

*Mille anni di storia dell'Arciabbazia di Pannonhalma*. Edited by József Pál and Ádám Somorjai. Roma-Pannonhalma: Accademia d'Ungheria in Roma - METEM, 1997, pp. 233; 22 pages of illustrations.

The book under review is a collection of essays that cover some of the important aspects and segments of the millennial history of the Archabbey of Pannonhalma, the first Benedictine monastery in Hungary, which for ten centuries served as one of the most significant centers of Hungarian religious life and Christian learning.

The book is a byproduct of the millennial celebrations (1996) of the foundation of Pannonhalma in 996 A.D., which witnessed a visit by Pope John Paul II to Hungary. The enclosed essays cover a wide spectrum of topics, which are categorized into five sections. These sections include the origins of Christianity in Hungary, the early written sources connected with the Archabbey of Pannonhalma, the interaction between the Italian and the Hungarian branches of the Benedictine Order, the relationship between Pannonhalma and the College of Saint Anselm in Rome, and finally the architectural development of the Archabbey during its ten centuries of existence.

The first of these topics is covered by two short essays. One of them by Gellért Békés on the activities of the early Italian missionaries in Hungary (pp. 19-26), and the second one by Ádám Somorjai on the establishment of monasticism in the land of the Magyars (pp. 27-35). This is followed by a section consisting of five studies on various written sources concerning early Christianity in Hungary. These include an assessment of the historiography of the Foundation Charter of Pannonhalma by Gábor Thoroczkay (pp. 39-82), an essay on the late- 11th-century inventory of the Archabbey' library and archives by László Veszprémy (pp. 83-99), a commentary on Cerbanus's 12th-century translation of Maximos Homologétés's *Peri agapés* by István Kapitánffy (pp. 101-120), an exposé on the portrayal of Saint Benedict in medieval Hungarian legends and church sermons by Edit Madas (pp. 121-147), and finally a study on the Hungary-based medieval manuscripts of *Regula Benedicti* by András Vízkelety (pp. 149-157).

The third section of this volume on historical relationship between the Hungarian and the Italian branches of the Benedictine Order consists of two essays. The first of these by Faustino Avagliano discusses the relationship between the monasteries of Montecassino and Pannonhalma, and in particular the former's influence upon the latter (pp. 161-167); while the second by Géza Mihályi explores the functioning of the Italian language gymnasium [lyceum] at Pannonhalma in the period between 1939 and 1948, and especially the contributions of this preparatory school to Italian-Hungarian relations (pp. 169-173).

Although section number four purports to treat the relationship between the Benedictine College of Saint Anselm in Rome and the Archabbey of Pannonhalma, in effect three of the four essays concentrate solely on the role of Father Gellért Békés (b. 1915) in this relationship. The first essay by Pius Engelbert covers the late-19th-century start of the interaction between these two institutions (pp. 177-190); the second by Richard James Cleary comments on Father Békés's role as an extraordinarily effective professor at Saint Anselm (pp. 191-194); the third by Péter Sárközy assesses Father Békés's literary achievements and his role as the editor of the Rome-based Hungarian language quarterly *Katolikus Szemle* [*Catholic Review*] (pp. 195-205); while the fourth by Jos E. Vercruyssen presents a subjective reminiscence about Gellért Békés's activities at the Gregorian University of Rome (pp. 207-211).

The fifth and final section of the book consists only of a single study. It is an extensive essay by Katalin M. Szilas and Ágnes Szölóssy on the architectural development of the Archabbey of Pannonhalma through its ten centuries of existence (pp. 215-226).

The book is introduced by Pope John Paul II's short address on the occasion of his visit to Hungary (pp. 7-11), and by Archabbot Asztrik Várszegi's speech delivered at the time of the Archabbey's millennial celebrations in 1996 (pp. 13-16). The work is complemented by a list of abbreviations (pp. 227-228), the names of the Hungarian Benedictines connected with the College of Saint Anselm in the period between 1888 and 1997 (pp. 229-230), the editors' short epilogue concerning the provenance of this volume (pp. 231-233), as well as by twenty-two pages of colored illustrations.

*Mille anni di storia dell'Arciabbazia di Pannonhalma* is a beautifully executed volume, which has much to offer to the uninitiated. The enclosed essays, however, are of considerably diverse nature. Some of them are heavily documented research articles, while others are only brief essays, speeches or reminiscences. As such, while most useful, this book cannot

take the place of a more systematic synthesis of the history of the Archabbey of Pannonhalma. Such a volume would be particularly welcome in English, French, German, Italian and Latin. It would be a major help to scholars of Church history, who cannot handle Hungarian, and therefore are unable to use the twelve-volume history of the Hungarian Benedictine Order edited by László Erdélyi and Pongrác Sörös in the early part of the twentieth century (*A Pannonhalma Szent Benedek Rend története, 1902-1916*).

Although less than a complete portrayal of the millennial history of the Archabbey of Pannonhalma, the authors and editors of this work should be commended for putting out a magnificently beautiful volume. This work is but one of several dozen scholarly books published through the efforts of the Society for Encyclopedia of Church History in Hungary [METEM], under the leadership of Archabbot Asztrik Várszegi of Pannonhalma and Dr. István Zombori of Szeged.

Steven Béla Várdy