<sup>72</sup> Cfr. *ibid.*: [The abbey under Ralph was] «second to none of the English churches in sanctity, benevolence, clemency, charity, and grace in kindness» (transl. E. Searle).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131 (transl. E. Searle).

<sup>74</sup> The most notable exceptions are the studies of R.W. Southern (1941), E. Searle (1974) and J.-F. Cottier (2001).

<sup>75</sup> See B. Goebel, *Einleitung*, in Ralph von Battle, *Dialoge zur philosophischen Theologie*, cit., pp. 13-16; S. Niskanen, *Einleitung*, in Ralph von Battle, *Dialoge zur philosophischen Theologie*, cit., pp. 68-71; B. Goebel, *Umkreis*, cit., pp. 157-162.

<sup>76</sup> For a list of his edited and unedited works, see S. Niskanen, *The Treatises of Ralph of Battle*, «Journal of Medieval Latin», 26 (2016), pp. 199-215, and B. Goebel, *Ralph von Battles De creatura: Ein trinitarischer Abriss der Heilsgeschichte: Einführung, Edition und Übersetzung*, in C. Müller, B. Willmes (eds.), *Thesaurus in vasis fictilibus*, Freiburg, Herder, 2017, p. 57; see also B. Goebel, *Umkreis*, cit., pp. 163-167.

<sup>77</sup> See J.-F. Cottier, *Anima mea: Prières privées et textes de devotion du moyen âge latin: Autour des prières et méditations attribuées à saint Anselme de Cantorbéry, XI-XIIe siècle*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2001.

<sup>78</sup> Cfr. Ralph of Battle, *De nesciente et sciente/Der Unwissende und der Wissende*, ed. S. Niskanen in cooperation with B. Goebel, transl. B. Goebel, in Ralph von Battle, *Dialoge zur philosophischen Theologie*, Freiburg, Herder, 2015, pp. 242-491.

non-Christian standpoint also figures in Anselm's dialogue on the incarnation (albeit represented by his friend and disciple Boso, by, that is, a Christian monk)<sup>79</sup>. Yet much more still than the "unbelievers" (*infideles*) of *Cur deus homo* deprived of their Christian representative, Ralph's «ignorant» (*nesciens*) is the «fool» (*insipiens*) from Anselm's *Proslogion*, transported from the psalm into a fictitious interlocution, i.e. the fool who says in his heart: «There is no God»<sup>80</sup>. At the same time, Ralph's *ignorant*, we may say, is the *nescient* from Anselm's *Monologion*, elevated to the rank of a dialogue partner, the *quis... ignorant* who «either because he has not heard or because he does not believe, does not know anything» about God and the divine properties and who «considers within himself things he knows not» (*quae nesciat*)<sup>81</sup>. If Ralph's *De nesciente et sciente* may be regarded as a dialogue recasting of the *Monologion/Proslogion*, it is possible to interpret Ralph's *Meditation of a Christian on faith* with its subtitle *and that we understand by reason much of what we believe by faith*<sup>82</sup> as his attempt to take up the project of the *Monologion* and *Proslogion* in a new way, that is to say, from the perspective of a Christian, as is the case in the *Proslogion*, not, however, in the form of a prayer but as an arrangement of undisguised pieces of reasoning, as in the *Monologion*. Anselm had initially called his *Monologion* a «meditation» («an example of meditating on the reason of faith»), and Toivo Holopainen, who considers the *Monologion* and *Proslogion* as «a pair of works with a common objective and a common methodology», comments that according to what Anselm says in the preface to the *Proslogion*, «one could freely switch the modes of presentation in the two works or instead use some other form (say, write a dialogue)»<sup>83</sup>.

It is furthermore likely that Ralph's third large dialogue *De peccatore et de ratione* was inspired by Anselm's *Cur deus homo*, including Ralph's prologue, which appears to be modelled on the pref-

<sup>79</sup> Cfr. Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur deus homo* I, 3, *cit.*, p. 50: «Boso: Patere igitur ut verbis utar infidelium».

<sup>80</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion* II-IV, *cit.*, pp. 101-104.

<sup>81</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion* 1, ed. F.S. Schmitt, *Sancti Anselmi opera omnia*, vol. 1, Seckau, Abtei Seckau, 1938, repr. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Frommann, 1984<sup>2</sup>, p. 13.

<sup>82</sup> Cfr. Ralph of Battle, *Mediatio cuiusdam Christiani de fide et quod multa quae secundum fidem credimus etiam secundum rationem intelligimus*, Bodleian MS Laud misc. 363, fols. 33v-43v; London BL MS Royal 12 C I, fols. 74v-92v.

<sup>83</sup> T. Holopainen, *The Proslogion in relation to the Monologion*, *cit.*, pp. 592 and 597-598.

ace to Anselm's work<sup>84</sup>. However, *De Peccatore* is not a conversation between a believer and a non-believer (or, for that matter, the representative of a non-believer) but the inner dialogue of a believer with his reason. As such, it is methodically almost closer to Anselm's *Meditation on human redemption* than to his dialogue on the incarnation, where faith in the salvific power of Christ remains suspended for the sake of argument. In this respect, Ralph's counterpart to *Cur deus homo* is rather the first book of his dialogue with the atheist.

In the same vein, in the fairly short period from 1090 to 1125, a group of authors composed dialogues between Christians and non-Christians, based, at least in part, on reason; one is almost inclined to speak of a movement and of a "golden age" of the genre in the wake of *Cur deus homo*<sup>85</sup>. One of these works, a dialogue between a Christian and a Jew, has traditionally been attributed to William of Champeaux and subsequently been taken to be the work of an unknown author linked to the school of Laon. However, this dialogue is quite possibly another work of Ralph<sup>86</sup>. Inspired by Gilbert Crispin's dialogue with a Jew, it clearly stands in the tradition of interreligious dialogues, inaugurated by Anselm's *Cur deus homo*. There are many more thematic parallels between Anselm's and Ralph's works<sup>87</sup>, leaving little doubt that Ralph's literary output is heavily inspired by Anselm's oeuvre. In this respect, Ralph goes even further than Gilbert Crispin, otherwise Anselm's closest follower<sup>88</sup>.

<sup>84</sup> See Ralph of Battle, *De peccatore et de ratione, Prologus*, London BL MS Royal 12 C I, fol. 2v; see B. Goebel, *Anselmian themes and anti-Anselmian stances in Ralph of Battle's philosophical theology*, in G.E.M. Gasper, G. Younge, M. Healey-Varley (eds.), *Anselm of Canterbury: Communities, Contemporaries and Criticism*, Leiden, Brill, forthcoming.

<sup>85</sup> See B. Goebel, "Rationabiliter loquenti non habeo quod rationabiliter obiiciam." *Odos Streitgespräch mit dem Juden und einige weitere Religionsgespräche im Anschluss an Anselms Cur deus homo*, in G. Förster, C. Müller (eds.), *Augustinus – Christentum – Judentum. Ausgewählte Stationen einer Problemgeschichte*, Würzburg, Echter, 2018, pp. 81-112.

<sup>86</sup> Cfr. [Pseudo-]Wilhelm of Champeaux, *Dialogus inter Christianum et Iudaeum de fide Catholica (Altercatio cuiusdam Christiani cum Iudaeo de fide Catholica)*, ed. P. Despont, in M. de la Bigne (ed.), *Maxima Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum et Antiquorum Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum*, vol. 12, Lyon (Anisson) 1677, pp. 1884-1894 = *Dialogus inter Christianum et Iudaeum de fide Catholica*, ed. J.-P. Migne, PL 163, Paris 1854, col. 1045-1072, and see B. Goebel, *Menschwerdung und Dämonologie. Der dem Wilhelm von Champeaux zugeschriebene Dialogus inter christianum et iudaeum vor dem Hintergrund von Anselms Cur deus homo*, in M. Enders, B. Goebel (eds.), *Die Philosophie der monotheistischen Weltreligionen im frühen und hohen Mittelalter*, Freiburg, Herder, 2019, forthcoming.

<sup>87</sup> For some of them, see B. Goebel, *Anselmian themes and anti-Anselmian stances*, cit.

<sup>88</sup> For Gilbert's works, see B. Goebel, *Gilbert Crispin*, in T. Bautz (ed.), *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. 30, Nordhausen, Traugott Bautz, 2009, col. 484-493; Id.,

Like Anselm and unlike his teacher Lanfranc, Ralph develops a rational theology; it seems, however, to be largely independent of and, indeed, rather different from Anselm's<sup>89</sup>. While for Anselm, theology basically is rational theology, Ralph's philosophical theology does not nearly exhaust the field of Christian theology. Again, while for the author of the *Monologion*, *Proslogion* and of *Cur deus homo*, theology does not need to (and should not) invoke the authorities of faith, Ralph leaves the proof from authority intact everywhere. Ralph does not seem to think it possible to prove the specific tenets of Christianity by reason alone to the same extent as Anselm does. He does not seem to think that the divine Trinity discloses itself to one who does not believe; his rational proof of the necessity of God incarnate (if the dialogue formerly attributed to William of Champeaux is actually by him<sup>90</sup>) requires far more presuppositions than Anselm's; and although reason can prove the existence of a supreme nature<sup>91</sup>, it is incapable of demonstrating that it is identical with the Christian God. We may say, then, that Ralph's theology represents a middle way between Lanfranc's and Anselm's approaches – an alternative stance, with its heyday yet to come.

#### 4. «*Inquire ergo quod vis*»: teaching and learning in Ralph's *De inquirente et respondente*<sup>92</sup>

Ralph's dialogue *De inquirente et respondente* brings together two Christians, one of whom (the "questioner") confronts the other (the "respondent") with his queries (*dubitaciones*). These do not relate to the existence of God or to the central doctrines of Christianity, but they do concern their common faith. They deal with a whole range of themes such as the problem and ontology of evil, the ethics of murder and suicide, the interpretation of the first verses of the book of Genesis and some other biblical texts, the idea of a creation from

*Umkreis*, cit., pp. 174-201.

<sup>89</sup> See B. Goebel, *Einleitung*, in Ralph von Battle, *Dialoge zur philosophischen Theologie*, cit., pp. 54-66; Id., *Anselmian themes and anti-Anselmian stances*, cit.

<sup>90</sup> See above, note 87.

<sup>91</sup> For Ralph's proof of the existence of a creator of everything there is, cfr. his *De nesciente* I. 3, cit., pp. 252-256; see also B. Goebel, C. Tapp, *Der kosmologische Gottesbeweis des Ralph von Battle*, forthcoming.

<sup>92</sup> For some of the following, cfr. B. Goebel, *Einleitung*, in Ralph von Battle, *Dialoge zur philosophischen Theologie*, cit., in particular pp. 19-28.

nothing, divine exemplarism and the notions of guilt and remorse. The answerer who seems to be related to the questioner as a teacher to an advanced disciple, tries to disperse the latter's doubts. The monastic setting of Ralph's dialogue becomes apparent not only by the extraordinary kindness and intimacy displayed by both interlocutors, but also by the fact that the respondent explicitly understands his efforts as an exercise in altruism, or charity (*caritas*):

If I understand something which you understand less than I do and which you desire to learn from me, be assured that I will readily disclose it to you in the name of charity, according to which we must serve each other. Charity demands that you love me like yourself and I love you like myself. *If we possess it in the right way and seek to live rightly in accordance with it, it does not tolerate that I love your advantage less than mine or that you love mine less than yours.* So ask whatever you want, since I am ready to respond to you as well as I can about all the things which you would like to inquire<sup>93</sup>.

Charity and the observance of the Golden Rule in its positive form («do as you would be done by») is one of the eight requirements a monk ought to comply with, as listed by Ralph in a short treatise on the monastic life formerly attributed to Lanfranc<sup>94</sup>. The inquirer thinks that he can trust this love almost absolutely whilst being careful not to wear it out, setting aside his further concerns at the end of the final chapter when he feels that his teacher has other business to attend to<sup>95</sup>. His questions take the form of requests and are often directed to the personified love (*dilectio*) or brotherliness (*fraternitas*) of his counterpart, thereby reinforcing the strikingly personal atmosphere of their colloquy. Its immediate aim is to provide a benefit (*utilitas*) for the inquirer greater or at least equal to that of the respondent<sup>96</sup>. As a literary work, says the unnamed teacher at one point in what is really the author's reflection upon his act of publishing, its further aim is to provide a benefit for its

<sup>93</sup> Ralph of Battle, *De inquirente et respondente* 1. 8, cit., p. 82. Cfr. *Benedicti Regula* IV, 1-2, cit., p. 29.

<sup>94</sup> Cfr. Ralph of Battle, *De octo a monachis observandis* 1, ed. D.H. Farmer, *Ralph's octo puncta of monastic life*, «Studia monastic», 11 (1969), pp. 26-29, at 26: «Sextum est ut inuicem secundum Deum se diligant, et omne bonum quod singuli sibi ab aliis impendi desiderat, ipsi aliis hilariter et cum gaudio impendant». The treatise was first edited by Luc d'Achery in 1648 amongst the works of Lanfranc.

<sup>95</sup> Cfr. Ralph of Battle, *De inquirente et respondente* XIII. 1, cit., p. 240.

<sup>96</sup> Cfr. *ibid.* VI. 36, p. 162: «That I do love you as much as I love myself, and that you do love me, of that I am sure; and I am sure that I do not love your advantage less than mine».

readers<sup>97</sup>. At the very beginning of his introduction, Ralph urges his readers that they must not let pass uselessly the lifetime accorded to them, in a passage that clearly recalls the prologue to the Rule of Benedict<sup>98</sup>. The interlocutors agree that we are to consider incessantly our condition in the life to come, always keeping our final destiny in mind, just as a monk is supposed to. The benefit in question, accordingly, refers to their existence post-mortem, just as the desire for perfect happiness is the driving force behind the Rule of Benedict. If a benefit of this sort is produced by their conversation, it is nonetheless the work of grace. Thus, the disciple believes it to be the will of God to have met his teacher, who in turn points to God as the source of all insight and every good<sup>99</sup>.

The same rule commends and commands taciturnity, so for a monk like Ralph the assumption of authorship for a work on theological and even philosophical questions, let alone for a literary *conversation*, requires justification. There are several sides to this problem. The first one concerns the very active role of the student in *De inquirente*: it is clearly he who determines the subject matters in this somewhat quodlibetal dialogue. On the face of it, this seems to ignore the precept from the Rule of Benedict that «keeping quiet and listening befits the pupil»<sup>100</sup>. This cathedral- or rather secular-school-like feature of the inquirer's behaviour is however attenuated by the apparent humility of his questioning (*humiliter precat*)<sup>101</sup> and the low opinion he seems to have of his own intellectual capacities<sup>102</sup>. The general impression he conveys is that he cannot help have the doubts entertained by him, thereby almost obliging his professedly charitable teacher to search a remedy for his perplexities. Although in his introduction, Ralph admits to the dialogue's

<sup>97</sup> Cfr. *ibid.* III. 5, p. 106.

<sup>98</sup> Cfr. *ibid.* I. 3, p. 80: «Interim dum in hac uita sumus, et per singula momenta ad terminum uitae nostrae transimus, ne id quod uiuimus perdamus semper nobis necessarium est multumque utile, ut sine intermissione de nouissimis nostra cogitemus et ad quam habitationem postquam hinc transibimus deuenturi simus. Si uero scire uolumus ad quem locum post hanc uitam uenire et in quem conuersari debeamus, modo diligenter intueamus quomodo uiuimus, quia ipsa uita nostra quam modo agimus nobis praeparat locum in quo post hanc uitam manere debeamus», to *Benedicti Regula*, Prologus, Nr. 42-44, cit., p. 8: «Et si fugientes gehennae poenas ad uitam uolumus peruenire perpetuam, dum adhuc uacat et in hoc corpore sumus et haec omnia per hanc lucis uitam uacat implere, currendum et agendum est modo, quod in perpetuo nobis expediat».

<sup>99</sup> Cfr. Ralph of Battle, *De inquirente et respondente* I. 7, cit., p. 82, and IV. 20, p. 138.

<sup>100</sup> *Benedicti Regula* VI, 6, cit., p. 39: «tacere et audire discipulum conuenit».

<sup>101</sup> Ralph of Battle, *De inquirente et respondente* I. 6, cit., p. 82.

<sup>102</sup> Cfr. *ibid.* III. 1, p. 104.

being arranged by him (*ponamus quasi duos, unum inquirentem et alium inquirenti respondentem*)<sup>103</sup>, the situation depicted here does not seem particularly artificial for a monastic school in the early twelfth century, at a time when theological studies and schools were thriving and undergoing rapid change. The ultimate justification for his peculiar inquisitiveness is provided by the inquirer himself when he states towards the end of the dialogue that he is «indeed very pleased that I doubted as I did, since it was at the instance of my asking you those things that you have instructed me about so many topics which I did not know before»<sup>104</sup>.

Another problem for a monastic author of a dialogue like Ralph's was that its redaction, let alone its publication might seem incompatible with the requirement of humility. Ralph's teacher (the dialogue figure) seems to be fully aware of these concerns and tries to dispel them by displaying an extremely modest and unassuming behaviour, surpassing even the humility of his student. Repeatedly, he makes it clear that it is only with many qualms, at the student's request and, indeed, out of a sense of duty, that he engages in this sort of colloquy. He does not feel up to his task as a teacher and fears that his explanations might be of little help or not helpful at all. His hesitations and misgivings do not fail to produce a *captatio benevolentiae* with the questioner. The latter suspects that the respondent is worried about the adverse effect his scholarly existence and teacherly role might have on his own character. He reminds him of the fact that nobody will be forced to read their conversation against his or her will and encourages him not to keep his knowledge to himself for the sake of charity:

Perhaps you act in this way because you are afraid of flattery's vain attractions – afraid that you might be lead astray if you frequently hear them, that you might think that you are of some importance when you hear someone's praising you for your little knowledge. But, believe me, I will not dismiss you for these fears, but rather question you faithfully about the things I doubt, confiding in the favour of your goodness. For I believe that you meet your neighbour (whom according to the Lord's commandment you shall love like yourself) with so much love that you gladly want to share with him anything which you understand may be useful for him<sup>105</sup>.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* i. 6, p. 82.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* xii. 1, p. 226.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* vi. 31-32, p. 160.

These and other remarks by the questioner make the respondent overcome his initial reluctance, in particular since he surmises that his interlocutor will not leave him in peace, whatever excuses he might offer<sup>106</sup>. If despite all his efforts his answers turn out to be unhelpful and worthless, this will be due to the inquisitiveness of his dialogue partner who «forces» him «to say what I do not know (*quod nescio*)»<sup>107</sup>. More often than not, the teacher claims that his assertions do not amount to knowledge, or even denies that he is asserting anything at all<sup>108</sup>. He repeatedly confines himself to offering the opinion of others, as he considers that he has not yet sufficiently understood the issue and cannot therefore pretend to be a competent judge<sup>109</sup>. In such cases, the student is left to judge for himself. Similarly, if there is no agreement amongst theologians as to how to interpret a certain biblical verse, the teacher contents himself with an exposition of the rival views and refrains from bringing about a decision<sup>110</sup>. When it comes to the notion of a creation out of nothing, he goes so far as to admit his complete ignorance: «As to this, I cannot respond to you anything other than that I do not know»<sup>111</sup>. Even if this cannot be taken literally – since he goes on to propose a variant of the ‘analogy of the builder’ which Augustine and Anselm had appealed to in this very context – this Socratic-style confession is rather remarkable. It is part of a general strategy of self-effacement and even self-deprecation employed by the author of this anonymous theological yet monastic dialogue. Indeed, not only did Ralph succeed in escaping identification with the writer of the dialogue for many centuries, one may also say of the teacher or “respondent” in the dialogue that he is a truly *self-effacing* figure. He is unpretentious, does not act schoolmasterly, and never tries to appear knowledgeable or wise. In anything he says he pursues the benefit of his pupil (and that of his readers) no less than his own. Eschewing the moral pitfalls of an intellectual life, he is a model of humility and charity, a veritable monk-theologian – in stark contrast to some noto-

<sup>106</sup> Cfr. *ibid.* iv. 5, p. 130.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 6, p. 132.

<sup>108</sup> Cfr. *ibid.* vi. 4, p. 146: «quod tamen non affirmando sed secundum quod michi uideatur expono».

<sup>109</sup> Cfr. *ibid.* vi. 14, pp. 150-152: «I am presenting to you their opinion, because I hardly comprehend anything useful in this matter, and that is why I do not wish to assert anything about it according to my own lights»; cfr. also *ibid.* vi. 29, p. 160.

<sup>110</sup> Cfr. *ibid.* iv. 7-16, pp. 132-136.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* ix. 2, p. 202.

rious non-monastic teachers such as Berengar of Tours (at least as Guitmond of Aversa describes him)<sup>112</sup>. In this sense, Ralph even outshines Anselm. His excuses for indulging in speculative theology seem more sincere than Anselm's and his hesitations less conventional; and while Anselm merely announces to write, at the request of his fellow monks, *plano stilo*<sup>113</sup>, Ralph actually does write in a simple style – and certainly does not do so for lack of skill, as his elaborate prayers and meditations show.

Ralph's monastic background and preoccupations perhaps become most obvious towards the end of the work when, after a discussion of some issues related to the notion of repentance (which occupies a prominent place in both Lanfranc's and Ralph's monastic spirituality)<sup>114</sup>, the student asks the teacher to provide an explanation of an extract from Psalm 73 (22-24a): *ad nihilum redactus sum et nescivi; / ut iumentum factus sum apud te et ego semper tecum. / Tenuisti manum dexteram meam*. The first two of these three verses are quoted by the Rule of Benedict in the famous seventh chapter with its doctrine of the twelve "degrees of humility". The sixth degree of humility, according to this scheme, is «that a monk be content with the poorest and worst of everything, and that in every occupation assigned him he consider himself a bad and worthless workman, saying with the Prophet, "I am brought to nothing and I am without understanding; I have become as a beast of burden before You, and I am always with You"»<sup>115</sup>. Interestingly, the respondent offers two rather different interpretations of these two verses: a first one, according to which they highlight the ontological consequences of sin, in particular of the sin of Adam, in response to the inquirer's wondering how it can be that a human being is reduced to nothingness although he

<sup>112</sup> Cfr. (with reference to Guitmond of Aversa, *De corporis et sanguinis Christi veritate in eucharistia*, ed. J.-P. Migne, PL 149, col. 1428A-B), M. Münster-Swendsen, *The Model of Scholastic Mastery*, cit., p. 322: «Guitmond of Aversa contends that the original cause of Berengar's error [...] lay in his *habitus*, which was already notorious in his student days: he did not pay heed to his master, nor respect his co-students; intolerably pompous and feigning loftiness and subtlety, he invented a series of idiosyncratic mannerisms, such as burying himself deep in his hood, pretending to be in profound meditation, speaking in a highly affected voice [...]».

<sup>113</sup> Cfr. Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion*, Preface, cit., p. 7.

<sup>114</sup> Cfr. Ralph of Battle, *De inquirente et respondente* xi, cit., pp. 212-224. For Lanfranc, see above, note 33; for Ralph, see his *De octo a monachis observandis*, cit., p. 29.

<sup>115</sup> Cfr. *Benedicti Regula* VII, 49-50, cit., pp. 48-49; the English translation is from *Saint Benedict's Rule for Monasteries*, transl. L.J. Doyle OBlSB, Collegeville, St. John's Abbey Press, 1948, pp. 26-27 (= *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 2001, p. 50).

or she possesses an immortal soul<sup>116</sup>; and a second one very much along the lines of the *Regula*, to the effect that the psalmist is expounding here the condition of a person possessing “true humility”:

If therefore someone who wants to be truly humble truly believes that he is inferior and more despicable than all other human beings, then he will not be indignant if he suffers injustice, because he deems it right that everybody should treat him in this way, as indeed they ought to do with a most despicable and abject thing. If, on the other hand, someone else seeks to honour him, he does not take to it, considering it as something he is not worthy of<sup>117</sup>.

For Ralph, this kind of self-abasement is an essential feature of the monastic existence – *est enim omnis vita monachi [...] paenitentia et humiliatio*<sup>118</sup> –, and it is most expedient in the monk’s (and, indeed, any Christian’s) quest for eternal happiness; as a matter of fact, «the more someone will have been humiliated for God’s sake in this life, the more will he be exalted in heaven»<sup>119</sup>. By pointing out these two senses of the psalm verses, belonging to the domains of theological anthropology and Benedictine spirituality respectively, Ralph demonstrates how speculative theology and the monastic life can not only go together, but complement each other. This is all the more important since his theological concerns – and here we come upon yet another problem faced by a teacher and theologian in the Lanfrancian tradition – could at first glance appear very remote from the daily exercises of a monk. The verses from the psalm not being the only biblical texts the questioner is desirous of having explained to him, the dialogue presents itself as a peculiar mixture of philosophical theology and (allegorical) exegesis of the Bible – a genre totally absent in the work of Saint Anselm. This blend of themes and methods should be seen as an attempt to combine questions arising from the monks’ *lectio* with problems from systematic or even rational theology as they could be encountered in the more theoretical works of the Church Fathers.

<sup>116</sup> Cfr. Ralph of Battle, *De inquirente et respondente* XII. 3-11, cit., pp. 226-230.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* XII. 13, p. 230.

<sup>118</sup> Ralph of Battle, *De peccatore et de ratione*, ed. (in part) J. Leclercq, in Id., *La vêtue “ad succurrendum” d’après le moine Raoul*, «Analecta monastica», 3 (1955) = *Studia Anselmiana* 37, pp. 158-165, here p. 162.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164: «quanto quis plus fuerit propter Deum humiliatus in terris, tanto plus fuerit exaltatus in caelis».

What is more, the inclusion in the exegesis of the third verse (24a), *Thou hast held my right hand*, going beyond the text quoted from the psalm in the *Regula*, allows Ralph to make a final transition from theology and biblical interpretation to devotion and prayer. For, in Ralph's understanding, this statement is «said in the person of Christ»<sup>120</sup>. Having established this, the respondent suddenly but not abruptly shifts to first person speech and ends the colloquy by a long prayer addressed to the Father from the point of view of the Son, recounting the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ and exposing their salvific power. After having struggled with the lofty problems of philosophical theology such as the ontology of evil and the intelligibility of the notion of *creatio ex nihilo*, the minds of the student, the teacher and the reader eventually come to rest.

A further problem for a monastic author publishing a theological work like *De inquirente*, albeit not under his name, should be mentioned here. Why write anything if the Church Fathers have already dealt with these questions in a most sublime way? Anselm had replied to this objection that the Fathers did not live long enough to be able to say everything they might have wished to say, and that the "ratio of truth" is too profound to be exhausted by any mortal being<sup>121</sup>. Ralph, by contrast, does not resort to these arguments, because he does not pretend to have added anything to their insights. His pretensions are far more modest than Anselm's: he merely wants to make the insights of others more accessible to his readers. Thus, for instance, when quoting extensively from Augustine, he remarks:

Maybe to someone it will seem superfluous that I report what has already been said by the blessed Augustine, since what he writes in the selfsame first book of the *City of God* could suffice everybody who wants to know about it. But to this my answer is that many will be able to take this small work here – which they can very easily carry to wherever they want – more lightly than that great work of the blessed Augustine<sup>122</sup>.

Ralph's apology for publishing *De inquirente* is, moreover, provided only indirectly, that is, by a literary figure; and not only by the "respondent" himself, who could easily be identified with the

<sup>120</sup> Ralph of Battle, *De inquirente et respondente* XII. 17, cit., p. 232.

<sup>121</sup> Cfr. Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur deus homo*, *Commendatio operis ad Urbanum Papam II*, cit., p. 40.

<sup>122</sup> Ralph of Battle, *De inquirente et respondente* III. 8, cit., p. 106.

author, but also by the student. And, significantly, the student's justification of his teacher's work assumes almost a slightly humiliating tone:

We certainly know that you are not Augustin or Gregory, nor any great one of these interpreters whose authority, as is appropriate, the Holy Church always reveres. But, as I said, if you do not have so great an authority and so great a knowledge as these do, you should not therefore keep quiet if you recognize some good that may be useful to your neighbour. For, indeed, some little one will perhaps find you little one, who will not be able to find these great ones<sup>123</sup>.

The teacher's engaging not only in Biblical interpretation but also in philosophical theology leads to the question how his rational arguments relate to the authorities of faith. In Ralph's dialogue *De nesciente et sciente*, the Christian (called the "knowledgeable one") underlines that human beings ought to live according to reason and that they have dignity and likeness to God because they have reason<sup>124</sup>. Reason, the Christian holds, teaches us that a Supreme Being exists and that we have an immaterial, immortal soul; it reveals to us amongst other things the purpose of our being human and some of the Supreme Being's attributes<sup>125</sup>. The *knowledgeable one* only resorts to arguments from authorities once the *nescient* has abandoned his initial atheism under the pressure of rational arguments, and goes on to claim that, for a Christian, arguments from authority should really take precedence over rational<sup>126</sup>. In the dialogue with the Jew formerly attributed to William of Champeaux, Ralph (if we suppose he is the true author of that work) uses sacred texts common to both Christians and Jews to substantiate his defence of Christianity. But he equally develops an argument that despite its many premises purports to be a rational proof of the incarnation<sup>127</sup>. Again, the teacher in *De inquirente et respondente* stresses the importance of rational considerations. He reminds the doubting Christian that the human being is a "rational nature" to whom it per-

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 23, p. 140.

<sup>124</sup> Ralph of Battle, *De nesciente et sciente* 1. 3, cit., p. 242; 1. 62, p. 270; see B. Goebel, *Einleitung*, in Ralph von Battle, *Dialoge zur philosophischen Theologie*, cit., pp. 28-31.

<sup>125</sup> Cfr. B. Goebel, *Anselmian themes and anti-Anselmian stances*, op. cit.

<sup>126</sup> Cfr. B. Goebel, *Einleitung*, in Ralph von Battle, *Dialoge zur philosophischen Theologie*, cit., pp. 50-52.

<sup>127</sup> Cfr. B. Goebel, *Menschwerdung und Dämonologie*, cit.

tains to live according to reason (*secundum rationem vivere*)<sup>128</sup>. When the respondent provides him with rational arguments that would seem to resolve a particular facet of the problem of evil – why does God allow the wicked to often fare better than the righteous? –, the inquirer accepts these arguments. Yet he asks the teacher to supplement them with authorities, as this would be still more sufficient for both of them (*plus nobis erit sufficiens*)<sup>129</sup>. Ralph's inquirer, then, behaves quite differently from the unnamed brethren (*quidam fratres*) mentioned in the preface to Anselm's *Monologion*. According to Anselm, they had prompted him to write a book and insisted on his doing so using solely rational arguments<sup>130</sup> – a method which Saint Augustine had objected to, associating it with his Manichean adversaries<sup>131</sup>. The inquirer, by contrast, not only accepts authorities but actually requires them from the respondent, who readily complies with his request. Yet on the other hand, the respondent explicitly sets forth rational arguments, something Lanfranc had done only implicitly and had not exactly approved of<sup>132</sup>. The teacher's emphasis on rationality – which becomes a veritable eulogy of reason in the first book of *De nesciente et sciente*<sup>133</sup> – does not recall Lanfranc, who as far as we can tell would probably have been quite embarrassed by it, but his adversary Berengar of Tours. So if Ralph's view regarding the scope of philosophical theology seemed to be a compromise between the approaches of his master Lanfranc and his friend and rival Anselm, the same may be said of his theological methodology.

<sup>128</sup> Ralph of Battle, *De inquirente et respondente* VIII. 12, cit., p. 194.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* II. 12, p. 88.

<sup>130</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion*, Preface, cit., p. 7. See B. Goebel, *Foi et raison selon la théologie philosophique de saint Anselme*, in O. Boulnois, P. Capelle-Dumont (eds.): *Philosophie et théologie au Moyen Âge*, vol. 2, cit., pp. 123-138.

<sup>131</sup> Cfr. Augustine, *De utilitate credendi* 2, ed. J. Zycha, CSEL 25.1, Vienna, F. Tempsky, 1891, p. 4: «Nosti enim, Honorate, non aliam ob causam nos in tales homines incidisse, nisi quod se dicebant terribili auctoritate separata mera et simplici rationes eos, qui se audire velent, introducturos ad deum et errore omni liberaturos».

<sup>132</sup> Cfr. B. Goebel, *Autorités sacrées ou raisons dialectiques?*, cit.

<sup>133</sup> See B. Goebel, *Einleitung*, in Ralph von Battle, *Dialogue zur philosophischen Theologie*, cit., pp. 28-31.