Using the Medicine of Grace: Kierkegaard Reads Hugh of Saint Victor on Sanctification

Joshua Furnal
Radboud University, The Netherlands

Abstract
In this article, I argue that Søren Kierkegaard’s prefatory editorial remark in Practice in Christianity about resorting to and making use of grace has a medieval inheritance, which stems from his reading of Hugh of St Victor (1096–1142). Rather than grounding Kierkegaard’s remark exclusively within the Lutheran tradition, I suggest that the medieval inheritance of the relationship between operative and cooperative grace contributed to a theological development in Kierkegaard’s view of sanctification. Moreover, Kierkegaard’s journal entries prior to the publication of Practice in Christianity provide the connection to Hugh of St Victor’s theology of sanctification. I briefly survey the development of Kierkegaard’s view of grace and examine Kierkegaard’s commentary on Hugh of St Victor’s Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Then, I survey Hugh’s distinction between restorative and cooperative grace against the wider backdrop of his theology of sanctification to highlight a structural affinity with Kierkegaard’s writings. My aim is to identify and illuminate this unexplored Catholic source of Kierkegaard’s distinction between grace and works that indicates a non-competitive relationship between divine and human agency.

Keywords
Kierkegaard, grace, sanctification, Hugh of St Victor, freedom, theological virtues

Introduction
What is distinctive about Kierkegaard’s view of grace and works in the task of right living before God in the process of sanctification toward the goal of eternal salvation? To arrive at an adequate answer from Kierkegaard’s writings, an interpretive problem in Kierkegaard studies needs to be overcome to address a theological problem. If grace

Corresponding author:
Joshua Furnal, Faculty of Theology, Radboud University, Postbus 9103, Nijmegen, The Netherlands.
Email: j.furnal@ftr.ru.nl
refers to divine assistance for right willing and acting then the task, process and goal remain God’s job and not ours. The problem emerges when grace operates in us yet without us for the goal of our eternal salvation, but our cooperation in faith and good works are superfluous in the process of sanctification. On the other hand, if faith and good works are still required, then grace is not gratuitous but rather dependent upon our response and earned. On this view of the problem, if sanctification depends somehow on our response, then grace is not a gift but an achievement; but if sanctification depends on God, then grace is not freely initiated but arbitrary. The theological problem arises based on a competitive view of agency that secularizes grace either as a violation of human freedom or as a primitive description of a natural process.  

By the time of the Reformation debates about grace alone and works-righteousness, the divine initiative in operative grace was seen at odds with our free response in cooperation with grace. As an unintended result, the supernatural free gift of grace was secularized into a natural reward that was determined causally.

In this article, I argue that by uncovering the importance of Hugh of St Victor for the later Kierkegaard’s understanding of grace, Kierkegaard’s own engagement with a medieval French Catholic source like St Victor moves Kierkegaard away from Luther’s rejection of Thomistic theology—for example, ‘the theological virtues’, ‘infusion’ and ‘cooperative grace’. My aim is to offer a new trajectory in Kierkegaard studies that scholars have not yet embarked upon fully to sketch an ecumenical agenda with some important new questions from Kierkegaard’s engagement with the Catholic tradition. By exploring the development of Kierkegaard’s theology of grace and works, one discovers how a medieval theologian like Hugh of St Victor enabled Kierkegaard to retrieve an Augustinian theology of grace and to resist the secularization of it.

However, when one turns to Kierkegaard scholars on this point, the standard interpretive account identifies Kierkegaard’s soteriology with Martin Luther’s view of justification without works. Indeed, some scholars still interpret Kierkegaard’s theology through the lens of Luther’s view of law and grace as if sanctification only amounts to

1. For more, see David B. Burrell, Learning to Trust in Freedom: Signs from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Traditions (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2010). See also David Burrell, ‘Does Process Theology Rest on a Mistake?’, Theological Studies 43.1 (1982), pp. 125–35.

2. For a recent reevaluation of this standard view, see Miikka Ruokanen, Trinitarian Grace in Martin Luther’s The Bondage of the Will (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), ch. 8.

3. The standard view began with Karl Holl extending to Eduard Geismar and Emanuel Hirsch. For more, see James M. Stayer, Martin Luther, German Saviour: German Evangelical Theological Fractions and the Interpretation of Luther, 1917–1933 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), ch. 2. See also Matthias Wilke’s chapter on Hirsch in Jon Stewart (ed.), Kierkegaard’s Influence on Theology: German Protestant Theology, vol. 10.1, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 155–84. For an example of the standard account, see Craig Hinkson, ‘Luther and Kierkegaard: Theologians of the Cross’, International Journal of Systematic Theology 3.1 (2001), pp. 27–45.
an affective repetition of justification without works. Yet what is often overlooked is that during the final decade of his life, Kierkegaard read Luther’s sermons and increasingly became critical of Luther’s theology as responsible for the secularizing errors of Christendom. Yet, David Coe argued recently that it is possible to reconcile Kierkegaard’s critique by supplementing texts from Luther that were not originally in Kierkegaard’s possession but are now available. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard still viewed Luther’s emphasis on justification without works as precipitating an undesirable theological justification of moral laxity.

4. Sylvia Walsh, Living Christianly: Kierkegaard’s Dialectic of Christian Existence (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), pp. 36, 159. Walsh writes that ‘In forgiveness, the consciousness of sin is taken away and replaced by its opposite, the consciousness of forgiveness’ (p. 36, italics original). Contradicting Matt. 5:17, Walsh later writes ‘Because Christ fulfills the law, he can require the absolute of human beings; but by fulfilling the law, Christ also destroys it. Through his fulfillment of the law he ransoms humanity from law to grace by presenting himself as the prototype who dialectically causes persons to flee to grace … the requirement of imitation after grace thus do[es] not signify to Kierkegaard a reintroduction of the law or any new form of the law and works righteousness’ (p. 159).

5. For more, see Joel D.S. Rasmussen and David Yoon-Jung Kim, ‘Martin Luther: Reform, Secularization, and the Question of His True Successor’, in Jon Stewart (ed.), Kierkegaard and the Renaissance and Modern Traditions: Theology (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 173–217. David Gouwens attempts to distinguish Kierkegaard’s ‘thematic’ endorsement of Luther’s doctrine from Kierkegaard’s critique of its abuse in Aaron Edwards and David J. Gouwens (eds.), T&T Clark Companion to the Theology of Kierkegaard (London: T&T Clark, 2019), pp. 315–33. See also Lee Barrett’s essay on Kierkegaard’s critical appropriation of Luther in Jon Stewart (ed.), A Companion to Kierkegaard (Chichester: Blackwell, 2015), ch. 12.

6. David Lawrence Coe, Kierkegaard and Luther (Lanham, MD: Fortress Academic, 2020). Although it is beyond my scope here, Coe acquits Luther and Kierkegaard from the charge of being ‘ontologically racist’ (p. 142), but does not consider recent work by Peter Tudvad or Joanna Nowotny. Also, Coe’s thesis about the continuity of Luther’s writings and Danish Lutheranism (pp. 178–82) unwittingly extends but does not resolve parallel interpretive questions about the continuity of Hegel’s writings and Danish Hegelianism, and does not consider the work of Jon Stewart. These issues meet in Kierkegaard’s reaction to the threat of Apollinarianism in Lutheran theology, particularly in the work of Hans L. Martensen, who portrayed Judaism using the Hegelian terms of unmediated supernaturalism and the Incarnation as mediated naturalism. For more, see Jakob Peter Mynster and Jon Stewart (eds.), Mynster’s “Rationalism, Supernaturalism” and the Debate about Mediation, Texts from Golden Age Denmark (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2009), pp. 129–43, esp. p. 130.

7. For example, against Luther’s undialectical separation of grace and works, Kierkegaard writes in his journal, ‘First the law and then the gospel, which is sheer leniency, etc. This way Christianity becomes an optimism anticipating that we are to have an easy life in this world’ (SKS 26, 166–67/NB 32:67). All citations from Kierkegaard’s journals will refer to Søren Kierkegaard, Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks, ed. Niels Jørgen Cappeløn et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014). Henceforth, SKS/NB.
Despite the dismissal of ‘the traditional Western ordo salutis’ in Kierkegaard studies, other scholars have noted that Kierkegaard’s post-Lutheran theology was developed while also reading from pre-Lutheran sources in the patristic and medieval eras. These scholars have situated Kierkegaard’s Pietism in the imitatio Christi tradition, the German contemplative tradition, and the Augustinian tradition. By equating the theology of Luther with Kierkegaard in contemporary Kierkegaard studies, a theological problem is perpetuated that distorts and covers up the development of Kierkegaard’s theology of sanctification. What is often missed is that Kierkegaard mentions sanctification more than 700 times in his writings to overcome the theological problem of competitive agency between God and creation. To provide

8. For example, see Murray Rae, Kierkegaard and Theology (London: T&T Clark, 2010), p. 100. See also Andrew B. Torrance, The Freedom to Become a Christian: A Kierkegaardian Account of Human Transformation in Relationship with God (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), p. 113. An earlier generation of Kierkegaard scholars like Niels and Marie Mikulová Thulstrup or Victor Lindström did not dismiss such a view.

9. Jon Stewart (ed.), Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions, vol. 4, Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). Unfortunately, this volume does not treat Hugh of St Victor. Also, Hugh is not mentioned in Stewart (ed.), A Companion to Kierkegaard, chs. 10 and 11.

10. Christopher B. Barnett, Kierkegaard, Pietism and Holiness (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011). See also Christopher B. Barnett, “‘Rest’ as Unio Mystica? Kierkegaard, Augustine, and the Spiritual Life’, Spiritus 16.1 (2016), pp. 58–77.

11. Hjördis Becker, ‘Mirroring God: Reflections of Meister Eckhart’s Thought in Kierkegaard’s Authorship’, Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook 2012.1 (2012), pp. 3–24; Hjördis Becker-Lindenthal, ‘Kierkegaard’s Reception of German Vernacular Mysticism: Johann Tauler’s Sermon on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross and Practice in Christianity’, International Journal of Philosophy and Theology 80.4–5 (2019), pp. 443–64; Hjördis Becker-Lindenthal and Ruby Guyatt, ‘Kierkegaard on Existential Kenosis and the Power of the Image: Fear and Trembling and Practice in Christianity’, Modern Theology 35.4 (2019), pp. 706–27; Hjördis Becker-Lindenthal, ‘Kierkegaard on Imagination: Possibility, Hope, and the Imitation of Christ’, History of European Ideas 47.3 (2020), pp. 1–16.

12. K. Paffenroth, J. Doody and H.T. Russell (eds.), Augustine and Kierkegaard (Augustine in Conversation: Tradition and Innovation) (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017); Lee C. Barrett, Eros and Self-Emptying: The Intersections of Augustine and Kierkegaard (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013); Robert Puchniak, ‘Kierkegaard’s “Self” and Augustine’s Influence’, in Heiko Schulz, Jon Stewart and Karl Verstrynge (eds.), Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), pp. 181–94; Craig A. Hefner, “‘In God’s Changelessness There is Rest’: The Existential Doctrine of God’s Immutability in Augustine and Kierkegaard’, International Journal of Systematic Theology 20.1 (2018), pp. 65–83; Walter R. Dietz, ‘Selbstverhältnis und Gottesverhältnis bei Augustin und Kierkegaard’, Kierkegaardiana 17:109 (1994), pp. 109–29; Paul R. Kolbet, ‘Augustine, Kierkegaard, and the Seduction of the Word: Rediscovering an Unfamiliar Theological Style’, Toronto Journal of Theology 31.1 (2015), pp. 57–65.

13. One excellent exception is Christopher Barnett’s essay ‘Sanctification: Kierkegaard and the Journey Towards Rest’, in Edwards and Gouwens (eds.), T&T Clark Companion to the Theology of Kierkegaard, ch. 19. For a recent corrective in Luther studies that takes an Augustinian view of sanctification into account, see Ruokanen, Trinitarian Grace, ch. 8.
an alternative to the standard interpretive account, and to address a theological problem perpetuated by it, one must attend to the development of Kierkegaard’s emphasis on an edifying yet rigorous halt at subjectivity so that the operation of grace cannot be separated from cooperating with grace when following Christ’s model.\textsuperscript{14}

**Kierkegaard on Grace and Works**

In this section, I will briefly survey the development of Kierkegaard’s view of grace to highlight the influential role of Hugh of St Victor. For Kierkegaard, sanctification is not a one-off reference in his journal but rather a view that is more widely developed throughout his writings. Before the publication of *Practice in Christianity* (1850), Kierkegaard had already arrived at the view that without grace we are not capable of regulating ourselves in an ethically rigorous way.\textsuperscript{15} Kierkegaard placed the task and goal of sanctification above any form of worldliness or thought that one might achieve perfection unaided by grace. For without grace, moral perfection is only an impossible possibility because of the pervasiveness of sin, which bars us from even attempting to attain the ideal.\textsuperscript{16} If the imitation of Christ is impossible, grace makes no demand, yet Kierkegaard reiterates the demand on the basis of the free gift of grace. Early on, Kierkegaard rejected the Apollinarian view that even with the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, the imitation of Christ is impossible because sin constantly refuses this possibility.\textsuperscript{17} Later, Kierkegaard observed that ‘we are afraid to ask for the help of the Holy Spirit’ because we would have to take seriously the fact that we are incapable of our salvation or sanctification.\textsuperscript{18}

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\textsuperscript{14} SKS 22, 415/NB 14:123 [1849]. Although our natural capacities are not sufficient to save us, it is not the case that God saves us without us—Kierkegaard says that discussions about salvation ‘must all be stopped by subjectivity’, which ‘cannot be excluded unless we want to have fatalism’.

\textsuperscript{15} SKS 23, 45–46/NB 15:66 [1850].

\textsuperscript{16} Elsewhere, Kierkegaard writes: ‘The Apostle James must be drawn forward a little, not for works against faith—no, no, that was not the apostle’s meaning either—but for faith, in order, if possible, to cause the need for grace to be felt deeply in genuine humble inwardness and, if possible, to prevent grace, faith and grace as the only redemption and salvation, from being taken totally in vain, from becoming a camouflage even for a refined worldliness’ (Kierkegaard, *For Self-Examination*, p. 24).

\textsuperscript{17} (Danish) Pap. II C 29–31 / (English) KK:5 [1838]. Kierkegaard’s notes on the famous Tübingen Catholic theologian, Johan Adam Möhler’s *Athanasius der Grosse und die Kirche seiner Zeit* (Mainz: Kupferberg, 1827) records the doctrinal development at the Council of Nicaea and its legacy in early Christianity. Kierkegaard mentions the Apollinarian tendencies in Luther’s rejection of works in the process of salvation. In the margin, Kierkegaard scrawls ‘!!!’ as big as possible next to this passage: ‘Möhler now provides some extracts from Hilary’s [of Poitiers] twelve-volume work on the Trinity. It is remarkable that although I have been engaged with dogmatics for some years now I have never heard them mentioned—they are powerful’. One year later, Kierkegaard refers to a remark from Hilary about knowing the unknown God only by revelation in Pap. II C 34/Not. 1:9 [1839–40].

\textsuperscript{18} Pap. X\textsuperscript{5} A 329/NB 24:80 [1851].
For Anti-Climacus, Christ is the model who also communicates to us how to act decisively in an edifying way that does not resist but welcomes divine providence.\textsuperscript{19} Indeed, the ethico-religious task and goal of moral perfection involves realizing the ideal and becoming more like God in Christ, the Model who freely invites us through charity to respond in faith and not in offense by grace.\textsuperscript{20} In 1849, Kierkegaard wrote that God’s merciful grace is encountered when one fails to attain the ideal set forth by the exemplar, ‘and quite rightly I am the one who sinks under it, humbled, and learns even more profoundly to take refuge in grace’.\textsuperscript{21} By this time, Kierkegaard already had adopted the biblical language of ‘the sickness unto death’ (Jn 11:4) to describe the sin of despair.

Indeed, Christ is the exemplar who does not abolish the law but intensifies its demand through his sufferings. Christ brings all of creation under divine judgment because ‘to be contemporary with Christ is absolutely the most rigorous possible examination’.\textsuperscript{22} Of course, all humanity will fail this examination without the assistance of grace. Kierkegaard characterizes the task of moral perfection not as a Sisyphean endeavor but rather as a restless tension.

[When one admits that] the grace of God is in itself worth being contented with—indeed, it alone is worth being desired; indeed, to possess it is the only blessedness. Then in a beautiful sense the human heart will gradually (the grace of God is never taken by force) become more and more discontented—that is, it will desire more and more ardently, will long more and more intensely, to be assured of grace … In a human being’s relationship with God, it is inverted: the more he needs God, the more deeply he comprehends that he is in need of God, and then the more he in his need presses forward to God, the more perfect he is.\textsuperscript{23}

For Kierkegaard, we all have a desire for grace that is already encompassed by grace in the form of a need. The gratuity of grace invites a free response that intensifies our longing for beatitude and motivates us to strive for wholeness in faith. Life itself is a testimony to a gift that has been freely given by God which invites each one of us to respond individually to Him in gratitude. As a result, the desire for grace intensifies as an imperfect relating to perfection that cannot be ignored. Grace works against our worldly presumption of redemption and our hard-working despair over imitation. Not only does Christ’s redemption provide a model of self-sacrifice to be imitated, but also the gratuity of grace in creation freely invites the free response of our striving obedience in

\textsuperscript{19} Søren Kierkegaard, \textit{Practice in Christianity}, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 107. Henceforth, PC.

\textsuperscript{20} Søren Kierkegaard, \textit{The Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening}, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 126. Henceforth, SUD. For Kierkegaard, grace refers to the Creator’s redeeming activity not as a matter of logical necessity but of goodness.

\textsuperscript{21} NB 13:88 [1849].

\textsuperscript{22} (Danish) Pap. II A 731 / (English) FF 128 [1838].

\textsuperscript{23} Kierkegaard, \textit{Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses}, p. 303.
sanctification.\textsuperscript{24} The gratuity of grace illuminates the good end toward which we are called in joy.\textsuperscript{25}

After 1850, the emphasis on works as the living expression of faith by grace comes to the foreground. For example, in 1851, Kierkegaard wrote ‘precisely the fact that grace is shown me, precisely the fact that I am pardoned—indeed, precisely here is the requirement that I must therefore make all the more effort’. Kierkegaard adds that this must ‘be understood as the inward appropriation of faith, as an ever more profound and inward understanding of how deeply I need grace’.\textsuperscript{26} For Kierkegaard, the appropriation demonstrates one’s understanding of the need of grace, which gets intensified after one is justified by faith because one’s salvation remains at stake. Space does not permit an exploration of the further linguistic connections between Augustine, Hugh of St Victor, and Kierkegaard on the relationship between the divine initiative of calling and our response in prayer.\textsuperscript{27}

Nevertheless, what accounts for the development in Kierkegaard’s view of sanctification? Before the publication of \textit{Practice in Christianity}, Kierkegaard primarily referred to grace as the awareness of God’s mercy before the exacting ideal of Christ and his Passion. However, in 1850, Kierkegaard encountered Hugh’s writings on sanctification, which, I suggest, helped Kierkegaard further develop his view of grace and works.\textsuperscript{28} After reading

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\item Kierkegaard writes ‘Just as Mary’s sitting at Christ’s feet honored him better than Martha’s activity, in the same way the lily and the bird are a superfluity of beauty and joy that God has squandered on the creation. But just because they are a superfluity in this way, the most perfect obedience is required of them. Certainly everything that exists is by grace; but the one who owes everything to grace to the degree that he understands he is a superfluity, he must be all the more obedient. Certainly everything that exists is nothing in the hands of the Omnipotent One, who created it from nothing, but that which in coming into existence advanced only to becoming a superfluity must understand most deeply that it is nothing’. Søren Kierkegaard, \textit{Christian Discourses: The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress}, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 81. Henceforth, CD.
\item SKS 18, 67–68/EE 193 [1840–41]. On the biblical connection between grace and peace, the gift of the Spirit as a pledge or witness of forgiveness that permeates new life with joy see Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22.
\item SKS 24, 190/NB 22:159 [1851]. Kierkegaard is explicitly responding to Luther’s sermon from the seventh Sunday after Trinity Sunday.
\item For example, in \textit{Confessions} book 13, Augustine displays linguistically the intensification of grace in human freedom whereby God’s grace is the beginning and end of our response in prayer: \textit{vocantem me invocarem te}. For more, see David Aers, \textit{Salvation and Sin: Augustine, Langland, and Fourteenth-Century Theology} (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), p. 14. Many thanks to Cullen McKenney to alerting me to this point, and for prodding me to read the writings of Hugh of St Victor.
\item SKS 22, 22–23/NB 15:21–25. Kierkegaard accessed Hugh’s writings in Adolph Helfferich, \textit{Die Christliche Mystik: In Ihrer Entwicklung und Ihren Denkmalen}, 2 vols. (Gotha: F. Perthes, 1842). Through Helfferich, Kierkegaard was introduced to the writings of Richard of St Victor, Denys the Areopagite, John Scotus Eriugena, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Johannes Tauler.
\end{enumerate}
Hugh, Kierkegaard finalized his editorial preface to *Practice in Christianity*, which included a distinction used never before between *taking refuge* in grace in relation to the *use* of grace (PC 7).\(^{29}\) As we shall see in the next section, Hugh argues that our sanctification is not achieved autonomously but rather cooperatively through the Spirit’s gift of faith, which is a theological virtue.

### Kierkegaard Reads Hugh of St Victor

In what follows, I suggest that Hugh introduced Kierkegaard to a theological way of describing the non-competitive relationship between divine and human agency that preserves the universal need for grace and grounds our spiritual sickness in a rejection of this need. For both Hugh and Kierkegaard, not only is grace applied to sin like medicine to sickness, but also grace builds us up, heals, and strengthens us for right living before God. By taking a synoptic view of Hugh’s original text and Kierkegaard’s commentary on it in his journal, a better understanding of Kierkegaard’s theology can be obtained through Kierkegaard’s ecumenical perspective. For Kierkegaard, grace refers to the medicine for our sickness of sin and despair. Kierkegaard appropriated the metaphor of medicine from Hugh of St Victor, which uncovers a shared view of grace and works in sanctification that is not only restorative but also cooperative.

Between a telegraphic note in his journal about Hugh’s ‘excellent’ comments on divine providence in the book of Esther,\(^{30}\) and an illuminating entry about Hugh’s ‘correct thesis’ on the relationship between faith and reason,\(^{31}\) Kierkegaard explored Hugh’s ‘excellent little essay’ *The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*.\(^{32}\) The biblical reference to the seven gifts comes from the prophet Isaiah (11:2) who described the seven ways that the Spirit of the Lord rests upon the messianic ruler: growth in wisdom and understanding, in counsel and might, in knowledge and godliness, and the fear of the Lord.\(^{33}\) Hugh

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29. NB 15 began in January of 1850 and Kierkegaard published PC on 27 September 1850.

30. SKS 23, 21/NB 15:21 [1850]. Kierkegaard was particularly struck by Hugh’s observation that ‘many women were selected so that one might be chosen by the king’ in the second chapter of Esther.

31. SKS 23, 23/NB 15:25 [1850]. The Italian Kierkegaard scholar and priest, Cornelio Fabro, once observed that ‘the relation between reason and faith is central to Kierkegaard’s work and his position overlaps substantially with the formula which leads from Hugh of St. Victor to St. Thomas’. Cornelio Fabro, ‘Review of *L’itinerario Filosofico Di Leone Sestóv* by F. Déchet’, *The Modern Schoolman* 43.4 (1966), p. 414. Translation mine. For more, see Joshua Furnal, ‘The Dialectic of Faith and Reason in Cornelio Fabro’s Reading of Kierkegaard’s Theology’, *Theological Studies* 78.3 (2017), pp. 718–39.

32. SKS 23, 22–23/NB 15:24 [1850]. Kierkegaard read from volume two (pp. 332–37) of Helfferich’s German translation of Hugh’s text. For more, see Joshua Benson’s short introduction and translation in Christopher P. Evans (ed.), *Writings on the Spiritual Life: A Selection of Works of Hugh, Adam, Achard, Richard, Walter, and Godfrey of St Victor* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 371–74.

33. The Latin Vulgate adds ‘godliness’ [*pietatis*] or sanctification to complete the list of seven gifts, which medieval interpreters connected to the cardinal and theological virtues. In Isaiah’s original context, the anointed leadership of the messianic ruler is comprised of
projects the original meaning of this text into a new context and explores how the Holy Spirit illuminates the heart and soul of the baptized person to know and love God. For Hugh, grace refers to the Lord’s freely given healing assistance to the will for right living and it is necessary for salvation.

As a spiritual physician, Hugh cautions against various hazards to our spiritual health and describes how grace purges, illuminates, and heals sin in the human soul. Hugh argues that the seven gifts of the Spirit are the healing remedy for our sickness of soul (represented by seven vices). The Spirit assists us by grace to know and love God and our neighbor in the right way. Hugh offers guidance regarding practical questions like how to ask for grace and what do we receive in grace? How do we recognize the healing work of the Spirit on actual sin? Hugh begins to answer these questions by drawing attention to what it is that we are seeking: ‘those who seek silver, who seek gold, who seek the transitory, who seek things of earth seek the service of slavery, not the spirit of freedom’. Hugh argues that we receive what we seek after—whether we seek physical or spiritual things. So, if we seek spiritual liberation from the transitory, then we should listen to the words of Jesus in the Gospels: ‘seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you’ (Matt. 6:33).

Reflecting on Hugh’s account of the seven gifts, Kierkegaard observed that Hugh ‘has real value’ as a writer because his ‘sentences are so pithy that they are almost themes’. Indeed, Kierkegaard remarks at length that Hugh’s ‘sketch of how the Holy Spirit [is] a medicine [that] saves from sickness is excellent’. Kierkegaard also notes how the gifts are the beneficial ‘remedy’ for our spiritual illness that ‘enlightens and quickens’ us for right perception in ‘the healing struggle’ against spiritual deafness and blindness. Moreover, Kierkegaard was impacted especially by how Hugh argues that praying for our spirit is also a prayer for the Holy Spirit without conflating the two.

Interpreting the passage in Isaiah (11:2), Hugh described the unity of the Holy Spirit: ‘the gift of the Spirit is the Spirit’ and yet ‘the one Spirit bestows himself in seven ways’...
such that there is ‘one nature, seven works; one substance, a sevenfold effect’.\(^{37}\) Hugh is clear that the Eternal One is Unchanging, yet ‘He who is always one and the same in himself is multiplied in you’.\(^ {38}\) Hugh analogically maintains the real distinction between the divine simpleness of the Spirit and the participated goodness of grace uniting relative and absolute value in the economy of salvation. Moreover, Hugh argues that because the Spirit is his own gifts of fear, piety, knowledge, fortitude, counsel, understanding, and wisdom, we come to have a share in these gifts by grace for good works. Thus, the seven gifts of the Spirit heal and empower us for many different good works and the Spirit who gives them remains present to the effects of its work.

Asking the Holy Spirit for the healing of one’s spirit is how Hugh recognized the interaction between restorative and cooperative grace. For example, one of the passages that Kierkegaard records refers to the way that the Spirit works in our lives to eliminate the corruption of pride and restore the health of humility.

The one spirit is sick, the other is the medicine. Therefore, if you want the one spirit to be healed, seek the other Spirit. If you are asking for the sake of your spirit, ask the Spirit. Do not be afraid to apply the medicine to the illness. The illness does not corrupt the medicine, but the medicine disrupts the illness … when the Spirit comes, he will not discover a dwelling, but he will come to make it. First the Spirit will build, later he will dwell. First the Spirit will heal, later he will illuminate. The first is done for health, the later for joy.\(^ {39}\)

Hugh recommends that we ‘ask the Spirit’ and that we do not shrink back from ‘applying the medicine’. For Hugh, our desire for God can be expressed in prayer as the proper mode of address to the ultimate source of creation. The Spirit’s work of healing grace is not only the cause and result of praying but also an incorruptible antidote that overcomes our self-destruction and transforms us into a worthy dwelling place for truth and charity. For Kierkegaard, praying is one way we take refuge in grace, which remains uncorrupted by our self-destruction and remains available even before requesting it.\(^ {40}\)

Grace disrupts our sickness of sin to restore good will. Hugh explained how suffering can be a sign of healing from sin and a path of charity, a sanctifying process of purification and illumination. For this reason, receiving the gift of grace can be painful and disruptive because the gifts of the Spirit purge us of imperfection. Just as an infection can

\(^{37}\) Septem donis 2; Evans, Writings on the Spiritual Life, p. 376.

\(^{38}\) Septem donis 3; Evans, Writings on the Spiritual Life, p. 376.

\(^{39}\) Septem donis 1; Evans, Writings on the Spiritual Life, p. 375. The entire passage is quoted by Kierkegaard in NB 15:24.

\(^{40}\) Elsewhere, Kierkegaard writes that ‘grace encompasses the Christian’ who ‘knows that to need God is a human being’s perfection … in his daily perseverance he is aware that he at no time can do without God. Thus, the Christian is wide awake … awake to God. The Christian is on the watch, and without ceasing he is on the watch for God’s will. He craves only to be satisfied with God’s grace; he does not insist on helping himself but prays for God’s grace … He understands that even in order to pray for his grace he cannot do without God’s grace’. CD 64–66.
make our eyes sensitive to light, so the surgeon must first cut to heal. The experience of pain can be an indication that the healing process is already underway.

Two opposites are fighting, the medicine and the illness. The medicine fights for you, the illness against you. If the medicine did not resist the illness, health would not follow. If the illness did not resist the medicine, pain would not be felt. The battle of opposites is your punishment; yet do not blame the medicine but the illness … [because] the illness alone causes pain, not health; the medicine alone provides health, not pain.41

For Hugh, the Spirit comes to inspire and infuse himself within us ‘so that you may see in yourself what you had before but did not see; and therefore you did not see it, because you did not pay attention’.42 Grace disrupts and elevates us toward salvation precisely where sin brings pain and self-destruction. In short, our salvation is at stake and at hand ‘this very day’ because grace gives time for repentance and the Lord’s kindness leads the way (Rom. 2:4).43

Not only does Kierkegaard learn from Hugh how to take refuge in the Redeemer’s grace through prayer, but also the Model for the application of the medicine gets illuminated. Thus, properly applying the healing medicine of grace involves leading one’s life before God as a cooperative response to grace. Again, Kierkegaard quotes at length the final section of Hugh’s essay in his journal.

what is useful and beneficial to something is good even if it is not good in itself. For that reason, a lesser punishment comes so that a greater punishment is avoided. This is good, although it comes from what is not good … He who is your true good accomplishes your good out of what is not your good. A different good will be achieved for you later that comes not only through him but from him. For first he accomplishes your freedom from your pain, later he accomplishes your joy from his own sweetness. Nevertheless, He is one and the same in both works. In the first work, he is the one who acts; in the other, he is both the one who acts and the source from which he acts.44

Divine providence cares for our needs by and through grace, even before we become aware of them. God is both the agent and source of our true good, and the awareness of our sin enables us to recognize the wrong we have done, to experience sorrow over this

41. Septem donis 3; Evans, Writings on the Spiritual Life, p. 377.
42. Septem donis 3; Evans, Writings on the Spiritual Life, p. 377.
43. Elsewhere, Kierkegaard writes about taking refuge in grace through prayer prior to his reflection on Jn 10:27: ‘You are indeed the one who “this very day” gives the time of grace, but the human being is the one who “this very day” should seize the time of grace … That phrase, which when you say it, O God, is the eternal expression of your unchanged grace and mercy, that same phrase, when a human being repeats it in the right sense, is the most powerful expression of the most profound change and decision—yes, as if everything would be lost if this change and decision did not take place this very day’ (CD 265).
44. Septem donis 4; Evans, Writings on the Spiritual Life, pp. 378–79. Cf. Søren Kierkegaard, The Moment and Late Writings, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 275–78.
fact, and to fear the consequence. The Spirit’s light enables us to see what we thought was pleasurable before is now harmful. In this way, grace transforms our moral understanding not only to elicit our repentance but also to help us see how every good and perfect gift comes from above (Jas 1:17) and that all things work together for the good (Rom. 8:28).

Reflecting on Hugh’s counsel, Kierkegaard concluded in his journal: ‘If you are using [bruger] the medicine, the suffering really stems from your not wanting to use [bruge] the medicine properly and fully’.45 Kierkegaard’s reference to using the medicine of grace comes from Hugh and reappears in his editorial preface to Practice in Christianity (1850), where Anti-Climacus reflects upon this halt at subjectivity and rehearses the exemplary ideal of faith as the proper response.46 In his editorial foreword, Kierkegaard wrote that he had ‘to learn not only to flee [at henflye] to “Grace”, but also to take flight in relation to the use [Benyttelsen] of “Grace”’.47 Elsewhere in Kierkegaard’s writings, the phrase ‘fleeing to grace’ occurs only twice more,48 yet ‘the use of grace’ does not appear again.

The Hong translation of ‘resorting to grace’ reinforces the standard Lutheran interpretation of sola fide in Kierkegaard’s theology, which falls apart when the footnote refers the reader to a journal entry from 1851, one year after the published preface.49 This generates the question with which we began: where does Kierkegaard’s singular invocation of ‘the use of grace’ come from? Instead of viewing grace as an excuse for spiritual laxity that one resorts to on occasion, Kierkegaard adds that grace is also an enabling resource in the face of the misuse of grace. Kierkegaard is not advocating a flight from the world, but rather calling forth the imitation of Christ, not as an excuse, but the task and goal of sanctification.

45. SKS 23, 22/NB 15:24 [1850].
46. For more, see Elizabeth Li, ‘Anti-Climacus’ Inverted Dialectic of Divine Grace and Human Activity’, Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook 23.1 (2018), pp. 105–23.
47. SKS 12, 15; cf. PC 7. Translation mine. In 1849, Kierkegaard wrote that ‘grace is not a cut-and-dried decision once and for all; a person needs grace again in relation to grace’ (SKS 22, 363/NB 14:33). In the next entry (NB 14:34), Kierkegaard deliberates about which draft of his editorial preface of PC to publish, but the notion of a human being ‘using grace’ does not appear before or in 1849. Nevertheless, the published version of the preface in 1850 was important to Kierkegaard and he alludes back to it again in several places (SKS 13, 23 and 16, 111). Søren Kierkegaard, The Point of View, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 15, 129.
48. SKS 27, 582/Paper 460 and SKS 23, 399/NB 20:15 [1850]. Kierkegaard also refers to one who ‘resorts [han tyer] to a grace’ in SKS 5, 264 or Søren Kierkegaard, Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 269. One close and poignant passage refers not to the use of grace but rather how faith grasps grace: ‘temporality consists simply of anguish—and yet in the divine sense, it is the time of grace. Faith, which relates to grace and grasps [griber] it, intervenes redemptively. In faith there is rest. Faith relates itself to grace’. SKS 22, 373–74/NB 14:46 [1849].
49. PC 381 n. 5. Cf. NB 22:159.
Let me respond to two possible objections to my argument. This first objection could be that I advance an overdetermined and unnatural reading of Kierkegaard’s phrasing in his editorial preface to *Practice in Christianity*. To the first objection, I would restate my methodological aim: as an alternative to the explanatory footnote provided by the Hongs, I suggest that Kierkegaard’s commentary on Hugh of St Victor in his journals is overlooked and instead it anticipated the phrasing in Kierkegaard’s editorial preface. So when Kierkegaard refers to the application of the medicine of grace ‘fully and properly’ in his journals, this insight corresponds to Kierkegaard’s phrase ‘taking flight to Grace in relation to the use of grace’. My claim is that the meaning of ‘use’ [*Benyttelsen*] of grace in the latter, corresponds to ‘using’ [*bruger*] the medicine properly and fully in the former.

This invites the second related objection, which is that I advance a synergistic interpretation of Kierkegaard’s view of grace that limits divine agency by introducing a need for our cooperation. Despite the similarities in ordinary language between ‘cooperative’ or ‘participatory’ types of grace, I am not suggesting a competitive view of agency where God needs us to complete any project for salvation. The synergistic error implies a composite view of divine agency that needs complemented by human agency to achieve God’s good intentions. Neither am I suggesting that there is no human agency involved so that everything pertaining to one’s salvation is predetermined. Instead of placing any conditions on divine agency, cooperative grace refers to the way God’s free initiative achieves God’s good ends by elevating the free response of the human will to allow and not resist those salvific ends. This view still requires the awareness of one’s guilt and sin, as well as Kierkegaard’s emphasis on bringing James forward to affirm that faith without good works is dead.

Finally, I would suggest that Kierkegaard’s position remains in alignment with the 1997 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*:

> The enslaving power of sin is broken on the basis of the merit of Christ (n. 29) … When Catholics affirm the “meritorious” character of good works, they wish to say that, according to the biblical witness, a reward in heaven is promised to these works. Their intention is to emphasize the responsibility of persons for their actions, not to contest the character of those works as gifts, or far less to deny that justification always remains the unmerited gift of grace.50 (n. 38)

To sum up, Kierkegaard praised Hugh’s writings for the way he connected the medicine of grace to the work of the Holy Spirit in such a way that preserves our free response to grace as a free gift. Moreover, Kierkegaard also appreciated Hugh’s emphasis on ‘using the medicine’ of grace to disrupt and heal the sickness of sin within the context of prayer, which connects the need for healing of the human spirit to the work of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of using this medicine is humility that works against the corruption of pride. What I have observed is that in his journal from 1850, Kierkegaard read and commented upon Hugh’s *Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*. My suggestion is that Hugh’s discussion of applying the medicine of grace provides a textual source for the manifestation of Kierkegaard’s emphasis on the use of grace in his editorial preface of *Practice in

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50. Nn. 29 & 38. <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/luterani/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/1999-dichiarazione-congiunta-sulla-dottrina-della-giustificazione/en.html#r11>. [Accessed: 13 June 2022].
Christianity. On the basis of Kierkegaard’s reading of Hugh, I will identify in the next section several structural affinities between Hugh’s theology and Kierkegaard’s writings.

Grace and Works in Hugh of St Victor

To identify a structural affinity to Kierkegaard’s remarks on sanctification, I will briefly explore Hugh’s theology of restorative and cooperative grace—specifically in his remarks on the sacraments and works of charity. To describe the non-rivalrous relation of grace and works in the process of sanctification, Hugh distinguished between restorative and cooperative grace in relation to human freedom. In On the Sacraments, Hugh wrote that the movement of grace does not occur without the involvement of human freedom because both human cognition and affection are involved in the act and content of faith at once.51 For Hugh, grace refers to the work of the Holy Spirit that restoratively causes the good will to exist, and which cooperatively moves the will in its movement toward the good.

The Holy Spirit first works a good will in these virtues, which arise through the restorative grace; then He cooperates with the good will that is moving itself and working. The Holy Spirit first inspires a good will so that it may exist, and He then inspires it so that it may move and work lest it be idle. The Holy Spirit first works it, then He works through it.52

In other words, the Holy Spirit inspires the emergence of the good will so that it may move itself toward the good in and through the work of the Holy Spirit. Grace moves not only intellectually but also existentially since there is a cognitive and affective dimension of interiority that fundamentally orients the whole person toward love and truth. For Hugh, the Spirit’s work of grace restores our will with the capacity for goodness for its own sake, which arises freely from the good will as it cooperates with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps us not only to know and to do the good, but also strengthens us in and through loving the good as we are perfected by it. In short, there is one non-competitive movement of divine initiative and free response, where one decides whether to resist this movement or not. On Hugh’s view of grace and works, the divine initiative restores the good will, and our free response cooperates with the Spirit unto good works.

In his essay entitled What Truly Should Be Loved?,53 Hugh grounds love with being itself and says that love is fundamental to our existence. Hugh described our life before

51. Hugh of St Victor, On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith (De Sacramentis), trans. Roy Deferrari (Jackson, MI: Ex Fontibus Company, 2016), p. 169. Hugh writes that ‘Faith is found in affection; that which is believed by faith in cognition’ (Sacr. 1.10.3).
52. Hugh of St Victor, Sacr. 1.6.17; Deferrari, p. 106. Hugh’s position here gets developed by Thomas Aquinas in his remarks on operative and cooperative grace. For an excellent exposition of this paradox, see ‘How God Achieves His Ends according to Saint Thomas Aquinas’, in David B. Burrell, Stations on the Journey of Inquiry: Formative Writings of David B. Burrell, 1962–72, ed. Mary Budde Ragan (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), ch. 4.
53. For more, see the general introduction and translation in Hugh Feiss (ed.), On Love: A Selection of Works of Hugh, Adam, Achard, Richard, and Godfrey of St. Victor (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012).
God as marked by a constant striving that is pulled in two directions: ‘the life of the heart
is love, and for that reason it is utterly impossible for the heart that desires to live to be
without love’.\textsuperscript{54} Love is the life of the heart, in motion as yearning, at rest in attainment.\textsuperscript{55} Like Augustine, Hugh charts the ascending trajectory of our restless yearning and imper-
fect expression of goodness and love to rest in the Creator’s perfect love and goodness.
Hugh often speaks about charity as a striving that draws us out of ourselves toward union
with that which is desired ultimately. Our love is restless and unhappy because ‘it does
not find perfect good in itself’ and ‘it should seek something other than itself to love’.\textsuperscript{56}
Indeed, Hugh also distinguishes between charity and cupidity: ‘charity is the very love of
God Himself, which God gives to humans so that they might come to enjoy God as their
ultimate end; [whereas] cupidity, by contrast, is the prideful love of self’.\textsuperscript{57} Elsewhere,
Hugh writes that ‘love can never bear being alone. It would in some fashion cease to
be love if it did not pour out the force of its love on another companion equal to
itself’.\textsuperscript{58} Therefore, our restlessness indicates an ethico-religious path beyond ourselves
that leads toward the love of God and neighbor as inseparably linked.

Moreover, Hugh analogically described the goal and means of sanctification as charity,
which refers both to the name and work of the Spirit: the bond of love that unites the human
creature to the Creator in ‘undivided union and a perfect harmony’ that is ‘as happy as it is
firm’.\textsuperscript{59} Hugh argues that restorative and cooperative grace is God’s love for us, shared
by the Spirit, which in turn enfamines our love—for the good in the neighbor and ultimately in
God—so that the love of God unites all neighbors to God and each other.\textsuperscript{60} God’s love is
shared with us for its own sake and our salvation so that it can be shared with others. On
this view, the good of everyone becomes the good of each individual since charity is not
diminished when it is shared but rather is enhanced indivisibly when shared by all. In \textit{On the Sacraments}, Hugh’s argument is theological: to love God is to desire to possess Him in
and through the neighbor because He is our good.\textsuperscript{61} Only on this basis, Hugh reasons, can

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} Hugh of St Victor, \textit{Quid vere} 1; Feiss, \textit{On Love}, p. 171.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Hugh of St Victor, \textit{Quid vere} 1–2; Feiss, \textit{On Love}, pp. 179–80. Cf. Hugh of St Victor, \textit{Subst. dilect.} 5, 8–9; Feiss, \textit{On Love}, pp. 144–46.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{57} For more, see Franklin Harkins’s introduction to ‘On the Praise of Charity’ in Feiss, \textit{On Love}, p. 154. A comparison between Kierkegaard and Hugh of St Victor on proper self-love is
beyond my scope here.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Hugh of St Victor, \textit{Arrha} 11; Feiss, \textit{On Love}, p. 207.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Hugh of St Victor, \textit{Subst. dilect.} 7; Feiss, \textit{On Love}, p. 145.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Ibid. Hugh writes ‘so that what each one could not obtain in himself from that One to whom all were clinging, he might more plentifully and more perfectly possess in another through
love of his neighbor, and the good of all would become wholly the good of each’.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Hugh of St Victor, \textit{Sacr.} 2.13.6; Deferrari, p. 379. Hugh writes ‘If you find [the neighbor]
bare of [God’s] goods, grieve because you see the receptacle [of goodness] empty; wish
that His goods come to him and enter him, that he may be made good, having His goods
without which he cannot be good. Therefore, love God because He is goodness. Love
your neighbor because he is good from goodness, or if he is not good that he may be
good who can be good’.
\end{itemize}
we love our neighbor truly whether they are our friend or enemy because ‘we should love them [so] that they may have goodness and be good’.62 In short, having goodness and being sanctified remain an inseparable task and goal.

We attain goodness, love, and unity by grace. The individual and communal mission of holiness is what sanctification entails. Charity is not scarce, envious, or competitive. By grace, the Spirit lovingly assists us and makes us good for the sake of attaining God’s good end. Attaining is not achieving since charity is not obtained through an ethical activity alone but rather shared through the gift of the Holy Spirit since ‘we have charity only to the extent that we have the Holy Spirit’.63 In this way, the Spirit of charity transforms and expands our ability and efforts to befriend God and others so that we might more perfectly resemble the image and likeness of God.64 But if this is the case for our imperfect forms of love then how might these loves reach fulfillment?

The means, exemplar, and telos of love is divine charity, which freely invites us to not resist union with God and the good of the neighbor so that we might be perfected in love. For Hugh, our freedom and charity imperfectly reflect God’s charity and freedom, and precisely for this reason, charity is the way, guide, and goal of our fulfillment. Love’s doubling is that in choosing love through love, the way becomes the goal for us here and hereafter.65 Since freedom is found in charity, we choose, enjoy, and possess charity through charity.66

[Since] you choose by means of charity, you run by means of charity, you take hold and you enjoy by means of charity. ‘God is charity’ says John the Apostle, ‘and whoever abides in charity abides in God and God in him’ (1 Jn 4:16). He who has charity, therefore, has God, possesses God, [and] abides in God.67

The existential means and divine goal of charity are found in its Incarnate exemplar. The sanctified Christian life reveals a structure of desiring goodness that involves being drawn inwardly by the Spirit to spurn pleasure, endure hardship, and to attain the object of love in a way that imitates Christ the redeemer. Hugh argues that the redeeming path of the imitation of Christ is led by charity. The exemplary Christian form of life and love’s

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62. Ibid. Deferrari, p. 380.
63. Hugh of St Victor, Sacr. 2.13.12; Deferarri, p. 398.
64. Hugh of St Victor, Arrha 13; Feiss, On Love, p. 208.
65. Hugh of St Victor, Laude car. 6; Feiss, On Love, p. 161. Hugh writes, ‘You choose what you love more … If this world is beautiful, what kind of beauty do you think exists where the Creator of the world is? Love, then, so that you might choose; love better so that you might choose more beneficially; love God so that you might choose to be with God. Therefore, choose according to love [per dilectionem]. But the more you love, the sooner you desire to arrive at [the object of your love] and the more quickly you hurry in order to take hold of it. Therefore, run by means of love and take hold by means of love [per dilectionem]’.
66. Hugh of St Victor, Laude car. 8; Feiss, On Love, p. 162. This Augustinian view of Christ as the way and the goal is carried forward by both Hugh and Thomas Aquinas.
67. Hugh of St Victor, Laude car. 8; Feiss, On Love, p. 163.
perfection is found in the Incarnate Word who suffered, died, and was raised again for the sake of charity. Moreover, the work of divine charity in Christ is shared with the saints and martyrs who imitate him. As a model of perfection, Hugh connects our human nature with Christ’s dual nature through the bond of divine charity. Charity is the way, guide, and goal of our true desire, which is ‘the road of the human to God and the road of God to the human’.70

You lead God down to the human, [and] you direct the human to God. God descends when He comes to us; we ascend when we go to God. Yet neither God nor we can go to the other except through you. You are the mediator, uniting opposites, associating the disconnected, and leveling in a certain way dissimilar things. You bring God low and lift us high.71

Ultimately, ‘charity is the origin of everything’ and it wishes to be present to us and to be in us: ‘Such is the love of God in us; insofar as it lies in his goodness, human weakness does not suffer anything that he does not arrange for our good’.72 For Hugh, the good will

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68. Hugh of St Victor, *Laude car*. 11; Feiss, *On Love*, p. 164. Hugh writes: ‘Contemplate God having been born of a woman, as an infant, swaddled with cloths, crying in a cradle, sucking the breasts. I see Him later seized, bound, wounded with scourges, crowned with thorns, spat- tered with spittle, pierced, fixed [to a cross] with nails, and given gall and vinegar to drink. First He suffered indignities, then dreadful things. And yet, if we look for the reason why He deigned to undergo those [indignities] and suffer those [dreadful things], we find none but charity alone … [O charity] You wounded the Impassible One, you bound the Invincible One, you drew the Immutable One, you made the Eternal One mortal. You did all these things in order to soften our hard hearts and prick our insensitive affections so that they might shake off their own sluggishness and your arrows might more readily penetrate them’. A similar portrait can be found in Kierkegaard’s writings; see Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, pp. 40, 104–105, 115, 138, 154, 163.

69. Hugh of St Victor, *Laude car*. 4; Feiss, *On Love*, pp. 160–61. Hugh writes ‘what they renounced we see; what they sought after we do not see, but believe; [and] what they endured we have heard … by dying they confessed the desire with which they ran while alive. O charity, how did you taste to them? … They ran because you drew them, they endured because you supported them, they arrived because you received them’.

70. Hugh of St Victor, *Laude car*. 9; Feiss, *On Love*, p. 163.

71. Hugh of St Victor, *Laude car*. 10; Feiss, *On Love*, pp. 163–64. This passage finds an interesting parallel in Climacus’ reflection on God as Teacher and Savior in Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments; Johannes Climacus*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), ch. 2.

72. Hugh of St Victor, *Arrha* 61; Feiss, *On Love*, p. 224. Compare these remarks with Anti-Climacus: ‘God and man are two qualities separated by an infinite qualitative difference … In paganism, man made god a man (the man-god); in Christianity God makes himself man (the God-man). But in this infinite love of his merciful grace he nevertheless makes one condition: he cannot do otherwise. Precisely this is Christ’s grief, that “he cannot do otherwise” he can debase himself, take a servant’s form, suffer, die for men, invite all to come to him, offer up every day of his life, every hour of the day, and offer up his life—but he cannot remove the possibility of offense. What a rare act of love, what unfathomable grief of love, that even God cannot remove the possibility that this act of love reverses itself for a
provides the means, Christ provides the example, and union with divine charity remains the goal of sanctification.

Although every virtue is the gift of God, only charity can be called not only the gift of God, but also God. Charity is the gift of God because the Holy Spirit is given by God to the faithful. On the other hand, charity is also God because the same Spirit is consubstantial and coeternal in the same divine nature with Him by whom He is given. God, therefore, grants the other gifts of grace even to those whom He condemns. But He saves charity alone, as if it were He Himself, as the reward for those whom He loves very much.73

Hugh’s theological perspective is Trinitarian and includes the sanctifying work of the Spirit. For it is at Pentecost that the Holy Spirit is sent into our hearts to have Triune Charity dwell within us. God is love and love is divine: the divine name is also the divine gift.

To sum up, Hugh argues that grace refers to the work of the Holy Spirit that restores our will with goodness as we cooperate with the Spirit in willing the good. Hugh’s non-rivalrous theology of grace and works provided a soteriological foundation for works of charity and the sacraments of the mystical body of Christ. What I have suggested is that for both Hugh and Kierkegaard, the relation between grace and works in the process of sanctification is inseparable from Christ’s redeeming model of self-sacrificial love. My claim is that Hugh’s theological framework structurally preserves an ethico-religious aspect of sanctification that Kierkegaard also shares, which safeguards a non-competitive relationship between grace and freedom.

Conclusion

Few scholars have observed that before publishing Practice in Christianity, Kierkegaard had favorable remarks about Hugh of St Victor, ‘the second Augustine’, regarding the gifts of the Holy Spirit, faith and reason, and divine providence. At first, comparing a medieval theologian from the twelfth century with a Danish thinker from the nineteenth century seems anachronistic and unwarranted. Yet I suggested that the standard reading of Kierkegaard’s soteriology needs to be opened up to a more ecumenical reading that includes a better appreciation of the affinity between the theology of Hugh of St Victor and Kierkegaard, by attending to Kierkegaard’s positive remarks on Hugh’s application of the medicine of grace. My claim is that, like Hugh, Kierkegaard’s view of salvation does not stop with fleeing to grace in justification without works, but includes the use of grace in the sanctification of good works. With these two features from 1850 in view, I suggested that Kierkegaard’s positive reading of Hugh, and his editorial emphasis

person and becomes the most extreme misery—something that in another sense God does not want to do, cannot want to do. The greatest possible human misery, greater even than sin, is to be offended at Christ and to continue in the offense; and Christ cannot, “love” cannot, make this impossible’. SUD, p. 126.

73. Hugh of St Victor, Laude car. 13; Feiss, On Love, p. 165. Space does not permit, but a future study may find a parallel emphasis in Kierkegaard’s Works of Love.
on ‘the use of grace’, warrant an ecumenical approach to interpreting Kierkegaard that Kierkegaard himself exemplifies, which also better situates Hugh and Kierkegaard in a shared Augustinian tradition. The Catholic inheritance of Kierkegaard’s post-Lutheran theology is an under-appreciated, but important lens through which to understand Kierkegaard’s theological project for contemporary debates in both systematic theology and Kierkegaard studies. Based on Kierkegaard’s invitation to use grace and Hugh of St Victor’s invitation to apply the medicine of grace, I have suggested a firmer connection between their approaches to the relation of grace and works in the process of sanctification. A link is established between Hugh and Kierkegaard’s theology based upon not only textual references but also a wider shared Augustinian tradition that need not exclude Luther himself.

I would like to conclude by suggesting at least four parallels between Hugh and Kierkegaard for further research. The first constructive link to identify is the shared emphasis on learning and appropriating wisdom or grasping divinely revealed truth. As a twelfth-century medieval spiritual writer, Hugh was highly educated and worked as a parish priest in Paris. Unlike Kierkegaard, Hugh wrote famous systematic theological treatises like *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith* and *On the Study of Reading* to teach students how to read and study Scripture properly. Hugh was perhaps the first theologian to make a systematic distinction between a theology of *creation*—the relation of God and the world—and *redemption*—the doctrines of the Incarnation, atonement, and salvation. For Hugh, there are two works of charity within one economy of salvation and the pursuit of wisdom lies between the time of creation and its restoration. Although Kierkegaard’s critique of intellectual systems would not qualify him as a systematic theologian, his writings are infused with biblical references and informed by Christian doctrine. Kierkegaard’s upbuilding pedagogy for learning God’s truth from God, and the accountability of leading one’s life before God makes self-knowledge inseparable from one’s God-relation. If the task and goal of sanctification involve both a right reading of reality and right living before God then cooperative grace provides faith with the opportunity for good works oriented toward a supernatural end. Wisdom reflects the know-how of right living and unites the theological and ethical aspects of life.

The second link is a shared emphasis on wisdom, charity, and the inseparability of the love of god and neighbor. Like St Augustine, Hugh described the human experience of

74. For more, see Joshua Furnal, *Catholic Theology after Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
75. For more, see Franklin T. Harkins, *Reading and the Work of Restoration: History and Scripture in the Theology of Hugh of St. Victor* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2009). Hugh’s pedagogy of ‘ordered reading’ is reflected in the structure of the Didascalion: Books I–III refer to reading in the liberal arts, and Books IV–VI refer to the reading of Scripture.
76. For more, see Boyd Taylor Coolman and Dale M. Coulter (eds.), *Trinity and Creation, Victorine Texts in Translation: Exegesis, Theology and Spirituality from the Abbey of St Victor* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2011).
77. For more, see Daniel Watts, ‘Kierkegaard and the Search for Self-Knowledge’, *European Journal of Philosophy* 21.4 (2013), pp. 525–49.
love, desire, and joy in terms of a restlessness [inquietudine] of the heart that can approach but not express God’s likeness. Following Augustine’s theology of memory and creation, Hugh argued that the pursuit of self-knowledge mirrors the pursuit of Divine Wisdom in contemplating and loving God. For Hugh, the liberal arts are intended to enhance our reading and interpretation of Scripture ‘in an ordered way’ so that our love and imitation of God might become more evident on earth. For this reason, Hugh argues that the restoration of all creation involves learning how to read properly in the liberal arts and Scripture. Consider the way that Climacus distinguished, without separating, the aesthetic-intellectual from the existential pursuit of truth with Anti-Climacus’ emphasis on the mirror of the Word as an essential component of self-knowledge. Both Hugh and Kierkegaard inherit the Augustinian tradition that emphasized knowing the truth involves ‘mirroring’ or being in the truth—valuing the coincidence of words and actions, or knowledge and virtue. In short, scriptural knowledge is displayed through one’s actions.

The third connection refers to stages of development in the spiritual life. Hugh sought to assist Christians on their journey toward union with God and described this journey in terms of a heavenly ladder (Scala caeli) that is divided into stages or steps. One must first pass through the spiritual stages of purgation followed by illumination. Hugh described virtue as the perfection of knowledge because it corresponds with the unending task of transparently striving to be accountable before God in Christ. The relevance of grace and works relates to his discussion of natural religion (or ‘religiousness A’), which endorses the human capacity for moral excellence through the formation of character by moral practices. On the other hand, revealed religion (or ‘religiousness B’) emphasizes sin and grace, which indicates the human incapacity for salvation. Thus, Kierkegaard’s ethico-religious notion of sanctification involves both grace and works and invokes the indispensability of moral and theological virtue for the happy life and salvation.

The fourth area of connection is the relation of faith and reason and the priority of divine transcendence. For Hugh, God cannot be grasped by human knowledge, understanding, reason, emotion, or imagination—‘The invisible things of God’ can only be grasped in and by faith. By reading Helfferich’s translation, Kierkegaard gained access to Hugh’s pedagogy of an ‘ordered reading’ of oneself, creation, and redemption based on Hugh’s discussion of the relation between faith and reason.

To sum up, I have highlighted at least four components of Hugh’s theology that find a structural parallel in Kierkegaard: (i) learning and appropriating wisdom; (ii) the love of

78. Augustine writes that ‘the more you advance in charity, the more you approach God’s likeness and the more you grow in awareness of God … and there you become aware that you cannot express that awareness’ (En. Ps. 99.6).
79. Harkins, Reading and the Work of Restoration, p. 114.
80. Although Hugh is not mentioned, a similar view of the Spirit’s pedagogical role in reading Scripture is offered in Matthew Frawley, ‘The Essential Role of the Holy Spirit in Kierkegaard’s Biblical Hermeneutic’, in Paul Houe and Gordon Marino (eds.), Søren Kierkegaard and the Word(s): Essays on Hermeneutics and Communication (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2003), pp. 93–104.
81. Hugh of St Victor, Sacr. 1.10.2; Deferrari, pp. 165–69.
God and neighbor; (iii) stages of edification or existence; (iv) the relation of faith and reason. I suggested that, for Kierkegaard, the grace of Christ pertains not only to the divine initiative of redemption in the free gift of salvation, but also to the model for cooperation in our free response of faith and good works. As actions reflect understanding, in following Christ the believer shows how she *flees* to grace and *uses* grace in a non-competitive manner. To develop this position, I observed how Kierkegaard’s view was formed by reading from the Augustinian tradition—namely, the French medieval theologian, Hugh of St Victor. I surveyed Kierkegaard’s reading of Hugh to highlight Kierkegaard’s distinction between resorting to and using grace as a distinctive post-Lutheran example that is indebted to pre-Lutheran sources. I then explored Hugh of St Victor’s view of grace and works to establish the structural affinity of his distinction between redeeming and cooperative grace. I hope contemporary debates about Kierkegaard’s theology of sanctification can be advanced beyond the identification with Luther’s view of justification without works, by drawing attention to one overlooked pre-Lutheran source with whom Kierkegaard positively engaged who was also very influential for St Thomas Aquinas.82

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**ORCID iD**

Joshua Furnal https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3342-9298

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