"Das große Sakrament der Vereinigung"
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Published in:
Approaching the Threshold of Mystery

Publication date:
2015

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):

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Franz Anton Staudenmaier belongs to the second generation of the well-known Catholic Tübingen School. Born in 1800, Staudenmaier studied in Tübingen, and after working for a short period of time as tutor at the Tübingen theological faculty, he was appointed at Gießen, teaching introduction to theology, *Theologische Enzyklopädie*, and dogmatics. When he was 37, he moved to the theological faculty in Freiburg, where his former teacher Johann Baptist Hirscher, also a renowned Tübingen scholar, joined him. Staudenmaier is mostly known for his highly speculative systematic theology and, in particular, his dealings with Hegel and German idealism. However, few people are aware of the fact that Staudenmaier was also the author of one of the most popular books on Catholic liturgy of his age.

Only a few contemporary theologians are aware of Staudenmaier’s impact on the theology of sacraments and the study of the liturgy. One of these is Reiner Kaczynski who, in the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* volume of the famous Herder commentary on the documents of Vatican II, perceives the suppression of Staudenmaier’s thought on liturgy by the neoscholastic forces in the 19th century as one of the most painful events in recent theological history. According to Kaczynski the true liturgical movement (as opposed to the liturgical movement in the *Aufklärung*) already started with Staudenmaier and therefore should not have been postponed until the twentieth century. I strongly agree with Kaczynski that forgetting or neglecting Staudenmaier was indeed a sad development for contemporary theology. I will try to rectify this in part, by revealing some of his thoughts on the Eucharist, which he presents as the great sacrament of unification and which gives a good example of the liturgical and theological value of this thought. I leave it to the reader then, to confirm or deny Kaczynski’s claim concerning Staudenmaier’s theology.

1. The Eucharist as the Great Sacrament of Unification

In line with his Tübingen colleagues, and mainly Johan Adam Möhler, the concept of unity and unification forms a crucial part of the theology of Anton Staudenmaier. Belonging to the romantic era, these theologians were strongly convinced about the organic character of all things. Everything for these authors was interconnected – the Pauline metaphor of the body and the limbs (Rom 12,3-8), for example, was crucial for their understanding of theology and faith. Moreover, the concept of unification used by Staudenmaier founds itself in the Trinitarian unity. In one of his reflections on the Church Staudenmaier states:

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1 This paper represents a small part of the fruits of four years of research on the theology of the Eucharist and of the liturgy according to the Catholic Tübingen School and Döllinger. See Samuel Goyvaerts, “Vereniging en tegenwoordigheid, offer en gemeenschap. De theologie van de eucharistie en de liturgie van de katholieke Tübingen Schule en Döllinger,” PhD diss., Leuven, 2013.
2 For a good introduction on the life and work of Staudenmaier see: P. Hünermann, *Franz Anton Staudenmaier* (Wegbereiter heutiger Theologie, 8), Graz, Styria, 1975.
3 Johan Adam Möhler was a church historian and belonged to the second generation of Tübingen theologians. His works on ecleciology and pneumatology inspired 20th century theologians like Yves Congar. For a good introduction on the life and works of Möhler see P.-W. Schelde, *Johann Adam Möhler* (Wegbereiter heutiger Theologie, 3), Graz, Styria, 1969.
The Church is one, 

The highest purpose of a human being and of Christianity is the participation in this Trinitarian unity between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. On numerous occasions, Staudenmaier states that this unity between God and human beings is not only celebrated but also worked or constituted in the Eucharist. Hence, the fact that I use the term ‘unification’, to translate the German term ‘Vereinigung’ which can refer to both unity and unification, or put differently, to the bond itself as well as to the process or the active working of this bond.

Although Staudenmaier, unlike Möhler for example, never refers to the term theosis, there are strong indications to believe that his thought explicitly points in this direction. This is rather remarkable when one knows that, since the Middle Ages, the idea of theosis has been absent in academic theology. In his immensely popular work on the liturgy, Der Geist des Christenthums dargestellt in den heiligen Zeiten, in den heiligen Handlungen und in der heiligen Kunst, Staudenmaier describes how – when celebrating the Eucharist – Christ enters into the inner life of the worshippers, who then receive and share in the divinity of Christ (‘sein göttliches Wesen’). While making this argument he refers to the preface of Ascension day where we pray and ask: “that He [Christ our Lord] might make us sharers in his divinity.” This is a first example of the lex orandi lex credendi principle which one can trace in Staudenmaier’s thought: though he does not give this short phrase to illustrate his case, he does use the liturgy itself as a theological argument. In the Eucharist, we can experience the deepest and most intense unification with the divine life of Christ. This idea is inspired by and based on what we pray in the celebration of the Ascension. On this point, Staudenmaier even speaks in mystical terms, referring to St. John of the Cross and his poems on the well-spring of unity offered to us in the Eucharist. In his Encyklopädie der theologischen Wissenschaften als System der gesammten Theologie, which is a completely different genre in comparison to his work on the liturgy, Staudenmaier states:

Christ gives himself up for the world in it [the Eucharist], but likewise, the community gives itself to him. Thus, through the unified action, both divine and human, the celebrating community is drawn into the community with God and Christ, in which life is holy and truly immortal.

It is important to note that it is a joint action of both Christ and the community, a giving of both divine and human. In Staudenmaier’s theology, freedom, specifically human freedom, is very important and it is also a necessary condition for receiving grace. Salvation, according to Staudenmaier, is no mechanical event but is essentially a process, namely „a process of mediation, constituted by two factors: divine grace and human freedom.” When one studies Staudenmaier, and by extension the entire Tübingen School, this interplay between human and divine also points to another essential theological idea, namely the incarnation. The unity


5 See Staudenmaier, Enzyklopädie der theologischen Wissenschaften als System der gesammten Theologie, 1834, 438. When Staudenmaier describes Sunday mass in his Geist des Christenthums he starts as follows: „Alles strömt zur Kirche, das Wort Gottes zu hören und im Hochamt den Versöhnungstod Jesu zu feiern, so wie die heidnische und innige Vereinigung mit ihm, dem Erlöser, dem Anführer und Vollender unseres Glaubens”. Staudenmaier, Der Geist des Christenthums dargestellt in den heiligen Zeiten, in den heiligen Handlungen und in der heiligen Kunst, 1838, Vol. 1, 100. Also see Staudenmaier, Das Wesen der katholischen Kirche. Mit Rücksicht auf ihre Geiger, Freiburg, Herder, 1845, 109–110; Staudenmaier, Der Geist des Christenthums, Vol. 2, 552; 700–703; Staudenmaier, Die Zücht vom heil. Frohlicheamnaste, in Süddentisches katholisches Kirchenblatt 1 (1841) nr. 2, 61–68, see 61; Staudenmaier, Enzyklopädie, 789. Also compare Mystici Corporis Christi § 82.


7 Staudenmaier, Geist des Christenthums, Vol. 2, 702.

8 […] auf daß das Wort sich erfülle, das uns aus der Präfation des Himmelfahrstages so heilig anspricht: damit er uns seiner Göttlichkeit teilhaftig macht”. Staudenmaier, Geist des Christenthums, Vol. 2, 702 (italics are original). Untill this day, the second preface of Ascension says: „ut nos divinitatis suae tribueret esse participes”.

9 In concerns the poem Anque es de noche, see Staudenmaier, Geist des Christenthums, Vol. 2, 703–705.

10 „Christus gibt sich in ihr [the Eucharist] ewig hin für die Welt; eben so gibt sich aber auch die Gemeinde an ihn hin, und wird so durch die vereinte Thätigkeit, die göttliche und menschliche, in die Gemeinschaft mit Gott und Christo ewig hineingezogen, in welcher das Leben ein heiliges und wahrhaft unsterbliches ist.” Staudenmaier, Enzyklopädie, 791.
between God and the human being that is constituted in the Eucharist is modeled alongside or parallel to the unity in the mystery of Christ’s incarnation.\footnote{So ist im Abendmahl die Einheit des göttlichen und menschlichen Lebens festgehalten, und wird in ihm wirklich vollzogen, wie Christus selbst die lebendige Einheit der göttlichen und menschlichen Natur ist}.\footnote{Cf. Staudenmaier, Abendmahl, I/4; Staudenmaier, Geist des Christenthums, Vol. 2, 769–770; Staudenmaier, Enzyklopädie, 411–420.} We also noticed that in the context of the Eucharistic unification, Staudenmaier often uses the term ‘Godman’ (Gottmensch) to denote the figure of Christ, or at least refers to his Gottmenschlichkeit, where both are meant to show that the incarnational relation between God and humanity is constitutive for sacramental unification.\footnote{In seiner Feier [of Corpus Christi] verwirklicht sich der erhabene Zweck der Menschwerdung Gottes; das Weihnachtsfest kommt zu seiner Erfüllung im Feste des heil. Frohlichehams” Staudenmaier, Die Zünfte, 62.} This also becomes clear in Staudenmaier’s reflections on the feast and the liturgy of Corpus Christi, which is again an example of how the law of prayer and the law of faith are related to each other in Staudenmaier’s theology.

2. The Feast of the Eucharist as the Fulfillment of the Feast of Corpus Christi

Staudenmaier understands the feast of the Eucharist, Corpus Christi, as the fulfillment of the feast of the incarnation, Christmas: “In celebrating Corpus Christi, the higher goal of the incarnation (Menschwerdung Gottes) is realized.”\footnote{Einheit der göttlichen und menschlichen Natur ist durch die Zünfte, 62.} Elsewhere he states that on the feast of Corpus Christi the feast of Christmas „comes to its realization in ourselves.”\footnote{Die Zünfte, 62.} These statements are of course connected to the traditional idea of salvation. God has become human in Jesus Christ, celebrated at Christmas, to reunite humanity with Him, a unity that is effected in the Eucharist. Liturgically, as Staudenmaier points out, this is reflected in the preface of Christmas and Corpus Christi, which in his time was the same and which reads: „For in the mystery of the Word made flesh a new light of your glory has shone upon the eyes of our mind so that, as we recognize in him God made visible, we may be caught up through him in love of things invisible.”

Today, this is just the first preface of Christmas, since after the Second Vatican Council, two prefaces for Corpus Christi were added, but before this change the Church prayed the preface of Christmas on Corpus Christi. This means that we have actually lost this very explicit liturgical connection between Christmas and Corpus Christi. Taking the liturgy as starting point for his theological reflection—lex orandi, lex credendi in practice—Staudenmaier further explores the (nowadays liturgically lost) connection between these two feasts. The mystery of Christ’s incarnation brings to us the „new light of divine clarity”. Since this new light has come to the world and permanently lives in this world, the earth rejoices. For this reason the heavenly choirs of Christmas in Luke 2 are cited by Staudenmaier. It is this heavenly joy that is continued while praying the preface of Christmas, also on Corpus Christi. Because of and just as in the Incarnation, heaven and earth are liturgically united in the joy of Christmas and in the permanent jubilation of Corpus Christi.\footnote{In uns selber zu seiner Verwirklichung komme” Staudenmaier, Die Zünfte, 62. See Staudenmaier, Die Zünfte, 62.} Again, the reason for this jubilation, and now I come to the core of Staudenmaier’s argument, is this:

On the day of Christmas, God unites himself with humanity, since He himself appears as a human amongst humans; likewise the human being unites itself with God through the Holy Supper on the feast of Corpus Christi.\footnote{„Denn vereinigte sich am Tage der heil. Weihnachten Gott mit der Menschheit, indem er selbst als Mensch unter Menschen erscheint; so vereinigt am Frohlichehamsfeste der Mensch sich mit Gott durch das heil. Abendmahl.” Staudenmaier, Die Zünfte, 62.}

As already noted, the Incarnation (Christmas) and the Eucharist (Corpus Christi) are strongly connected in the liturgical theology that Staudenmaier develops here. By God’s grace and the salvific birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we the faithful are able to unite ourselves with God. Thus, heaven and earth rejoice, for „Die Himmel hat sich auf die Erde herabgelassen; die Erde ist in den Himmel zurückgegangen”.\footnote{„Die Himmel hat sich auf die Erde herabgelassen; die Erde ist in den Himmel zurückgegangen“; Staudenmaier, Die Zünfte, 62.} Again, we can very easily read all of this from the perspective of thesis, although without Staudenmaier mentioning this explicitly.
3. The Unification with God and with Each Other: the Eucharist and the Church

This unity between God and humanity is the first and main reason why Staudenmaier calls the Eucharist the great sacrament of unification. The second reason is the fact that this unity between God and humanity constituted in the Eucharist is through itself constitutive for the community, which is the Church. The Eucharist is not only the unification between God and humanity, but also the unification of human beings amongst each other. Staudenmaier says:

However the love towards God and Christ, which here [in the Eucharist] is present and forever growing in ourselves, is also a love towards our brothers. This is why the Last Supper is the great sacrament of unification, and the Church as community in love is most intimately connected to it, because the Church itself, being the great and living unification of all with God and amongst each other, derives this from the Eucharist.18

Starting from this quote, a first observation is the crucial place of love. This is, of course, not at all surprising, since, as Staudenmaier elsewhere puts it, „love is unity.“19 The highest unity is the unity with God, and since this unity is constituted in the Eucharist, Staudenmaier is able to say that, „the mystery of the Supper is the mystery of love,“20 or that „in this Sacrament, the deepest essence of love is revealed.“21 As a consequence, Staudenmaier sometimes calls the Church the present Kingdom of love.22

A second observation is that the Church and the Eucharist are mutually constructive, as Staudenmaier also states elsewhere: „When the Church celebrates the Last Supper, she sees and edifies herself. In this moment she increasingly realizes herself in her temporal and eternal being.“23 In other words, the Eucharist builds up the Church. However, through his Eucharistic reflections and his ecclesiology the relation between the Eucharist and the Church clearly comes to the fore as one of reciprocity. In order to clarify this reciprocal relation between the Church and the Eucharist, it must be made clear how Staudenmaier perceives the real presence of Christ, in the Church as well as in the Eucharist.

To Staudenmaier, the Eucharist is much more than anamnesis alone. Although he recognizes the commemorative character of the Eucharist, the Eucharist also contains something real.24 The Eucharist as a (spiritual) moment of remembrance, is connected with and constituted by the Eucharist as moment of reality, of real presence. Anamnesis is constitutive for the meaning of the Eucharist, but the real presence constitutes the living and sacramental value of this liturgical celebration. Both sustain each other.25 This real presence now, makes „our unification with Him a truly, essential and living one.“26

Staudenmaier stresses the fact that Christ’s presence is a living and active presence, which seeks to bring everything into unity, both in itself as well as in unity with God. For Staudenmaier the Eucharistic real presence can be seen as the ontological ground and essential condition for the unity with God through Christ. Of course, he also refers to the Eucharistic gifts. In view of his sacramental theology, in which the outward elements of liturgy and sacraments play an essential role, Staudenmaier believes that the consumption of the

18 „Die Liebe aber, die hier [in the Eucharist] zu Gott und Christus in uns ist und immer lebendiger wird, ist auch eine Liebe zu den Brüdern. Deswegen ist das Abendmahl das große Sakrament der Vereinigung, und die Kirche als Gemeinschaft in der Liebe steht zu ihm in der allerengsten Verbindung, weil eben die Kirche selbst als die große lebendige Vereinigung Aller mit Gott und untereinander aus ihm nimmt.“ Staudenmaier, Enzyklopädie, 438 (italics are original). Also see Staudenmaier, Das Wesen2, 109–110; Staudenmaier, Enzyklopädie2, 789. In this last work, Staudenmaier phrases it thus: „denn das Sacrament des Abendmauls […] ist das große Sacrament der Vereinigung, und zwar des Menschen mit Gott durch Christus, und der Menschen untereinander“ (italics are original).
19 Staudenmaier, Geist des Christenthums2, Vol. 2, 702.
22 Staudenmaier, Das Wesen2, 114. In this writing, Staudenmaier connects this Kingdom of love immediately with the communio sanctorum.
23 „Während daher die Kirche das Abendmahl spendet, schaut und erbaut sie sich selbst und verwirklicht sich in jedem Momenten mehr in ihrem zeitlichen und ewigen Dasein.“ Staudenmaier, Enzyklopädie2, 439.
24 Staudenmaier, Enzyklopädie2, 439.
25 „Das Moment der Geistigkeit wäre ohne das Moment der Realität eben so unlebendig, als das Moment der Realität ohne das Moment der Geistigkeit bedeutungslos wäre. Die Hauptsache ist der Geist; aber der wahre Geist ist der lebendige“. Staudenmaier, Enzyklopädie2, 439.
Eucharistic gifts is indispensable to reach true unity with God, which might also explain his strong devotion for Corpus Christi.27

Similarly, Christ’s presence in the Church does not rest on mere commemoration but rests within the faith that Christ’s living presence in the Church is constituted in and through its liturgy and sacraments. Through these, Christ becomes real in the Church, his life is repeated in her, He appears in her according to his spiritual entirety, He is being presented in her, in order for her to become the substantial form, the proper manifestation, in one word, his body, σωμα.28

As observed above, the metaphor of the Church as body of Christ is crucial for Staudenmaier’s theology. The chapter on the Church in his Encyklopädie, in which the reflections on the Eucharist are also present, is completely structured on the basis of Paul’s metaphor of the body and the members.29 Connecting ecclesiology and Eucharistic theology, Staudenmaier writes:

Through this [Eucharistic] unity everyone becomes an agile and vivacious member, and thus one can understand how the Eucharist is that sacrament which has a truly particular and reciprocal relation to the Church, because in it she sees and establishes herself always anew and because [through it] she realizes the eternal idea underlying herself, and presents this in all objectivity – which is moreover the reason that this sacrament can only be truly known in the Church and that the doctrine of the Eucharist constitutes an essential part of the doctrine of the Church.30

Staudenmaier explicitly states that the relation between the Church and the Eucharist is a very particular and reciprocal one, as stated above. This quotation mainly illustrates how time and again Staudenmaier’s starting point is the Eucharistic unification. Through partaking in the Eucharistic meal and the unification between the faithful and Christ, all become members of his body.

Conclusion

Unification with God through Christ is essential for the theological thinking of Franz Anton Staudenmaier, for whom the highest goal of the Church and the human being is this unity with God. This unity is strongly connected with the incarnation, which he also shows through a particular liturgical theological method. This also explains why the Eucharist has a unique position in his theology. The stress on unity moreover explains the reciprocal relation Staudenmaier describes between the Eucharist and the Church. The Eucharist can only take place in the life of the Church, understood as Christ’s present and living body, and at the same time, the Eucharist is the realization of this presence. This is a living and active presence, whose sole goal is to lead to unity, both amongst the faithful and as a profound unity with God. The act of communion, nurturing oneself on Christ’s body and blood, is essential for this unity – hence also Staudenmaier’s attention and love for the feast of Corpus Christi.

Influenced and driven by the organic thinking of the Romantic era during his lifetime, Staudenmaier unites many different aspects of the Eucharist into one coherent system, as well as those aspects that are beyond the scope of this reflection such as sacrifice, salvation and others. Staudenmaier is certainly one of the most underestimated Catholic theologians of nineteenth century within the field of liturgy and sacraments and by

27 Staudenmaier, Encyklopädie, 439.
28 „wird Christus in der Kirche real, wiederholt sich in ihr sein Leben, kommt er in ihr nach seiner geistigen Totalität zur Erscheinung, wird er in ihr gestaltet, so daß sie die substantielle Form, die eigentliche Manifestation, mit einem Worte, sein Leib, σωμα wird, Staudenmaier, Encyklopädie, 756.
29 Cf. Staudenmaier, Encyklopädie, 425–448; Staudenmaier, Encyklopädie, 752–849. Mainly the fourth chapter in the second edition of the Encyklopädie is entirely based on 1 Cor 12:4-28, see Staudenmaier, Encyklopädie, 803–817.
extension ecclesiology and systematic theology as a whole, and whose work warrants a great deal of further study in our own contemporary era.