

Sacramental Wisdom: *Humilitatio*, *Eruditio*, *Exercitatio* in the Scholastics and Today

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Introduction

The relationship between human nature and the sacraments is often characterized in a way that takes away from the beauty and power of the sacraments. Sacraments are sometimes viewed today as something basically irrelevant to human life, an interesting spiritual “option” for those who find comfort in ritual. This view leads to a sacramental practice that is occasional, irregular, or nonexistent. Many young people who fail to grasp religion as important to their reality implicitly embrace this perspective. The difficulty parishes have had in the past few years in convincing parishioners to return to liturgical prayer after each wave of the coronavirus pandemic demonstrates this viewpoint.

In another perspective, the sacraments might be viewed precisely as expressions of what it means to be human, or one might say, to be human in a world in which God reveals himself at all times.¹ In this view, the sacra-

¹ This viewpoint has roots in Karl Rahner’s emphasis on the supernatural existential, that is, God’s grace as always already present. In sacramental theology, this idea bleeds the uniqueness out of sacramental and liturgical encounters with God. It seems that Rahner’s intention is to emphasize the power of God’s grace, but his thought moves in a direction that merges the supernatural into the natural. See Rahner, “Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental event,” in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 14, *In Dialogue with the Future*, trans. David Bourke (New York: Crossroad, 1976), 166.

ments are our own graced self-expression as a community. They merely make thematic what already happens each moment. Alternatively, they celebrate who we are, and perhaps can be radically updated to reflect changing categories of social identity.²

Both of these viewpoints overlook the fallen state of human nature that cries out for healing from God. The first view does not preclude knowledge of human violence and fragility, but fails to recognize the sacraments as a medicine needed for the remedy of human ills. The second viewpoint, while professing a need for Christ, looks to the human person or community for healing rituals. This approach risks being enmeshed with human nature in a disordered state in such a way that it celebrates human disorder instead of healing it. Alternatively, the viewpoint may lead to the abandonment eschatological hope and wither into inanity.

There are profound metaphysical and anthropological issues that play out in these two opposite but strangely united viewpoints. Rather than directly analyze these errors, this paper would like to propose the recovery of a medieval viewpoint that offers another perspective. This is Hugh of St. Victor's explanation that the sacraments fit and heal human nature through offering humanity humility, instruction, and exercise.³ This paper will briefly survey Hugh's contribution, analyze its reception by several of the thirteenth-century Scholastics, shows its deep rootedness in biblical wisdom, and then show how it fruitfully opposes current-day challenges.

Hugh of St. Victor

Hugh of St. Victor was a twelfth-century canon of the Parisian Abbey of St. Victor. The most influential writer of the Victorine school, his work is characterized by an Augustinian concern for the re-formation of the image of God in man, a sense of the wise ordering of salvation history, and an emphasis on both virtue and liturgical practice. In his masterwork, *De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei*, Hugh of St. Victor divides the works of God into two main periods: the work of creation and the work of restoration. Within the

² See Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, rev. and updated ed. (St. Louis, MO: Ligouri, 2001), 458.

³ His words *humiliatio*, *eruditio*, and *exercitatio*, are usually translated in this way, although the English words capture the sense of the Latin somewhat awkwardly. See *De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei* 1.9.2, in *On the Sacraments: A Selection of the Work of Hugh of and Richard of St Victor, and of Peter of Poitiers*, ed. Hugh Feiss, Victorine Texts in Translation 10 (Turnhout: Brepols: 2020), 80; see also 91 (notes to this section of *De Sacr.*).

work of restoration, there are three periods: the period of the natural law, that of the Mosaic or written law, and that of grace, inaugurated by Christ.⁴ His book's division into two parts cuts across these distinctions: Part 1 of Hugh's text covers creation, the restoration in general, faith, sacraments in general, as well as particulars of the sacraments of the periods of the natural and written law. Part 2 includes the Incarnation, the Church, various Christian rituals, and the final restoration of Christ's return.

Hugh is writing around the time when theologians began to list the number of the sacraments of the Church as seven. Emerging from the wider use of the term, Hugh uses the word "sacrament" in a wide sense, but distinguishes several categories of sacraments. Following Dominique Poirel, scholars recognize that Hugh uses the word *sacramentum* in five main ways.⁵ The first is a general definition: (1) any sign of anything sacred. The second through fourth are more specific usages, to which we do not commonly give the term "sacrament" today: (2) Scripture, which signifies sacred realities both through its text and the realities to which its text points, (3) Christ and the mysteries of his life, particularly the Passion, and (4) the Christian mysteries, received by the believer as teachings signifying greater realities.

The fifth is Hugh's definition of a sacrament that will be of interest to this paper: (5) "The sacrament is a corporeal or material element, presented on the outside in a sensible way, which represents by a resemblance, signifies by institution [*ex institutione*], and contains by sanctification a certain invisible and spiritual grace."⁶ This definition applies most perfectly to the sacraments given by Christ, but can be stretched to include the rituals of the Old Law and even those practiced by upright individuals during the period of the law of nature before the Mosaic Law.⁷ In this case, *ex institutione* would perhaps be better translated as "by convention."⁸

This definition, as most of Hugh's vision, is explicitly Trinitarian. Hugh unpacks it, noting that the Creator decreed that things be able to represent spiritual grace, the Redeemer instituted particular things for specific

⁴ Hugh, *On the Sacraments: A Selection*, 25 (general introduction).

⁵ Dominique Poirel, "Sacraments," in *A Companion to the Abbey of Saint Victor in Paris*, ed. Hugh Feiss and Juliet Mousseau (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 278–86.

⁶ Hugh of St. Victor, *De Sacr.* 1.9.2: "Sacramentum est corporale vel material elementum foris sensibilibiter propositum ex similitudine repraesentans, et ex institutione significans, et ex sanctificatione continens aliquam invisibilem et spiritualem gratiam" (*PL*, 176:317; trans. mine).

⁷ Marcia Colish, *Peter Lombard*, vol. 1 (New York: Brill, 1994), 359.

⁸ This is the translation used by *On the Sacraments: A Selection*, 28.

significations, and the Holy Spirit (the Dispenser, whom he connects to the spoken “blessing” in the sacraments) makes them able to be sources of grace.⁹

It is after his discussion of the definition of a sacrament that Hugh turns to the question of why the sacraments were instituted. This discussion considers the wisdom of God in tempering his means to the human condition after the fall. He states that the sacraments were instituted for a threefold purpose: humility, instruction, and exercise.¹⁰

Humility, Instruction, and Exercise in Hugh

Humility

Hugh places his discussion of the way in which the sacraments teach humility squarely in the context of fallen humanity. Echoing the Augustinian language of *frui* and *uti*, Hugh explains the fall as a disruption of the proper hierarchical ordering of creation. God is the highest good, meant to be enjoyed by the human person.¹¹ Original sin involved humans subjecting themselves to lower goods which were meant to be employed in the service of God. As a just result, they became further subject to the material world through concupiscence. The humility of obeying God in using the material elements of the sacraments is an appropriate counter to the pride of the first sin, helping humans merit reconciliation with God.

Hugh sets up the humiliation of the sacraments as something speaking to the entire disordered human condition. It is a conscious practice of humble obedience which enables humanity to seek a proper orientation to God. In describing the effects of the fall on the human person, Hugh mentions a “darkness” which prevents the mind from recognizing the Creator and a “coldness” in which he does not seek God through love.¹² The second and third reasons for the sacraments will address these two effects.

Instruction

Hugh teaches that the human mind, darkened by sin, cannot recognize the invisible things of God except through the visible. In the original creation, the world did have a sacramental aspect in that it showed forth God’s invisible good, but this was not the main way in which the human mind knew God or other things.¹³ Man knew many things about the world through infused

⁹ Hugh, *De Sac.* 1.9.2.

¹⁰ Hugh, *De Sac.* 1.9.3.

¹¹ Hugh, *De Sac.* 1.9.3.

¹² Hugh, *De Sac.* 1.9.3.

¹³ See Boyd Taylor Coolman *The Theology of Hugh of St. Victor: An Interpretation*

knowledge.¹⁴ He also possessed an “interior, contemplative knowledge of the divine presence.”¹⁵ After the fall, things changed, and human access to the invisible became mainly through the physical. Therefore, it is appropriate that the sacraments have visible appearances to instruct men about the spiritual good which is restored by the sacraments. Hugh uses the image of medicine in a container. The labeled container identifies the medicine within which would otherwise not be recognized.

Exercise

Hugh bases his third reason for the sacraments in the weakness of human love, which cannot focus on the love of God. Although Hugh intends to describe the negative impact of sin on the human person, he describes a human instability that seems to be based on the finite character of the human person as well. Human life involves a variety of activities. For example, it is not possible for a human person to always walk, sit, stand, or eat.¹⁶ Likewise, contemplation of God is no longer an activity that can be sustained in this life.

Hugh identifies two main categories of human activity after the fall: those that are useful and necessary to life, such as eating, and those that concern vicious pleasures. Sacramental rituals introduce a third kind of activity, the worship of God. This worship interacts with the other types of action. It completes useful activities, giving human life an order towards an end, which directs useful activities also to the service of God. This teaching echoes the Scholastic notion that charity forms or directs moral virtue. Sacraments need to be integrated into a life of virtuous works. They are not salvific alone, but when united with faith. They are meant to be fruitful in virtuous good works.¹⁷ In regard to vicious actions, worship displaces their perverse pleasures with the peaceful, harmonious, and beautiful pleasures of the liturgy. Under sacramental exercise, Hugh places all the variations in the liturgical life: the different holy places and times, as well as moments of speech, singing and silence.

Three Schemas

Within the context of Hugh's theology, three schemas can be loosely “mapped” onto the threefold reason for the sacraments.

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 48.

¹⁴ Hugh, *De Sac.* 1.6; Colish, *Peter Lombard*, 1:359.

¹⁵ Coolman, *Theology of Hugh*, 168.

¹⁶ Hugh, *De Sac.* 1.2.9.

¹⁷ Hugh, *De Sac.* 1.9.8; Colish, *Peter Lombard*, 1:522.

Human/Psychological

The first is a psychological view of the human person. In this schema, humility refers to the general orientation of a human life to God. Hugh does not treat humility as a single virtue, but as a properly ordered attitude of the creature to the Creator, who is also the highest good.¹⁸ Under this general orientation, instruction and exercise order and heal specific faculties of the human person: the intellect and affections respectively. This schema draws on Augustine's inner triad of mind, understanding, and will, if mind is stretched to include the spiritual orientation of the person in his totality.¹⁹ Hugh's discussion of exercise refers to the will, but includes sensible pleasures as rightly subordinated to the known good.²⁰ Describing the reasons for the sacrament according to this schema emphasizes that the human person is made for union with God. It also teaches that God works in a way appropriate to the human person, when he acts to heal the spiritual faculties of the person.

Definition of Sacrament

Hugh's definition of a sacrament also maps on to his threefold reason. As mentioned above, Hugh's definition has three parts: a material element, institution, and sanctification. Hugh connects humility to the engagement with the material element in the sacraments. Instruction has to do with the ability of the sacrament to teach about the grace given. This connects to the institution that gives the sacrament its specific signification. Exercise matches sanctification because Hugh teaches that the human person grows in holiness through the continued practice of sacred rites. He speaks of interior renewal and "devotion leading to holiness" found in the exercise of holy activities.²¹ This holiness connects to both the grace given in the sacrament and the exercise of virtue required by consistent liturgical practice.

Trinity

Once it has been shown that Hugh's definition of a sacrament maps onto his threefold reason, it follows that the same Trinitarian schema found in Hugh's definition will also apply to the threefold reason. Hugh is well-known for

¹⁸ See *On the Sacraments: A Selection*, 91 (notes to the section).

¹⁹ Boyd Taylor Coolman, "'In Whom I am Well Pleased': Hugh of St. Victor's Trinitarian Aesthetics," *Pro Ecclesia* 23, no. 3 (2014): 344.

²⁰ Colish notes that Hugh's psychology draws a strong line between the mental (mind and will) and sensing faculties of the human person (*Peter Lombard*, 1:358–59).

²¹ Hugh, *Devotione ad Sanctitatem*. See also Hugh, *De Sacr.* 1.9.

the lens of Trinitarian appropriation through which he views reality.²² Hugh appropriates the qualities of power, wisdom, and goodness to the Father, Son, and Spirit, respectively.²³ Sometimes he matches them with the responses of fear, truth, and love in restored humanity.²⁴

The Trinitarian schema in humility, instruction, and exercise is subtle rather than explicit. In speaking about humility, Hugh references God as Creator, an activity appropriated to the Father. In his discussion of instruction, Hugh speaks about the medicine given to restore humanity. Christ is the teacher and the physician who administers the medicine.²⁵ When linked with the recognition that sacraments signify because of their institution, instruction is linked to Christ. This is true even if the threefold reason is read as pertaining to the sacraments of the Mosaic Law or the time of nature. For Hugh, the Wisdom who is the second person of the Trinity is expressed in all of God's revelation, and the restoration of which all sacramental rituals teach is that accomplished by Christ.²⁶ Exercise, since it has to do with the human person gradually becoming sanctified through sacramental practice, is connected to the Holy Spirit.

Taken together, these three superimposed schemas express the appropriateness of the sacraments to restore the image of the Trinity in the human person, echoing key themes from Hugh's theology.

Reception

Hugh's teaching was integrated into the thought of many of the early Scholastics. This paper will consider only a few: Peter Lombard, who incorporated Hugh's thought into his *Sentences*, as well as Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, and Thomas Aquinas.²⁷

Peter Lombard

Lombard studied with Hugh of St. Victor in Paris, who was a major influence on him.²⁸ Lombard's *Sentences* includes a section discussing the threefold

²² He is credited with pioneering Trinitarian appropriation (*On the Sacraments: A Selection*, 65).

²³ Coolman, "In Whom I am Well Pleased," 338.

²⁴ Coolman, "In Whom I am Well Pleased," 351.

²⁵ Hugh, *De sac.* 1.8.2; Coolman, *Theology of Hugh*, 96.

²⁶ Hugh, *On the Sacraments: A Selection*, 63.

²⁷ Other authors could have been selected as well. Colish notes that the threefold reason of Hugh is also reproduced in the author of the *Summa Sententiarum* and the *Sententiae Divinitatis* (*Peter Lombard*, 1:527).

²⁸ Philipp W. Rosemann, *Peter Lombard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 27, 45.

cause of the sacraments.²⁹ His treatment is a faithful but shorter version of Hugh's teaching.³⁰ In incorporating Hugh's three reasons, Lombard keeps them in the order in which Hugh gave them. In his discussion of humility, he puts emphasis on obedience rather than healing. He does not immediately contextualize the three reasons with a discussion of the fall, but it is present in Lombard's wider writing on the sacraments, so this is not a departure from Hugh.³¹ In his treatment of instruction, Lombard agrees with Hugh that a clear knowledge of God was lost with the fall so that humans now need visible things through which to come to know the invisible divine things.³² In his discussion of exercise, Lombard repeats Hugh's three types of activity. He does not elaborate on liturgical activities as Hugh does, but instead puts emphasis on avoiding evil activities by doing good.

Only traces of Hugh's psychological schema can be recognized in Lombard's account. This is probably because Lombard's preferred view of the human soul is dual: the higher power of reason (including the will) as distinguished from the lower power shared with animals.³³ The schema does not map well onto Hugh's three reasons. Lombard does follow Hugh in discussing sacramental humility in the context of relationship with God. It enables man to obey and please God. His discussion of instruction mentions the human mind, but his discussion of exercise focuses on good actions and avoiding temptation, rather than on the will or ordered pleasure emotions.

The second and third schemas from Hugh are not present in Lombard. Lombard's preferred definition of a sacrament is: "a sign of God's grace and a form of invisible grace in such manner that it bears its image and becomes its cause."³⁴ This is a dual definition, which has its emphasis on sign and cause. Accordingly, Lombard's discussion of the threefold reason does not map onto the schema of his definition of a sacrament, nor does he draw Hugh's links with the persons of the Trinity.

²⁹ Peter Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 1, ch. 5.

³⁰ Rosemann also lets this section pass with a simple summary (*Peter Lombard*, 146).

³¹ Lombard also insists that sacraments are medicinal, and therefore did not exist before the fall (*Sent.* IV, d. 1, ch. 1; d. 2, ch. 1).

³² Lombard has a substantially different understanding of the extent of the infused knowledge of natural things that unfallen man would have had. While Hugh advocates for an extensive infused knowledge, Lombard suggests an infused contemplative knowledge of God, but space for learning in regard to many other things (Colish, *Peter Lombard*, 1:370.)

³³ Colish, *Peter Lombard*, 1:371; Lombard, *Sent.* II. d. 24, chs. 4–5.

³⁴ Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 1, ch. 4. "Sacramentum . . . signum est gratiae Dei et invisibilis gratiae forma, ut ipsius imaginem gratiae et causa existat" (trans. mine).

Alexander of Hales

Alexander of Hales's *Gloss on the Sentences* treats Hugh's threefold reason very briefly. Hales orders the three reasons as Hugh does. Despite its brevity, Hales's treatment does imply a psychological schema. It is slightly different from Hugh's. He interprets humility the same way as Lombard and Hugh, describing this humility as ordering the person "in relation to God" (*quantum ad deum*).³⁵ Hales connects instruction to the speculative intellect and exercise to the practical intellect, thus giving a treatment of the threefold reason that focuses on the relationship of the human mind to divine things. The distinction between the speculative and practical intellect shows Hales's different psychological concerns from Hugh. Hales's treatment does not reveal an overlying schema related either to a definition of the sacraments or the Trinity.

Albert

Albert the Great encountered Hugh's teaching through Hugh's own writing as well as those of Peter Lombard and Alexander of Hales, who taught in Paris while Albert was there.³⁶ In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Albert shows Hales's influence: he follows Hales' division of the *Sentences* into chapters and distinctions. Albert himself influenced later reception of Lombard's *Sentences* by introducing the division into smaller articles as well as the Scholastic *disputatio* method of commentary.³⁷ Albert connects the threefold reason both to Lombard and directly to Hugh.³⁸ Albert treats Hugh's threefold reason in his three most important works of sacramental theology: his *Commentary on the Sentences*, his *De sacramentis*, and his *De corpore Domini*. This study will consider points from all three works, with prominence given to the *Commentary on the Sentences*.

In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Albert treats Hugh's threefold reason within the question of whether Lombard assigned these three causes rightly.³⁹ Here, Albert follows Hugh's order of humility, instruction, and exercise.

³⁵ Alexander of Hales, *In IV sent.*, d. 1, ch. 3, in *Glossa in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi: In Librum Quartum* (Florence: Quaracchi, 1957), 10.

³⁶ Wayne Hellmann, Timothy LeCroy, and Luke Townsend, "Historical Introduction," in Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Sentences: Sacraments* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2016), 23.

³⁷ Hellmann, LeCroy, and Townsend, "Historical Introduction," 23.

³⁸ See Albert the Great, *De Corpore Domini*, d. 6, tr. 2, ch. 1, in *On the Body of the Lord*, trans. Albert Marie Surmanski, Fathers of the Church Medieval Continuation 17 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 344.

³⁹ Albert, *In IV Sent.*, d. 1, ch. 13, in *Beati Alberti Magni Opera Omnia*, vol. 29, ed. Auguste Borgnet (Paris: Vivés, 1894).

When, however, he returns to the threefold reason to use it explain the sacrament of confirmation, he re-orders the elements so that instruction is first, then humility and exercise.⁴⁰ He likewise varies the order in his *De sacramentis*, while in *De corpore Domini*, he always puts instruction first.⁴¹

Albert's discussion of humility follows the reasoning of Lombard fairly closely, speaking about a just humiliation which helps man rise up from his sinful subjection to material things.⁴² Albert's discussion of instruction includes the idea from Hugh and Lombard that, as a result of sin, mankind needs physical things to be led to the spiritual things of God.⁴³ In addition, Albert includes material from Dionysius which implies that the need for the physical to attain knowledge of the spiritual is, to some extent, proper to the natural human condition.⁴⁴

Albert also does something novel in his discussion of exercise. In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Albert's objector asks how it is possible to speak of an "exercise" of the sacraments when some of them are only received once.⁴⁵ Instead of appealing to the wider daily liturgical practice which Hugh has in mind, Albert answers by shifting the meaning of exercise from liturgy to the inner action of sacramental grace. Grace remains in the soul, repeatedly affecting it.⁴⁶ Although Albert is aware that earlier authors used the term *sacramentum* more "loosely for any sacred thing" ("abusive . . . pro quacumque re sacra"), it has taken on the more focused meaning when Albert writes.⁴⁷ The narrowing of the usage of the term turns Albert towards an explanation of exercise which focuses on the sacrament rites rather than wider liturgical practice. Albert also has interest in the nature of sacraments as causes; connecting exercise to the life of grace given by the

⁴⁰ Albert, *In IV Sent.*, d. 7, ch. 3.

⁴¹ Albert, *De Sacramentis*, tr. 1, q. 3, obj. 6, ad 9, in *Opera Omnia Sancti Doctoris Alberti Magni*, vol. 26, ed. Albertus Ohlmeyer (Münster: Aschendorff, 1958); Albert, *De Corpore Domini*, d. 6, tr. 2, ch. 1 (*On the Body of the Lord*, 344).

⁴² Albert, *In IV Sent.*, d. 1, ch. 13, ad 2.

⁴³ Albert, *In IV Sent.*, d. 1, ch. 13, ad 4.

⁴⁴ Albert, *In IV Sent.*, d. 1, ch. 13, ad 4. Bernhard Blankenhorn identifies Dionysius as an influence on the psychology of Albert, gradually influencing him to a theory of knowledge less dependent on Augustinian illumination and more comfortable with the idea that the human mind is naturally ordered to come to knowledge through the senses. Blankenhorn carefully traces this development in Albert (*The Mystery of Union with God: Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas* [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015], 59–67).

⁴⁵ Albert, *In IV sent.*, d. 1, ch. 13, obj. 5.

⁴⁶ Albert, *In IV sent.*, d. 1, ch. 13, obj. 5.

⁴⁷ Albert *De Sacr.*, tr. 1, q. 2, sol.

sacraments allows him to connect one of the threefold reasons to the role of sacraments as causes. This will be important for his analysis of the reason for the threefold reason.

Schemas

Albert's tendency to re-order Hugh's threefold reason suggests strongly that he is reading it within his own psychological schema, which places the intellect first, followed by the will and the sensitive powers of the soul.⁴⁸ It is probably Albert's emphasis on the primacy of intellect over will that leads him to place instruction before humility or action. Albert reads the threefold reason as corresponding to the human intellect, then affections (will and sensitivity), followed by grace-supported action.

When Albert gives the threefold reason in Hugh's order, he lines it up along a definition apparently based on Hugh's. Albert knows Hugh's definition of a sacrament; he quotes it as one of several valid definitions of a sacrament.⁴⁹ When Albert explains Hugh's threefold reason, he says it is based on the fact that sacraments have matter [*materia*], the notion of a sign [*ratio signi*], and the notion of a cause [*ratio causandi*].⁵⁰ This definition echoes Hugh's "material, signification, and sanctification," although it has shifted the focus of the third element. While Hugh generally connected exercise to the sanctification found through virtuous liturgical practice, Albert has shifted the meaning of exercise to focuses on the ability of a sacrament to cause grace. Albert sees the matter in the sacrament as connected to humility, signification to instruction, and causality to exercise.

Albert does not discern a Trinitarian appropriation in the threefold reason. The fact that Albert does not read this Trinitarian level into the threefold reason undoubtedly contributes to his ease in changing the order of the reasons.

Aquinas

Aquinas had familiarity with all of the writers mentioned above. Like Albert, Aquinas discusses the threefold reason in his *Commentary on the Sentences*. He treats it in a similar manner in his *Summa*. In both texts, Aquinas discusses the threefold reason in treating the necessity of the sacraments. In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas follows Hugh and Lombard's

⁴⁸ See Stanley Cunningham, *Reclaiming Moral Agency: The Moral Philosophy of Albert the Great* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 107–9.

⁴⁹ Albert, *In IV sent.*, d. 1, ch. 5; Albert, *De Sac.*, tr. 1, q. 2.

⁵⁰ Albert, *In IV sent.*, d. 1, ch. 13, sol.; see a parallel passage in Albert's *De Sac.*, tr. 1, q. 2, ad 9

order in the objections, but in the body he gives the threefold reasons in the order of instruction, humility, exercise. He follows this latter order in his *Summa*.

Aquinas's exposition draws on Hugh, Lombard, and Albert. He emphasizes the wisdom of God and the fittingness of material sacraments for human nature. In his discussion of instruction, he, like Albert, appeals to the Dionysian principle that it is best to come to know the spiritual through the physical, which is better suited to us.⁵¹ Thomas's description of humility uses the lens of virtue or strength. He argues that contraries heal each other; therefore, the humiliation of using bodily things in the sacraments makes reparation for the sin of pride which originally damaged human virtue. While Hugh uses the medicine box containing a healing remedy to explain instruction, Aquinas uses it to explain the humility needed to accept being taught and healed through the material.⁵²

In the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas's explanation of exercise focuses on refuting the objection in 1 Tim 6:8 that physical exercise profits little. When joined to piety, this exercise has value.⁵³ In the *Summa*, he adds Hugh's understanding that right worship prevents superstitious practices.

While Aquinas does not explicitly spell out a psychological schema, his re-ordering of the reasons as instruction, humility, and exercise shows that he orders his discussion according to the human faculties which are healed: the mind by instruction, the affections through being re-ordered in their attachment to sensible things, and the actions as they use physical things for the honor of God.⁵⁴ These three do not include all elements in a full Thomistic psychology, but do order the faculties connected to these three reasons into the hierarchical order in which Aquinas understands them.

Aquinas does not overlay a definition of the sacraments onto the threefold reason, nor does he work within a schema of Trinitarian appropriation.

Summary

There is a wisdom in Hugh's threefold schema which is both approved and modified by the next generations of writers. All of those who have been studied agree that the necessity of the sacraments is not a necessity binding God, but is a necessity of fittingness in which God tempers his remedies to the needs of the fallen human condition. While Hugh's threefold reason is

⁵¹ Thomas Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 3; Pseudo-Dionysius, *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia* 1 (PG, 3:370).

⁵² The medicine box image is not used in the threefold reason by Lombard.

⁵³ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 4.

⁵⁴ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1, corp., ad 3.

overlain by three schemas, the Trinitarian and definitional schemas fade in the reception of his teaching. In contrast, the psychological schema remains prominent in these theologians who follow Hugh. The Dominicans, tentatively in Albert and boldly in Aquinas, actually re-order the threefold reason in order to express the primacy of the intellect over the will.

An important insight into the relationship of the sacraments to human nature is found in the thought of all of the theologians surveyed. Sanctification is not merely a general turning to God, or recognition of God, but involves a deep re-orientation on several levels. It requires an openness of mind, and of heart to change, both a healing and a gradual growth in love supported by practice.

	Order	Trinitarian Schema	Definition Schema	Psychological Schema
Hugh of St. Victor	Humility, Instruction, Exercise	Father, Son, Holy Spirit	Material, Institution, Sanctification	Orientation to God, Mind, Affections
Peter Lombard	Humility, Instruction, Exercise	No	No	Orientation to God, Mind, Actions
Alexander of Hales	Humility, Instruction, Exercise	No	No	Orientation to God, Speculative Intellect, Practical Intellect
Albert the Great	<i>Humility or Instruction, Exercise</i>	No	(<i>with humility first</i>) Matter, Sign, Cause	(<i>with instruction first</i>) Intellect, Affections, Need for grace
Thomas Aquinas	Instruction, Humility, Exercise	No	No	Mind, Affections, Body/Actions

The slight flexibility found in the ordering and interpretation of the elements suggests an enduring value to Hugh's schema. The basic truths it describes about human nature are valid, even when the deepest wounds in human psychology and relationship to God are considered in slightly different ways. They have not been appropriated by many current-day authors, but a few who have considered them are able to integrate them into some present-day challenges. For example, Margot E. Fassler in her 2011 work

Gothic Song emphasizes the way in which Hugh's understanding of the sacraments highlights human dignity. She writes, "Sacramental action is a model for the way of restoration, proving to humans that they too, like the sacraments, have hidden worth buried within the elements for their flesh. By learning and believing, they can find the divine within themselves as surely as they can find the divinity within the waters of baptism or the bread of the altar."⁵⁵ Fassler finds here a testimony to the reality of the spiritual world, against materialism. Interestingly, she couches her analysis almost in the terms of a counselor who may need to assure others of their value and worth. She recognizes that the gradual nature of growth in knowledge and holiness through sacramental practice reminds the Christian to be patient with the slow rhythms of human growth. Her affirmation of the value of each person underlines a concern of the magisterium since the Second Vatican Council, and in the teaching of Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis.

One wonders if a present-day study, perhaps one which considers the value of direct experiences of others and the sensible world (as opposed to virtual, computer-mediated experiences) could be employ this schema with a contemporary twist.

Biblical Quotes and References

To support the proposal to seek enduring wisdom in Hugh's threefold reason, it is necessary to look at its grounding in Scripture. If Hugh's reason truly contains something of permanent value in the Church's reflection on the sacraments, it must be because it presents in an insightful way the revelation given in Scripture.

The major explicit background for Hugh's threefold reason is the Genesis account of creation and the fall. God creates a physical universe, in which humans share as creatures with bodies, and are also called to spiritual communion with God. Man was originally united to the goodness of God, using the physical things of creation in a way that honored the Creator. This affirmation of the goodness and purpose of material creation is a remote backdrop. More proximate is the fall itself, in which humanity lost its initial intimate friendship with God, falling into a condition in which pain, suffering, confusion, and interpersonal alienation have become the facts of daily life.

⁵⁵ Margot E. Fassler, *Gothic Song: Victorine Sequences and Augustinian Reform in Twelfth-Century Paris*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 231.

Hugh underlines the extent to which human behavior and experience have been impacted by the fall by identifying all humans living in the world with the tragic figure of Cain. Cain was, as Hugh quotes, “a wanderer and fugitive upon the earth” (Gen 4:12). While Cain’s wandering was, in the context of the Genesis account, a punishment for his murder of his brother Abel, Hugh reads Cain’s unsettled state to be paradigmatic of the human condition which suffers the general punishment for sin. This restlessness is why the sacraments need to offer “exercise” to the worshiper of God. This restlessness can be assuaged by profitable works, but not entirely healed in this life, which supports the need for many sacraments as well as liturgical activity to be repeated.

Another key image from Scripture is that of a medicine jar. Hugh speaks about the sacraments as spiritual medicine held within a vase. This echoes Jesus’s claim to be the physician found in many places in Scripture, such as in Mark 2:17 where he says: “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” Lombard puts the image of the good Samaritan who applied medicinal oil and bandages to the wounds of afflicted humanity at the beginning of his *Sentences* IV, giving an additional Christological emphasis to the image of medicine.⁵⁶ This image is found in Lombard, Albert, and Aquinas. Both of these images express the saving power of God as revealed in Scripture.

Neither Lombard nor Hales nor Albert add additional direct biblical quotations to their exposition of Hugh’s threefold reasons, although they use many more in their overall explorations of sacramental theology. Aquinas uses several quotes to defend the biblical background of the threefold reason. The most significant of these are found in the *sed contra* of the *Commentary on the Sentences*, and the reply to objection 3 in the *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 61, a. 1, ad 3.

In the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas refers to St. Paul’s “law of sin in the parts of my body” from Rom 7:23, also calling it the “wound of sin.” Aquinas argues that because the wound of sin affects even the body, so the medicine for sin should involve the bodily. There is a certain reversal here: the alienation from God brought by sin shows itself as disordered physical desires; therefore, it is appropriate that the healing given reach the mind through the body. What is seen in the physical expresses the spiritual. This of course, ties God’s way of acting in the sacraments to his pedagogy in the Old Testament (which speaks through sensible signs and wonders) and his coming in the Incarnation. The text of St. Paul which continues on to speak

⁵⁶ Lombard, *Sent.* IV, pt. 1, ch. 1.

about Christ Jesus as saving him from this “body which is subject to death” (Rom 7:24) affirms this connection.

In his *Summa* passage, Aquinas answers an objection against sacraments in light of the sufficiency of Christ’s Passion by appealing to Romans 6:3: “All we who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in His death.”⁵⁷ He argues the sacraments are powerful through Christ’s Passion. Here both human physicality and the Incarnation which heals through the revelation of God in the flesh of Christ are seen to be at the heart of the threefold reason.

Wider Biblical Background

Because Hugh places his threefold reason for the sacraments within the wide sweep of salvation history, it is in accordance with his mind to see other places where the biblical unfolding of God’s plan supports the threefold reason for the sacraments given by Hugh. This paper briefly will consider biblical themes which support each of the three reasons.

The most significant implicit biblical background in Hugh’s account is found in God’s various commands which specify and order human worship. Since these are commands to practice early “sacraments,” they pertain to all three of the reasons. Hugh does not quote a specific command of God, but likely has in mind the Mosaic covenant and Christ’s institution of the sacraments, as well as the few pre-Mosaic specifications about worship, for example, the Exodus 20:25 command to use only stones which have not been shaped by a human hand to build an altar. Using material elements in worship is an act of obedience because God has issued various commands about worship. This aspect of God’s revelation in the Old Testament also ties into the Hugh’s understanding of instruction and exercise. The reason why sacraments can instruct about specific graces is that God specified the meaning of various liturgical activities when he instituted them. The later prophetic clarification that sacrifices were instituted for the sake not of God but of humanity also affirms that this activity is given for the good of humanity rather than of God. This is expressed in the ironic questioning of Ps 50:13–14: “Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High.”

Specifically grounding Hugh’s teaching on humility is the Christ of the Philippians hymn (2:5–11), who descended into the physicality of the human world in order to raise us up to the true knowledge and worship of the Father. In his section on the Incarnation, Hugh quotes this text in his

⁵⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [ST] III, q. 61, a. 1, ad 3.

discussion of what Christ merited for humanity by his suffering and death. Here, Hugh concludes that glory would have been due to Christ even without the humiliation of his suffering and death. These were undertaken in order to merit for disordered humanity.⁵⁸ Christ merits and is the model for the humble sacramental obedience which humanity must accept.

Finally, the theme of the revelation of divine wisdom through the Incarnation fits with Hugh's understanding of instruction.⁵⁹ Throughout the Old Testament God makes himself known in human language and human events as he forms his people. The theology of John's Gospel, which teaches that the glory of the Father is revealed through the incarnate Word, also supports the need for divine instruction. That this instruction continues in the sacraments affirms one way in which the revelation of the divine presence and power touches each human life.

Therefore, Hugh's threefold exercise ties into several fundamental biblical themes: the revelation of the glory of the Father through the Word incarnate, humanity's estrangement from God and need for healing of heart, and the idea that the activity of worship supports seeing the glory of the Father and conversion of heart.

Relevance for Contemporary Sacramental Issues

General Insights

As mentioned above, many issues in contemporary sacramental theology have deep metaphysical and anthropological roots. Theological investigation which traces these to their source and unravels their complexity is important. Equally valuable is the retrieval of a perspective of wisdom which holds up the more complete against the damaged or impartial. It is this second sort of corrective that the threefold reason of Hugh of St. Victor offers to several trends in contemporary sacramental theology.

Humility

The medieval teaching that the sacraments were instituted for humility contradicts the idea that all human impulses point directly towards the good. It teaches that human desires have been disordered by the fall. Therefore, the sacraments require a willingness to go against what may feel natural in order to allow oneself to be re-ordered by God. This is not always recognized.

⁵⁸ Hugh, *De Sac.* 2.1. Hugh also makes the point that Christ's love and obedience meant glory even without his humiliation.

⁵⁹ For a reading of Hugh which sees the sapiential theme as central to his theology, see Coolman, *Theology of Hugh*, 81–102.

Sometimes, instead, there is a desire to affirm and celebrate what is disordered. A contemporary example of the attitude which is in tension with Hugh's thought can be found in the conflict in the German Church over the blessing of same-sex couples.⁶⁰ The practice of blessing the unions of such couples recently began to be practiced in the German Church. After a Vatican statement condemning such blessings, protest ceremonies were organized in early 2021 under the slogan "Love wins."⁶¹ This is a particularly difficult part of Catholic moral teaching for the contemporary world to accept.

Testifying to a more diffuse form of the failure to recognize sinful behavior as disordered is a 2015 "pew survey" on the topic of sin. This survey notes that many Catholics disagree with the Church in what constitutes a sin. For example, 23 percent denied that abortion is a sin and 33 percent that living with a romantic partner outside of marriage is one.⁶² This is not a directly liturgical example, but shows the loss of humility before the moral teaching of the magisterium.

Hugh's teaching about humility suggests that we need to approach human nature with an expectation of finding disorder as well as a desire to act to re-order ourselves. The small acts of liturgical obedience practiced from year to year push back against the tendency to deny the reality of sin or to celebrate behavior which natural law and the Christian tradition consider disordered. Hugh recognizes the courage needed to undertake this re-ordering when he speaks of the "merit" in the exercise of humility. Merit is directly connected to love, but usually also implies a challenging difficulty which evokes a deeper act of love. It implies the difficulty in accepting and following certain aspects of the moral law. To accept it is implicitly to enter into Christ's humiliation. It implies a difficulty and pain in conversion, but also is a reminder that humanity can be healed and is called to something beyond this world. Perhaps the call to be restored to the image of the humble Christ should be noted as the true ground of this element.

⁶⁰ "Germany: Several Churches Offer 'Blessing Service for Lovers,' Including Homosexual Unions," *Vatican News*, May 10, 2021, vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2021-05/germany-catholic-churches-blessing-lovers-homosexual-unions.html.

⁶¹ "German Priests Defy Vatican to Bless Gay Couples," *BBC News*, [bbc.com/news/world-europe-57055162](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-57055162). "More Than 230 German Theologians Protest Vatican Statement against Blessing of Same-Sex Unions," *America: The Jesuit Review*, May 22, 2021, americamagazine.org/faith/2021/03/22/germany-theologians-same-sex-unions-blessing-vatican-240293.

⁶² "What's a Sin? Catholics Don't Always Agree with Their Church," *Pew Research Center*, September 25, 2015, [pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/09/25/whats-a-sin-catholics-dont-always-agree-with-their-church/](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/09/25/whats-a-sin-catholics-dont-always-agree-with-their-church/).

Instruction

Hugh's understanding that the sacraments teach us pushes back against various suggestions that the sacraments be re-designed to fit our contemporary situation. Hugh connects the instructive element not only to the natural signifying properties of various natural elements, but to a revealed institution (either in the Old Law or by Christ). In this understanding, sacraments should be respected because they are a message from God. Specifically, their instruction teaches us the sort of healing which they offer.

The element of instruction stands in opposition to two particular contemporary tendencies. The first is a denial of revelation or the Church's normative interpretation of revelation. A strong example of this is found in some types of feminist theology. Paradigmatic of this attitude is a statement from Elizabeth Johnson (although not made in the context of sacraments) that, instead of situating the center of theology in the revelation given by God, theology should view the world through "the lens of women's flourishing."⁶³ A revealing statement of this attitude can be found in Rosemary Radford Ruether's *Women-Church*, where there are suggestions for new liturgies to be developed for events in women's lives, such as ceremonies for menstruation, miscarriage, and abortion which she puts on the same level as baptism.⁶⁴

Hugh's understanding that the Christian sacraments speak to us about a healing medicine given by Christ would not make it possible for a community either to de-center Christ or to replace his sacraments with others. This is because of a recognition that Christ himself acts through the sacraments to heal the soul. Although suffering is always individual, the perennial teaching suggests a commonality in the sorts of healing which the human soul needs, whether male or female and in any time period.

A second tendency which Hugh's element of instruction pushes back against is a completely sociological view of the sacraments. An example of this is found in the theology of Joseph Martos, who claims that it is "magical thinking" to claim that the sacraments heal the soul in any way other than that brought about by the psychological-social experience of the rite itself.⁶⁵ He suggests that the American Church should institute new sacraments that are psychologically and socially relevant to present-day Americans. For

⁶³ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroads, 2002), 18–21.

⁶⁴ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women-Church: Theology and Practice of Feminist Liturgical Communities* (Harper and Row, 1985), 125–220.

⁶⁵ Joseph Martos, *Honest Rituals, Honest Sacraments: Letting Go of Doctrines and Celebrating What's Real* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 83.

example, prison ministry should be substituted for confession. Marriage is re-imagined as a temporary commitment, vowed without reference to children or indissolubility.⁶⁶

Martos writes from a Heideggerian-Rahnerian viewpoint influenced by the postmodern thought of Louis-Marie Chauvet.⁶⁷ Chauvet shows a real reverence for the presence of God which he understands as present in a hidden, non-causal way in the sacraments. The sacraments then act as “expressive mediations” which allow the subject to situate himself in the world.⁶⁸ Coupled with an understanding of the sacraments as actions entrusted to the Church, this understanding attenuates until sacramental theology becomes merely the historical narrative of a faith community. Martos describes the sacraments as: “celebration and transition rituals, . . . intensification rituals . . . which function as doors to sacred realities.”⁶⁹ These are merely psychological-social realities—indeed, a true and important dimension to the sacraments, but not enough to express their full meaning.

The recognition that the community of the Church expresses itself in the sacraments is not in contradiction to Hugh’s thought, but it is not adequate to it. The sacraments are moments when the Church “remembers” and “expresses” its experience of Christ, but this is a remembrance mediated by the gift of Christ himself, given to conform the Christian to Christ. As St. Albert teaches, Christ imparts both his wisdom and power through the sacraments.⁷⁰ The specificity of the healing and of the power of Christ requires that the specific gift that Christ gives be continued in the Church. There is an individual immediacy made possible in the sacramental celebration. Hugh’s instruction invites the Christian to re-discover the “healing medicine” within each sacrament, although it is correct that this medicine does need to be administered at a particular time and to an individual.

Exercise

Hugh’s insistence that the sacraments help to heal the human person by giving the opportunity to engage in activities directed towards God offers valuable insight into both the nature of the sacraments and that of the human person. As with instruction, there are two problematic attitudes towards the

⁶⁶ Martos, *Honest Rituals*, 121.

⁶⁷ See Martos’s article “Louis-Marie Chauvet’s Postmodern Sacramental Theology,” in *Assembly: A Journal of Liturgical Theology* 35, no. 2 (2009): 26–28.

⁶⁸ Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Madeleine Beaumont and Patrick Madigan, SJ (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 110.

⁶⁹ Martos, *Honest Rituals*, 459.

⁷⁰ Albert, *De Sacr.*, tr. 1, a. 2, ad 3.

sacraments that this reason resists. First is the idea that there is no need for sacraments because the whole world is the place of the revelation of God. This way of thinking is related to an aforementioned Rahnerian perspective which gives a sacramental version of the supernatural existential. In this tendency, there is an emphasis that God is always present everywhere, with the sacraments only serving as moments of human recognition of such presence.⁷¹ As a result, specific liturgical moments matter less than a general awareness of the holiness of creation. This can result in an individualistic desire to “worship God by walking in nature,” or a tendency which sees Church buildings as places for a community to meet—the Church building and liturgical times occasioned by a purely human social need, rather than a moment in which to engage in a sacred activity.⁷²

In contrast, Hugh emphasizes the need for the human person and community to engage with the things of God. In his analysis of exercise, Hugh both distinguishes and unites moments of liturgical prayer from daily activities, which he calls “useful” and “activities of necessity.”⁷³ While Hugh seems to have survival activities in mind, it is likely that all good natural activities could fit into this category, including the philosophical and artistic. In Hugh’s teaching, specific moments of liturgy are different from daily activities, but also have an effect on them, orienting them towards God so that natural activities are “perfected.”⁷⁴ Hugh suggests that the way to allow the awareness of the presence of God into all the mundane moments of life is to sacralize life by moments of more intense liturgical actions. In his classic text *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Ratzinger pushes back against the idea that we do not need specific times and places of worship because the whole world is holy.⁷⁵ Certainly, the whole world is the place of the Incarnation of the Word, but we need specific moments of worship in order to overcome sin and allow God into the world.

Hugh’s thought on this topic is in harmony with the recent work of David W. Fagerberg entitled *Consecrating the World: On Mundane Liturgical Theology*.⁷⁶ Fagerberg, while writing beautifully of the world as a sacrament

⁷¹ Karl Rahner, “Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event,” in *Theological Investigations*, 14:161–84.

⁷² Ratzinger discusses this latter manifestation of this trend in his classic text *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 62.

⁷³ Hugh, *De Sac.* 1.9 (*On the Sacraments: A Selection*, 82).

⁷⁴ Hugh, *De Sac.* 1.9 (*On the Sacraments: A Selection*, 82).

⁷⁵ Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 62–73.

⁷⁶ David W. Fagerberg, *Consecrating the World: On Mundane Liturgical Theology* (Kettering, OH: Angelico, 2016).

revelatory of God, nevertheless reminds his readers: "The world does not just sit there as a sacrament, it must be made to operate as a sacrament, and this only Christ can do because he has conquered Satan in fact. Now his victory can go and be transcribed, transferred, translated onto each of us personally, which liturgy does when it unites us to Christ's symbolic action because his liturgy wields efficacious signs, called sacraments."⁷⁷ In Fagerberg's thought, specific moments of sacramental conversion are necessary for the recognition of the sacramentality of the world.

A second tendency, which is largely opposed to the first, is a loss of faith in the effectiveness of the sacraments. Perhaps this can be seen simply in the Mass attendance numbers given by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate's numbers. The 2015 statistics say that only 39 percent of baptized Catholics in the United States attend Mass every Sunday.⁷⁸ There are various reasons for this behavior, no doubt (and certainly the numbers are lower post-pandemic). One underlying attitude is the thought that one does not get anything out of Mass or liturgy. There is a doubt that the sacraments effectively change the life of the Christian. An example of a tendency towards this could be Cardinal Walter Kasper's proposal in book *The Gospel of the Family* that divorced and remarried Catholics be sometimes offered communion while they are working to turn aside from sin, but before they have chosen to reject it. To an extent, Kasper's endorsement of the "way of penitence" agrees with Hugh (in that he recognizes the need for repeated practice for growth in virtue.) His pastoral suggestion, however that communion be given to those in ambiguous moral situations overlies a doubt about the ability to truly turn from disordered behavior.⁷⁹

Hugh's insistence on exercise as a sacramental aspect necessitated by human nature invites the Christian to re-evaluate what it means to "get something out of liturgy." Hugh situates the sacraments within the larger Christian life of faith and growth in virtue. Spending time in worship strengthens the Christian in discipline and faithfulness, while also training the will to appreciate the things of God. Fassler observes: "The sacraments require constant practice to be understood and appreciated properly. This exercise is of great benefit to the learning and development of humans."⁸⁰ The mention of appreciation suggests the role of the "delight" which Hugh

⁷⁷ Fagerberg, *Consecrating the World*, 86–87.

⁷⁸ "U.S. Catholics Open to Non-Traditional Families, Chapter 2: Participation in Catholic Rites and Observances," *Pew Research Center*, September 2, 2015, pewforum.org/2015/09/02/chapter-2-participation-in-catholic-rites-and-observances/.

⁷⁹ Walter Kasper, *The Gospel of the Family* (New York: Paulist Press, 2014), 51.

⁸⁰ Fassler, *Gothic Song*, 231.

connects to exercise. He understands that prayer, ritual, and pilgrimage to some extent take the place of vicious activities. They do this by filling up time in the life of the Christian, but they also fill up emotional needs by their ability to enchant. Their sensible beauty should form the taste, drawing the Christian to love and appreciate the things of God. Hugh's reasons call upon the parish to consider the aesthetic quality of the liturgy offered. The liturgy is not pure entertainment. It is meant to direct the will to God. Yet it should have a certain "multiplicity, variety and interludes"⁸¹ in order to "refresh" and "renew" the soul as it practices the virtues demanded by the liturgy.⁸²

St. Albert's insights on exercise are important here as well. Concerned about the sacraments as causes of grace, Albert emphasizes that the grace of the sacrament is what has repeated exercise in the life of the Christian. Far from Martos's "magical thinking," Albert teaches that the Christian can trust in God's help given in the sacraments, but that this help is drawn upon in the moments of daily life when virtue is exercised. The Christian must act to co-operate with grace, allowing the "exercise" of the sacraments to unfold in the discipline of the entire moral life, if he truly wishes to be changed by the healing grace given in the sacraments. In both Hugh and those who take up his teaching, the sacraments are closely allied to a life of virtue, but do not substitute for it. They offer a final end—a perfecting activity—but still require that other activities be ordered to it.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Hugh of St. Victor's three reasons emphasize the mercy of God in giving sacraments fitted to human nature. They are grounded in the general trajectory of God's revelation in salvation history. They were slightly re-ordered by the medieval tradition to fit slightly different anthropologies, but even this slight re-ordering emphasized the relevance of the sacraments to the human faculties. While this appeal to medieval theology does not account for all of the questions and complexities that modern and post-modern theories of the Church and language have raised, they nevertheless outline a set of compelling reasons for looking to the traditional theology of the sacraments with renewed interest and respect. N·V

⁸¹ Hugh, *De Sac.* 1.9 (*On the Sacraments: A Selection*, 82).

⁸² Hugh, *De Sac.* 1.9 (*On the Sacraments: A Selection*, 82).