A dedicatory letter and its context: Beinecke MS 1154.

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Beinecke MS 1154

ff 1v-7v; ‘Libellus de sacramentis a Bonizo Sutrine editus ad galterum le onans cenobii monacum atque priorem missus. ... qui fecit utraque unum.’

Libellus de Sacramentis ends without formal explicit, and missing last six lines of the text.

[Bonizo, Libellus de Sacramentis, PL 150.857-866.]

f. 7v; ‘Ceterum, frater karissime, cum a me exe-gisses, a quibus auctoribus …’

Hitherto unknown dedicatory letter, probably in preface to Bonizo’s Liber de Vita Christiana.


The codex ends abruptly in the middle of the second line of the incipit of book IV.


f. 7v; ‘Videtur quod hic incipit liber.’

Marginal note parallel to the start of Liber de Vita Christiana in a later hand.

ff.103r-v; ‘confutos ... perlineste’

The text on this folio is not continuous with those either side of it, but is instead a copy of Liber IIII.98.100.

ff.105r-v; ‘nichil ... locis’

Second miscopied folio in the same choir as f.103r-v. The text on the whole folio is what fits in line with the placement of folio 103, implying that it has been mistakenly bound in the wrong place.

ff. 123r-v; ‘Beata Maria mater Ihesu anorum erat xii quando per spiritum sanctum angelo nuntiante concepit. ... a ministerio debent abstinere’
Additional material after the end of book V of *Liber de Vita Christiana*, followed by the first incipit of book VI. Material is unique to this manuscript.

Parchment (generally good quality), 123 folios (18.5 x 11.2cm). The present binding of the codex is nineteenth century red leather, the binder having cut down the folios, trimming off numerous marginalia. Each folio has lightly ruled lines and margins, with most notes and some corrections in the margins. Rubrics in red, in line with text (except ff.25r-27v where rubric is also in the margins). Larger red first letter of each new section after rubric. Sometimes this first letter is decorative, but this never alters the layout of the text pattern of text (decorative letters appear on f.23r, f.33r, f.37v, ff.47r-48v, f.67r, f.70r, 87r, 119r).

The text is written in two different Italian scripts of the early or mid twelfth century. The first hand ceases after the first three letters of f.84r (the -dam of *quodam* in *Liber de Vita Christiana* IV.44). The first line, after -dam, and the next three lines of f.84r are blank. The second hand begins on the fourth line at the start of *Liber de Vita Christiana* IV.45 with ‘Filius Romanum ecclesiam’. The second hand is smaller and rounder, probably later than the first, which is more clear and consistent through the first half of the text. The layout and structure of the text, including patterns of the rubric, remains the same throughout despite this change.

The text of *Liber de Vita Christiana* is consistent with the text in Perels’ printed edition of *Liber de Vita Christiana*, except for a few missing sections scattered throughout the first half of the manuscript. On f.25v, II.8 is missing. On f.27r II.25 is missing, and a hitherto unknown text is in its place ‘*Om quidem ... seruentur*’. On f.61r III.69-III.71 is missing. And on f.62r III.84 is missing.

There are many corrections and marginal notes in a later fourteenth-century hand, which Ian Robinson attributes to Thomas Gascoine (1403-58). These include corrections to names referenced in text using black ink over the red of the rubric (most notable at f.73r and f.75r). There is also a note on ruled lines in the lower margin of f.79v. The hand is distinct
from both that of the annotator discussed by Robinson and either of the hands in the text. The right-hand edge of the note has been cut off by the nineteenth century binder. f.100 mostly cut out, leaving only 4cm of the folio. The folio was fully written and is consistent with the text on the folios before and after. Extra parchment bound, though only 2cm remains, between ff.50-51, ff.66-67, ff.84-85, ff.91-92.

The parchment of the last folio, 123, is badly stained and mutilated, and the towards the end of the manuscript the parchment is much more yellow in colour and generally more fragile. There is some decay and a few small holes at the edges of the first 15 folios. The parchment is in good condition except for some large sections of parchment missing from a folios scattered throughout the second half of the manuscript (f.68, f.69, f.85, f.114, f.117, f.122). There is a lot of smudged ink on ff.57v-58r, and some on ff.58v-59r. There is a scar-like imperfection vertically cutting through the middle of f.63r, that can also be seen on f.63v.
A dedicatory letter and its context - MS 1154

Beinecke MS 1154 is one of the main witnesses to some of the works of Bonizo, Bishop of Sutri (1045-1092). Indeed, the manuscript seems to be almost identical to Mantova, Biblioteca Comunale Teresiana, MS 439. However, on careful examination, the manuscripts diverge in two significant ways, giving us new information both about Bonizo and the role his work played in the development of twelfth century canonical collections. Beinecke MS 1154 has been described before by Ian Robinson, when it was still MS Bib. Mai. Heythrop. Z 105BON, at Heythrop College (Oxfordshire, England).¹ The manuscript contains two treatises by Bonizo of Sutri; *Libellus de Sacramentis* and *Liber de Vita Christiana*, two canonical collections both of which were written after 1089, though the exact dates of authorship are not certain.² In Robinson’s description, a few features are identified that distinguish this manuscript from those of that contributed to the compilation of Perels’s critical edition of the *Liber de Vita Christiana*.³ Robinson also helpfully contrasts the manuscript in question with the Mantua codex, which he deems to be almost exactly the same, save three extracts on f.123, the last folio.⁴ Robinson also notes that the *Libellus di Sacramentis* ‘ends without formal explicit on f.7v’, immediately followed by the inscription ‘Incipit vita cristiana. Ieronimus in tractatu super Mathuem’ and the first capitulum of Book

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One of Liber de Vita Christiana, thus completely omitting the Preambula which fill the first twelve pages of Perels’s edition of this second work.

However, on closer examination it appears that Robinson’s examination is incomplete. The eight lines preceding the incipit of book one of Liber de Vita Christiana contain a hitherto unnoticed dedicatory letter that appears to act as a preface to this second work of the codex. I hope to detail the content and context of this letter, before going on to discuss the additions Robinson mentions in his description. Together these further observations will help to provide a more nuanced view of Beinecke MS 1154 and the texts therein. Moreover, by addressing the tradition in which this dedicatory letter appears I hope to shed light more broadly the work of Bonizo, and the context of twelfth century canonical collections, especially the dedicatory letters that so often prefaced them.5

The dedicatory letter that prefaces Liber de Vita Christiana in Beinecke MS 1154 is as follows:

Ceterum, frater karissime, cum a me exegisses,

a quibus auctoribus hec nostre ?mense? institutio sumpsisset exordium indagare, quia non potui quando petisti variis necessitatis inpeditus, cum usuris tibi reddere curavi. Nam et decretis sacramentis licet a te non rogatus, copendioso tamen aliquantulum indicere agressus sum. Tu vero si quid rusticum, si quid sit inpolium inveneris, amici nominis favore sustenta ne quid sit dictum set ex quanta karitatis prodeat radice represa.

But, most beloved brother, I have taken care to give to you with interest, since you had asked of me that I investigate from which authors the institution of our [shared textual] table takes its beginning, since I was unable when you asked, [because I was] prevented by various necessities. For, although, I was not asked by you [about] the determined sacraments, I have nevertheless briefly endeavoured to suggest something little. You however, if you should find something rustic, if something is unpolished, having sustained the favour of the name of friend, not what may be said [let nothing be said] but what may precede from a great steadfast route of charity.

It is unclear exactly what the appropriate transcription and then translation of the word ‘mense’, which appears in the text as ‘m/se’ (with an abbreviation mark over the ‘m’. Robert Somerville has postulated that the best interpretation reads ‘… hec nostrre mense institutio sumpsisset …’, wherein ‘mense’ denotes the word ‘table’ in a metaphorical sense, implying a ‘textual banquet’. In an attempt to be as faithful to the latin as possible, I have translated this as ‘[shared textual] table’, picking up on the idea of ‘nostre’ in the same clause. Despite this initial ambiguity, the sense of the letter is clear. Having been asked to address the ‘determined sacraments’ some time before the composition of this letter, Bonizo responds with a broader treatise including also discussion of the determined sacraments. Given the friendship between Bonizo and the author of the request, Bonizo humbly (and somewhat rhetorically) asks that his work may be read charitably.
Though on first examination it seems that the letter can be easily interpreted as a preface to *Liber de Vita Christiana*. This is an important canonical collection comprised of ten books, of which only the first five and the first incipit of the sixth book appear in the Beinecke codex. After the first book on baptism, the material is distributed according to different categories of Christians; bishops, priests, friars or men and women of orders but without ordination, and the laity, whilst the last two books deal with penance. Not only does the letter precede *Liber de Vita Christiana*, but the text is also a much longer exposition of the sacraments as they pertain to different orders of Christians, with details on how to lead a life appropriate to your status in a Christian hierarchy more broadly. Both of facts seem to allude to the idea that the letter is intended simply as a preface to *Liber de Vita Christiana*. Furthermore, the manuscript does address the determined sacraments as they pertain to both administration and recipients throughout the Church.

However, the *Libellus de Sacramentis* is a response to the question of the dedicatee about the origin of the Mass, posed by Gualterio, prior of the monastery of St Benedict in Leno. Bonizo responds to the question, taking the opportunity to also discuss the other sacraments and the important role of the papacy in liturgy. In doing so Bonizo distinguishes between those sacraments instituted by the Lord; the eucharist and baptism, and the others, which are instituted by the apostles in the context of a historically fictitious reconstruction. There is, then, some ambiguity as to the original address of the letter. The ‘*decretis sacramentis*’ that appear to constitute the intended driving focus of the tract to which it refers might in fact refer to those on which Bonizo expands in *Libellus de Sacramentis*.

Perhaps further clues can be found in the fact that the letter comes not at the end of the *Libellus de Sacramentis*, but seemingly in place of the last few lines and the final explicit, as
According to the critical edition on the Patologia Latina. These final lines, not included by our scribe contain enormous potential for controversy. They are as follows:

Sunt praeterea et alia sacramenta, quibus nunc utitur Ecclesia

Dominico exemplo, quamvis non tradito praeccepto, ut est exsufflatio in exorcismis, effetatio in catechumenis, et manus impositio, qua baptizatis consignando sanctus datur Spiritus, et qua reconciliantur peccatores matri Ecclesiae, et qua episcopis et sacerdotibus et levitis virtus traditur ministerii. Explicit libellus de sacramentis a Bonizone Sutrino episcopo editus, ad Gualterium Leonensis coenobii monachum et priorem missus.

Following a description of the Old Testament’s prefiguring of Christ in Jacob, the detailing of non-traditional sacraments in these lines might be seen as antithetical to the aim of Libellus de Sacramentis. If the inquiry prompting the treatise regards divinely ordained sacrament of baptism, explicit attribution of other sacraments to tradition might have been seen controversial by our scribe, especially in the relatively recent contemporary contestation of Peter Lombard’s discussion of the sacraments in ‘Sententiarum libri quatuor’ (1155–8). Given that the seven ‘determined sacraments’ were still under some discussion within the Church at the time of composition of either treatise, it is possible that an innocuous letter in replacement of these lines would be more acceptable. Though this explanation seems unlikely, if compared to other manuscripts in which the Libellus de Sacramentis is present

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and a similar phenomenon can be seen, it might shed some light on the processes by which disputes on the sacraments during the late eleventh and early twelfth century evolved. Indeed, the *Libellus de Sacramentis*, as Roger Reynolds noted, can be read as part of a movement towards more keen observance of liturgical practice. Reynolds tells a story whereby creation of new liturgical structures, and developments in liturgical practice continued to develop between the mid-ninth and mid-eleventh century despite the fact that reflective scholarship and commentary on the content and meaning of liturgy stagnated. However, by the middle of the Gregorian reform movement, in which Bonizo was active, ‘there was a concerted effort not only to make the rite used in Rome more Roman and less Germanic, but also to impose that rite elsewhere’. Along with, to name only two, Bernold's *Micrologus*, and the sermons ascribed to Ivo of Chartres, Bonizo’s *Libellus de Sacramentis* is one of the works here cited that Reynold’s thinks helps to mark an important shift in the history of liturgical scholarship. On this basis, reading what of *Libellus de Sacramentis* is not included in Beinecke MS 1154 might be as significant as paying attention to what is included.

Whilst of course it is most likely that this letter is in preface to *Liber de Vita Christiana*, the missing last lines of *Libellus de Sacramentis* can help to contextualise the codex as a whole. This might be better achieved by comparing this manuscript to the manuscript described by Nicolangelo D'Acunto - Mantova, Biblioteca Comunale, MS. 439. In the description cited here there is no mention of a letter between *Libellus de Sacramentis*. However, there is also no mention of the additions that Robinson claims feature in both the Mantua and Beinecke on

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9 ibid., p.112.
f.108. It is possible that the *Libellus de Sacramentis* is also incomplete in this manuscript, and that the letter also appears in any position during the codex. This seems more possible given that, in the Beinecke manuscript, the letter is not formally introduced by any incipit or space left blank. If the same is true in the Mantua manuscript it would be easy to mistake the letter for the last few lines of the *Libellus de Sacramentis* that do not appear in the Beinecke manuscript as they are of roughly the same length.

Whichever explanation is historically accurate, this letter can be located in a tradition of medieval prefaces to legal texts. Somerville identifies the decisive shift in preoccupation of canon law works between the mid-eleventh and the mid-twelfth century from concerns about sources and their arrangement to the problem of harmonisation of contradictions found in those sources. Indeed, Bonzio is concerned with both of those things. Though his emphasis is on reconciling canonical positions, *Liber de Vita Christiana*, especially from the second book onwards as it is organised in accordance with different classes of persons as they pertain to the Church, organises canons in lists before coming to reconciliatory conclusions. This indicates that Bonizo’s *Liber de Vita Christiana* represents a mid-point, both chronologically and in terms of content. Furthermore, this can be represented in the nature of the hitherto unknown letter featured in this manuscript. The fact that Bonizo in the letter states that he has ‘endeavoured’ to provide something to answer the question of the sacraments in a more holistic way suggests the place of this manuscript in the tradition of evolving prefaces to canonical works. It also might be significant that the *preambula*, included in Perels’s critical edition, is missing from the recension of the *Liber de Vita Christiana* featured in this codex. Though the reason for this is unclear, it is possible that the scribe thought the preamble

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unnecessary for an understanding of the rest of the work, thus indicating the individuality of prefaces at this time. However, given that the preamble is also quite long, a decision may have been taken that its inclusion would not be an effective use of limited resources, or potentially even that inclusion of the *Libellus de Sacramentis* was so much more important that the preamble was irrelevant in comparison.¹²

A trend towards increasing focus on the harmonisation of canons, rather than their organisation, can also account for the three extracts on f.123v-r that seem to be unique to this codex (as they feature neither in Perels’s edition nor in the Mantua manuscript), though they are written in the same hand as the preceding thirty-nine folios. As Somerville explains, harmonising canon law in a way that revealed the ancient authority on which the contemporary Church rested was of utmost importance.¹³ The precise origin of these extracts is hard to isolate, though the material does not seem at odds with that present in the rest of book V, specifically the final addition which discusses the marriage of priests and deacons. The previous two extracts (denoted by Robinson as 5.81 and 5.82) seem to be an attempt to harmonise Old Testament laws dealing with ‘nidah’ - purity laws pertaining to menstruating women - with the official Church views about Mary, in ways which take into account her

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¹² However, this is not to imply that the preamble is in itself irrelevant or uninteresting historically. Indeed, when compared to broader trends of medieval prefaces as explored by Quain, it seems that the preface to Liber de Vita Christiana could provide an interesting point of comparison and contrast, especially in light of the section on Roman and Canon law, though also more generally. See Quain, *The Medieval Accessus Ad Auctores*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), especially pp.14-29.

theological significance. It is interesting to view Bonizo in comparison to Somerville’s description of Ivo of Chartre’s unique position among his contemporaries interested in Church law, as his study of Church canons was ‘guided, and tempered, by his responsibilities as a pastor and judge’ unlike many of his contemporaries who wrote in monastic settings or in papal court. Indeed, Bonizo and Ivo share aspects of this biographical feature, as Bonizo was active in the Gregorian reform movement and saw the realities not only of court life but also of the bishopric. Perhaps the additions in the Beinecke manuscript in a small way attest to this. More broadly, the extent to which Bonizo in the whole of Liber de Vita Christiana is an example of the openness and frankness that McLaughlin Describes as distinguishing contemporary discussion from those of the twelfth century canonists. Indeed, that Bonizo warns Bishops against contact with women attests to the sometimes failed attempts to reconcile all canonical contradictions in the pursuit of a complete representation of canon law as pertaining to episcopal sexuality.

It is suggested by Nicolangelo D’Acunto that the Mantua manuscript leads to the hypothesis that the codex is evidence of an attempt to preserve the writings of Bonizo in a coherent

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14 The most relevant extract here is the first paragraph of the section that Robinson denotes as 5.82, though the second paragraph can also be read in the way I have argued in support of my conclusion. The extract is as follows;

‘Cum enixa fuerit mulier, post quantos dies debeat ecclesiam intrare, testamenti veteris in concepcione dedieimus … Quod scindendum est, quia in ministerio earnis accipitur. Nam si eadem hora qua gemuerat, intret ecclesiam, nullo peccati pondere gravatur; voluntas non dolor carnis in culpa est. In carnis autem comixtione voluntas est; nam in prolis prolatione gemitus. Unde et quando prime omnium matri dieitur, ‘in dolore parles’. Si itaque enixam mulierem prohibemus ecclesiam intrare, ipsam penam in culpam deputamus.’

15 Somerville and Brasington, Prefaces to Canon Law Books in Latin Christianity, p.115.


17 Bonizo of Sutri, Liber de vita Christiana, 2.41, ed. Perels, 55.
whole, a hypothesis that could be extended to this manuscript also given that they are almost identical. Though the exact date at which this manuscript was written is uncertain, the unique letter and additions to the last folio here discussed can contribute to an understanding of the context in which Bonizo was thinking and writing, and the conditions under which Beinecke MS 1154 was composed. In light of the desire first to clarify the content of canons and then to harmonise the whole of canon law, the idea that this manuscript was the first part of an attempt to harmonise the writings of Bonizo himself does not seem out of place. Indeed, just as Somerville aptly describes how prefaces ‘could orient a user approaching what are formidable tomes’, the hitherto unknown letter in Beinecke MS 1154 can help orient us in the confusing and complex world of late-twelfth century canon law compilations.

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20 Somerville and Brasington, Prefaces to Canon Law Books in Latin Christianity, p.3.
**Bibliography**


