The theology of the Franciscan friar Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (c. 1221–1274) contains some of the most symbolic and richly illustrative imagery of any medieval thinker. Influenced by a variety of sources, among them Augustine, Hugh and Richard of St Victor and a variety of Neoplatonic thinkers including Dionysius the Areopagite, Bonaventure’s approach to theology was one that treated the process of growing in wisdom (sapientia) as the path to holiness. While it is fashionable at times to recount the medieval theological endeavors of the scholastic schoolmen as esoteric and removed from practical matters of everyday living, such a consideration betrays one’s anachronistic projection more than elucidates the mindset of medieval thinkers. Bonaventure was very much committed to connecting the lived experience of faith with what has

Daniel P. Horan, a Franciscan friar of the Holy Name of Jesus Province, teaches at Siena College in Londonville, New York.


become the Anselmian contribution to summarizing theological inquiry: *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding). Such is the case with Bonaventure’s understanding of the Eucharist. An inheritor of the Fourth Lateran Council’s (1215) explicit use of *transubstantiatio* (transubstantiation, literally “changed in substance”),⁴ as was Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure was in some sense limited in the way he could speak about the Eucharist. However, while necessarily adopting the language of transubstantiation, Bonaventure offers unique reflections on the meaning and significance of the sacrament. Bonaventure suggests that the Eucharist, given to us by Christ, is “a sacrifice, a sacrament and a food.”⁵ Correlatively, the Eucharist as sacrifice most eminently reflects the Christocentric theological perspective of Bonaventure, the Eucharist as sacrament is the unitive dimension, and the Eucharist as food will account for the ethical implications of his vision.

The shape of Bonaventure’s reflection on the theology of the Eucharist is deeply influenced by his overtly Christocentric theological outlook. While it is also fair to say that Bonaventure’s theology is in many ways Trinitarian, even in those aspects the centrality of Christ emerges with force. Zachary Hayes explains: “If Christianity is approached in terms of its eternal grounding, then the mystery of the trinity is foundational. But if Christianity is


approached in terms of the historical process whereby the Christian faith-vision emerged in human consciousness, then the mystery of the incarnation is foundational." Bonaventure explicitly outlines his starting point for theology in his *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*: theology must begin at the center of reality, which is Christ. This Christocentric starting point and consistent hermeneutic will dramatically affect the content of Bonaventure’s reflection, an observation that we will explore in greater detail below.

In addition to the Christocentricity of Bonaventure’s eucharistic theology, there is a strong current of relationality and emphasis on community present in his work. This arises from Bonaventure’s careful consideration of the Eucharist as a sacrament of initiation, closely tied as such to Baptism. One is not simply bonded to Trinitarian life through Christ without also being united to all the other faithful and the rest of creation at the same time. It is here that the theme of unity plays a major role in Bonaventure’s understanding of the Eucharist.

Naturally flowing from the unitive dimension of Bonaventure’s eucharistic theology are the ethical implications such participation in the celebration of the Eucharist entails. This is perhaps one of the more overlooked aspects of Bonaventure’s theological insight and a trajectory that is not only timely, but also worth developing for contemporary application.

While these themes can be identified throughout Bonaventure’s written corpus, the necessary limitations and restrictive scope of this essay require that we examine just one example from the collection of the Seraphic Doctor’s work. Next to the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, the *Breviloquium* is quite possibly the most famous work of Bonaventure. Additionally, the *Breviloquium* offers the reader something akin to the medieval Franciscan’s “summa.” While quite different in style, size and method when compared to

---


7 Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaëmeron* I.1 (V: 329a): “ubi debet incipere: quia a medio, quod est Christus; quod medium si negligatur nihil habetur.”

Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, the *Breviloquium* explores a variety of theological themes in a comprehensive and integrated manner. The *Breviloquium* also provides insight into Bonaventure's slightly more mature theological thought as opposed to an equally comprehensive but early text like his sentence commentary. For these reasons and others, it seems most logical to use the *Breviloquium* as our primary source.

This essay is organized into four parts with a conclusion. The first section is an introduction to the *Breviloquium* with historical and paleographic highlights that are relevant to the study at hand. The second section focuses on the Christocentric dimensions of Bonaventure's theology of the Eucharist. Drawing on the work of Bonaventurean scholars who have already delved into the place of Christ as the center of Bonaventure's theological outlook, we will consider the manner in which this Christocentric feature of his thought relates to his eucharistic reflections. The third section is a look at how the unitive aspect of Bonaventure's theology of the Eucharist emerges in the *Breviloquium*. The fourth section will explore some of the possible ethical implications present in Bonaventure's reflections on the Eucharist. Finally, this essay will conclude with a recapitulative summary and a brief consideration of how this study might further advance contemporary retrieval of medieval theological insight, while also expanding our understanding of the Eucharist.

**THE BREVILIOQUIUM: CONTEXT AND CONTENT**

In describing the *Breviloquium*, one scholar stated in summary, "its literary genre is matched by nothing comparable in the whole of the Middle Ages."\(^9\) M.-D. Chenu observed that the *Breviloquium* is "the most adequate incarnation — after the *Itinerarium* — of Franciscan inspiration within a theological science."\(^10\) The text is

\(^9\) For more information on Bonaventure's early treatment of the Eucharist, see the forthcoming volume in the *Bonaventure Texts in Translation Series* edition of Bonaventure's commentary on Book IV of the Sentences dealing with selected parts of the sacramental tradition published by the Franciscan Institute, St Bonaventure University.


Daniel P. Horan

506
indeed unique and unparalleled in composition when compared to Bonaventure's contemporaries. Its purpose was, to borrow an anachronistic comparison, to serve as something akin to a college textbook for Franciscans studying for ministry. Widely believed to have been completed in 1257, the same year Bonaventure would effectively end his academic career because of his election as General Minister of his Order, this was a time in the Franciscan community marked by an increase in young men entering the life. During the course of his many years at the University of Paris, Bonaventure became convinced that there was a critical need for some academic theological training in the education of the young friars. At this time there was no standard text or program that was universal or even widespread in its usage. Bonaventure undertook the task of writing a text that would be used in the Franciscan studia or formation houses. In the prologue of his project, Bonaventure explains its conception: "This teaching has been transmitted, both in the writings of the saints and in those of the doctors, in such a diffuse manner that those who come to learn about Sacred Scripture are not able to read or hear about it for a long time. In fact, beginning theologians often dread Sacred Scripture itself, feeling it to be as confusing, disordered, and uncharted as some impenetrable forest. That is why my colleagues have asked me, from my own modest knowledge, to draw up some concise summary of the truth of theology. Yielding to their requests, I have agreed to compose what might be called a brief discourse [breviloquium]. In it I will summarize not all the truths of our faith, but some things that are more opportune [for such students] to hold." Although Thomas Aquinas's intention in writing his Summa Theologiae somewhat mirrored Bonaventure's goal in filling the lacuna of basic theological books, the content and style of the two texts are vastly different. While the difference in size certainly merits note (Thomas's 512 questions versus Bonaventure's 72 chapters), the method of Bonaventure is what most distinguishes the Seraphic Doctor from his Dominican colleague.

13 Breviloquium prologue, 6.5 (V: 208b).

Christocentricity, Unity and Ethics
507
The *quaestio* technique that so often symbolizes the scholastic style is replaced by Bonaventure's more catechetical or deductive method. Instead of engaging in the standard argumentative mode of his day, something Bonaventure was quite skilled at as witnessed in his other work, Bonaventure begins each chapter with a simple declarative statement about a particular tenet of Christian faith. After he introduces the faith claim (i.e., "In this sacrament [the Eucharist], the very body and very blood of Christ are not only signified, but actually contained under the twofold appearance of bread and wine, yet not as two sacraments, but one"), he goes on to elucidate the doctrine and suggest a *ratio ad intelligentiam* (a rational demonstration of its truth). This approach is explicitly deductive and, by way of method, quite simple. J. Guy Bougerol describes the text, noting that "in this work there are no arguments, no conclusions, no answers to objections: nothing but an austere exposition, organized less for formal teaching than to aid personal mediation." The style is important because it again distinguishes Bonaventure's work from contemporary scholastic treatises, while also providing a degree of freedom that the typical Lombard-based format would otherwise not allow. This structural freedom established an environment that permitted Bonaventure to do what he intended by way of composing a summary of his personal knowledge of theology. While the *Breviloquium* does not encapsulate the entirety of Bonaventure's theological thought, nor offer a static representation of the Seraphic Doctor's conclusive perspective on certain doctrinal issues, it does give us the most concise and originally synthesized presentation of his views, at a particular time, on a variety of theological themes, including the Eucharist.

Concerning the content of the text, although he did not follow Lombard's format as such, the structure of the *Breviloquium* curiously mirrors the ordering of themes found in the *Commentaries on the Sentences*. Prior to the seven-part ordering of material that composes the content of the text, Bonaventure wrote a lengthy prologue. The prologue, a significant work in its own right, is

---

14 *Breviloquium* VI, 9.1 (V: 273b).
15 Monti, "Introduction," xxv.
16 Bougerol, 109.

Daniel P. Horan

508
tripartite. It contains a short introduction highlighting the importance of Scripture, the main body of the prologue that "constitutes the most complete treatise on hermeneutics produced in the Middle Ages," and a closing explanation for the purpose of the *Breviloquium*, the likes of which we have already seen above. After the prologue Bonaventure's sequencing is as follows: on the Trinity of God (in nine chapters), on creation (in twelve chapters), on the corruption of sin (in eleven chapters), on the Incarnation of the Word (in ten chapters), on the grace of the Holy Spirit (in ten chapters), on the sacramental remedy (in thirteen chapters) and on the final judgment (in seven chapters).

There is an intentional methodological flow that emerges from this structuring. Monti explains: "It begins with the mystery of the Trinity, and from there proceeds to 'reduce' or 'retrace' the various beliefs proposed in the Catholic tradition to the foundational mystery of the self-diffusive First Principle in order to demonstrate how they all logically flow from it." This method is partnered with Bonaventure's Anselmian conviction noted above, that any process of theological inquiry is in effect faith seeking understanding. In addition to the linear methodological flow from Trinity to the final judgment, some have suggested an *exitus* (going out) and *reditus* (return) sequence in the ordering. The first three sections (Trinity, creation, sin) constitute the *exitus*, while the next three sections (Incarnation, grace and the sacraments) describe the *reditus*. The Incarnation, therefore, marks the centerpiece or mid-point of the *exitus-reditus* process, thereby suggesting the beginning of return or the final recapitulation of all creation in and through Christ. This reaches its culmination in the *eschaton* denoted by the section on the final judgment.

What we are concerned with here is what Bonaventure locates near the end of the *reditus* arm of the sequence. Located between a presentation on the grace of the Holy Spirit (that which transforms human beings interiorly to love God and one another in community) and the final and ultimate return (*reditus*) of all into the

---

17 Ibid., 89.
fullness of Trinitarian life, stands the section dedicated to the sacraments. Bonaventure spends the first six chapters of the thirteen-chapter section on the source, variation, number, institution, administration and repetition of the sacraments. He does not linger on any one section, but spends a noticeably lengthier time on the Eucharist in comparison to the other sacraments and his general introduction.

Having briefly outlined the contents, method and structure of the *Breviloquium*, we shall now examine Bonaventure's theology of the Eucharist in this text with an eye toward the christocentricity, call to unity and ethical implications inherently present in the Seraphic Doctor's explication.

**EUCHARIST, SACRIFICE AND CHRIST THE CENTER**

One scholar, summarizing Bonaventure's christocentric outlook, wrote: "One of the most profound mysteries of Christ that attracted Bonaventure is the centrality of the Word. As eternal Word, Christ is center of the Trinity; as Incarnate Word he is center of creation; as inspired Word, he is center of the human heart."\(^{21}\)

Characteristic of Bonaventure's Christology is the understanding that the incarnate Word is the mediator of all. Zachary Hayes wrote: "From his early writings, Bonaventure showed a clear predilection for the concept of Christ as the *medium*. The Word is the *personal medium* of the trinity, the *medium* of God's creative and redemptive activity. As Bonaventure's thought developed, he came to see Christ as the *medium* or center of history as well. Though distinct from the concept of *medium*, the concept of *mediator* is intimately related to it."\(^{22}\)

Such a significant emphasis on the centrality of Christ necessarily carries over from cosmological and soteriological considerations to Bonaventure's sacramental theology. This is first seen in the *Breviloquium* in Bonaventure's brief exposition on the source and meaning of the sacraments. Bonaventure explains: "We must maintain

---


the following about the source of the sacraments: that they are sensible signs divinely instituted as remedies in which, under the cover of material realities, divine power operates in a hidden manner." Drawing on the authority of Lombard's sources, Bonaventure asserts the widely held understanding of the meaning of sacrament at that time. He goes on to explain that what is conferred in the sacrament is "certain spiritual grace" through which "the soul is cured from the weakness of its vices." The metaphor used here is that of Christ the physician who, as principle of human restoration, should be able to restore and heal the "diseased human race." The sacraments, therefore, become the medicine through which the human spirit is healed.

In addition to the understanding that Christ is the source of the sacraments and the restoring principle of humanity, the christocentricity of Bonaventure's theology of the Eucharist accounts for the significance of the transformation that takes place in the bread and wine. Bonaventure insists that Christ as the restoring principle is not simply the eternal Word, but the Incarnate Word. As such, the Word bestows the grace of healing to humanity (and all of creation) through the imparting of truth and self-offering. This visceral and material experience of the God-made-flesh provides the context for what Bonaventure will describe as the sanctification of material elements for the effective healing of humanity. Bonaventure adds, "The Incarnate Word is the fountain of every sacramental grace," thereby emphasizing the central role Christ plays as medium. The Incarnate Word also features prominently in Bonaventure's understanding of the explicit institution of the sacrament of the Eucharist: "He [Christ] instituted the Eucharist by comparing himself to a grain of wheat, and, immediately before his passion, by confecting the sacrament of his body and blood and giving it to his disciples."

Christ as restorative principle is not simply an accidental quality of God's divine plan. Instead, Bonaventure offers a cosmic consideration of the process of sanctification of humanity and all of

---

23 Breviloquium VI, 1.2 (V: 265a).
24 Ibid., VI, 4.3 (V: 268b).
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., VI, 4.4 (V: 269a).
creation that places the Incarnate Word at the center of salvation history. The very presence of the “entire Christ wholly contained” in the eucharistic species of bread and wine represents the “first fruits of the kingdom and the means by which humanity is cured of its primal spiritual wounds and elevated to share in an intimate relationship with the divine.”

It is through the sharing in the Eucharist that humanity “regains its resemblance to the divine likeness.”

In Bonaventure’s description of the Eucharist as “sacrifice, sacrament and food,” we can see the christocentric dimension of his wider theological worldview present in the sacrificial aspect. Following the tradition, Bonaventure held: “The age in which grace is revealed demanded that no oblation be offered except a pure, acceptable, and all-sufficient one. But no such sacrifice exists but the one offered on the cross, namely, the body and blood of Christ. It was therefore necessary that this sacrament contain the body and blood of Christ, not only in a figurative way, but actually, as an offering fitting for this age of grace.” Bonaventure believed that, from the perspective of redemption, Christ is the one acceptable offering or victim. Furthermore, Christopher Cullen explains: “because the Eucharist is an offering and specifically, the offering of the cross, it was necessary that the body and blood of Christ be present, ‘not only figuratively but in reality’ (non tantum figurative, verum etiam veraciter).” The cosmic christology of Bonaventure shines forth here in the reflection on the Eucharist, bolstering the emphasis on the Word as medium of human restoration to the divine image. In this respect Hayes notes, “Bonaventure’s theological vision can be seen as a consistent elaboration of a sacramental principle that embraces the entire world and its history.” It would appear that Bonaventure sees a link between the redemp-

28 Ibid., 114. See also Hellmann, *Divine and Created Order in Bonaventure’s Theology*, 94–95 for Bonaventure’s understanding of humanity mirroring Christ’s place as medium.
29 *Breviloquium* VI, 9.3 (V: 274a).
31 Ibid., 175.
tive, sacrificial act of the cross and the participation in the Eucharist as a medicinal, grace-filled experience of restoration that transcends humanity to include all creation.

This experience of the Eucharist implies an awareness of what Kevin Seasoltz describes as God's invitation and empowerment for "us to participate in the death and resurrection of the crucified and risen Lord."33 It is in Christ and through Christ that we are restored to our divine image and it is in and through Christ, the supreme physician and restorative principle, that we are fully incorporated into his body.

**THE EUCHARIST AS UNITIVE**
The notion that the liturgy is both the summit of the Church's activity and the source of its divine power is common knowledge today thanks in large part to the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*).34 This understanding of the celebration of the Eucharist is rooted in the unitive dimension of *communio* or *koinonia* present in the memorial meal of thanksgiving. We find the understanding of community as a constitutive element of the Eucharist dating back to the writings of Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 10:14-33 and 11:17-34).35 It is precisely the understanding of Christ as the source of relationship to God and one another that stands as the foundation of both the earliest (Pauline) reflections on the eucharistic celebration as well as Bonaventure's own examination of the nature of Eucharist-as-sacrament. Cullen explains: "In short, Bonaventure's eucharistic theology summarizes the main themes of his whole theology. The Eucharist is to be a sort of compendium of the Christian life and of the history of the redemption, which finds its center in the cross."36

---


36 Cullen, 173.
Bonaventure considers the participation in and reception of the Eucharist ("the sacrament of communion and of love") as not only something that signifies a particular reality, but also arouses its recipients to attain both communion and love in order for the sacrament to "accomplish what it signifies." Here the central focus again turns toward Christ who, according to Bonaventure, is the one who enkindles the Christian community toward mutual love and unites the community to the "oneness of the Head [i.e., the Risen Lord]." Bonaventure writes: "It is from him that a stream of mutual love flows into us by means of the all-pervading, unifying, and transforming power that his love possesses. Therefore, this sacrament contains Christ's true body and immaculate flesh in such a way that it penetrates our very being, unites us to one another, and transforms us into him." Bonaventure's cosmic christocentricity carries over into the unitive-sacramental dimension of his reflection on the Eucharist. Not only do we receive the "true body and immaculate flesh" of Christ, it is precisely because of Christ's presence and self-offering of love that we are united to one another through him.

In addition to the role of medium, Christ serves as the one through whom the Christian community is united in the Spirit. Bonaventure emphasizes the "whole Christ" (totus Christus) in his discussion of the right reception of the sacrament. "Whoever receives them [the body and blood of Jesus Christ] worthily, eating not merely sacramentally, but also spiritually through faith and love, is more fully incorporated into the mystical Body of Christ, and is renewed and cleansed." Bonaventure highlights not just the sacramental presence of the Risen Christ in the eucharistic elements, but instead focuses his attention on the whole Christ, which is both Christ the head and his members. It is precisely the celebration of the Eucharist, in communion with the whole Christ, that the members of the Church are drawn together in mutual love and are called to reflect the "oneness of the Head." How is this accomplished?

37 Breviloquium VI, 9.3 (V: 274a).
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., VI, 9.1 (V: 273b-274a).
41 Ibid., VI, 9.3 (V: 274a-274b).

Daniel P. Horan

514
Bonaventure explains that the sharing in the sacrament is a sharing in the divine love of Christ and that this love might penetrate us to our very being. In so doing, this love unites us to one another and transforms us into him.\textsuperscript{42} Bonaventure uses the image of the "mystical body of Christ" to illustrate this unification. The centerpiece of this move is the attention given to the love that is the bond of the body. The sacrament, the \textit{communion}, is a sharing in the love of Christ in the Spirit.

There is also the typically symbolic character of Bonaventure's reflection on the Eucharist as sacrament. Following Augustine, Bonaventure notes the fittingness of the elements of bread and wine for the sacrament: "Nothing is a more appropriate symbol of the unity of the body of Christ, physical and mystical, than bread, which is made of many spotless grains, and wine, that is pressed together from choicest grapes."\textsuperscript{43} Like the formation of bread and wine from many varied contributors, so too we see the formation of the body of Christ formed through the diverse constituency that is the Church. Bonaventure's emphasis on the "spotless" grains and "choicest" grapes is likely an allusion to the post-restoration baptized members of the body, which follows from his earlier elucidation of the Eucharist as the principle of restoration by virtue of Christ's sacrificial offering. It follows, therefore, that the unitive dimension of Bonaventure's eucharistic theology proceeds from the christocentric and sacrificial consideration of the sacrament. Subsequently, the sacramental and unitive understanding of the Eucharist leads Bonaventure to reflect on its nourishing dimension. It is this third feature of his theological perspective that affords us an opportunity to consider the ethical implications present in Bonaventure's theology of the Eucharist.

\section*{Eucharist as Nourishment and Its Ethical Implications}

The last dimension of Bonaventure's threefold understanding of the Eucharist is nourishment. This perspective is certainly one of the most clearly predictable given that the eucharistic elements are themselves food. It would seem most natural to associate bread

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., VI, 9.4. (V: 274b).
and wine with nourishment. But in what sense does Bonaventure understand this to be the case? Bonaventure explains early in his treatment on the Eucharist in the *Breviloquium* that he is primarily referring to nourishment in the sense that it is associated with "the life of grace." He explains: "Nourishment in the life of grace for all the faithful consists in preserving our devotion toward God, love for our neighbor, and our own inner contentment." His understanding of the life of grace is a theme echoed elsewhere in his later work. We see this most strikingly in his collations on the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Bonaventure explains that grace is "faithful with respect to God; strong in relationship to oneself; and generous in relation to one's neighbor." The life of grace is naturally Trinitarian, while also community oriented. There is a sense in which Bonaventure has always before him the notion of the full body of Christ, that is Christ as head and all the baptized, for grace is never simply portrayed as a vertical relationship devoid of horizontal or communal engagement. Instead there is a flow from God to self-integrity to community. Likewise, as we have seen above, Bonaventure's dynamic and complex understanding of the Eucharist flows from God with emphasis on christocentricity and the healing or medicinal dimension associated with individual integrity to a sense of unity to the lived consequence and ethical implications of the Eucharist. While he was indeed a thinker of his time, preoccupied as he was with the eucharistic species and the meaning of the "real presence" of Christ under the forms of bread and wine, he also retained a Pauline theological impulse with regard to the concurrent and inseparable dimension of the whole Christ and the fullness of the body of Christ present in the celebration of the Eucharist. It is precisely this undercurrent of Pauline eucharistic

44 Ibid., VI, 9.2 (V: 274a).
45 *De septem donis* I, 9 (V: 459a). The threefold dimension of the use of grace in *De septem donis* varies slightly from Bonaventure's earlier discussion of the subject in the *Breviloquium* where he appears to suggest a fourfold dimension. See *Breviloquium* V, 8.1-5 (V: 261b).

Daniel P. Horan

516
theological resemblance that would appear to guide Bonaventure's reflection from the unitive to the ethical dimension of his outlook.

In light of this concurrently existing interrelationship that is the life of grace consisting of relationship with God, oneself and others, we can see that the nourishment inherent in the Eucharist must affect each of these relational aspects in some way. Bonaventure suggests that the Eucharist as nourishment be considered in light of our earthly pilgrimage. We can understand this image as a definition of what it means to live in the world as the Body of Christ. Dennis Billy notes that, "through the Eucharist, believers are fortified in their faith, empowered in their struggle to overcome sin, and strengthened in their capacity to love. They become the means by which Christ acts in the world and the leaven by which his Spirit transforms the world into a new creation." Our pilgrimage is not simply a devotional journey of oneself with God or Christ alone. Instead, it is the deeply intertwined association among all of the baptized. To be on pilgrimage means to live in the world in a particular and dedicated way. One does not journey on a pilgrimage without intention nor without reflective and prayerful examination of one's life and actions. For Bonaventure, it is precisely the Eucharist that provides the nourishment for this particular pilgrimage called Christian life.

In recent years several scholars have explored the connection between the celebration of the Eucharist and its ethical implications. However, there has been little attention paid to the examining the condition for right reception of the sacrament. See Breviloquium VI, 9.6 (V: 275a). Nevertheless, the sense in which I describe a certain Pauline theological impulse is less a matter of explicit and proper exegesis and citation on the part of the Seraphic Doctor and more the sense in which his dynamic understanding of the Eucharist unfolds.

47 Breviloquium VI, 9.2 (V: 274a).
48 Billy, 111.

Christocentricity, Unity and Ethics 517
possibility that a medieval thinker such as Bonaventure might have something to contribute to the conversation. It is true that his exploration of the ethical implications of the Eucharist are less overt than contemporary treatments, nevertheless the threefold dynamic examination of the subject is helpful. If we take Bonaventure's pilgrimage trajectory as a starting point for understanding the Eucharist and ethics, we must first begin with an appreciation for the destination.

The goal of the pilgrimage is to be fully united in the body of Christ. Bonaventure concludes his exposition on the Eucharist: "In this way both the celebrating priests and the communicants might realize the gift of grace through which they are cleansed, enlightened, perfected, restored, vivified, and most ardently born up into Christ himself through a most burning love." The process of pilgrimage itself therefore requires engaged exercise of this burning love that is to serve as the means to being united in Christ. However, as we have seen above and in Bonaventure's other work, love is never unidirectional. For Bonaventure, it necessarily requires the horizontal dimension of praxis. This may at first appear obvious, but the context in which it is discussed must always remain in the forefront of our reflection. Bonaventure is talking about the sacrament of the Eucharist. The Eucharist, then, becomes the privileged place and source of our encounter with the whole body of Christ as well as the nourishment to live the vita evangelica.

The love of neighbor is as central an element for Bonaventure's understanding of the Eucharist as its sacramental or sacrificial dimensions. While Bonaventure does not, within his Breviloquium eucharistie reflections, explicitly highlight what the love of neighbor does or should entail, his including this aspect of the Eucharist reveals the importance he ascribes to ethical behavior and moral responsibility with regard to the community. In a sense, his work anticipates the renewed sense of the full meaning of the eucharistic celebration as articulated in the teaching of the Second

exemplarity of Jesus's ministry of table fellowship and its connection to service and Eucharist, see Miriam Therese Winter, Eucharist with a Small "e" (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 2005).

50 Breviloquium VI, 9.7 (V: 275a).

51 Ibid., VI, 9.2 (V: 274a).

Daniel P. Horan

518
Vatican Council and the subsequent studies of liturgical and sacramental theology. Those scholars who have in recent years returned to the question "what is it that we do when we celebrate the Eucharist?" and concluded that in some sense we are rehearsing the Kingdom of God, which is marked by God's loving and powerful in-breaking, should be happy to find a medieval kindred spirit. Bonaventure's approach, unlike the seemingly myopic Thomist approach, is a complex and integrated reflection on the multivalent meaning of the Eucharist that transcends the limited strictures of the transubstantiation of eucharistic species. While not as developed as contemporary ethical analysis of the meaning of the Eucharist, Bonaventure's inchoate and anticipatory theology will certainly be a welcome resource for those interested in examining the continuity of eucharistic theology throughout the centuries.

CONCLUSION

The limited focus of some scholars of medieval theology and philosophy, in addition to many contemporary sacramental theologians' overlooking the richness of Bonaventure's theology of the Eucharist, has contributed to a lacuna in sacramental ressourcement in recent decades. It is my hope that this short essay has highlighted at least one area of Bonaventure's thought that might indeed provide a renewed appreciation for the complexity of this thinker in particular and suggest a helpful resource for eucharistic theology in general. While Bonaventure's discussion on the particular and partial questions related to the Blessed Sacrament (as opposed to the celebration of the Eucharist entirely) is indeed a condition of his theological and historical context, he does not limit his reflection on the Eucharist to an articulation of what happens to bread and wine. Instead, Bonaventure draws on his christocentric theological outlook to better understand the sacrificial and medicinal nature of the Eucharist. From his reflection on the restorative nature of the Eucharist stemming from Christ as medium, Bonaventure points out the unitive dimension of the Eucharist. Necessarily following the unitive dimension are the ethical implications of the Eucharist that challenge the members of the body of Christ to live out the vita evanglica in concrete ways. The love of neighbor is, in Bonaventure's view, never divorced from the

Christocentricity, Unity and Ethics

519
gathering of the assembly to celebrate Christ’s saving work and the union of all the baptized that is formed through it. Bonaventure’s integrated and threefold understanding of the Eucharist as articulated in the *Breviloquium* provides a surprising resource for further study of medieval theology as well as contemporary retrieval and application.

R. Kevin Seasoltz

**Liturgy and Ecclesiastical Law:**

**Some Canonical and Pastoral Challenges**

Vatican II’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy is a document that is evangelical, theological, juridical, and pastoral. It is evangelical in the sense that it has been framed in the spirit of the New Testament, as the words of the Constitution are often the very words of the Gospel. It is theological in that it elaborates at length the theological foundations for the way in which the Church is sanctified and worships: in Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is juridical in the sense that it proposes definite practical lines of action in matters of the liturgy. Finally, it is pastoral in that its objective is, as the first paragraph of the document states, “to impart an ever-increasing vigor to the Christian lives of the faithful; to adapt more closely to the needs of our age those institutions which are subject to change; to encourage whatever can promote the union of all who believe in Christ; and to strengthen whatever serves to call all of humanity into the Church’s fold” (SC, no 1).

R. Kevin Seasoltz, a Benedictine monk of Saint John’s Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, is the editor of *Worship*. In a somewhat different form this article was first published in *The Jurist* 70 (2010) 114–30.

R. Kevin Seasoltz