The Abbey and Order of St. Victor in the Twelfth Century
Context and Bibliography for Readers of Victorine Texts in Translation

Victorine Texts in Translation (VTT) is a ten-volume series published in hardcover by Brepols, the publishers of the Corpus Christianorum and many other scholarly series and works, and in paperback by New City Press, which also has published an English translation of the works of St. Augustine. One volume of the series is appearing each year. Each volume is devoted to a theme and contains works by several Victorine authors. The translations are made by members of the editorial board and by others. Each volume has its own editor(s), indicated below in parentheses.

These links provide guidance for those who would like to explore the history of the Abbey of St. Victor and the theology of its writers. The aim of these links is to provide direction, not to be exhaustive. Preference is given to works in English. When works of the Victorines have appeared or will appear in Victorine Texts in Translation, they are indicated in red. Included are the relevant essays in the festschrift, Knowledge to Beatitude: St. Victor, Twelfth-Century Scholars, and Beyond: Essays in Honor of Grover A. Zinn, Jr. Edited by E. Ann Matter and Lesley Smith (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013) to which several of the members of the editorial board of VTT contributed. Readers will note the central importance to Victorine studies of the late Jean Châtillon, Rainer Berndt, SJ (Hugo von Sankt Viktor Institute in Frankfurt), Dominique Poirel (Institut de recherché et d’histoire des texts in Paris), and Patrice Sicard (Canon of the Cathedral of notre Dame in Paris), and Luc Jocqué (Brepols Publishers, Belgium), who is both our editor and a Victorine scholar. The late Michael Signer was an important influence in the studies of several of the members of the editorial board of VTT.

There are two excellent surveys of scholarly work on the Victorines during the twentieth century:


A leading German scholar of the Victorines attempts a characterization of religious and intellectual formation at St. Victor and the fundamental principles of Victorine theology in:

1. The Abbey, Its Founders, Its History, and the Congregation of St. Victor

St. Victor was an abbey and for a while a congregation of abbeys of canons regular who followed the Rule of St. Augustine. Canons regular were clergy who lived in common like monks, but almost always followed the Rule of St. Augustine. Their monasteries usually had a customary (book detailing the observances of daily life), and these often drew on monastic (Benedictine/Cistercian) models, so the observances of canons often resembled those of monks. The canons regular have not fared as well as the monastic orders in the post-French Revolution era. The best known congregation of them are the Premonstratensians, also known as the Norbertines after their founder St. Norbert.

1.1 Canons regular

There is no standard, comprehensive history of the canons regular. Two books on them in English (focusing on the British Isles):


1.2 The customary of St. Victor

The customary of St. Victor is available in a critical edition of the Latin text:


It is planned to include at least selections from the *Liber ordinis* is VTT9.

Ralf M. W. Stammberger studies in detail the formation program at St. Victor, basing himself primarily on the *Liber ordinis* and two works of Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon* and *De institutione novitorum*:


1.3 The History of the Abbey and Congregation of St. Victor

The Abbey of St. Victor remained in existence until the French Revolution. The congregation of forty or so abbeys that embraced its way of life does not seem to have survived beyond the first century of St. Victor’s existence. The history of the Abbey and Congregation of St. Victor is the object of only one comprehensive study:


Two collections of articles stemming from conferences on St. Victor help update Bonnard:

1.4 William of Champeaux; Abbot Gilduin and the Founding of St. Victor

St. Victor was founded 1108-1113 by William of Champeaux, archdeacon of Paris and teacher. He became bishop of Châlons-en-Champagne in 1113, but the abbey quickly prospered under the leadership of his successor, Gilduin, who remained in office until 1155. William and Gilduin embraced the ideals of the Gregorian Reform as these pertained to the clergy. The canons regular were to be models of clerical life in community, chaste, detached from personal ambition and wealth, dedicated to preaching.

Important though he clearly was, not just for St. Victor but for the schools of Paris, William of Champeaux remains a somewhat shadowy figure. Some recent articles have clarified his initiative to found St. Victor:


For William of Champeaux’s philosophical ideas and writings, which are difficult to disentangle in the maze of twelfth-century collections of sentences, a good source is the article on him in the online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/william-champeaux/

Abbot Gilduin (1113-1155) is thought to have had a very large influence in shaping the life of the Abbey and Congregation, but little is known about him. Recently a work has been discovered and published which, like the *Liber ordinis*, was promulgated at St. Victor during his abbacy:
2. Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141)

2.1 Introduction

After considerable debate among scholars, it now seems almost universally agreed that Hugh of St. Victor was from Saxony and that he came to St. Victor sometime around 1115. Until his death twenty-five years later, Hugh of St. Victor taught and wrote at the abbey. His theology and his style left their imprint on the canons who succeeded him as teachers, preachers, and writers at St. Victor, and his theology exerted wide influence beyond the abbey. Hugh like his successors listed below was comfortable and creative in both the traditional, meditative, rhetorically ordered theology of the monastic and Augustinian tradition as well as in the new more dialectical theological styles that emerged in the twelfth century. He left behind a very large repertoire of writings, most of which are listed in the index to a collection of his works prepared under Abbot Gilduin:


Hugh’s works are found in hundreds of manuscripts. These manuscripts have been surveyed in a very useful, if not completely accurate, work:


Hugh of St. Victor's works, their editions and translations, are all listed in the abbreviations section of each volume of Victorine Texts in Translation. Here it will be enough to mention several of his most important works and then single out English translations that appear in VTT or elsewhere.

2.2 De sacramentis Christianae fidei (On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith)

De sacramentis Christianae fidei is Hugh’s longest and most important theological work. It is found in vol. 176 of Migne’s Patrologia latina. This edition has been translated into English and, more recently, into German, and a new Latin edition has been prepared from two early manuscripts by Rainer Berndt, SJ.


Some selections from On the Sacraments appear in VTT2: 253–267, and others are planned for inclusion in later volumes.

VTT1 also contains a translation of a reportatio, that is, a student’s notes corrected by Hugh himself, of some of his lectures preliminary to the writing of the De sacramentis:
Hugh of St. Victor, *Sentences on Divinity*, VTT1:103–177

2.3 Didascalicon on the Study of Reading

*Didascalicon on the Study of Reading* is a guide to what to read when studying the liberal arts and Sacred Scripture. Long available in a translation by Jerome Taylor (Columbia University Press, 1961) that was based on the critical edition by C. H. Buttimer (Catholic University Press of America, 1939), it is a very good window into the way the Victorines approached learning.

Franklin T. Harkins presents a new translation of the *Didascalicon* in VTT3: 61-201

Further examples of Hugh’s theory and practice of exegesis appear in VTT3 and will appear in VTT6:

- *On Sacred Scripture and Its Interpretation* and *The Diligent Examiner*. VTT3: 203–252
- *Notulae*. VTT6
- *Chronicon*, Preface. VTT6

2.4 On the Ark of Noah: Little Book (libellus) on the design of the Ark

The *Libellus (Little Book)* describes a very large drawing (whether real or imaginary is debated) of the Ark of Noah (and much else), which served as a tool of spiritual formation, memorization, and instruction. These two texts were edited and studied by Patrice Sicard:


Grover Zinn, Jr. has devoted much of his scholarly life to studying Hugh of St. Victor’s two treatises on the Ark of Noah. His new translations and explanations of both works will appear in VTT5.

2.5 Writings on the Spiritual Life

Hugh of St. Victor was especially adept at writing short works that wove together biblical commentary, theological reflection, and moral and spiritual teaching—a combination that was to be characteristic of Victorine writers throughout the twelfth century. These works of Hugh are well represented in Victorine Texts in Translation:

- *On the Three Days*. VTT1: 49–102
- *Soliloquy on the Betrothal-Gift of the Soul*. VTT2: 183–232
- *On Meditation*. VTT4: 381–394
- *Explanation on the Canticle on Mary*. VTT4: 412–452

2.6 Hugh and Pseudo-Dionysius
Hugh of St. Victor wrote a lengthy commentary on Pseudo-Dionyius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*. A critical edition by Dominic Poirel is soon to appear in the CCCM. He has also published a lengthy study:


A translation of a small portion of Hugh’s *Commentary* appears in


See also,


### 2.7 Writings about Hugh of St. Victor

The bibliographies in the various volumes of VTT show how extensively Hugh of St. Victor has been studied. Five recent books provide introductions to his writings and thought:


*From Knowledge to Beatitude* contains several studies of Hugh of St. Victor:


An article concerned particularly with the *De institutione novitiorum*:


There is a section on Hugh in:


3. Adam of St. Victor (d. 1140s)

3.1 Sequences

Adam of St. Victor has for centuries been renowned for his sequences. He was precentor at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris by 1107 and transferred to St. Victor around 1133. There are questions about how many sequences of his can be identified, but there is a solid core of about forty that are attributed to him with some certainty. A Latin-English edition of his sequences:


There is a very thorough literary study of Adam’s sequences, which includes the Latin texts and French translations of them:


A number of Adam of St. Victor’s sequences are translated in Victorine Texts in Translation:

“Mundi renovatio,” “Profitentes unitatem,” and “Qui procedis ab utroque” in VTT1: 179–194
“Gratulemur ad festivum” and “Simplex in essentia, in VTT2: 233–243
“Ave, virgo singularis/Mater” and “Salve mater salatoris/vas, in VTT4: 453–469

3.2 Studies on Adam and his sequences

Margot Fassler has produced influential studies on Adam, clarifying his identity and life and placing his sequences in the context of the Victorines’ concern to reform clerical life and ministry by a close study of the melodies to which the sequences were sung:


4. Garnier of St. Victor (d. ca. 1170)

Gregorianum (PL 193:23–462) is a theological dictionary based on the writings of Gregory the Great.

5. Achard of St. Victor (d. 1171)

5.1 Introduction
Achard of St. Victor, who seems to have been an Anglo-Norman, was abbot of St. Victor 1155–1161, and died as bishop of Avranches in 1170/71. He was virtually unknown until the twentieth-century, in which his three major writings were finally published. The longest of these, a collection of fifteen sermons, was edited and discussed in a book-length study by Fr. Jean Châtillon, a professor at l’Institut Catholique in Paris, and the foremost Victorine scholar of the twentieth century. The other two works, of a more philosophical nature, are also available in critical editions. All have been translated into English.

5.2 De discrezione animae, spiritus et mentis


5.3 Sermons

Tr. H. Feiss, Works, 59–351.

Several of Achard’s sermons have been translated for Victorine Texts in Translation and more will appear in VTT8:

Sermon 5. VTT2: 245–260
Sermon 13: VTT4: 75–129
Additional sermons: VTT8

5.4 De unitate Dei et pluralitate creaturarur.


Tr. H. Feiss, Works, 375–480.

5.5 Studies

6. Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173)

6.1 Introduction
After Hugh of St. Victor, Richard is the Victorine who has left behind the largest literary legacy and been the most studied. Richard is said to have been from Scotland (or perhaps Ireland). He was subprior at St. Victor, then prior from 1162 until his death in 1173. During the time he was prior, the abbey was in considerable turmoil under the inept leadership of Abbot Ervisius. Not all of Richard’s large legacy has been critically edited. As he did for Hugh of St. Victor, R. Goy published a survey of the manuscripts of Richard’s works.


Two works that provide an introduction to Richard and his work are:


6.2 Syntheses
Two recent attempts, one short and one long, at a synthesis of Richard’s theology of the spiritual life are:


Both of these syntheses concentrate on four of Richard’s most important works:

6.3 On the Four Degrees of Violent Love.


On the Four Degrees of Violent Love, tr. A. Kraebel, VTT2. 261–300

6.4 The Twelve Patriarchs (also known as The Preparation of the Soul for Contemplation and Benjamin minor).


### 6.5 The Ark of Moses (also known as The Mystical Ark, or On Contemplation, or Benjamin major).


Tr. Grover A. Zinn, Jr, *The Twelve Patriarchs*, 149-343. Tr. Ineke van t’Spijker, Mary Clare Murphy, and Hugh Feiss, OSB, VTT5.


### 6.6 On the Trinity

This is Richard’s most studied work; many of the studies are focused on his definition of “person.”


### 6.7 Other Works of Richard of St. Victor

Richard wrote many other works. Of them, the following appear in Victorine Texts in Translation:

- *Commentary on the Apocalypse*. Excerpts in VTT3: 327–370
- *Tractates on Certain Psalms*. VTT4: 131–239 (based on a critical edition by Christopher P. Evans which is to appear in CCCM)
- *De Emmanuele*. VTT6 (a critique of Andrew of St. Victor’s interpretation of Isaiah)
- *On Difficult Passages in Paul*. VTT6
- *Sermon 70, On Pentecost*. VTT6
- Other sermons of Richard will appear in VTT8

### 6.8 Writings About Richard of St. Victor in From Knowledge to Beatitude:


Matter, E. Ann. “Heart Calls to Heart: The Importance of the Love between the Lover and the Beloved

7. Odo of St. Victor (d. 1173)

Odo was prior of St. Victor, then abbot of Sainte Geneviève, which at the time adopted the Victorine observance. There are sermons and letters attributed to him, but there is no thorough study of their authenticity. See PL 196.1399–1418 and PL 171.186-190, 301, and 307.

8. Andrew of St. Victor (d. 1175)

8.1 Introduction

Andrew of St. Victor was an Anglo-Norman. He was sent to be the first abbot of a Victorine foundation at Wigmore in England in 1148. He resigned in 1155 and returned to St. Victor. In 1161 he was called back to Wigmore. He died in 1175 and was buried in the nave of the new church that the community was then building. Andrew has a special place in the history of medieval exegesis as a resolute practitioner of literal, historical exegesis. His surviving commentaries all concern the Old Testament. His work was brought to scholars’ attention by the investigations of Beryl Smalley. Since then, the majority of his works have appeared in critical editions in the CCCM.

8.2 Works about Andrew of St. Victor

One comprehensive work on Andrew is


8.3 Translations of Andrew’s works

One of Andrew’s works has been translated from Latin into English:


Translations appearing in Victorine Texts in Translation:

Andrew of St. Victor, Prologues to Select Commentaries. VTT3: 269–286

Further texts will be included in VTT6.
9. Walter of St. Victor (d. 1179/1180)

9.1 Introduction
Walter of St. Victor was subprior when Richard was prior and succeeded him in 1173.

9.2 Contra quatuor labyrinthos Franciae
Walter first came to the attention of scholars through the work of Palémon Glorieux, who published an unfinished and uncirculated work of Walter’s, which he criticized for its hostile tone and poor scholarship. In it Walter attacks teachings of Peter Abelard, Peter Lombard, Peter of Poitiers, and Gilbert of Poitiers.

Glorieux, P. “Le Contra quatuor labyrinthos Franciae de Gauthier de Saint-Victor,” Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge, 19 (1953): 187–95 (introduction), 195–335 (text);


9.3 Sermons
Jean Châtillon carefully studied and eventually published 36 sermons from a Victorine sermon collection that exists in a number of manuscripts. Of the 66 sermons in that collection, twenty-one are explicitly attributed to Walter, and a number of others may be his as well. In them Walter shows himself to be the equal of other Victorine preachers in style and content.


Several sermons will appear in Victorine Texts in Translation:

*Sermon 6: On the Feast of the Purification. VTT4: 529–550
Six or seven of Walter’s Sermons will appear in VTT8.*

10. Guérin of St. Victor (d.1193?)
Guérin may have been abbot of Sainte Geneviève. He was living among the canons regular of La Châge when he was chosen to succeed Ernis in 1172. He left behind letters (PL 196.1387–1398), and some unpublished sermons and acts. On him, see the article by Jacques Pycke in Dictionnaire d’histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques, 22 (Paris, 1988): 684-696.

11. Godfrey of St. Victor (d. ca. 1195)

11.1 Introduction
Godfrey of St. Victor studied the liberal arts and theology at Paris and then entered the Abbey of St. Victor about 1155–1160. He was assigned for some years to a priory, then returned to the abbey in 1185/1186, where he served as armarius, in which capacity he was responsible for the production and preservation of books, especially those used in the liturgy. He was not a speculative thinker, but a gifted writer. The only book-length study of Godfrey to date is:

Delhaye’s work has been brought up to date and amended by a series of articles in French by Françoise Gasparri. Not all of Godfrey’s works have been edited and published, but two that have, the *Microcosmus* and the *Fountain of Philosophy*, show that Godfrey shared Hugh of St. Victor’s encyclopedic outlook.

11.2 Microcosmus


11.3 Fountain of Philosophy


11.4 Preconium Augustini


11.5 Sermons and Hymns

Godfrey prepared collections of 31 of his sermons and a 32nd has been identified. Only a few of these have been edited and published. One of these and two hymns attributed to Godfrey are translated in


12. Twelfth-Century Victorines: Specific Topics


13. Thomas Gallus (d. 1246)

Thomas was a native of France. He became a member of St. Victor. In 1218/1219 he and two other canons of St. Victor accompanied Cardinal Guala Bicchieri to Vercelli to occupy an abbey that the cardinal was establishing there along with an adjacent hospital. Thomas became prior in 1224 and abbot in 1125. His burial monument in the former abbey church of St. Andrew in Vercelli depicts him with Pseudo-Dionysius, St. Andrew, the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Catherine, the patroness of philosophy. Thomas wrote biblical commentaries and studies of the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius. He was friends with Robert Grosseteste, Adam Marsh, and St. Anthony of Padua. Our understanding of his place in the intellectual history of the Abbey of St. Victor will be enhanced by a critical edition of Hugh of St. Victor’s *Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy* by Dominique Poirel, which is soon to appear in the CCCM, and by his lengthy study:


Thomas Gallus’ works are gradually appearing in critical editions:


English translations are beginning to appear. In addition to McEvoy’s bilingual edition, there are:


Declan Lawell has published a number of short editions and articles:


Boyd Taylor Coolman has written two recent articles on Thomas Gallus:


Several works of Thomas Gallus are to appear in forthcoming volumes of VTT, beginning with VTT5.

14. Penitentials
The canons regular of St. Victor had a pastoral ministry to the students in Paris, which included acting as confessors. Members of the community produced two surviving penitentials or guides for confessors:


Passages from these two works will appear in VTT10.

15. In the Victorine Sphere of Influence
15.1 Robert of Melun (d. 1167)


15.2 Maurice de Sully (d. 1196)
Maurice seems to have been born around 1120 to a humble family in the region around Orléans. He arrived in Paris about 1140 and, like Robert of Melun, was influenced by the teaching of Hugh of St. Victor and Abelard. Maurice, though, was more of a humanist than a dialectician, and he had a practical, pastoral bent. He succeeded Peter Lombard as Bishop of Paris in 1160. He oversaw the building of Notre-Dame as his
new cathedral, as part of a reorganization of the pastoral care in his diocese. He left behind Latin sermons addressed to his clergy, as well as a collection of sermons which aimed to serve as models for his clergy when they preached to their people. These exist in both Latin and Old French and are much influenced by Richard of St. Victor’s writings. He died at St. Victor.

A number of his Old French sermons will be translated in VTT8.

15.3 Absalom of Springiersbach
Absalom, not to be confused with an abbot of St. Victor by the same name, was sent to Springiersbach as abbot in 1193, and seems to have died there in 1204, although another abbot succeeded him as early as 1196. He has left behind a large collection of sermons which was published in 1534 and reprinted as

_Sermones festivales_, PL 211.13-294. A number of these will be translated in VTT8.

15.4 William of Aebelholt (d. 1203)
William joined the Abbey of Sainte-Geneviève in Paris shortly after the community adopted the Victorine _ordo_ in 1148. He served at subprior under the first Victorine abbot Odo. He was evidently a champion of strict observance. In 1165 he traveled to Denmark, where he was charged with reforming a community of canons, who later moved to Aebelholt. He became an important figure in the Danish church and died in 1203. In 1224 he was canonized by Pope Honorius III. There survive a _Vita et miracula_ and a collection of his letters, and other documents, none of which are available in English.

16. The Thirteenth Century and Beyond
After 1200 St. Victor’s importance as a center of theological learning declined, and the history of the abbey after that time has not received much attention from English-speaking scholars. Some idea of the abbey after 1200 can be derived from two studies by Marshall E. Crossnoe:
