

## ABSTRACT

### On Baptism and the Eucharist: A Brief Theological Summary

Rebecca Fedorko

Director: Junius Johnson, Ph.D.

This thesis deals with the history of sacramental theology concerning the two common sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist. The overview begins with Hugh of Saint-Victor, who represents the Catholic tradition. After Hugh is a brief overview of Martin Luther's writings on Baptism and the Eucharist, looking at why his views differ from Hugh of Saint-Victor and in what specific ways he diverges from the Catholic tradition. The chapter on Luther is followed by a summary of John Calvin, who gives the most protestant perspective, Luther acting as a middle ground or transition period from the Catholic to the protestant. The final chapter of this thesis is an exposition of my personal growth and beliefs concerning Baptism and the Eucharist, pulling ideas and arguments from each of the writers as well as from my Christian heritage. The conclusion of this thesis posits that the differences between these three theologians and the Christian traditions they represent have been over emphasized and that the heart of Christianity can be found in the work and worship practices of all three scholars.

APPROVED BY DIRECTOR OF HONORS THESIS

*Junius Johnson*

---

Dr. Junius Johnson, Department of Great Texts

APPROVED BY THE HONORS PROGRAM

---

Dr. Elizabeth Corey, Director

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

ON BAPTISM AND THE EUCHARIST: A BRIEF THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Baylor University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Honors Program

By

Rebecca Fedorko

Waco, Texas

December, 2017

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments . . . . .	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction . . . . .	1
Chapter 2: Hugh of Saint Victor . . . . .	3
Chapter 3: Martin Luther . . . . .	21
Chapter 4: John Calvin . . . . .	35
Chapter 5: Personal Growth . . . . .	49
Concluding Remarks. . . . .	60
Bibliography. . . . .	61

## Acknowledgments

This project has been the work of over a year and could not have been accomplished without the help of numerous people. First I would like to thank my mother for pushing me to join the Honors College and continually encouraging me to stick with it, even though the prospect of this project was daunting. My fiancé Joshua has also been a great help, sitting through hours-long writing sessions and being my constant source of positivity. Finally, I must thank Dr. Johnson for his unflagging and priceless wisdom and willingness to teach. Joining his Medieval Great Texts class was what started me on a journey of falling in love with theology; he is the reason my interest in church practices grew beyond a faint perusal of C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*; and also the reason this thesis is completed.

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

Baptism and the Eucharist are common practices across all Christian denominations. The Eucharist is the central theme of worship in the liturgical church and Baptism is a central, albeit one-time, practice for Christians in Catholic, protestant, and Orthodox forms of the faith. Because they are practiced among all Christians, Baptism and the Eucharist unify the Church on common ground. However, disputes about the details of how to go about these sacraments and what exactly they accomplish have caused many of the most schismatic debates and divisions in the Church. Luther's dispute with the Catholic Church over the intricacies of cooperation between faith and works, which is the matter of the sacraments, led to the rise of Protestantism. The effects of those disputes have caused division in the church, to the point where many Protestants I know now struggle to consider the Catholic Church a Christian institution.

As I began to study theology, I found myself interested in the dichotomy indicated by the way that the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist function both as common ground and as a source of schism. Baptism and the Eucharist are the most clear-cut and easily distinguished sacraments in the Bible with respect to what they are in the physical sense. It is hard to misunderstand immersion in water (although many liturgical churches choose to sprinkle rather than immerse) and partaking of bread and wine. My childhood in the Protestant church gave me a clear representation of the "what" of sacraments, but no understanding of "how" or "why." I grew up practicing the Eucharist rarely and without any idea that some held it to be the actual body and blood of Christ. I underwent Baptism without knowing that some hold it to be effective for special grace unto salvation. Jesus underwent and established these sacraments himself, but I

was raised on them unaware that there was a rich history of belief and tradition regarding them that my Protestant denomination had all but wiped from the slate. When I began learning about different beliefs, my study never went beyond the “what” and into the realm of “why.” I had a shallow understanding of what many Christians hold to be the most important truth of any Christian practice. By studying the history of these sacraments, I hope to lay a foundation that better informs my understanding of the Church as a whole, allows me to commune more closely with my fellow believers, and paved the way to improve my understanding of other church practices.

In undertaking this project, I decided to look at three examples of Christian beliefs that I thought best represented three diverging practices and beliefs in the church concerning Baptism and the Eucharist: Hugh of Saint-Victor, Martin Luther, and John Calvin. I chose a foundational work by each of these writers to represent their overall view on the sacraments, although I do include excerpts from multiple works when writing on Luther, and spent a chapter handling and attempting to understand each theologian’s perspective on the sacraments. By fleshing out the Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist perspectives on Baptism and the Eucharist, I was better able to inform my own beliefs concerning those sacraments. The fourth chapter of this thesis deals with that process of developing a personal understanding of how the sacraments function in the believer’s life, as well as developing an idea of how the sacraments should be emphasized as a common practice rather than used as an excuse for division among the body of believers.

## CHAPTER 2

Hugh of Saint-Victor

### *On Sacraments*

In order to fully unpack what Hugh has to say about sacraments, it would behoove us to define what Hugh's perception of the sacraments is. According to Hugh, "in every sacrament there is one thing which is treated visibly without and is seen, and there is another which is believed invisibly within and is received" (Hugh, *Sacr.* Bk I, part 9, chap. 2, p. 154)<sup>1</sup>. Thus, the sacrament works in both a physical and a non-physical or spiritual way. It is also "a corporeal or material element set before the senses without, representing by similitude and signifying by institution and containing by sanctification some invisible and spiritual grace" (part 9, chap. 2, p. 155). Thus, the sacrament is defined by three things: it must be similar to what it is representing spiritually, it must have an institution by which it is established to convey an invisible grace, and it also must be sanctified "through which it contains that thing and is efficacious for conferring the same on those to be sanctified" (part 9, chap. 2, p. 155). From this definition one can conclude that in addition to the three requirements for classifying a sacrament, a sacrament inherently has two parts: the sacrament itself and the grace it confers, or as Hugh puts it, "What is visible without and material is a sacrament, what is invisible within and spiritual is the thing or virtue of the sacrament... and is received invisibly" (part 9, chap. 2, p. 154). These two parts of the sacrament work to accomplish three things in the recipient: humility, instructing, and exercising the mind.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hugh, and Roy J. Deferrari. *Hugh of Saint Victor on the Sacraments of the Christian Faith: (De Sacramentis)*. Wipf & Stock, 2007.



The sacraments serve to humble the recipient by forcing him to seek higher grace through participation with lower things. As Hugh puts it, “it is just that man, who subjected himself to earthly things through concupiscence, first abandoning God through pride, now seeking God through humility that he may more fully declare the affection of his devotion, should incline himself to the same on account of God’s precept through obedience” (part 9, chap. 3, p. 156). Here Hugh explains that, because man made himself a slave to earthly things by sinning, so it is through submitting himself to those same “mute and insensible elements” (part 9, chap. 3, p. 156) that one must show one’s devotion to God.

The visible, outward sign of the sacrament was given in order that humans could be instructed about the nature of the invisible grace given by the sacrament. The reason God uses physical things to teach about spiritual matters, Hugh says, is that it “is just that man, who subjected himself to earthly things through concupiscence, first abandoning God through pride, now seeking God through humility that he may more fully declare the affection of his devotion, should incline himself to the same on account of God’s precept through obedience” (part 9, chap. 3, p. 156). That is to say, since mankind sinned by submitting itself to earthly things out of pride, it is fitting that humans should show their repentance and humility towards God by once again submitting themselves to earthly things, this time out of obedience to God. Additionally, as Hugh puts it, God made the sacraments with a physical representation so that “through that which is seen without in the sacrament in the visible species the human mind may be instructed to recognize the invisible virtue which consists within the thing of the sacrament.” Hugh explains this concept more fully by referring to the use of marked containers for medicine. Although people do not often recognize specific medicines, they can recognize the container in which a medicine is kept. In the same way, humans are incapable of recognizing an invisible grace, so for

the sake of instructing our minds, God attached invisible grace to visible signs that we might better understand the grace itself.

Whereas instruction is intended to result in understanding, sacraments are also used to exercise the mind. Hugh says: “since man’s life here cannot be without change, against that change which engenders failing is opposed another change [the sacraments] which produces progress so that, since it can not stand so as always to be the same, it moves and always moves forward so as to be better” (part 9, chap. 3, p.158). This exercise or stimulation differs from instruction in that its purpose is to maintain momentum towards Christ, not to achieve any particular goal. Hugh is arguing that the human mind cannot be stationary, it is always either progressing towards God or regressing into sin. Thus, since the human mind must either fall or move forwards, Hugh claims that the sacraments were given to aid in propelling the mind forward so that, stimulated “by the variety of things and fired within by the emulation of virtues it must find occasion for progress” (part 9, chap. 3, p. 158). In short, the sacraments serve as virtuous stimulation, giving an idle mind something on which to focus.

According to Hugh, a sacrament can only be called such if it meets certain criteria. The sacrament must be an accurate physical depiction of the invisible grace at work, just as water, which is used for physical cleaning, represents the spiritual cleansing and justification that results from Baptism. God creates the sacraments with this aptitude “By Himself and in His own” (part 9, chap. 4, p. 159), meaning that he acts entirely within his own power, authority and nature. But to this aptitude must also be added institution, by which the sacrament has authority, and benediction by which the sacrament is sanctified. Jesus alone gives authority to a sacrament when he institutes it. However, Jesus gives sacraments authority through institution “by himself and in ours, that is, alone and in humanity” (part 9, chap. 4, p. 159). By this Hugh means that

Jesus institutes sacraments alone, but in his two natures, both the Divine and human. Finally, a sacrament must be sanctified by the benediction of the priest, but “neither through himself nor in his own” (part 9, chap. 4, p. 159), meaning that the priest does not sanctify through his own power nor does he act by his own nature, for that would have the priest doing more than God. No, instead God “cooperates with the one who ministers, by whose virtue through the ministry of the one ministering what is to be sanctified is sanctified” (part 9, chap. 4, p. 159). Thus it is not the work of the priest that sanctifies but God’s power working through the priest. Hugh’s clarification that it is God working through the priest and not any power inherent in the priest rebuts any arguments one might make about how a mere man could sanctify something to confer the grace of God.

One of the most pivotal assertions Hugh makes is that sacraments are necessary for salvation. Hugh reads from John 3:3: “He can not be saved who has not been baptized” (part 9, chap. 5, p. 161), making that the foundation for his argument for the necessity of sacraments in salvation. He also calls on John 6:53, where Jesus says that those who do not eat of his flesh and drink of his blood will not be saved. That is not to say that God cannot save man without these things, rather that, “it is within God’s power to save man without these but it is not within man’s power to attain to salvation without these” (part 9, chap. 5, p. 161). In other words, God can save without the sacraments those who were unable to perform the sacraments before death. For example, Hugh says, “Whoever, therefore, possessed the thing of the sacrament in right faith and true charity did not lack these sacraments unto damnation, because they either were not obliged to receive them on account of the time or were not able to receive them on account of imminent necessity” (part 9, chap. 5, p. 161). Here, Hugh states that so long as a person receives the grace conveyed by the sacrament they can be saved, but anyone who does not receive the sacrament or

received it without “right faith and true charity” lacked the grace “unto damnation.” This is an important distinction because it takes away the power of the sacraments as the reward of salvation. He says that to believe that everyone lacking the sacraments lacks them unto damnation “ascribes a necessity to the sacraments and from the Author of sacraments you take away power and to Him you deny piety” (part 9, chap. 5, p. 162). Here it appears that Hugh is hoping to dissuade people from venerating the sacraments in and of themselves, saying: “let not that which is administered to us through them be ascribed to these, and let us not so venerate the visible species in them that we be convicted of subordinating invisible truth to them” (part 9, chap. 5, p. 162). Hugh is making very clear the distinction between the sacraments, which are physical vessels, and the “thing of the sacrament” or invisible grace conferred by the sacraments, which he asserts comes solely from God. That which is to be honored is the grace, not the sacrament in which it is dispensed.

While it may appear that Hugh is asserting that the sacraments are not necessary for salvation, the reality is that he has not made them any less necessary as far as Christian practice goes. Essentially, he is saying that believers must participate in the sacraments insofar as they are able to, and that there is exceptional grace for those who desire to but are incapable. Hugh is very clear that God’s power is not limited by the institution of the sacraments, but also that “man [can] not by any means be saved if he contemned these” (part 9, chap. 5, p. 161). That is to say, insofar as man is responsible for his own salvation, the sacraments are necessary, but insofar as God is omnipotent, His salvific grace is not limited by the sacraments.

Sacramental grace alone does not save, however: faith and good works must accompany it. Indeed, Hugh says “these three so cling together that they can not have the effect of salvation if they are not simultaneous” (part 9, chap. 8, p. 165), meaning that all three are necessary for

salvation. Faith gives the believer fortitude and the sacraments act as the weapons and tools by which one accomplishes good works; each is essential in conjunction with the others for accomplishing salvation.

Hugh further discusses sacraments as falling into three categories: those necessary for salvation, those not necessary for salvation but of benefit to salvation, and those used in preparation for the other kinds of sacraments (part 9, chap. 7, p. 164). However, for the sake of length I will only be discussing the first order of sacraments, those necessary for salvation, which are Baptism and the Eucharist.

### *Baptism*

Baptism is “the water sanctified by the word of God for washing away sins” (Hugh, *Sacr.* Bk II, part 6, chap. 2, p. 283), and is the means by which a believer receives the grace of justification. It was instituted by Jesus, who underwent Baptism at the hands of John the Baptist. The visible cleansing with water mirrors the spiritual cleansing of justification and it is accompanied by the benediction “In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” Thus, it fulfills Hugh’s three criteria for being a sacrament. Hugh’s claim that Baptism is necessary for salvation comes from John 3:5, wherein Jesus himself states: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

If one were taking Jesus literally in John 3:5, it would seem that Hugh is directly contradicting the Bible by saying that God saves the unbaptized when they had not the opportunity to be sprinkled or immersed. However, Hugh’s wording comes into play here. One who wishes to enter into the kingdom of God must undergo Baptism. But that is not to say that God cannot bring into His kingdom anyone he pleases. The wording of this argument veers

dangerously close to the idea that believers can save themselves through participation in the sacraments, and God is only working salvifically in the cases where believers were unable to participate in the sacraments before death. However, I would say that Hugh makes it clear that the sacraments only allow believers to participate in the act of salvation, not enact it for themselves.

According to Hugh, Baptism is the New Testament covenant that replaces the Old Testament covenant of circumcision, for “through circumcision, just as now through Baptism sins were once similarly remitted” (part 6, chap. 3, p. 288). However, circumcision was merely a figure of Baptism. A figure is something that has a purpose in the present but is also a precursor to a future thing. The future thing is usually fuller in both revelation and power than the figure is. Using this definition, then, circumcision was instituted to pave the way for Baptism, which was yet to come. However, Baptism goes one step further than circumcision in that “circumcision when received was able to free only from perdition but Baptism is able to lead the reborn even to glory” (part 6, chap. 3, p. 289). Here Hugh exemplifies how circumcision, which was but a figure, was efficacious in its time for the forgiveness of sin. In Baptism, however, which according to Hugh is the fulfillment of the figure of circumcision, entrance into the glory of God is added to justification. Thus, Baptism accomplishes what circumcision accomplished and more. Hugh would say that Baptism even accomplishes justification in a more complete way than did circumcision and does this through the passion of Christ on the cross, for although Baptism was already more than circumcision (for a figure must be lesser than the thing that fulfills it), the addition of the passion adds it “unto the cooperation of sanctification” (part 6, chap. 3, p. 289). That is to say, whereas circumcision was only efficacious unto justification, the passion makes Baptism efficacious for sanctification as well. However, if Hugh is making the assertion that

Baptism was not completed until Christ's passion, that leaves in some doubt whether all the people baptized in the name of Jesus before the passion received justification or not. It is possible that justification was delayed for them until the passion and then they received it, but if that is not the case then would the masses then need to be rebaptized in order to receive the justification necessary for salvation? Hugh does not resolve the question of delayed justification in this work, but his response would likely be the one I have already outlined, that those who were baptized before the passion didn't receive the grace of Baptism until it occurred.

As I stated before, the benediction of Baptism is in "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," which is the word given by Christ in Matthew 28:19, and it is only when this benediction accompanies immersion in water that Baptism is truly accomplished. Some of Hugh's opponents made the argument that making this benediction necessary allotted an unsuitable amount of power to mere words. However, Hugh argues that since God made all of creation with words, it would be natural and fitting for him also to confer grace through words: "So do not wonder if, through the word of God, that is sanctified which was instituted as a sacrament for the remedy of salvation" (part 6, chap. 2, p. 283).

Hugh goes on to clarify that there is no inherent power in the phrase "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." In fact the power is not in the phrase but in what the phrase invokes, that is, in the name of God, which is also the name of the Son and the Holy spirit. Hugh says, "there is one name where there is one nature, one substance, one divinity, one majesty. Now this is the name whereby all should be saved" (part 6, chap. 2, p. 284). This name is the same name that David mentioned when he said "Save me, O God, by thy name" (Psalm 53:3). Hugh argues that the name of the trinitarian God is not, in fact, a collection of letters or sounds. Rather, "we should understand the name itself as the fame and the celebrity rather than

some word or sound of a word coming to the ears. Then His fame and His celebrity itself is His name [...] Faith in God then is the name of God through which His celebrity is now enjoyed among men” (285). Thus, it is not the phrase itself that sanctified the sacrament, but the faith that boasts of the celebrity and power of God and is expressed by the phrase: “in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

Hugh is careful to add that his argument that faith in God is the same as the name of God does not mean that the specific phrasing can be disregarded or left out. His reasoning is that “faith is within and lies hidden until it begins to be named” (part 6, chap. 2, p. 286), that is, that faith is only realized through words. Thus it is the confession of the faith that brings it to light, and the phrase is the means by which the faith is confessed. In addition to the argument for confession of faith, Hugh adds that Christ said to “teach ye all nations, baptizing [Matthew 28:19]”, and “if you moisten and are silent, you moisten and do not teach” (part 6, chap. 2, p. 286). Thus there must be some teaching, and that is where the phrase “in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” comes into play. It is the means by which the one undergoing Baptism and anyone watching are instructed as to what is happening and by whose power it is being accomplished. Hugh also argues that it is equally important to name all three persons in the benediction, for “to deny one is to deny the whole;” in other words, because all are in one and the one is in all, you cannot diminish the power or honor given to one without doing so to them all. Thus one must name all three persons in faith and not “diminish the power either of the Father or of the Son or of the Holy Ghost” or else “the entire mystery is void” (287), that is, the Baptism is not efficacious. Anyone who does not follow this method for baptizing, that is, anyone who is baptized “neither in the name of Christ nor with the faith of the Holy Spirit cannot have received the sacrament of Baptism” (287). That is, any Baptism that lacks either the



profession of the name of God and/or faith through the Holy Spirit is void of any invisible grace and is nothing more than an immersion.

A main objection to Hugh's insistence on the naming of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost in Baptism is that some believers in the New Testament were baptized only in the name of Jesus Christ. For example, Acts 8:16 says that the Samaritans had only been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Since Hugh has claimed that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost must all be named in order for a Baptism to be efficacious, the Baptisms only in the name of the Son would be void of any invisible grace. However, Hugh clarifies that "If you should say 'Christ,' you have designated God the Father by whom the Son was anointed and the Son himself who was anointed and the Holy Spirit with whom He was anointed" (part 6, chap. 2, p. 287). Thus, Christ only was mentioned by name but in doing so one has inferred all three persons of the Trinity. The same logic holds true for any member of the Trinity: by mentioning one you refer to all three; "Therefore, unity of operation, unity of proclamation which cannot be separated" (part 6, chap. 2, p. 288). This would seem like a direct contradiction to what Hugh stated earlier, that all three persons must be named, but that is not the case. Hugh asserts that faith in all three persons must be present, even if only one is named, because to name one is to name all of them, but faith in one is not faith in them all. If faith in any one person of the Trinity is lacking, then it is not a valid Baptism.

Hugh does concede that salvation can be had without Baptism in specific instances. For example, martyrs who were killed before they had the chance to receive Baptism still receive the grace of justification, for "it is more to give blood than to receive water" (part 6, chap. 7, p. 293). There are also certain extenuating circumstances, such as a lack of water or time before death. Hugh says that what is more important than fulfilling the act of Baptism is the desire to do so,

saying that “to be baptized can be in the will, even when it is not in the possibility” (part 6, chap. 7, p. 294) and that is enough to receive the invisible grace of Baptism. However, Hugh is careful to specify that anyone who had ample time to be baptized but avoided it and then died suddenly or unexpectedly did not receive the grace of Baptism and “lacked it unto damnation,” for latent obedience unrealized is the same as disobedience.

On the subject of rebaptizing, Hugh claims that it is never necessary if the first Baptism was valid, no matter what happened afterwards. One argument for rebaptism was that it was needed in the case of an infidel performing a Baptism, in which case the grace of the sacrament would not have been imparted. Hugh claims that, so long as the one being baptized had proper faith and was immersed, then the grace of Baptism can be communicated at a later time by a priest performing the sign of the hand. Some also argued for rebaptism in the case of having been baptized without the proper honor due to the act. However, Hugh asserts that if “there is the intention of baptizing, even if due reverence does not exist in the act, there is indeed the sacrament, since it is done completely and this is intended” (part 6, chap. 13, p. 301). Therefore, any immersion that is intended as Baptism, even if it is done sportingly or without realization of the gravity of the matter, is a valid Baptism and confers the grace of the sacrament. However, Hugh warns that when Baptism is done in jest there are consequences, although he does not specify what kind of consequences. It is hard to understand how one could baptize jokingly and really mean it at the same time, resulting in an efficacious Baptism, but it is possible that the translation makes understanding Hugh’s exact tone and meaning in this instance a little difficult. Hugh does allow that, in cases where the believer has no memory of being baptized and there are no witnesses to the event, the believer can be baptized again at the risk of being rebaptized, “because it should not be said that what is not known to have been done has been repeated” (part

6, chap. 13, p. 300). That is to say, if no one knows that a thing has been done, no one can say that to do it would be repetition. Therefore, Hugh claims that ignorance should not be counted against the believer as sin in regard to his Baptism.

Insofar as infant Baptism is concerned, Hugh claims that children are baptized through the confession of faith of those who are morally responsible for them. Hugh defends this belief by saying that children are born into sin “by another’s iniquity,” that is, the iniquity of Adam and Eve, and thus can be “loosed by another’s faith and confession” (part 6, chap. 12, p. 299). Godparents are assigned to a child who has been baptized to act as “surety to God” for the salvation of the child. That is to say, Godparents are responsible for the moral and spiritual growth of the child and are tasked with leading the child into Christianity. However, according to Hugh, the child does not at the moment of Baptism receive the grace of Baptism. Rather, Hugh asserts that the child must later undergo catechism and confirmation, which is when the child begins to be responsible for his own morality and receives the actual grace of the sacrament, and also to begin participating as a full member of the church; that is, to take the sacrament of the Eucharist.

### *The Eucharist*

According to Hugh, the Sacrament of the Eucharist is “one of those upon which salvation principally depends and it is peculiar among all, since from it is all sanctification” (part 8, chap. 1, p. 304). From this we can infer that the invisible grace of the Eucharist is sanctification, that is, to be made pure and declared holy. Hugh further explains that the Eucharist sets forth three things at once: “visible appearance, truth of body, and virtue of spiritual grace” (part 8, chap. 6, p. 308), so that “what is seen according to appearance is the sacrament and the image of that which is believed according to the truth of the body, and what is believed according to the truth

of the body is the sacrament of that which is perceived according to spiritual grace” (part 8, chap. 7, p. 309). More to the point, what Hugh is saying here is that the bread and wine are the visible sacraments of the invisible grace of Jesus’ body and blood. It follows, then, that Jesus’ body and blood are the sacraments of the perceived invisible grace of sanctification.

In the same way that Baptism was preceded by circumcision, according to Hugh, so the Eucharist was preceded by the eating of the Paschal Lamb, “whose flesh was eaten by the people and by whose blood the posts of the houses were marked” (part 8, chap. 5, p. 307). The Paschal Lamb represents the lambs sacrificed to save the people of Israel in the book of Exodus when they had to mark their doorposts with blood to mark themselves as God’s people and escape the angel of death, whom God had sent out to kill all the firstborn among the Egyptians in Exodus 12. The Paschal lamb was the figure that preceded Jesus Christ, who was the “Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Just as Baptism superseded circumcision, so too does the Eucharist supersede the Paschal Lamb. The Paschal lamb saved the Israelites from an earthly death and was eaten yearly to commemorate that salvation; the Eucharist saves those who partake of it from spiritual death and sanctifies them.

Jesus Christ instituted the Eucharist at the Passover meal, “changing the bread and wine into His own body and blood by divine power” (part 8, chap. 2, p. 304) and giving it to his disciples. At that point the bread and wine were present only in image, not in substance, and the substance was the real Body of Christ. That is to say, the bread and wine were not physically present any more. Rather, the body and blood of Christ was present under the appearance, or image, or bread and wine. This is the belief from which sprang the idea of real presence (transubstantiation). Hugh defends this real change biblically by quoting from John 6:53, wherein Christ says: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you have

no life in you.” The question was also raised as to which body is present in the Eucharist, Christ’s mortal or immortal body.

Although he shies away from the topic initially, saying, “divine secrets of this kind are more to be venerated than to be discussed” (part 8, chap. 3, p. 304), Hugh prefers to believe that the body given in the Eucharist was “that body incapable of suffering and immortal” (part 8, chap. 3, p. 305). That is to say, Hugh states that, in his opinion, the body Christ gave was his perfect and immortal body, but appears to offer it more as a preference than a dictate.

Some might raise the objection that, since Christ was mortal before his death and resurrection, it must have been his mortal body that he gave at the Last Supper and not his immortal body. However, Hugh addresses these objection by delving into a short Christology, saying that “human nature in Christ was mortal, but by will, not by necessity” and that “before He put off mortality through complete death, He sometimes put it aside in part when He wished” (part 8, chap. 3, p. 305). That is, Christ was human by his own will: it was not something he was forced into, which meant he had complete power over the assumption of his human nature. Hugh argues that Christ could put aside the mortality of this nature when he wished, rather like taking off a hat or jacket. Thus, Christ would be able to give his immortal body to his disciples at the Last Supper through putting off the mortality of his human nature, even though he had not died and been resurrected yet.

The reason that Christ gave his real body and blood in the Eucharist, Hugh says, is “that he might incorporate us with him” (part 8, chap. 5, p. 307). Only through incorporation with Christ can one receive the grace of the Sacrament. Additionally, anyone who receives the sacrament without faith does not receive the grace of the sacrament, but “He who takes has the sacrament, he who believes and loves has the substance of the sacrament” (part 8, chap. 5, p.

307). Here Hugh once again makes a distinction between receiving the sacrament and receiving the grace of the sacrament. The former can be had simply by receiving the body of Christ. As Hugh writes: “He who eats and is not incorporated has the sacrament but not the substance of the sacrament” (part 8, chap. 5, p. 307). Although Hugh’s definition of incorporated is a little hazy, leaving the reader wondering if incorporation is the same as receiving the grace of the sacrament or if it is something else entirely, he makes it clear that simply taking the sacrament without faith and love will afford you nothing, once again refuting any arguments made for grace without faith or grace by works. It is possible that incorporation with Christ is the same as having faith, since Hugh references both as necessary components for receiving the grace of the sacrament. The fact that he does not demand both incorporation and faith in order to receive grace, but at first only incorporation and later only faith, also supports the idea that incorporation and faith are the same thing, or at the very least accomplishing the same goal, albeit in different ways. Hugh also makes the point that those unable to partake of the sacrament can still receive the grace of the sacrament: “Just as he who is incorporated, even if he does not happen to eat, has the substance of the sacrament, although he has not the sacrament” (part 8, chap. 5, p. 307). In other words, one can be incorporated without participating in the physical sacrament, and through that incorporation receive the grace of the sacrament. Therefore, as with Baptism, Hugh makes the case that one can receive the grace of the sacrament without receiving the sacrament itself.

Another reason Hugh gives for Christ offering his real body and blood was so that “He might through the food of the flesh invite to the taste of Divinity” (part 8, chap. 13, p. 309). Jesus Christ offered his flesh instead of merely bread and wine “that he might raise them to seek and find the spiritual presence” (part 8, chap. 13, p. 313), that is, to experience spiritual intimacy with God. By offering His immortal body, Jesus gives Christians a taste of divinity, but also guides

them into God's spiritual presence by giving them something that is both human and divine to ease the transition from the physical to the spiritual.

Hugh also points out that Christ left his body "veiled" in bread and wine as an allowance for human frailty, which "might shudder at the touch of flesh in the taking of it" (part 8, chap. 13, p. 309). That is, since Christ knew that humans would shrink back from eating the flesh of another human, He hid the truth of the body in ordinary food so that His followers would not miss out on sanctification because of a physical revulsion to the sacrament through which it works. Hugh also makes the case that, by veiling the body in "usual and principal food," that is, food that was partaken of daily and is a staple in human diets, Jesus fostered both sense and taste. Hugh says, "sense is fostered in the one, when it receives only the usual and customary things; while faith is built up in the other, when in that which one sees he recognizes the nature of what he does not see" (part 8, chap. 13, p. 310). Exactly what Hugh meant by "fostering sense" is unclear, although it may be the case that he is referring again to the idea that Christ veiled the true body and blood in order not to offend our senses, which could also be explained as fostering sense. If that were the case, his reference to "usual and customary things" makes sense. Hugh's argument for the building of faith holds firm and clear, however, since taking the Eucharist as the real body of Christ fosters faith by asking for belief in what is not visible.

Christ's body remains undivided during and after consumption of the Eucharist. Rather, each part contains the whole, as Hugh says: "One part is seen and, as it were, seems to be a part, and the whole is there, and another part is seen and, as it were, seems to be another, and is the same and the whole itself... Whatever member of the parts you make, the whole is in each" (part 8, chap. 11, p. 312). More clearly put, every time the Eucharist is divided, Christ remains fully in each part. For example, if the loaf is split in two, Christ is fully in both halves. If each of those

halves is quartered, the fullness of Christ is in each of the eight pieces and so on unto infinity. Hugh encourages his readers not to marvel at this explanation, although it appears to break certain laws of metaphysics, saying: “If the doer is considered omnipotent, whatever the thing will be, it will not be impossible” (part 8, chap. 11, p. 312). This is a statement that could be used to defend all of Hugh’s arguments up to this point; if God desires it so He can make it so regardless of natural law.

After the dispensation of the Eucharist and the incorporation into the body of Christ through receiving it, the physical presence of Jesus withdraws, leaving only the spiritual presence. Hugh makes the case that Christ is only present physically so “that you through His corporeal presence may be raised to seek the spiritual and be assisted in finding it” (part 8, chap. 13, p. 314). Once again Hugh is asserting that Christ gave his true body and blood in order to assist the receiver’s pursuit of spiritual maturity, guiding him from the material to the spiritual through the eating of His immortal body. However, Hugh further makes the case that “as long as the sense is affected corporeally, his corporeal presence is not taken away” (part 8, chap. 13, p. 314), meaning the physical presence of Christ serves the purpose of satisfying the senses. Once the senses have been satisfied, there is no longer any reason for Him to be present physically and He withdraws, leaving only his spiritual presence. Hugh makes this argument to contradict anyone who would say that Christ’s body passes through the bowels and is ejected from the body as fecal matter, which Hugh says is not worth thinking about. Rather, as Hugh puts it, “Christ passes from mouth to heart” (part 8, chap. 13, p. 314), for he came “to be eaten, not to be consumed” (part 8, chap. 13, p. 314), that is, the purpose of Christ’s physical body being present was to satisfy the senses, integrate the believer with Himself, and raise up the believer to His spiritual presence, all of which is accomplished through the act of eating, not necessarily through



being consumed. Thus, the physical body of Christ remains present in the Eucharist up until the moment of swallowing, at which point the physical body of Christ leaves and only His spiritual presence remains. However, one could argue that the senses do not cease to be affected after eating, for the intestines sense the Eucharist long after eating has ceased. Hugh makes no answer to this objection.

## CHAPTER 3

Martin Luther

### *On Sacraments*

Luther asserts that there are only three sacraments, as opposed to the Catholic tradition of seven, naming them “baptism, penance, and the bread... Yet if I were to speak according to the usage of the Scriptures, I should have only one single sacrament, but with three sacramental signs” (*Captivity* 21)<sup>2</sup>. Here we see Luther referring to the sacraments as Hugh of Saint Victor did, as having an invisible grace, which he here called the sacrament, and a physical symbol, which he called a sacramental sign. For the sake of clarity throughout this thesis, I will continue to use Hugh’s terms for the sacrament and that which is conveyed by the sacrament, where the sacrament is the physical symbol and the thing or grace of the sacrament is that which the sacrament conveys. Luther makes the case that the same invisible grace is given in all three sacraments and that it is merely expressed through three different signs. Luther is also adamant that the sacraments are not good works, but gifts to be received (*Captivity* 60), and that “if you would be saved, you must begin with the faith of the sacraments, without any works whatever. The works will follow faith” (*Captivity* 64).

From this we can infer that, unlike Hugh, Luther does not see the need for a sacramental sign to mimic the thing it represents, thus all the physical signs can be different for the same sacramental grace. Luther also asserts, like Hugh, that the sacrament remains whole and complete even when administered by someone who does not receive it himself. That is, “the testament or sacrament is given and received through the ministration of wicked priests no less

---

<sup>2</sup> Luther, Martin, et al. *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 1520. Fortress Press, 2016.

completely than through the ministration of the most saintly” (*Captivity* 58). Through this Luther is combatting the belief that the efficacy of a sacrament could be diminished by improper administration or administration by someone who was not himself a believer.

Luther also calls the sacraments testaments, that is, evidence of the invisible grace received by believers through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. From this one can infer that the sacraments do not convey the grace of salvation, but rather that believers have already received that grace through the death and resurrection of Christ, and the sacraments merely attest to it. That is not to say that Luther treats the sacraments as mere signs. No, he still attributes to them an invisible grace with efficacious power, although since he refrains making sacraments necessary for salvation, it becomes more unclear what those invisible graces accomplish.

Luther asserts that the sacraments do not supersede in effectiveness the laws of the Old Testament, but rather “the same God who now saves us by baptism and the bread saved Abel by his sacrifice” (*Captivity* 67). This directly contradicts Hugh, who claims that the sacraments of Baptism and communion build off of Old Testament sacraments yet go beyond them in terms of the grace they convey. However, Luther claims, “In each of these alike some promise was given which required faith in God” (*Captivity* 67). That is, the laws and signs of the Old Testament and the sacraments of the New Testament are equal because they were the same in principle; God gave a promise and the people believed it by faith. Luther clarifies that the laws/signs of the Old Testament to which he is referring are not the laws set down by Moses, but rather “those signs which God occasionally gave to the fathers living under the law, such as the sign of Gideon’s fleece, Manoah’s sacrifice, or that which Isaiah offered to Ahaz in Isa. 7” (*Captivity* 67). Luther reasons that “the legal symbols do not have attached to them any word of promise requiring faith” (*Captivity* 68). That is, Luther is saying that the sacraments of the New Testament and the

Old Testament signs differ from Mosaic Law in that they are accompanied by a promise in which one must believe by faith, which, as previously mentioned, is Luther's definition of a sacrament. "Hence they are not signs of justification, for they are not sacraments of the faith that alone justifies, but only sacraments of works" (*Captivity* 68). Here one can clearly see Luther's 'faith only' attitude show through in that he distinguishes between acts done through faith in a promise of God and acts done without faith for the sake of checking off a list. Luther concludes that "the new sacraments cannot differ from the old sacraments, for both alike have the divine promises and the same spirit of faith [...] on account of the word of promise, which is the sole effective means of distinguishing them" (*Captivity* 68), that is, the promise given is the only thing that can distinguish between the signs of the Old Testament and the signs or sacraments of the New Testament. "Their whole efficacy, therefore, consists in faith itself, not in the doing of a work. Those who believe them, fulfill them, even if they should not do a single work" (*Captivity* 68). That is, unlike Hugh, who asks believers to show him their faith by their works, Luther asserts that if faith is already present, no work is necessary to justify a believer.

Luther further claims that the physical sacrament has no power in itself. For example, there is not inherent power in the water of Baptism. "It cannot be true, therefore, that there is contained in the sacraments a power efficacious for justification [...] Unless you should call them 'effective' in the sense that they certainly and effectively impart grace where faith is unmistakably present" (*Captivity* 68). Here Luther shies away from the word efficacious as regarding the sacraments, preferring the term effective because he relies on faith as the active agent. The sacraments are only effective where faith has already been at work.

Although Luther also treats penance as a sacrament, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore his theology concerning that sacrament. For the sake of brevity I will concern myself only with Baptism and the bread, as Luther calls the Eucharist.<sup>3</sup>

### *Baptism*

Luther affirms Baptism as “the first sacrament and the foundation of all the others, without which none of the others can be received” (*Captivity* 62). He also calls it a sacrament instituted by God “as an aid to such a faith” (*Colloquy* 87)<sup>4</sup> and the means “through which we are regenerated to [eternal] life” (*Colloquy* 87). He claims that it is assurance of salvation but only in conjunction with right faith, and that it is not only permissible for children to be baptized, but that Jesus intended it for little children.

Luther asserts that Baptism works together with faith for salvation. Luther calls Baptism the result of a “divine promise, which says, ‘the one who believes and is baptized will be saved’ [Mark 16:16]” (*Captivity* 61). Baptism also signifies death and resurrection, “that is, full and complete justification” (*Captivity* 70). What Luther means is a spiritual death to sin and resurrection into a life of justification through the power of Jesus’ physical death and resurrection. Luther implores his readers to remember their Baptisms as proof of their salvation rather than relying on penance, for “once we have been baptized, we are saved” (*Captivity* 61). Luther was refuting a commonly held belief that Baptism only saved one from sins committed prior to the Baptism and that all future sins had to be atoned for through penance. Luther’s argument is that “when we rise from our sins or repent, we are merely returning to the power and

---

<sup>3</sup> Although Luther eschews the use of the word ‘Eucharist’, I will continue using it for the sake of clarity.

<sup>4</sup> Luther, Martin, et al. *Luther's Works*. Vol. 38, Fortress Press, 2002.

the faith of Baptism from which we fell, and finding our way back to the promise then made to us” (*Captivity* 61). That is, the sanctifying power of Baptism continues throughout the life of a believer, continually cleansing him each time he falls into sin and repents. No other sacrament is necessary for the remittance of sin.

Luther further makes the claim that the salvation offered through Baptism “cannot be changed by sin” (*Captivity* 62). That is, no amount of sin can overcome the power of salvation, which is imparted through right faith and Baptism. Therefore, “In it the penitents have a shield against all assaults of the scornful enemy, an antidote for the dread of death and judgment, and a comfort in every temptation” (*Captivity* 62). Luther exhorts believers to take comfort in the truth of their Baptism and not be persuaded into attempting to do through their own power what God has already accomplished through the sacrament. Luther compares this with the repentant Israelites’ continual remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt under the guidance of Moses. Each time they turned back to God from their sinful ways they remembered the great deliverance He had given them. “How much more ought we to remember our exodus from Egypt, and by this remembrance turn back to him who led us through the washing of regeneration” (*Captivity* 62).

Luther does concede that, although no sin can break the power of Baptism while yet there is faith in its power, lack of faith can and will, for he says, “no sin can condemn them save unbelief alone” (*Captivity* 63). Luther is careful to stay away from the idea of “once saved, always saved.” He believes there is strong power in Baptism and that wherever true faith holds fast there is salvation. However, he freely states that “many rashly leap overboard into the sea and perish; these are those who abandon faith in the promise and plunge into sin” (*Captivity* 63). That is, one cannot accidentally be damned: it is only when a believer intentionally abandons his faith that he is no longer saved. Luther allows for returning to salvation after the metaphorical

jumping ship, and clarifies that such a person returns not to salvation in part but to “the abiding and enduring promise of God” (*Captivity* 64). That is, there is no penalty for leaving and returning, so a believer who has left the faith and returned will be as completely redeemed as someone who never wavered. Luther also makes the case that any penance or act of contrition that is done without faith in the redemptive power of baptism is worthless, “for whatever is done without faith in God’s truth is vanity of vanities and vexation of spirit” (*Captivity* 63).

Baptism is entirely a work of God and not of man. Luther asserts that the one baptizing “baptizes in that he performs the work of immersing the person to be baptized; he does not baptize, because in doing so he acts not on his own authority, but in God’s stead. Hence we ought to receive Baptism at human hands just as if Christ himself, indeed, God himself, were baptizing us with his own hands. For it is not man’s baptism, but Christ’s and God’s baptism, which we receive by the hand of man” (*Captivity* 65). That is, no part of Baptism comes from man or has power from man; rather it belongs as a whole to God and should be seen as a work done by God in us. Luther warns believers not to ascribe even the immersion to mankind’s work, but to “ascribe both to God alone, and look upon the person administering it as simply the vicarious instrument of God” (*Captivity* 65). Luther argues this point by referring to the words accompanying the sacrament, namely, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen,” (*Captivity* 65). By this the baptizer signifies that it is not he who accomplishes anything. Rather, Luther says, “I hold that ‘in the name of’ refers to the person of the doer” (*Captivity* 65), that is, it refers to God as the baptizer. This is not meant to imply that God takes over the mind or the body of the one baptizing. Instead, it means that the baptizer’s action of immersion should not be attributed to his own power; it should be attributed to God.

Because God is the one baptizing and not mankind, Luther also claims that the form of the Baptism, that is, the language accompanying it and the physical manner in which it is done, does not affect the validity of the Baptism. “For the power of baptism depends not so much on the faith or use of the one who confers it as on the faith or use of the one who receives it” (*Captivity* 66) and that “even if the wicked minister should not give it in the name of the Lord, he would yet be truly baptized in the name of the Lord” (*Captivity* 66).

Luther also rejects rebaptism, saying “I have made known abundantly my faith concerning infant baptism” (The Annotated Luther, III, *Concerning Rebaptism*, p. 279)<sup>5</sup>. Luther follows Hugh’s teaching on infant baptism, saying “Infants are aided by the faith of others, namely, those who bring them for baptism” (*Captivity* 76). Indeed, he goes so far as to say that baptism “has its chief blessing for them” and that Christ “desired that by it little children, who were incapable of greed and superstition, might be initiated and sanctified in the simple faith of his Word” (*Captivity* 60).

### *The Eucharist*

Luther argues that the Eucharist is a testament between God and mankind, that it is composed of both the bread and wine, that both “kinds” (that is the bread and the wine) should be distributed to anyone who wants them, that it is not necessary for salvation, and that it is not merely the accidents of the bread and wine that are present, that is, the outward appearance of them, but that the bread and wine are actually physically present along with the body of Christ (a view that came to be known as consubstantiation). It is important to note that Luther refers to the

---

<sup>5</sup> Luther, Martin, et al. *The Annotated Luther*. Vol. 3, Fortress Press, 2015.



sacrament as a whole only as “the sacrament of the bread,” but he means both the bread and the wine.

Luther describes the sacrament as a testament from Christ, “in his blood, poured out for us [Luke 22:20].” Luther uses the term testament to describe the Eucharist in order to prove his point that the Eucharist is not a good work but a “promise received” (*Captivity* 50). Specifically, Luther is pushing the point that there are no works that can be done for the sake of the body and blood of Christ; they are something to be received, not worked for. Luther criticizes the idea that there is some work that must be done to partake of the sacrament, saying: “When we ought to be grateful for benefits received, we come arrogantly to give that which we ought to take” (*Captivity* 50).

Luther also makes the claim that the Eucharist should, in fact, be taken in both kinds, that is, as the bread and the wine, as seen in the Last Supper as related by the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Some had asserted that the wine should be reserved for the priests alone and not given to the laity, and that the decision to reserve the wine for the priests should be left to the church. Luther quotes from Matthew 26:27, wherein Christ says: “drink of it, all of you.” Because Christ gave special attention to the cup and the Bible says that “they all drank of it” whereas no such specification is given to the consumption of the bread, the cup should not be left out of the communion.

Luther continues his argument in favor of the Eucharist in both kinds by saying that “the whole sacrament, or communion in both kinds, is given either to the priests alone or else it is at the same time given to the laity” (*Captivity* 23), that is, both bread and wine must be given, whether to just the priests or to both priests and the common people. He goes on to say that, “If it is given only to the priests (as they would have it), then it is not right to give it to the laity in

either kind. For it must not be given rashly to any to whom Christ did not give it when he instituted the sacrament” (Captivity 23). In other words, if the Eucharist was only intended for the priests, neither the bread nor the wine should be given to the common people. However, “if it is given also to the laity, it inevitably follows that it ought not to be withheld from them in either form,” (Captivity 23) and it is “certainly an impious act to withhold the cup from the laymen when they desire it” (Captivity 23). Also, “just as baptism and absolution must be administered in their entirety, so the sacrament of the bread must be given in its entirety to all laymen” (Captivity 24). Here Luther is referring to the administration of the other sacraments, making the point that it would be wrong to try to withhold a part of Baptism or penance from the laity, so too is it wrong to try to withhold part of the Eucharist from them.

Luther further argues that Christ says: “This is my blood, which is poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:29). Since the blood of Christ is denoted by the wine, and He Himself has said that His blood is poured out for many, Luther asserts that the wine should not be withheld from anyone who desires it, whether priest or layman. Luther also uses Paul’s words to defend the administration of both the bread and wine: however, having seen Luther’s proof that Jesus himself gave both bread and wine and gave both for all people to receive, Paul’s further exploration of the matter may be passed over in silence. So, although Luther takes time to address every instance wherein Paul could be thought to have said that one should withhold the wine from the laity or given special permission to administer it to them, Jesus Christ’s institution prior and contrary to any such claims should be authority enough for him to stick to his conclusion.

Luther’s final refutation is that it would be unfit for the priests to concede the grace of the sacrament to the laity and not give them the sign, which is the lesser part, for “in every sacrament

the sign as such is incomparably less than the thing signified. What then, I ask, is to prevent them from conceding the lesser, when they concede the greater?”(*Captivity* 25). Because the grace of the sacrament is much more important than the physical sacrament itself, Luther argues that if the laity can receive the greater, there should be nothing stopping them from receiving the lesser.

Luther makes the case that the Eucharist is not necessary for salvation, nor are believers obliged to partake. Rather, it is something believers can choose to partake in or not. As seen in the chapter on Hugh of Saint-Victor, the biblical evidence for the Eucharist as necessary for salvation comes from John 6. Luther refutes the entire argument laid down by Hugh by stating that John 6 should not be considered to be talking about or referring to the sacrament. Luther first asserts that John 6 must be “entirely excluded from this discussion, since it does not refer to the sacrament in a single syllable” (*Captivity* 21). Rather, he believes it is the case that “Christ is speaking of faith in the incarnate Word” (*Captivity* 22). What Luther means by this is that Jesus was speaking metaphorically in those passages of John 6. Luther cites Jesus’ words from John 6 to prove his point, saying: “‘My words are spirit and life’ [John 6:63], which shows that he was speaking of spiritual eating, by which he who eats has life” (*Captivity* 22). Here Luther is trying to show that by saying that His words are spirit and life, Jesus was asserting that a spiritual eating and digesting of his words was necessary for salvation, not a physical eating, for “no eating can give life except that which is by faith, for that is truly spiritual and living eating” (*Captivity* 22). Luther’s exclusion of this passage in John is what lays the foundation for most of his theology concerning the Eucharist. It is worth noting that the explanation he gives here for removing it from the discussion seems a little rushed over and lacking in depth of discussion.

Luther also argues from a logical standpoint that to make the Eucharist necessary for salvation would be to condemn infants and “all the sick, and all those absent or in any way

hindered from the sacramental eating, however strong their faith may be” (*Captivity* 22). Hugh of Saint-Victor would easily answer that where faith is present, circumstances preventing the believer from eating would not inhibit their salvation and acceptance into Heaven. Luther does not seem to have read Hugh of Saint-Victor’s writings on the topic or has refrained from touching on such rebuttals in order to maintain the strength of his own argument. However, in book IV, Ch. 17 of *The Sacrament of the Body and Blood—Against the Fanatics*,<sup>6</sup> Luther makes several claims that would seem to contradict his statements from *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. Namely, that “no work, no deed, will help me out of my sins, but I have another treasure, the body and blood of my Lord, given to me for the forgiveness of sins” (*The Sacrament of the Body and Blood—Against the Fanatics*, bk. IV, p. 329-330). Immediately after this, however, Luther claims that the sacrament serves two purposes: “that you strengthen your faith and make your conscience secure” (*Against the Fanatics*, 330). While Luther adamantly opposes the idea that the Eucharist is merely a commemorative or symbolic ritual, he also condemns the idea of it being *necessary* for salvation. One could assume he holds a stance somewhere in the middle; that it is a part of salvation: not the keystone, but a part. Or perhaps, that through the sacrament of the bread one *can* receive salvation, but it is not necessary.

Luther’s middle-ground stance on the salvific powers of the Eucharist is similar to Hugh’s, but seems to edge much nearer the possibility of salvation without the Eucharist than Hugh’s. While Hugh allows for salvation without the Eucharist, Luther is adamant that no believer’s physical actions can aid in his salvation. Were Luther to clarify his statements, I believe he would argue that the Eucharist is not necessary for salvation, but that it is a necessary part of the true believer’s worship.

---

<sup>6</sup> Luther, Martin, et al. *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings: Edited by Timothy F. Lull and William R. Russell*. Fortress Press, 2012.

Luther also makes the case that the sacrament of the Eucharist was not mandated by Christ and should not be considered necessary or obligatory and that “The priests are not lords, but servants in duty bound to administer both kinds to those who desire them, as often as they desire them” (*Captivity* 29). Thus, the people should be able to take or not take communion as often as they like. Luther’s proof for such a claim comes from Christ’s phrasing at the Last Supper, where he said: “As often as you do this, do it in remembrance of me” (I Corinthians 11:23). Luther sees this as an invitation to participate when one wishes, and only then does it include a mandate to “remember.”

Departing from the Catholic tradition yet again, Luther claims that the bread and wine are actually present along with the body of Christ in the Eucharist (consubstantiation), and it is not just the accidents of the bread and wine that are present. Luther begins with a purely philosophical reason to believe in consubstantiation, saying: “to hold that real bread and real wine and not merely their accidents are present on the altar would be much more probable and require fewer superfluous miracles” (*Captivity* 30).

Luther also argues that consubstantiation better suits the biblical passages about the Eucharist than does transubstantiation. He calls it, “an absurd and unheard-of juggling of words to understand ‘bread’ to mean ‘the form or accidents of bread’ and ‘wine’ to mean ‘the form or accidents of wine’” (*Captivity* 33). In other words, Luther believes it is too far of a stretch to claim that what Christ meant by “bread” was not actually bread but merely its accidents. He argues that to claim such a thing would mean that every time Jesus mentioned a subject he only referred to its accidents or its form, and to claim such a thing would “enfeeble the words of God” (*Captivity* 33).<sup>7</sup> Instead, Luther asks why the bread could not at once be bread and at the same

---

<sup>7</sup> Luther’s statement here does not follow, however, since it could quite easily be that Christ referred to the accidents of bread merely as bread a single time. However, no principle exists that would

time Christ, so that the biblical words are “retained in their simplest meaning as far as possible” (*Captivity* 32). Christ calls the bread “bread” and yet also calls it his body. Luther explains and argues his premise with the example of red-hot iron in which “the two substances, fire and iron, are so mingled that every part is both fire and iron” (*Captivity* 35). In the same way that superheated iron is both fire and iron simultaneously and in all parts, so the body of Christ could be one with the bread such that “the body of Christ be contained in every part of the substance of the bread” (*Captivity* 35). Thus, Luther posits that consubstantiation is a simpler and therefore greater explanation for the nature of the Eucharist.

Luther also points out that consubstantiation is a better representation of Christ’s incarnation than transubstantiation and what is true of the incarnation is true of the sacrament. He argues that “in order for the divine nature to dwell in him bodily [Col. 2:9], it is not necessary for the human nature to be transubstantiated and the divine nature contained under the accidents of the human nature. Both natures are simply there in their entirety” (*Captivity* 37). Luther admits that this is a hard teaching, but declares that “Even though philosophy cannot grasp this, faith grasps it nonetheless” (*Captivity* 37).

Luther also refutes the idea touted by the Roman Catholic church that to have the bread and wine physically present would be an invitation to idolatry. The Catholic reasoning was that “the danger of idolatry demands that the bread and wine should not be really present” (*Captivity* 34), thus any worship of the thing itself was actually worship of Christ and the laymen would be safe from any accidental sin. However, Luther returns that there is as much danger of the people worshipping the accidents, for the general public has no knowledge of the philosophy behind a

---

explain when to interpret Jesus’ reference to a particular noun as meaning the noun itself or merely the accidents of the noun. With such a principle lacking, it is hard to say whether Hugh or Luther has a better interpretation of the passage.

subject and its accidents. He argues that “if they do not worship the accidents, but the Christ hidden under them, why should they worship the substance of the bread” (*Captivity* 34). Thus Luther overturns the argument that transubstantiation is necessary to keep the people from idolatry because they are as likely to worship the accidents of the bread as they are the substance of the bread, knowing not the difference between the two.

Finally, Luther applauds the common people who “believe with a simple faith that Christ’s body and blood are truly contained there, and leave to those who have nothing else to do the argument about what contains them” (*Captivity* 35). This shows that Luther saw the argument between transubstantiation and consubstantiation as futile, an idea further proven when Luther presses not that the Catholic church accept his view on consubstantiation, but that they accept both as valid opinions and “not press us to accept their opinions as articles of faith” (*Captivity* 38), and that he will permit men to “follow the other opinion” (*Captivity* 38).

## CHAPTER 4

John Calvin

### *On Sacraments*

Calvin first defines sacraments as an “outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of His good will towards us” (*Institutes*, bk. IV, ch. XIV, pg. 1277)<sup>8</sup>. In other words, they are a demonstration by which believers are assured of God’s grace towards them. He further defines them as “testimon[ies] of divine grace toward us, confirmed by an outward sign” (*Institutes* 1277). The purpose of the sacraments is “to sustain the weakness of our faith, and in turn attest our piety toward him” (*Institutes* 1277). That is, the sacraments are meant for the building up of one’s faith and also as a public good work by which the believers are known to be faithful “in the presence of the Lord and of his angels and before men” (*Institutes* 1277) and also by which “we profess Christ our commander and testify that we serve under his ensign” (*Institutes* 1288).

According to Calvin, “a sacrament is never without a preceding promise but is joined to it as a sort of appendix, with the purpose of confirming and sealing the promise itself” (*Institutes* 1278). That is to say, the sacraments must always be preceded by a revelation of divine grace, which the sacrament then confirms. Quoting Augustine from *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, Calvin says, “Let the word be added to the element and it will become a sacrament. For whence comes this great power of water that in touching the body it should cleanse the heart, unless the word makes it? Not because it is said, but because it is believed” (*Institutes* 1279). That is, the

---

<sup>8</sup> Calvin, Jean, and John T. McNeill. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. XXI, SCM, 1961



word is what gives power to the sacrament; however, not the words themselves, but the belief in the words. This is an echo of Hugh's beliefs in terms of the power of the word in the sacraments. The word also serves as a tool to teach and bring understanding: as Calvin puts it, "to lead the people by the hand wherever the sign tends and directs us" (*Institutes* 1280).

Calvin refers to the signs given to the Old Testament patriarchs to prove his point, saying that "whenever God gave a sign to the holy patriarchs it was inseparably linked to doctrine, without which our senses would have been stunned in looking at a bare sign" (*Institutes* 1279). Calvin asserts that because "we are creatures who always creep on the ground, cleave to the flesh, and, do not think about or even conceive of anything spiritual, [God] condescends to lead us to himself even by these earthly elements, and to set before us in the flesh a mirror of spiritual blessings" (*Institutes* 1278). That is, as physical beings, it would have been too much for humans to see the bare reality without a physical representation (sign) and an explanation of what was happening. Thus, "because we have souls engrafted in bodies, he imparts spiritual things under visible ones" (*Institutes* 1278). If humans were not physical creatures, they would not need the physical signs, but things being as they are, God's signs are linked visually and vocally to "provide for our ignorance and dullness, then for our weakness" (*Institutes* 1278). In this way, the physical signs serve not only for the confirmation of God's word but "to establish us in faith in it" (*Institutes* 1278), that is, to sharpen the believer's faith in God's promises.

Calvin seems to contradict himself in some ways concerning the idea that a sacrament confirms God's word when he says: "For God's truth is of itself firm and sure enough, and it cannot receive better confirmation from any other source than from itself" (*Institutes* 1278). By this he means that nothing can testify to the truth of God's word better than His word itself, thus it does not *need* the sacraments to confirm it. However, Calvin clears up the confusion by stating

that “our faith is slight and feeble unless it be propped on all sides and sustained by every means, it trembles, wavers, totters and at last gives way” (*Institutes* 1278). Thus, the sacraments, although they do not attest to God’s truth as assuredly as God’s truth does to itself, serve as a bolster to the believer’s faith. In other words, the sacraments are for the believers’ benefit and are not necessary for the confirmation of God’s promises.

The word and sacrament cannot affect a believer or lead him into greater faith without the work of the Holy Spirit. Calvin says that “faith is the proper and entire work of the Holy Spirit, illumined by whom we recognize God and the treasures of his kindness, and without whose light our mind is so blinded that it can see nothing” (*Institutes* 1284). This declaration at first seems contradictory to all that Calvin has previously said concerning faith and the sacraments. If faith is solely the work of the Holy Spirit, then belief in the word and participation with the elements of the sacraments cannot lead believers into greater faith. However, Calvin is not contradicting himself, but adding a layer of depth to his explanation to make the Holy Spirit the thing on which the whole matter turns. He says that the Holy Spirit is the way by which the hearts of believers are affected by the word and the sacrament. “[God] illumines our minds by the light of his Holy Spirit and opens our hearts for the Word and sacraments to enter in, which would otherwise only strike our ears and appear before our eyes, but not at all affect us within” (*Institutes* 1284). That is to say, the Holy Spirit is what makes the sacrament effective, giving the believer the capacity to believe and be affected by it. As Calvin puts it, “Word and sacraments confirm our faith when they set before our eyes the good will of our Heavenly Father toward us, by the knowledge of whom the whole firmness of our faith stands fast and increases in strength. The Spirit confirms it when, by engraving this confirmation in our minds, he makes it effective” (*Institutes* 1286).

Calvin also addresses a dispute about which does more work in a believer, the word or the sacrament. Calvin claims that the two work equally. However, he jumps to reassert that both are worthless without the work of the Holy Spirit without giving much by way of an explanation for his equal ranking of them.

Contrary to Hugh, Calvin argues that the sacraments have no value except insofar as they are God's tools. That is to say, none of the physical sacramental elements have any innate effectiveness. "We place no power in creatures" (*Institutes* 1287), Calvin states, for "neither bread, nor sun, nor fire, is anything save in so far as (God) distributes his blessings to us by these instruments" (*Institutes* 1287). He continues, saying, "In the same way, neither ought our confidence to inhere in the sacraments, nor the glory of God be transferred to them. Rather, laying aside all things, both our faith and our confession ought to rise up to him who is the author of the sacraments and of all things" (*Institutes* 1287). Here Calvin is breaking with any who would say that the sacraments can justify and confer grace, saying that "in promising a righteousness apart from faith, it hurls souls headlong to destruction" (*Institutes* 1289). Calvin adds that his explanation of the sacrament "is not to be understood as if the force and truth of the sacrament depended upon the condition or choice of him who receives it" (*Institutes* 1291).

At this point it is unclear whether or not Calvin is allowing the sacraments inherent power. His first claim indicates that the power of the sacraments lies in the faith of the believer, but his second makes the sacraments objectively effective regardless of the one partaking. One could understand Calvin's contradictory statements concerning the effectivity of the sacraments to mean that the purpose and reality of the sacrament does not change based on the heart of man, but only man's ability to receive it. As Calvin puts it (quoting Augustine from *Tractates on the*

*Gospel of John*): “If you receive carnally, it does not cease to be spiritual, but it is not so for you” (*Institutes* 1292).

One of Calvin’s most revolutionary claims is that the sacraments offer no justification for sin and serve only to “set forth Christ to us” (*Institutes* 1292). Calvin asserts that “justification is lodged in Christ alone, and that it is communicated to us no less by the preaching of the gospel than by the seal of the sacrament, and without the latter can stand unimpaired” (*Institutes* 1290). Here Calvin contradicts Hugh completely, saying that the sacraments are not necessary for the forgiveness of sins. He also seems to contradict himself, for he stated earlier that the word and sacrament worked equally in the believer, but here states that the former can do the full work of salvation without the latter.

Calvin organizes the sacraments categorically, differentiating between sacraments reserved for the clergy and what he defines as “ordinary sacraments,” which are Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. For the sake of brevity I will only address Calvin’s comments on Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, hereafter to be called the Eucharist for the sake of continuity with the rest of the thesis.

### *On Baptism*

Baptism serves as a confession before men of allegiance to Christ “by which we publicly profess that we wish to be reckoned God’s people” (*Institutes* 1313), and as an assurance of faith, Calvin says. It also is a sign of forgiveness, of the believers’ participation in Christ’s death and resurrection, and also in his blessings, according to Calvin. God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit all work together in Baptism, even though “all the gifts of God proffered in baptism are found in Christ alone” (1308), Calvin says, because one finds “in the Father the cause, in the Son the matter, and in the Spirit the effect, of our purgation and regeneration (through Baptism)”

(1308). In other words, although the gifts are found in Christ alone, without the Father the gifts would not be offered to us and without the Holy Spirit the gifts would not be effective in us.

The Holy Spirit makes Baptism effective to bolster a believer's faith in three ways: as a "token and proof of our cleansing" (*Institutes* 1304), to show us our "mortification in Christ, and new life in him" (*Institutes* 1307), and as a testament to the fact that we are "so united to Christ himself that we become sharers in all his blessings" (*Institutes* 1307). Calvin describes Baptism as evidence of cleansing rather than the medium for cleansing itself, saying that "in this sacrament are received the knowledge and certainty of such gifts" (*Institutes* 1304), referring to regeneration, renewal, and salvation. Calvin goes on to clarify that the certainty of having been cleansed is effective for the entire life of the believer who is baptized. That is, "that at whatever time we are baptized, we are once and for all washed and purged for our whole life" (*Institutes* 1305).

Under this reasoning, Calvin condemns rebaptizing, saying that "though baptism, administered only once, seemed to have passed, it was still not destroyed by subsequent sins. For Christ's purity has been offered us in it; his purity ever flourishes; it is defiled by no spots, but buries and cleanses away all our defilements" (*Institutes* 1306). Therefore, there would be no need to be baptized more than once, for the first immersion begins a process of being purified that is ongoing. Thus, Calvin exhorts believers to "receive it, and be secure" (*Institutes* 1315). By this argument, Calvin also rejects the idea of penance, which was the means by which Christians in the Catholic tradition were absolved of sins committed after Baptism. Calvin argues that Baptism is itself penance, and that, "as often as we fall away, we ought to recall the memory of our baptism and fortify our mind with it, that we may always be sure and confident of the forgiveness of sins" (*Institutes* 1305).

Baptism also allows believers to participate in Christ's death and resurrection both symbolically and literally. Calvin asserts that in being baptized, believers are symbolizing a death to their old sinful nature and a renewal of righteous life in Christ. He quotes Romans 6:4, where Paul is exhorting the Christians to "walk in newness of life" (*Institutes* 1307). Thus, the Baptism is symbolic for the believer's death to sin and resurrection into new life, which mirrors Christ's own death and resurrection. Calvin clarifies that the mortification of our flesh, in other words, the condemnation of our sinful nature, is not an act completed in Baptism, but only begun there, "which we pursue day by day and which will, moreover, be accomplished when we pass from this life to the Lord" (*Institutes* 1312). Calvin supports this belief with the inner struggle of Paul described in Romans 7, where Paul related his continual battle against sin.

Baptism is not only symbolic, however. Calvin argues that, through Baptism, Christ engrafts believers into himself through their sharing in his death, and "just as a twig draws substance and nourishment from the root to which it is grafted, so those who receive baptism with right faith truly feel the effective working of Christ's death in the mortification of their flesh, together with the working of his resurrection in the vivification of the Spirit" (*Institutes* 1307). It is unclear if by this Calvin means that to be engrafted with Christ requires Baptism, and what exactly engrafting with Christ accomplishes. He has been adamant thus far that the sacraments do not impart salvation, but Christ's imputation of righteousness through Baptism sounds like a contradiction of that statement.

Baptism goes beyond merely engrafting us into Christ's death and resurrection, unifying us with Christ so closely that we also share in his blessings. Calvin states that Christ underwent Baptism so that he might "have it in common with us as the firmest bond of the union and fellowship which he has deigned to form with us" (*Institutes* 1308). Because of that bond, Calvin

asserts “that we are children of God from the fact that we put on Christ in baptism” (*Institutes* 1308). Thus, the blessing Christ shares with us through Baptism is adoption by God as his children.

Baptism is also a confession of faith before believers and a means of entrance into the body of Christ, that is, the Church. Calvin states that Baptism is the sign “by which we testify that we agree in worshipping the same God, in one religion with all Christians; by which finally we openly affirm our faith” (*Institutes* 1313-1314). Calvin adds that the efficacy of Baptism does not depend on the merit of the one who administers it. Calvin argues that “a sacrament must not be judged by the hand of the one by whom it is ministered, but as if it were from the very hand of God, from whom it doubtless has come” (*Institutes* 1315). This is a point of common ground for Calvin, Luther, and Hugh, all of whom assert that where there is right faith in the one being baptized, it is a true Baptism.<sup>9</sup> Calvin clarifies, however, that “Christ did not command women, or men of every sort, to baptize, but gave this command to those whom he had appointed apostles” (*Institutes* 1320). That is to say, Calvin believed that only ministers should baptize, even arguing against Baptism by a layman in cases where a minister was not to be had and death was near at hand. His reasoning for this was, once again, that Baptism was not necessary for salvation so there was no reason to rob a minister of his duty.

Infant baptism is a good and right practice, demanded by God and exhorted by Christ. The foundation for Calvin’s defense of infant baptism is rooted in his comparison of Baptism with circumcision. Calvin argues that what circumcision accomplished under the Old Testament law is the same thing that Baptism accomplishes in the New Testament. “For circumcision was for the Jews their first entry into the church, because it was a token to them by which they were

---

<sup>9</sup> Hugh adds that the Baptism must be confirmed by a priest making the sign of the cross, but does not go so far as to say that it is invalid should the one baptizing be an infidel.

assured of adoption as the people and household of God, and they in turn professed to enlist in God's service. In like manner, we also are consecrated to God through baptism, to be reckoned as his people, and in turn we swear fealty to him" (*Institutes* 1327)

The Anabaptists made the argument that circumcision was a purely carnal promise with carnal rewards and that Baptism is a spiritual promise with spiritual rewards. Calvin refutes them by following their logic to the only possible end, which would be that God's promises to the Jews only yielded carnal results and not everlasting ones, namely, that the entire nation "was satiated for a time with God's benefits... only to perish in eternal destruction" (*Institutes* 1333). Such a conclusion is preposterous to Calvin, who continues his refutation by citing Paul in Colossians 2:11, where he describes a spiritual circumcision and compares it to the burying of sin in baptism, as "striving to demonstrate that baptism is for the Christians what circumcision previously was for the Jews" (*Institutes* 1333). Just as in circumcision the Jewish children were entered into the promise God made to Abraham, so in Baptism children are engrafted into the body of Christ and marked to receive his blessings.

Having likened Baptism to circumcision, Calvin then needed only to point out that God demanded the children of Israel to be circumcised on the eighth day, in other words, while they yet lacked the faculties to hear the word, believe, and profess, which are required of adults. Calvin also points to Jesus' exhortation in Matthew 19:14 to "let the little children come to me," arguing that "if it is right for infants to be brought to Christ, why not also to be received into Baptism, the symbol of our communion and fellowship with Christ?" (*Institutes* 1330) The benefits of infant Baptism are that when children are "engrafted into the body of the church, they are somewhat more commended to the other members," and that the parents see the truth of God's promise to bless "even to the thousandth generation," and in seeing are given "ample



occasion to proclaim his glory” (*Institutes* 1332). It should be noted that the listed benefits of infant Baptism and even the comparison to circumcision are a shaky foundation for stating that God demands it. First of all, to argue such a linear relationship between circumcision and Baptism would exclude women from being baptized, since they were never circumcised. Second, that a child should be baptized to be commended to the congregation in the future seems like a poor substitute for the engrafting into Christ’s death and resurrection that Calvin describes in Baptism for adults. Calvin tries to make a stronger argument for infant Baptism later, stating that the infants remain hateful to God in their original sin until they are regenerated through Baptism, and that only through Baptism are they purified for entrance into God’s presence in heaven (*Institutes* 1340). However, this seems to contradict his earlier statements that Baptism is not necessary for justification.

One may also argue that if infant baptism is demanded, why are infants not also given the Eucharist? Calvin’s refutation of this argument is that Paul commands a believer to “prove and search himself” before partaking of the Eucharist. Since children are incapable of such self-examination, he concludes it would be preposterous to give them the Eucharist.

### *The Eucharist*

For Calvin, the Eucharist is meant to “nourish us throughout the course of our life” by means of “bread and wine, which represent for us the invisible food that we receive from the flesh and blood of Christ” (*Institutes* 1360). Believers are “refreshed by partaking” of Christ, who is completely spiritually present in the Sacrament. The Eucharist is composed of both bread and wine and also serves to confirm believers in their faith concerning the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice on their behalf through “the remembrance of Christ’s death” (*Institutes* 1414). The effect of the Eucharist is that “in it they have a witness of our growth into one body with Christ

such that whatever is his may be called ours” (*Institutes* 1362). That is to say, in the same way that the body takes in food and makes it part of the body, so believers take in Christ through the Eucharist and are made one with him and share in his blessings and power. Calvin’s reasoning here seems flawed, since when a creature eats it takes what is eaten and makes it a part of its body, but Calvin is asserting that when a believer eats, what is eaten (Jesus) takes the eater (the believer) and makes it part of Himself. Thus, it would seem his analogy falls short of making his point. I think Calvin would argue, however, that in terms of consumption, it is the nature of the lesser thing to become part of the greater thing. Thus, even though human believers are physically consuming Christ, Christ consumes the believers due to His being the greater nature.

Calvin continues his philosophy of the Eucharist by asserting that Christ’s body is not physically present in the Eucharist, but that his body is fully present spiritually. Calvin states that “Christ is the only food of our soul” and that God intended the Eucharist to be a physical image of a spiritual eating; “just as bread and wine sustain physical life, so are souls fed by Christ” (*Institutes* 1361). Calvin addresses John 6, the foundation for Hugh’s argument in favor of transubstantiation, arguing that when Christ called himself the “bread of life,” he did so not specifically in reference to the sacrament but in reference to his entire ministry. His reasoning is that Christ meant to infer that “by true partaking of him, his life passes into us and is made ours just as bread when taken as food imparts vigor to the body” (*Institutes* 1365). Calvin also argues that the term “bread of life” and the following promise of eternal life to any who eat (John 6:48-50) was symbolic of the physical body that Christ gave up in death, and thus the Sacrament “sends us to the cross of Christ where that promise was indeed performed and in all respects fulfilled” (*Institutes* 1363). In other words, the Eucharist is intended to draw believers from physical things to spiritual things by giving a physical representation of a spiritual reality.

Calvin makes another argument based on a quote from Jesus in John 6:51: “the bread which I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world” (*Institutes* 1368). Calvin takes this to mean that through Christ’s flesh all redeemed human flesh is restored to life, not by means of a physical eating but as a result of Christ’s physical giving over of his flesh to death.

In what appears to be a complete reversal of belief, Calvin also states that “it would be extreme madness to recognize no communion of believers with the flesh and blood of the Lord” (*Institutes* 1370) and that “if the Lord truly represents the participation in his body through the breaking of bread, there ought not to be the least doubt that he truly presents and shows his body” (*Institutes* 1371). In other words, if Christ said that believers partake of his body in the Eucharist, then it must be true. However, Calvin seems to clear the matter up by later clarifying that Christ’s body is not physically present in the bread or in the wine for “there is not need of this for us to enjoy a participation in it” (*Institutes* 1373). Rather, Christ’s body is present spiritually and believers partake in it through the “secret power of the Holy Spirit” (1370). In this way Calvin combats consubstantiation and transubstantiation; “for they think they only communicate with it if it descends into bread; but they do not understand the manner of descent by which he lifts us up to himself” (*Institutes* 1379). For Calvin, rather than Christ physically returning to earth, He lifts the believer up spiritually to partake of His physical body.

Calvin also runs through a long list of philosophical and scientific reasons Christ’s physical body and blood could not physically be present through consubstantiation or transubstantiation. He even gives a defense for choosing to use reason to prove his points. However, his theological reasoning best fits the scope of this project, so we will content ourselves with what has been said.

Through the Eucharist believers both share in Christ's blessings and are affirmed in their faith concerning the everlasting life they receive through him. Calvin says the effects of the Eucharist are "redemption, righteousness, sanctification and eternal life, and all the other benefits Christ gives to us" (*Institutes* 1372). That is not to say that the Eucharist is necessary for these things any more than Baptism is necessary for purification; rather, Calvin asserts that it is the seal and assurance of these things and that "the Lord here not only recalls to our memory, as we have already explained, the abundance of his bounty, but, so to speak, gives it into our hand and arouses us to recognize it" (*Institutes* 1414). Here there is some disparity in Calvin's language and what one can discern about what he means. By saying, "gives it into our hand" Calvin appears to be arguing that the Sacraments are the way in which believers receive the "abundance and bounty" of the Lord, which is a contradiction of his classification of Sacraments as seals of a promise. However, I would argue that Calvin is using imprecise phrasing that is muddling his presentation of the argument. In other words, it is not that Calvin believes the Lord is giving grace, mercy, or justification to the believer through the sacraments, rather he is reiterating that the sacraments impart *something*, which he has already named as assurance and engrafting and the things there listed are that of which believers are assured.

The Sacrament must be accompanied by the Word in order to be effective, Calvin argues, "for whatever benefit may come to us from the Supper requires the Word: whether we are to be confirmed in faith, or exercised in confession, or aroused to duty, there is need of preaching" (*Institutes* 1416). Calvin is careful to clarify that it is "no magical incantation" that accompanies the bread, but "the promises are recited and the mystery declared, so that they who are about to receive it may receive it with benefits" (*Institutes* 1416). The reason for this is implicit in Calvin's understanding of a Sacrament as a seal of a promise. If the promise is not known, the

Sacrament has nothing to seal and is useless. Thus, preaching the Word must come first so that those partaking may know and believe what promises are being affirmed in the sacraments.

Additionally, no physical conversion of the elements occurs, but when the promise (word) is given, those who hear it for what it is can receive. “But this principle was hidden from [non-believers], that the bread is a sacrament only to those persons to whom the word is directed” (*Institutes* 1377). That is to say, the bread is only bread to a non-believer, but once the promise of participation with Christ is brought to mind and believed by faith, the bread and wine become the Sacrament, or “seals of the promise” (*Institutes* 1377). This reliance on faith likens Calvin to Luther; however Calvin uses it to further distance himself from Luther and Hugh by pointing out that consubstantiation and transubstantiation both allow nonbelievers to participate in the body of Christ, since it is an actual physical presence. Spiritual participation with Christ’s body through faith means that anyone who partakes without faith simply eats bread.

## CHAPTER 5

### Personal Theology

At the start of this, the final chapter of this thesis, it behooves me to explain clearly what I mean by justification and sanctification. Justification is the means by which believers are absolved of the guilt of sin: sanctification is the means by which the very soul of the believer is changed by God to be more like God and thus less inclined to sin. For sin changed the being of humans, making them prone to sin, like a poorly built machine that is likely to break down often and be in need of repairs. Justification resolves the immediate problem of the machine breaking down by providing forgiveness of sin. Sanctification is the rewiring of the machine itself to make the breakdowns less likely. Sanctification is never completed in a believer's lifetime. Rather, it is pursued and received only in part as the believer continually submits his will to the Lord's, but is received in whole by the justified at or sometime after death.

I also hold that justification comes only through repentance, that is, by turning away from sin and turning towards God, and that no human can know whether a person is saved or damned, "for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7, KJV)<sup>10</sup>. That is to say, man can see only actions, but it is the state of the heart/soul that determines salvation. That is why Christ said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me,

---

<sup>10</sup> "BibleGateway." *King James Version (KJV) - Version Information - BibleGateway.com*, [www.biblegateway.com/versions/King-James-Version-KJV-Bible](http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/King-James-Version-KJV-Bible).

ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23), for some who appear to be saved will be damned, and some who appear to be furthest from Christ will enter Heaven’s gates.

### *The Sacrament*

A sacrament is a physical means by which believers are led into justification and sanctification, are brought closer to the Lord through obedience, and publicly declare their dedication to God through their actions. Paul only uses the term “sacrament” to describe marriage in Ephesians 5:32. The reasons for the inclusion of Baptism and the Eucharist under the term “sacrament” is meat for another thesis, however it does make the actual term more ambiguous, as well as raise the question: why did the Church group the sacraments together the way they did? The various acts Jesus commanded of believers were never grouped together with rules governing how they function in the life of the believer in the bible, thus it appears that all of the arguments concerning the definition of a sacrament put forth by the theologians previously mentioned and by myself are purely exercises in logic and philosophy with the aim at making a coherent pattern of the acts and commands of Christ. That is not to say that I condemn it as pointless; rather, I think one should tread carefully when trying to assert truths that Christ himself did not see fit to talk of in specifics, a point that I think shows that these conjectures about sacraments etc., while interesting and sometimes helpful for spiritual growth, are unnecessary in the grand scheme of the work Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection meant to accomplish.

While the physical sacraments do not confer justification or sanctification, through the medium of the sacraments both are found, albeit in different manners. That is to say, while the sacraments lead the believer to justification and sanctification, they are not necessary for either and God can justify and sanctify believers without the use of sacraments. Therefore, they are not

necessary for salvation. This does not mean that the sacraments can be done away with, for believers are commanded by Christ himself to attend to such sacraments as are dealt with in this thesis (namely, Baptism and the Eucharist), and there is certainly a value inherent in the sacraments that cannot be found elsewhere simply because they are an opportunity to follow a direct command of Christ.<sup>11</sup> By the same reasoning, it would be sin not to partake of the sacraments when given the opportunity, for to not do what Christ has commanded would be to not love the Lord with “all your heart, soul, mind, and strength” (Mark 12:30).

Although not necessary for salvation, the sacraments are effective insofar as they are an avenue by which believers are drawn into deeper communion with God through obedience, and sanctified by the same. Whether or not there is special sanctification through the sacraments is difficult to say, although the argument can and has been made that there must be a special sanctity in the sacraments because Jesus himself requested that we perform them and as the Son of God, his commands carry a weight beyond words.

In performing the sacraments, it is biblically evident that one must first attend to the spiritual realm and only second to the physical realm, a fact that combats the argument in favor of innate sanctity or power in the physical sacraments. When Christ and Peter each command others to baptize, it is preceded by a command to “make disciples” (Matthew 28:19) or “repent” (Acts 2:38). This indicates that the spiritual state of the believer must be put in order before the physical sacraments should be participated in. Additionally, when Jesus heals the slave of the centurion (Luke 7:1-10), he commends the man for his faith. When he saves the adulterous woman from stoning (John 8:1-11), he tells her to go and sin no more, which he repeats to the

---

<sup>11</sup> Although Christ does give other commands, many of them concerning love, and also “sin no more” (John 8:11) and “go and make disciples”(Matthew 28:19), this thesis is developed using the definition of sacrament as a physical sign of a spiritual truth. Thus, Baptism and the Eucharist are the only two commands of which it has been argued that the sign is directly related to a spiritual truth.



lame man at the pools of Bethesda (John 5) after healing him. In none of these instances does Jesus emphasize Baptism, or even mention it. Rather, he emphasizes the state of the heart, urging the people to walk in faith and purity.

Attention to the spiritual should precede the sacrament with the Eucharist as well, for Jesus gave it only to his apostles, those with whom he had walked for three years and who believed in him. Paul further elucidates the idea by saying that believers must “examine themselves” (1 Corinthians 11:28) before partaking. Unworthy participation in the Eucharist while unrepentant is shown to have real effects, such as those Paul outlines in 1 Corinthians 11:23-28.<sup>12</sup>

One could counter the argument that Jesus only gave the sacrament to those who were worthy, that is, repentant, with the fact that Judas was present at the Last Supper. Calvin and Luther would agree, I think, that Judas did not receive the reality of the sacrament at all and for him it was only bread and wine. However, it would seem that whether or not one receives the reality of the Eucharist does not depend upon the receiver being repentant because Paul outlined how the Eucharist was a double edged sword, bringing sickness and death to those who partook of it unworthily. Mere bread and wine would not be effective to bring sickness or death to unworthy participants. It could be said that God brings about the punishment of unworthy partakers without the reality of the sacrament being present, but if the reality of the sacrament is not there, they are not truly partaking of the sacrament unworthily and do not deserve such punishment.

The word, that is, teaching, must accompany the physical immersion or eating in order to make it truly a sacrament. On this point all three theologians agree. Without teaching, and for Calvin and Luther also comprehension from those listening, the sacraments are only actions and

---

<sup>12</sup> Paul says that the Corinthian believers are getting sick and even dying as a result of unworthy participation in the Eucharist.

have no effective power. As Hugh, Luther, and Calvin have already outlined the various reasons for preceding a sacrament with teaching, I will leave my claim as it stands. However, it should here be noted that, because Christ himself commands that all be baptized in “the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19), it stands to reason that the sacrament of Baptism should be accompanied by such teaching as will explain the use of that phrase and that the phrase should be used in conducting the sacrament itself.

### *On Baptism*

Baptism is the outward, public sign of a Christian’s belief in and dedication to God and His church, draws the believer into intimate communion with God, and, supposedly, is the way by which the believer is made ready to receive the Holy Spirit, although that point is in contention. Additionally, Baptism is not efficacious for salvation. Rather, it is a part of sanctification insofar as to be baptized is to do the will of God (Jesus’ mandate to baptize) and it is a public declaration of union with and dedication to the body of Christ (the Church), as Calvin put it.

Whether or not there is a deeper sanctification than that which I have outlined is unclear. Its actual existence seems to me a moot point, since all Christians should undergo Baptism out of simple obedience first, and if there is special sanctification, that is wonderful and all true believers receive it. I do not go as far as Abelard does and say that God ensures all believers receive Baptism, but I do argue that the responsibility for Baptism is placed on mature believers as the doers, for one cannot expect a new believer to undergo Baptism if he has not had it explained to him. That is to say, mature believers are responsible for the instruction of new believers on the importance of Baptism, and also for encouraging to undergo the sacrament. For Christ commanded that his disciples “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19), that is, he

commanded his followers to go out and make sure that everyone hears and is baptized. Thus the first responsibility concerning Baptism falls to the declarer of the Gospel, and the second to the hearer to listen and, if the Holy Spirit makes him able to understand, act to receive the sacrament.

Baptism is also something that Christians can hold on to as a remembrance of their justification and purification, for Baptism symbolizes a washing away and renewal of life by using a physical sign to represent a spiritual truth. However, it is not the mechanism for that purification except insofar as the Lord sanctifies believers through their submitting their wills to His will in obedience to Christ's commands.

Baptism is the means by which believers enter into a more intimate communion with God and the church by following in the steps of Christ and being publicly named one of God's own through the utterance of the phrase "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This public declaration of belonging to God reflects Jesus' own Baptism when God publically pronounced him as His son. On this point all three theologians agree: Baptism is a public declaration.

Being baptized not only in the name of the Father and of the Son but also that of the Holy Spirit has been said to be the means by which believers receive the Holy Spirit. The story of Peter and Cornelius would immediately appear to refute that. However, one can argue that the story of Cornelius' pre-Baptism reception of the Holy Spirit was only meant to show Peter and the other believers that gentiles could believe and be baptized as well. One cannot argue, though, that Paul baptized the believers at Ephesus first in Christ's Baptism, "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (Acts 19:6). That is to say, after baptizing the believers at Ephesus into Christ, which one would assume means as Christ commanded that people be baptized with the induction

of the triune God, Paul yet had to lay hands on them and pray for the Holy Spirit to come upon them. From this it would seem that Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a separate event from Baptism. Christ's final statement to the Apostles about the coming Holy Spirit also points at Baptism as a separate event, for Christ said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8), making no reference to Baptism being necessary to receive the Holy Spirit. I cannot absolutely refute that water Baptism may be a necessary precedent for Baptism in the Holy Spirit, but biblical evidence makes it seem otherwise.

I must here point out that I am also biased by my own experience in the Christian church. Baptism in water and Baptism in the Holy Spirit were two distinctly separate events in my life, as they were in the lives of many others I have known and whose testimonies I have heard. However, those narratives don't exclude the possibility of Baptism normally preceding receiving the Holy Spirit.

The immersion of infants fails to meet the criteria for a sacrament, since infants can neither believe nor repent of their sins. Although I have already responded in part to Calvin's view on infant Baptism, which is the only one I need to address given that my interpretation of the function of sacraments resembles his the most closely, I think it merits further comment. Firstly, it would seem to me an injustice to deny a person the opportunity to know the mortification of their own flesh and experience the impartation of Christ's righteousness through Baptism just so that they would be better grafted into the corporeal church at an earlier age, the benefits of which Calvin barely outlines. I also think that faith is inherently necessary in Baptism: always it is "believe and be baptized," and not "be baptized so you might believe." Since it is impossible for an infant to believe, it must stand that Baptism is unfitting for anyone without the mental faculty necessary for belief. This line of reasoning would also exclude the

severely mentally disabled from participating in Baptism, but I argue that it does not exclude them from salvation. I posit that the parameters for the salvation of infants and the severely mentally disabled are not tied to the sacraments at all. Rather, I choose to believe in the perfect justice and mercy of God in matters of salvation that go beyond biblical example.

Calvin argues in favor of infant Baptism using Christ's statement to "let the little children come to me." However, I would argue that Christ's declaration there has more to do with the proverb "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6) than it does with Baptism or salvation. In the Biblical context, Christ called the children to him to hear his teaching, not so he could baptize them. Following that interpretation, I think Christ was encouraging believers to share the Gospel with the children so that they might, at the earliest possible moment, come into the body of Christ through Baptism. What follows from this theology of mine is that rebaptism in the instance of those who were baptized as infants is admissible, in order that the believer may fulfill the actual sacrament as Christ requires, that is, to believe and be baptized.

### *The Eucharist*

The Eucharist draws believers to repentance, the source of justification, and should be taken regularly. The physical sacrament is not efficacious, but when coupled with faith it is used to recall to mind the work of Christ on the cross, to aid in examination for sinful behavior that does not honor God, and to seal in our hearts and minds the knowledge that Christ will return in glory one day. Through this act of obedience, the believers who partake are also sanctified and brought nearer to Christ.

There is no way to know if Christ's body is present instead of or alongside the bread. Those explanations could be the truth of the matter, or he could be present spiritually, or he

could merely commune spiritually with the partaker, or Christ could have instituted it as a practice for Christians in self-examination and to recall to mind often the work he did on the cross and his ever-approaching second coming. Regardless, through the Eucharist, Christians commune with Christ, examine themselves, are brought back to the foot of the cross, and are humbled and enlivened by the memory of Jesus' work and the hope of his work to come.

The issue of the presence or nonpresence of Christ in the Eucharist has been more schismatic than necessary. Even Luther admitted that there was no way to prove in favor of or against transubstantiation, although he only argued that point with consubstantiation as the alternative: instead he asked that the church not make that belief the thing on which the whole sacrament turned. I am taking a similar stance. As far as biblical proof one way or the other, the verses in John 6 can be taken either literally or metaphorically. It would not be the first time Christ spoke metaphorically<sup>13</sup>, nor would it be the strangest thing he had said literally. Although my own assertions claim that Christ is not physically present, In 1 Corinthians 11:29, Paul says, "For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves." Paul's assertion leaves room for an alternate interpretation of the literal meaning. The use of the word "discerning" here is what leaves room for argument. Another translation uses the word "recognizing,"<sup>14</sup> another "unworthily,"<sup>15</sup> and another "honoring."<sup>16</sup> All three

---

<sup>13</sup> "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5); "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12); "I am the good shepherd" (John 10: 11, 14).

<sup>14</sup>"Berean Study Bible." *Berean Study Bible*, [bereanbible.com](http://bereanbible.com).

<sup>15</sup> KJV

<sup>16</sup> "BibleGateway." *New Living Translation (NLT) - Version Information - BibleGateway.com*, [www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-Living-Translation-NLT-Bible](http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-Living-Translation-NLT-Bible).

translations share a common meaning, which is that the believers are meant to interact with Christ while taking the Eucharist. The literal usage of “discerning” or “recognizing” means that the believers are being told to recognize the actual physical body of Christ in the sacrament. However, it could also be said that the believers were being told to discern the body of Christ insofar as the bread and cup represented his body and blood.

Paul’s warning to the church in Corinth has also been used to argue that the early believers took the Eucharist as the actual body and blood of Christ. I posit that they did not believe it to actually become the flesh and blood of Christ, but rather that they *thought* of it as the body and blood of Christ insofar as he is sustenance to the souls of those who believe, even as believers think of Christ as light, a shepherd and a gate. In all of those metaphorical instances, Christ said “I am,” and by saying so was making a statement about himself and not about the light or a shepherd or a gate; the physical things were meant to help explain spiritual truths. The same can be said for Christ’s statements about being “the bread of life” (John 6:35), for it meant not that he was or would actually be bread but that he was nourishment and sustenance for the souls of believers. Similarly, at the Last Supper, when Christ handed out the bread and wine, he was using it to explain that he, the bread of life who is our nourishment, was being handed out for the sake of nourishing and saving humanity. It was foreshadowing and also a method by which the disciples and all who came after them could understand and remember what Christ did on the cross. Thus, the believers thought of the bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ that was given for them, and by partaking of it as though it were Christ’s body the reality of the cross was made all the more vivid and real in their hearts.

Each believer ought to examine himself or herself before taking the Sacrament, remembering the sacrifice of Christ and his resurrection and looking forward to his return. Such reflection draws the believer into repentance, in which state the believer is sanctified by God.



## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The most intriguing part of this study has been seeing how three theologians who are noteworthy because of their differences from each other hold so many things in common. Regardless of the details, Hugh, Luther, and Calvin all value the sacraments because they came from Christ himself. Each posits that the sacraments must work in harmony with belief and sees the sacraments as a way to be drawn closer to God by understanding spiritual truths through physical signs. All three stress that the sacraments should not be forgotten or foregone, even if their reasons differ, and all believe the sacraments were given to believers as an aid and a way for a loving God to bless his children. Whereas many of the details of the truths I have just outlined have been cause for separation and division in the Church, I see more themes to unify than divide when I read these theologians. I believe this study has helpfully revealed differences, but has revealed even more similarities pointing towards a common root for the truth of the sacraments. It is on that common truth that I have founded my own beliefs, which is why I acknowledge that what I posit may not be absolute truth. The one thing I hold unwaveringly in highest honor, above even the sacraments, is the cross and the work done there by Christ Jesus, and on that my fellow theologians all agree. Everything else is but a vapor when compared with the reality of salvation through Christ.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

“Berean Study Bible.” *Berean Study Bible*, bereanbible.com.

“BibleGateway.” *King James Version (KJV) - Version Information - BibleGateway.com*, [www.biblegateway.com/versions/King-James-Version-KJV-Bible](http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/King-James-Version-KJV-Bible).

“BibleGateway.” *New Living Translation (NLT) - Version Information - BibleGateway.com*, [www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-Living-Translation-NLT-Bible](http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-Living-Translation-NLT-Bible).

Calvin, Jean, and John T. McNeill. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. XXI, SCM, 1961

Hugh, and Roy J. Deferrari. *Hugh of Saint Victor on the Sacraments of the Christian Faith: (De Sacramentis)*. Wipf & Stock, 2007.

Luther, Martin, et al. *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings: Edited by Timothy F. Lull and William R. Russell*. Fortress Press, 2012.

Luther, Martin, et al. *The Annotated Luther*. Vol. 3, Fortress Press, 2015.

Luther, Martin, et al. *Luther's Works*. Vol. 38, Fortress Press, 2002.

Luther, Martin, et al. *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520*. Fortress Press, 2016.