

RICHARD HOOKER'S DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

BY

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A Thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

This thesis discusses the contribution of Richard Hooker to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in his magisterial work, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Hooker's discussion of the Holy Spirit is unsystematic although his dependence on the Holy Spirit for his theology is extensive. The aim of the thesis is to assess the contribution of the Holy Spirit to Hooker's theology as under-represented in current research. The method adopted is the identification of those texts where Hooker specifically discusses the Holy Spirit, analysis of such texts in their immediate context, and links to Hooker's use of John Calvin. In particular, the view that Hooker wrote the *Laws* primarily to refute Puritan claims that the Elizabethan church had failed to embrace the fullness of Genevan reform, is assessed. The heart of this criticism is especially notable in the *Christian Letter*, and is something Hooker anticipated in the body of the *Laws*. In light of this concern, Hooker's attitude to reform is explored in relation to contemporary and later Puritan writers, such as William Perkins, William Ames, Richard Baxter, and John Owen, and forms part of the overall evaluation of the importance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit for his theology.

Four areas are investigated in the thesis concerning the role Hooker assigned to the Holy Spirit in Christian theology.

1. The role of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of Scripture.
2. The nature and purpose of the sacraments in light of the Holy Spirit.
3. The place of the Holy Spirit in understanding Hooker's view of the orders of ministry.
4. The centre of Hooker's theology as the claim to "participation" in the life of God.

The thesis concludes that Hooker remained generally consistent with Calvin's understanding of the Holy Spirit, though he refined Calvin's scriptural hermeneutic with special reference to the relationship between reason and the Holy Spirit. It also concludes that later Puritans such as Richard Baxter and John Owen, offered a perspective on the relationship between reason and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that was in line with Calvin but also anticipated by Richard Hooker. This suggests a strong measure of continuity between Hooker and Puritan thought that did not become apparent until after his death in 1600, and which contemporary scholarship has continued to debate. The thesis contends that Hooker was indeed an advocate of reform but with a characteristically independent grasp of what that entailed in the convergence of Thomistic and Calvinist thought. Hooker's doctrine of the Holy Spirit was a consistent theme that was essential to his central *motif* of the believer's participation in God.

The final chapter shows that Hooker, in defending the Elizabethan Settlement, was able to avoid the entrapment of the Puritan charge of Pelagianism and sympathy towards Rome on the one hand, and the Roman charge of Scriptural insufficiency on the other, by positing a third pole in the debate. This required acceptance of the idea of foundational Christian truth whose goal was *theosis*, the union of the soul with God, whose agent was the secret operation of the Holy Spirit and instrumentality, the Scriptures and sacraments. As such, Hooker called for mature commitment to theological investigation that stood above partisan rancour.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my profound gratitude to the members of my doctoral committee: Prof. Dawne McCance, Head of the Department of Religion at the University of Manitoba for her guidance, my supervisor, the Rev. Prof. Egil Grislis, for his constant support, encouragement, and confidence in this present study, and Prof. Francis Carroll who offered many useful insights. Each has given me wise counsel and direction, and stimulated this neglected area in Richard Hooker studies which revealed for me an aspect of Anglican theology that I knew existed, but remained unexplored. At St John's College, University of Manitoba, I gladly acknowledge the generosity and interest of the College, its Fellowship, and administration in seeing the project to its completion. In particular I want to thank Dr. Janet Hoskins who encouraged me, and was willing to spend much time in discussion over the "judicious Mr. Hooker." I also wish to acknowledge many useful conversations and discussions with Prof. Torrance Kirby of McGill University and the fellowship of the Hooker Studies Group at successive meetings of the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference.

During the writing of this thesis, my wife Jilleen has born the burden of a husband who was absent more often than should be allowed, and it is to her that I owe the greatest debt.

Naturally, a thesis can never be the final statement about the subject at hand. At its completion, I was more than ever aware of the sophistication of Hooker's thought. It was also plain that he did not believe theology to be an end point, but part of the movement of the soul to union with God, as food for the journey. Therefore, I pay humble tribute to him as a great Anglican thinker and divine, whose greatness was recognised even during his relatively short life. Those who read Richard Hooker discover a most gracious, and yet vigorous, exposition of Christian faith that defended the Elizabethan Settlement, but was never limited by it.

John K. Stafford
Christmas, 2004

*For Jilleen and our children,
Fiona, Laura, and Jonathan,
and to the memory of my parents, Thomas Kirby and Ada Helen,
who taught me to love learning.*

Note on Citation Style

The *Folger Library Edition* of the *Lawes* is used as the primary text for Hooker's quotations in this thesis. The standard method of citation is adopted as indicated below. The text of this critical edition reproduces, as far as possible, the formatting of the original printed editions and so includes the use of italics which can appear in the body of the printed page without implying emphasis on the part of the author. Since this thesis has retained the text form of the *Folger Edition* when quoting from the *Lawes*, no syntactic emphasis on the part of the present author should be understood when italicised text is encountered, unless otherwise indicated.

The method of citation from the Folger Edition of the *Lawes* is illustrated using the following example:

Lawes V.56.7: 2.240.9–13

V = Book number

56 = Chapter number

7 = Section number

2 = Folger volume number

240 = Page number

9–13 = line numbers

The whole drift of the scripture of God what is it but only to teach *Theologie*?

Richard Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.14: 1.229.33–230.1

Such is evermore the finall victorie of all truth that they which have not the hartes to love hir
acknowledg that to hate hir they have no cause.

Richard Hooker, *Lawes*, V.71.7: 2.379.15–17

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Preamble

Scholarship over the last thirty years has investigated Richard Hooker's (1554–1600) theology not only with respect to his defence of established civil and religious government, or his conflicts with Walter Travers (1548–1635) and Thomas Cartwright (1535–1603), both Puritan critics of the established church, but also for the originality and depth of his theology. In particular, Hooker's sacramental theology, his understanding of divine grace in relation to the freedom of human intellect and reason, and his amelioration of strict Calvinism during the English reformation, have all received detailed investigation. Hooker relied on the same sources as Calvin and the magisterial reformers. His dependence on Thomistic and Aristotelian thought has also been documented, but with respect to his stature as a theologian, W. Speed Hill has aptly noted:

Another facet of the traditional view largely missing from our portrait is that of Hooker the theologian, the English Aquinas. One could not, . . . produce a volume like Nicholas Lossky's . . . analysis of the 'mystical theology' of Lancelot Andrewes based on the *Lawes*. It is not that Hooker was not an innovative theologian; Topics like God's essential nature, the authority of Scripture, the extent to which original sin had impaired human reason, the

definition of the church, . . . are implicit throughout the *Lawes*.¹

At the same time, epistemological, and therefore hermeneutical questions, are discussed by Hooker with some care. This is especially evident in his principal work, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, concerning the nature and epistemic limits of Scripture, and his delicate handling of sacramental theology where he sought to navigate between the formularies of Rome, and Puritan ideals that envisioned the English reformation in close conformity with Geneva. Debate over the central role of the Bible itself could therefore not be avoided, and naturally linked these themes. From Hooker's perspective, the nature of the Scriptures demanded a hermeneutic that synchronised the rationality of the text, limited human capacity to comprehend truth, and the divine origin of its texts, with the perceived salvific potential in Scripture amongst persons whose faith could not be defined in terms of intellectual grasp. This emerges, for example, in his key discussions of baptism:

For that which there wee professed without anie understandinge, when wee afterwarde come to acknowledg, doe wee any thinge els but onlie bringe unto ripenes the verie seed that was sowne before? Wee are *then beleivers* because *then wee beginne to be* that which processe of time doth make perfect . . .,²

In the well-known axiomatic relationship Hooker made between nature and grace, wherein “. . . nature hath need of grace . . . hath use of nature”³ reason and

¹ W. Speed Hill, “Richard Hooker in the Folger Edition: An Editorial Perspective,” in *Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community*, ed. Arthur S. McGrade, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies no. 165 (Tempe, AZ: SUNY, 1997), 18f See also a very brief appreciation of Hooker and Andrewes' “mystical theology” in, Arthur M. Allchin, *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1988).

² Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Book V*, vol. 2 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. W. Speed Hill, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), V.64.2: 2.294.30–295.26.

³ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Preface, Books I to IV*, vol. 1 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. Georges Edelen, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard

revelation were placed in a correlative rather than incompatible conjunction. For the sake of understanding their epistemological boundaries, he placed nature *inside* the realm of soteriological possibility, yet without doing violence to the key tenets of reformed thought, namely the supremacy of Scripture, the centrality of justification by faith, and the corruption of the will.

Theology and Purpose in *The Lawes*

In this thesis, the term “theology” is drawn from Hooker’s own special interest in the rational investigation of Scripture and the claims made for Scripture by his Puritan and Roman adversaries. He takes this to be the normative discipline of Christian belief and epistemology, and a responsibility necessarily undertaken to protect not only the gains made through the reformation, but generally, in a more irenic context, the commendation of Christian faith toward what he takes to be the innate human propensity for the investigation of congruence in life. In particular, Hooker understood the task of theological investigation to be at the heart of a persuasive kerygma. Indeed, he was aware of the historical precedents that gave such labour its rationale. The relationship between the human capacity to reason and the work of theology had been examined by St. Thomas Aquinas. Thomas had expounded the necessary distinction of faith and reason and which Richard Hooker would rely upon to shape the *Lawes*. Thomas wrote:

University Press, 1977), III.8.6: 1.223.28. St. Thomas had said much the same: “. . . sacred doctrine makes use of human reason, not, indeed, to prove faith (for thereby the merit of faith would come to an end), but to make clear other things that are put forward in this doctrine. Since therefore grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it, natural reason should minister to faith as the natural bent of the will ministers to charity.” St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol. I, First Complete American ed., trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1947), First Part, Q.1, Art.8.

. . . it was necessary that man should be taught by a divine revelation; because the truth about God such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors. . . . in order that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and surely, it was necessary that they should be taught divine truths by divine revelation. It was therefore necessary that, besides philosophical science built up by reason there should be a sacred science learned through revelation.⁴

All persons could recognise the truths discernable by reason because its origins derived from the *created* order, which guaranteed the spontaneous drive of people in all eras to inquire into the nature of reality, and construct plausible frameworks for understanding its significance. Hooker describes the work of human rational behaviour in an ordered universe as:

. . . the lawe of reason or humaine nature is that which men by discourse of naturall reason have rightly found out themselves to be all for ever bound unto in their actions. Lawes of reason have these markes to be knowne by. Such as keepe them, resemble most lively in their voluntarie actions, that very maner of working which nature her selfe doth necessarily observe in the course of the whole world. The works of nature are all behoovefull, beautifull, without superfluitie or defect; even so theirs, if they be framed according to that which the law of reason teacheth. Secondly those lawes are investigable by reason without the helpe of revelation supernaturall and divine. Finally in such sort they are investigable, that the knowledge of them is generall, the whole worlde hath alwayes beene acquainted with them, It is not agreed upon by one, or two, or few, but by all: which we may not so understand, as if every particular man in the whole world did knowe and confesse whatsoever the law of reason doth conteine, but this lawe is such that being proposed no man can reject it as unreasonable and unjust.⁵

This is rational inquiry which all persons can rely upon in principle, despite being obscured by the “foggie damp of original corruption”⁶ apart from any special

⁴ Aquinas, *Summa*, First Part, Q.1, Art.1.

⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.8.8: 1.89.28–90.15.

⁶ Richard Hooker, “A Learned and Comfortable Sermon of the Certaintie and Perpetuitie of Faith in the Elect,” in *Tractates and Sermons*, vol. 5 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. Egil Grislis and Laetitia Yeandle, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 71.17.

“helpe of revelation supernaturall or divine.”⁷ Once disclosed, revealed knowledge was nonetheless accessible to rational inquiry. Nevertheless, the natural endowments of reason were insufficient to know and glorify God so as to fulfil the divine word of Scripture and thus enter by faith into the salvation they promised—unless Man’s reason is redeemed and transformed into right reason.⁸ Consequently, Hooker defended rational inquiry as necessary to the work of faith, even if its role was simply to clarify the nature of the problems confronted by faith. So, in the case of St. Paul, the Apostle most learned in Jewish and philosophic wisdom:

. . . that rationally and oratorially wisdom of the Græcians . . . or that Judaicall, which he learned in *Jerusalem* sitting at the feet of *Gamaliell*, to detract from the dignitie thereof, were to injurie even God himselfe, who being that light which none can approach unto, hath sent out these lights whereof we are capable, even as many sparkls resembling the bright fountain from which they rise.⁹

⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.8.9: 1.90.6.

⁸ This distinction is vital in Hooker, and *Book I* of the *Lawes* supplies the epistemological groundwork. Hooker is not always consistent in his use of the term “reason” and context must often guide the reader. Here we see Hooker naming this distinction with clarity: “In reasonable and morall actions another law taketh place, a law by the observation wherof we glorifie God in such sort, as no creature els under man is able to doe, because other creatures have not judgement to examine the quality of that which is done by them, and therefore in that they doe, they neyther can accuse nor approve themselves [Hooker is citing Romans 2:15]. Men do both, as the Apostle teacheth, yea, those which have no written lawe of God to show what is good or evill, carrie written in their hearts the universall of mankind, the law of reason, whereby they judge as by a rule which God hath given unto all men for that purpose. The lawe of reason doth somewhat direct men how to honour God as their Creator, but how to glorifie God in such sort as is required, to the end he may be an everlasting Saviour, this we are taught by divine law, which law both ascertaineth the truth and supplyeth unto us the want of that other law. So that in morall actions, divine lawe helpeth exceedingly the law of reason to guide mans life, but in supernaturall it alone guideth.” Hooker, *Lawes*, I.16.5: 1.138.27–139.10. Hooker is building his argument against the Puritans that Scripture was the only rule for human action and belief. For two useful accounts of Hooker’s discussion of reason and natural law, see, Robert Hoopes, *Right Reason in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 123–45; Damian Grace, “Natural Law in Hooker’s *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*,” *The Journal of Religious History* 21, no. 1 (February 1997): 10–22.

⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.9: I.226.8–15.

Hooker viewed all knowledge as valuable because even at its most fragmentary, it resembled “. . . the bright fountain from which they arise.” Yet his respect and admiration for the achievements of human inquiry though predicated on the generally accessible gifts of God to humanity, was not idealistic for:

. . . there are that beare the title of wise men and Scribes and great disputers of the world, and are nothing in deede lesse then what in shew they most appeare. These being whollie addicted unto their owne wills, use their wit, their learning, and all the wisdome they have, to maintaine that which their obstinate harts are delighted with, esteeming in the phrentique error of their mindes the greatest madnes in the world to be wisdome, and the highest wisdom foolishnes¹⁰

The mere “aptnes” to reason did not itself confer the ability to do so in such a way that brought salvific knowledge to man. Knowledge is partial, and reason subject to human error and the effects of sin. And so theology, the best and highest goal of human rational capacity is, according to Hooker, only satisfied by rational explorations of the mystery of Christ. But this again is made possible by the general human capacity to reason, and by the prevenient claims of the Gospel to truth revealed in Scripture:

[those] neither induring to be taught the mysterie of Christ; unto whose most blessed name, who so studied to use both their reason and all other gifts as well which nature as which grace hath indued them with, let them never doubt but that the same God who is to destroy and confound utterly that wisdome falsely so named in others, doth make reckoning of them as of true Scribes . . .¹¹

But of course, not everyone gifted with deep rational capacity was willing to believe the Gospel as truth. Hooker accepted that the natural capacity of man apart from the divine assistance of the Holy Spirit and knowledge of the purpose and limits of Scripture would not automatically lead to belief. Reason was the key instrument, and itself a gift of God, but this did not mean a person was excluded from the assurance of

¹⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.9: 1.226.15–22.

¹¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.9: I.226.24–29.

salvation merely because his rational powers were underdeveloped. Hooker has already proposed that reason alone is insufficient to produce saving faith:

Unto the word of God being respect of that end, for which God ordeined it, perfect, exact, and absolute in it selfe, we do not add reason as a supplement of any maime or defect therin, but as a necessary instrument, without which we could not reape by the scriptures perfection, that fruite and benefit which it yeeldeth. The word of God is a twoedged sword, but in the hands of reasonable men; and reason as the weapon that slew *Goliath*, if they be as *David* was, that use it.¹²

Yet this is not where Hooker rests his case for the necessity of right reason. For even if “the force of naturall reason is great. The force wherof unto those effects is nothing without grace.”¹³ Thus, for humans to realise the intended effects of Scripture, grace must supply the will with its disposition to obey the law of God disclosed in them. It is therefore the act of God which persuades the human mind to believe the Gospel and be conformed to its doctrine and precepts. But the Scriptures as a “twoedged sword” were as likely to be a hazard in the wrong hands as they might be an instrument of life in right hands:

To our purpose, it is sufficient that whosoever doth serve honor and obey God, . . . that man would no more do this then innocents and infants doe, but for the light of naturall reason that shineth in him, and maketh him apt to apprehend those things of God which being by grace discovered, are effectuall to perswade reasonable mindes and none other, . . .¹⁴

And so Hooker’s logic cannot project an authentic way of believing that does not have within it, even at a most rudimentary level, the quest for truth, itself a divine gift. Once the “things of God” had been discovered—by definition only by grace—it was possible to infer that the natural reason with which all persons were endowed, was also

¹² Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.10: I.227.2–9.

¹³ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.11: I.229.15f.

¹⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.11: I.229.16–22.

now liberated by that same grace, by virtue of regeneration, to be further persuaded of the truth of the Gospel, and to act in obedience to it.¹⁵ The work of theology for Hooker is the way by which the human exploration for truth discloses the revelation of God, and by process of which, human reason is brought gradually into convergence with the salvific decrees of the kingdom of heaven through the work of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ It is at this point that Hooker brings together the central place he gives to Scripture, and “theology” as the rational process of inquiry into matters divine:

The whole drift of the scripture of God what is it but only to teach *Theologie*? *Theologie* what is it but the science of things divine? What science can be attained unto without the help of natural discourse and reason? . . . In vaine it were to speake any thing of God, but that by reason men are able some what to judge of that they heare, and by discourse to discern how consonant it is to truth. Scripture indeed teacheth things above nature, things which our reason by it selfe could not reach unto. Yet those things also we believe, knowing by reason that the scripture is the word of God.¹⁷

Hooker’s defence of the primary role he gives to Scripture “upon the knowledge wherof our whole faith and salvation dependeth”¹⁸ is already determined either in its self-authenticating character or in its canonical status and involved no retreat from St.

¹⁵ Thus Hooker sets the stage for his later discussions of baptism and Eucharist.

¹⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.9: I.226.29–32, 8.11: I.229.23–33.

¹⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.11: I.229.33–230.10 Hooker uses the term “science” as does St. Thomas to describe the authority and limits of human reason: “. . . sacred doctrine make use also of the authority of philosophers in those questions in which they were able to know the truth by natural reason, . . . Nevertheless, sacred doctrine makes use of these authorities as extrinsic and probable arguments; but properly uses the authority of the canonical Scriptures as an incontrovertible proof, and the authority of the doctors of the Church as one that may properly be used, yet merely as probable. For our faith rests upon the revelation made to the apostles and prophets who wrote the canonical books, and not on the revelations (if any such there are) to other doctors.” Aquinas, *Summa*, First Part, Q.1, Art.8.

¹⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.13: I.230.28f For a recently published view that Hooker rejected Calvin’s view of Scriptural authority see, Nigel Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology - A Study of Reason, Will, and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 226–38.

Thomas.¹⁹ It is for Hooker no departure from *sola Scriptura* to further conclude that though the Scriptures themselves be “the oracles of God him selfe. This in it selfe wee cannot say is evident.”²⁰ This candid stance towards the limitations of the biblical sources did not give Hooker much cause for anxiety because he held that saving faith was completely possible without a mature grasp of every implication of Christian faith since it was not knowledge in itself but Christ that brought salvation. The Christian life was one of growth and maturation so that “the more we bestow our labor in reading or hearing the misteries thereof, the more we find that the thing it selfe doth answer our received opinion concerning it.”²¹ In the hands of Richard Hooker theology becomes an iterative process which, when wedded to reason informed by faith, reflects the self-authentication of God and whose results lead the believer to deeper spiritual union with God. Hooker’s theology, like that of St. Thomas, is therefore the “science” appropriate to its object, the accumulation of laws and axioms which like all science attempts to describe the object or phenomenon, and define its inner relations and dependencies. The “science” is not the object, but provides the framework of shared language, its syntactical ‘rules of engagement’ for probing the object and, for Hooker, the opportunity to both confirm and challenge belief. He consistently refused to create a false dichotomy between rational inquiry as the instrument of theology, and the possibility of supra-rational knowledge whose truth was not compromised merely because it stood at

¹⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.13: I.230.32–231.2 St. Thomas concluded that, “. . . Sacred Scripture, since it has no science above itself, can dispute with one who denies its principles only if the opponents admit some at least of the truths obtained through divine revelation. . . . Since faith rests upon infallible truth, and since the contrary of a truth can never be demonstrated, it is clear that the arguments brought against faith cannot be demonstrations, but are difficulties which can be answered.” Aquinas, *Summa*, First Part, Q.1.Art.8. For St. Thomas and Hooker, the self-authenticating character of Scripture was something that could be assumed and validated over time by its effects.

²⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.13: I.231.6f.

²¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.13: 1.231.27f.

the outer edges of human experience. The persuasive power of theological discourse occurs because for Hooker the truth of theological and Scriptural propositions is not absolutely dependent on rational agreement on the one hand, or the inner witness of the Holy Spirit on the other. Theology was Hooker's way of guaranteeing the continued work of probing the kerygma of the Scriptures, but whose implications were not exhausted:

Neither can I think that when grave and learned men do sometime hold, that of this principle there is no prooffe but by the testimony of the spirit, which assureth our harts therin, it is their meaning to exclude utterly all force which any kind of reason may have in their behalfe; but I rather incline to interpret such their speeches . . . that other motives and inducements, be they never so strong and consonant unto reason, are notwithstanding uneffectual of them selves to worke faith concerning this principle, if the special grace of the holy ghost concur not to the inlightning of our minds.²²

In general, Hooker followed Calvin regarding the theologian's task "not to divert the ears with chatter, but to strengthen consciences by teaching things true, sure, and profitable."²³ Calvin was quite clear about the analogical use of language in theological discussion as a primary need to serve the accurate interpretation of Scripture.²⁴ In particular, theology functioned as a defensive measure for Calvin against what he took to be the excesses of speculative inquiry. He states:

I will exert especial effort to the end that they who lend ready and open ears to God's Word may have a firm standing ground. Here, indeed, if anywhere in the secret mysteries of Scripture, we ought to play the philosopher soberly and with great moderation; let us use great caution that neither our thought nor our speech go beyond the limits to which the Word of God itself extends. For how can the human mind measure off the measureless essence of God according to its own little measure, a mind as yet unable to establish for certain the nature of the sun's body, though men's eyes daily gaze upon it? Indeed, how can the mind by its

²² Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.15: I.232.16–25.

²³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion Vol. 1*, vol. XX of *The Library of Christian Classics*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), I.14.4.

²⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.13.3.

own leading come to search out God's essence when it cannot even get to its own?²⁵

Hooker's general approach to theology was not at variance with Calvin though it is clear Hooker demanded more from it. He appears to have been more willing than Calvin to view theology as a necessarily polemical task while seeking to achieve the same sort of "firm standing ground" as Calvin.²⁶ Hooker not only speculated about things divine but also debated the sources of knowledge and certainty in the same way that Calvin did and he is clearly frustrated when it is avoided.

. . . even of learners in the schoole of Christ, the duty of their teachers in bringing them unto such ripenes must needes be somewhat more, then only to read sentences of scripture, and then paraphrastically to scholie them, to vary them with sundry formes of speech, without arguing or disputing about any thing which they containe. This method of teaching may commend it selfe unto the world by that easines and facilitie which is in it: but a law or a patterne it is not, as some do imagine, for all men to follow that will doe good in the Church of Christ.²⁷

Nevertheless, "good in the Church of Christ" is still his desired result and as such, he surely does not depart from Calvin in his basic aims for theology.

²⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.13.21.

²⁶ Hooker thought of theology as "science," while William Ames depicted it as "art" reflecting the inherently practical turn of mind of Puritan divinity. As such, "Every art has its rules to which the work of the person practicing it corresponds. Since living is the noblest work of all, there cannot be any more proper study than the art of living. Since the highest kind of life for a human being is that which approaches most closely the living and life-giving God, the nature of theological life is living to God. Men live to God when when they live in accord with the will of God, This practice of life is so perfectly reflected in theology that there is no precept of universal truth relevant to living well in domestic economy, morality, political life, or lawmaking which does not rightly pertain to theology. Theology, . . . is to us the ultimate and noblest of all teaching arts. It is a guide and master plan for our highest end, sent in a special manner from God, treating divine things, tending towards God, and leading man to God. It may therefore not incorrectly be called θεοζωία, a living to God, or θεωργία, a working towards God, as well as theology." William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, Translated from the Third Latin Edition of 1629, ed. and trans. John Dykstra Eusden (Grand Rapids: Baker books, 2nd printing, 1997), 77f.

²⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.16: I.233.27–234.2.

Situating Richard Hooker

Interest in Richard Hooker continues to be stimulated by contemporary appreciation for his remarkably balanced theological and ecclesiastical perspectives. Hooker's *Lawes* stand apart as a measure of how theological debate could be conducted despite the protagonists' deep opposition to each other.²⁸ Indeed, Hooker eschewed fruitless confrontation:

*Thinke not that ye reade the wordes of one, who bendeth him selfe as an adversarie against the truth which ye have alreadie embraced; but the words of one, who desireth even to embrace together with you the selfe same truth, if it be the truth, and for that cause . . . hath undertaken the burthensome labour this painefull kinde of conference.*²⁹

Hooker had an independent cast of mind and his defence of ecclesiastical tradition was never absolute, any more than it was for Geneva. Hooker can even envisage a situation where ordination might proceed without a bishop.³⁰ Although to

²⁸ Rudolph Almasj argues persuasively that in *Book I*, Hooker's defence of human reason as a legitimate source of authority was not only a response to Walter Travers, but also to the Whitgift-Cartwright debates. He writes, "With a practical goal in mind, Hooker was correcting, completing, and defending Whitgift's initial defense of the settlement by supplying a much-needed defense of reason and the opinions of men." Rudolph P. Almasj, "The Purpose of Richard Hooker's Polemic," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 39 (1978): 252. Almasj continues, "Understandably, many have been tempted to see Hooker generalizing on a higher plane than Whitgift and laud him for extending the scope of the debate and rising above controversy. Hooker's extension, however, is not due to a generously philosophical desire to abandon the petty bickering of the controversy. Rather, he is simply responding to Cartwright's *First Reply* where he found the broad utterance "that Scripture is the only rule of all things which in this life may be done by men." No doubt Hooker became distressed that Whitgift, who recorded the passage (Tract II, Chapter 1, fourth division), ignored its implications." See also, Rudolph P. Almasj, "Richard Hooker and Elizabethan Polemics" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1975); Rudolph P. Almasj, "Richard Hooker's Address to the Presbyterians," *Anglican Theological Review* 61 (1979): 462-74; Rudolph P. Almasj, "Richard Hooker's Address to the Puritans," in *Selected Papers from the West Virginia Shakespeare and Renaissance Association*, vol. 4 (1979), 117-39.

²⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface 1.3: I.3.1-6.

³⁰ Hooker has in mind the theoretical question of necessity. Nevertheless, (assuming the authenticity of Book 7), it is a remarkable concession. Richard Hooker,

some extent of circumstantial importance, this can be usefully kept in mind when scholarly discussion attempts to situate Hooker too strictly as either a defender of (Genevan) reform or too comfortably aligned with Rome. Neither extremes do justice to the originality of his mind:

Ceremonies have more in waight than in sight, they worke by commonnes of use much, although in the severall actes of their usage wee scarcely discern any good they doe. And because the use which they have for the most parte is not perfectlie understood, superstition is apt to impute unto them greater vertue then indeed they have.³¹

In light of the Puritan critique of ecclesiastical ceremonies not prescribed by the Scriptures, the role and power of bishops, and the conformity to the results of the Continental reformation, Hooker's attitude is mediating and circumspect. Despite his consistently humble temperament,³² and desire to avoid conflict, Hooker was far from passionless and distant in his writing, and was very capable of returning invective for what he perceived to be heresy or stupidity, as his marginal notes in the *Christian Letter* disclose. Of course, this magnanimity was predicated on a strongly held sense of his own commitment to the superiority of the established religion of Reformation England and political emancipation from Rome.³³ Nonetheless, Hooker managed to display a

Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Books VI, VII, VIII, vol. 3 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. P. G. Stanwood, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981), VII.14.11: 3.226.19–227.4; Hooker, *Lawes*, VII.14.11: 3.227.9–34.

³¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.65.4: 2.303.2.

³² It must however be conceded that Calvin is given a less generous appraisal in the *Christian Letter*, though only in terms of his personal demeanour, not intellectual and spiritual contribution.

³³ For Hooker as a source that anticipated the political and religious toleration of America see, Wendy Dackson, "Richard Hooker and American Religious Liberty," *Journal of Church and State* 41 (Winter 1999): 117–34; John Walton, "Tradition of the Middle Way: The Anglican Contribution to the American Character," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 44, no. 195 (1975): 7–32; Robert K. Faulkner, "Reason and Revelation in Hooker's Ethics," *American Political Science Review* 59 (1965): 680–90.

compassionate regard for the integrity and frailty of persons:

There is in the knowledg both of God and man this certaintie that life and death have devided betwene them the whole bodie of man kinde. What portion either of the two hath, God him selfe knoweth; for us he hath left no sufficient means to comprehend and for that cause neither given any leave to search in particular who are infallible the heirs of the kingdom of God, who castawaies. Howbeit . . . the safest axiomes for charitie to rest it selfe upon are these, . . . *there is hope of everie mans forgivenes the possibilitie of whose repentance is not yeat cut of by death.* And therefore charitie which *hopeth all thynges* prayeth also for all men. Wherefore . . . for us there is cause sufficient in all men whereupon to ground our prayers unto god in their behalfe.³⁴

Egil Grislis³⁵ points out that religion, as the “glue of society,” could never be isolated from the larger social and political concerns of the early modern world. The persuasive appeal of contemporary Hooker studies, not only for Anglicans, is all the more remarkable as present discussions continue to unfold relating to questions of liturgical development, ordination, and personal piety.³⁶ For example, Stephen McGrade³⁷ and Bruce Kaye³⁸ discuss the application of Hooker’s thought to various contemporary situations, and Nigel Atkinson³⁹ seeks to press Hooker into the service of

³⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.49.2: 2.203.9–30.

³⁵ Egil Grislis, “Commentary,” in *Tractates and Sermons*, vol. 5 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. Egil Grislis and Laetitia Yeandle, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 619–55.

³⁶ Stephen W. Sykes, “Richard Hooker and the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 36 (Easter 1993): 200–14; Brian Christopher, “Richard Hooker and Me,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 36 (Easter 1993): 179–80; Daniel B. Stevick, “Hooker’s Criteria for Liturgy,” *Anglican Theological Review* 73 (Spring 1991): 139–54; Derwyn R. G. Owen, “Is There an Anglican Theology?” in *The Future of Anglican Theology*, Toronto Studies in Theology, Vol. 17 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Printers, 1984), 3–13; Marianne H. Micks, “Richard Hooker as Theologian,” *Theology Today* 36 (January 1980): 560–63.

³⁷ Arthur S. McGrade, “Richard Hooker. An Apologist for All Seasons,” *St. Mark’s Review* 141 (Autumn 1990): 12–19, 37.

³⁸ Bruce N. Kaye, “Richard Hooker and Australian Anglicanism,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 36 (Easter 1993): 227–45.

³⁹ Nigel Atkinson, *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Tradition and*

evangelical Anglican interests. The remarkable breadth of intellectual sympathy, which is a feature of Hooker's personality and thought that frequently reveals itself in both the *Lawes* and the *Sermons* was achieved by setting his comprehensive theological inquiry, not in a linear relation between those in debate, but as something multi-dimensional, elegant and attractive, revelatory as well as rational, and demanding of human intellectual skill. Marianne Micks characterises Hooker's theology as the convergence of poetry, political philosophy, rhetoric, humanist theology, held together inside a Calvinist conviction.⁴⁰ It was just such a richness that led to a similar result in his hermeneutic.⁴¹ Hooker believed that the union with God, that "sea of goodness,"⁴² was attainable through the divine gift of the Holy Spirit as the first gift of redemption to the believer, and that the desire for God was inherent in man as part of God's general providential care. He understood God as the object of human desire, and so to be desired with all the force of natural reason though like Aquinas, human reason, like human desire, was an admixture of error and not salvific. Thus, according to Richard Hooker, we may know of God, because reason can discern the divine origin of the created order, and be transformed into "right reason"⁴³ through the Spirit of God, proleptically through the sacramental ministration of baptism and the Eucharist, to the discoveries of divine truth in the Scriptures, till "we become what we profess":

Complete union with him must be according unto every power and facultie of our mindes apt to receive so glorious an object. Capable we are of God both by

Reason (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997); Nigel Atkinson, "Hooker's Theological Method and Modern Anglicanism," *Churchman* 114, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 40–47.

⁴⁰ Micks, "Richard Hooker as Theologian," 561.

⁴¹ John K. Stafford, "Scripture and the Generous Hermeneutic of Richard Hooker," *Anglican Theological Review* 84, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 915–28.

⁴² Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.3: 1.113.11.

⁴³ Reason thus informed by the Holy Spirit becomes right reason in the thinking of Hooker because it results in faith, by which humans may enjoy both the understanding and assurance of salvation proclaimed by the Gospel.

understanding and will, by understanding as hee is that soveraigne truth, which comprehendeth the rich treasures of all wisdom As the will doth now worke upon that object by desire, which is as it were a motion towards the end as yet unobtained, so likewise upon the same hereafter received it shall worke also by love.⁴⁴

But that which is “as yet unobtained,” the justified relation of the believer with God was only dimly apprehended by human rational powers. Hooker was careful not to place revelation and reason in a negative relation to each other since in the ‘logic’ of the incarnation, both were crucial in the establishment of a soteriological situation that preserved the absolute inscrutability of God while maintaining the dignity of human freedom to inquire into the “art of living.”⁴⁵ The fact that Hooker thought humans “capable of God” meant he considered them “apt” to receive the divine word with some measure of acceptance and recognition. Although the dogma of the incarnation is not emphasised directly by Hooker, its presence underwrote his depiction of the divine-human encounter which self-consciously accorded human will the potential to know God, while simultaneously limiting the realisation of it as a consequence of human exertion:

. . . our blessednes . . . doth neither depend upon the nature of the thing itself, nor proceede from any natural necessitie that our souls should so exercise themselves for ever in beholding and loving God, but from the will of God, which doth freely perfect our nature in so high a degree and continue it so perfected. Under man no creature in the world is capable of felicitie and blisse; . . .⁴⁶

Therefore reason as the intended capacity of humans to inquire about their own existence and the significance of it, could carry a person into the arena of divine inquiry and contemplation, but never, of itself, finally satisfy its desire, though such desire itself came from God. As Hooker writes, “. . . our desire being naturall is also in that degree

⁴⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.3: 1.113.7–15.

⁴⁵ Ames, *Marrow*, 77.

⁴⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.3: 1.113.24–30.

of earnestnes whereunto nothing can be added. And is it probable that God should frame the heartes of all men so desirous of that which no man may obtaine?”⁴⁷

More specifically, for Hooker, the testimony of the Spirit in Scripture was, in principle, accessible to reason since dependence on the tradition of the church alone was insufficient for a secure grasp of divine truth:

Scripture teacheth us that saving truth which God hath discovered unto the world by revelation, and it presumeth us taught otherwise that it self is divine and sacred. The question then being by what means we are taught this, some answeare that to learne it we have no other way then onely tradition, as namely that so we believe because both we from our predecessors and they from theirs have so received. But is this enough? . . . the more we bestow our labor in reading or hearing the misteries thereof, the more we find that the thing it selfe doth answer our received opinion concerning it.⁴⁸

We therefore have no *word of God* but the Scripture.⁴⁹

This was a consistent position of Hooker—that the saving knowledge of God was uniquely revealed in Scripture. He applied an epistemological duality in relation to human reason, and divine revelation in his discussion, for example, of paedobaptism where “we become what we profess” over time.⁵⁰ The condition was the necessity to continue in one’s profession with the church as one’s spiritual mother:

In all which hitherto hath beene spoken touching the force and use of mans reason in thinges divine, I must crave that I be not so understood or construed, as if any such thing by vertue thereof could be done without the aide and assistance of gods most blessed spirite For this cause therefore we have endeavoured to make it appeare how in the nature of reason it selfe there is no impediment, but that the selfe same spirit, which revealeth the things that god hath set down in his law, may also be thought to aid and direct men in finding out by the light of reason what lawes are expedient to be made for the guiding of his Church, over and besides them that are in scripture.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.4: 1.114.12–15.

⁴⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.14: 1.231.12–28.

⁴⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.21.1: 2.84.17f.

⁵⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.64.2: 2.295.1f.

⁵¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.18: 1.234.31–235:5–11.

Thus Hooker is clear that notwithstanding “the force and use of mans reason in thinges divine,” and “the guiding of his Church,” no human comprehension could take place without “the aide and assistance of gods most blessed spirite . . . which revealeth the things that god hath set down in his law”

The Purpose of the Thesis

As Hooker developed his concepts of revelation, reason and sacrament, the conversation between reason and Spirit became crucial. While he did not do this in a completely systematic fashion, Hooker located the relevant discussions at very strategic places in his debate with Puritanism. Thus, for example, when he discussed the normal application of human reason to the appropriation of truth, and the origins and experience of grace, Hooker was extremely careful to assess that process in relation to concepts of revelation which deferred mainly to the central place of Scripture and the Holy Spirit, since this was the place where the Puritans had located their claim to special revelation. So although Hooker appeared to place Scripture alongside other sources of human knowing such that, “. . . nature, scripture, and experience it selfe, have all taught the world to seeke for the ending of contentions by submitting it selfe unto some judiciall and definitive sentence, . . .”⁵² it remained the case that the Spirit itself, according to Hooker, was the universal authority that differentiated the true character of law and its application, from the *incapacity* of human reason, and the vitality of the Gospel. While indeed, “Councels may erre,”⁵³ the Scriptures were situated as:

. . . our chiefest direction . . . for nature is no sufficient teacher what we shoulde doe that we may attaine unto life everlasting. The insufficiencie of the light of nature is by the light of scripture so fully and so perfectly herein supplied, that

⁵² Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 6.1: 1.29.24–27.

⁵³ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 6.3: 1.31.6.

further light then this hath added there doth not neede unto that ende.⁵⁴

The ground was therefore prepared for a later discussion of the difference between ‘reason’ and ‘right reason’ which depended no less upon the place assigned to the Holy Spirit, and on the intriguing idea of the existence of “intuitive revelation”⁵⁵ by which Hooker hinted at a self-authenticating dimension of discernment in human knowing. Again, Hooker pointed to the provisional nature of human knowing:

But that our love is sound and sincere, that it commeth from a *Pure hearte and a good conscience and a faith unfained*, who can pronounce, saving only the searcher of all men’s hartes, who alone can intuitively doth knowe in this kinde who are his? And as those everlasting promises of love, mercy, and blessedness belong to the mysticall Church, even so on the other side when we reade of any dutie which the Church of God is bounde unto, the Church whome this doth concerne is a sensible knowne company.⁵⁶

Therefore the epistemological tension of reason and Spirit was directly analogous in Hooker to that of the dual character of the church as both the repository of revealed knowledge in the Bible, and a rationally understood word accessible to ‘reasonable’ people through the task of preaching or other forms of human inquiry. The difficulty that Hooker faced lay in his special emphasis on secret truth.⁵⁷ In light of the reformation emphasis on the limits of the unaided intellect, Hooker connected the place of the Spirit with the secret illumination of the human mind—hence the epistemological priority of the Spirit in Hooker extended not only to the revelatory character of Scripture, but also the capacity of reason to grasp it. Therefore, “secret truth” existed in two forms for Hooker. The first was prophetic and hence rare, and the second the more

⁵⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, II.8.3: 1.188.2–7.

⁵⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 6.3: 1.31.12.

⁵⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.1.2: 1.195.19–26.

⁵⁷ Amongst numerous citations, see for example, Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.10: 1.17.29–18.4 See the excursus on Hooker’s use of the terms “secret” and “mysticall” at the end of Chapter 1.

normative manner in which “reason be the hand which the Spirite hath led [them].”⁵⁸ If spiritual knowledge was held to be secret, then for Hooker it was an open secret accessible to the elect, “extending it selfe unto all that are of God.”⁵⁹ Therefore, he writes:

There are but two waies whereby the spirit leadeth men into all truth: the one extraordinarie, the other common; the one belonging but unto some few, the other extending it selfe unto all that are of God; the one that which we call by a speciall divine excellency Revelation, the other Reason.⁶⁰

Although Hooker made an *a priori* distinction between the two origins of the human grasp of truth, it is to be noted that he qualified his observation on revelation since it was on this very question that the Puritan desire to “prophesy,” and the later Quaker ideal of a pure spiritual hermeneutic untainted by the intellectual constraints of a Scriptural canon, came to be opposed in Hooker's theological strategy.⁶¹ Revelation and reason were not antithetical categories in Hooker's thought. He assigned a significant role to the Spirit in grounding epistemic certainty, though it was not a singular and absolute role, as in Calvin. In contrast to Thomas and Calvin where the role of the Spirit in Christian doctrine was more systematically developed, the theology of the Spirit which was closely linked in Richard Hooker to his discussions on reason, emerged unpredictably, sometimes with little support. Sometimes Hooker uses the term “reason” in ways that lack his usual precision in language. He often uses the term as

⁵⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.10: 1.17.22.

⁵⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.10: 1.17.17f.

⁶⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.10: 1.17.15–19.

⁶¹ For example, Quaker hermeneutic stressed the superior purity of the regenerate intellect's spiritual enlightenment in apprehending over rational debate and Scriptural inquiry. Biblical interpretation was not therefore a matter of rational inquiry but the charismatic application of spiritual insight granted to the individual through conversion. The spiritual convictions of the individual were thus to be valued more highly than the processes of reason and, at worst, made reason redundant as a necessary part of interpretation.

synonymous with common sense, which carries no soteriological overtones, but he also means the natural capacity of persons to examine and describe objects or problems using the rules of logic and language, and arrive at conclusions. For Hooker such reason is corrupted because of the Fall and though capable of inquiry, unaided by the grace of God, it is unable to discover independently the means of salvation. At other times he appears to mean “right reason,” usually in contrast to reason—that is reason enabled by the grace of God and the Holy Spirit to comprehend matters disclosed by divine revelation, for example, rational discussion about Scripture, its proper interpretation, and application for Christian faith. In this latter respect, the special role of the Spirit in revelation was often very secret in Hooker insofar as it was given to few persons, and principally, to the authors of the canonical Scriptures. The role of human volition was secondary to the mystery of divine providence for, “. . . unlesse as the Spirit is a necessarie inward cause, so water were a necessarie outward meane to our regeneration, what construction should we give unto those wordes wherein wee are said to be new borne, and that ἐξ ὕδατος”⁶² Hooker adopts the same vocabulary of the divine/human “secret”⁶³ in relation to grace. Thus, “besides the mysticall copulation”⁶⁴ of the church with Christ, the “participation of his spirit”⁶⁵ with believers, lay the life of the soul hid with God as the “habitual and real infusion [of grace], as when grace is inwardly bestowed while we are on earth and afterwards more fully both our souls and bodies made like unto his glory.”⁶⁶ Hooker concluded therefore, that what

⁶² Hooker, *Laws*, V.60.1: 2.254.14–18.

⁶³ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Attack and Response: Dublin Fragments*, vol. 4 of *Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. John E. Booty, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982), 42: 4.157.18.

⁶⁴ Hooker, *Laws*, V.56.10: 2.242.30.

⁶⁵ Hooker, *Laws*, V.56.8: 2.240.27.

⁶⁶ Hooker, *Laws*, V.56.11: 2.243.6–9.

communion God shared with humans was not always susceptible to human probing regardless of the rational possibilities for investigation, and despite his insistence that such inquiry is proper and sensible. The source of this aspect of Hooker's theology lay in the incarnational emphasis in his substantial Chalcedonian discussion of Christ's two natures and, in particular, positioned his argument for the mutual participation of Christ and the believer which allowed him to use the language of ontological union without asserting the divinisation of man:

His two natures have knit them selves the one to the other and are in that neerenes as incapable of confusion as of distraction. Their coherence hath not taken away the difference betweene them. Flesh is not become God but doth still continewe flesh although it be now the flesh of God. Yea of ech substance . . . the properties are all preserved and kept safe. . . . therefore Christ cannot naturallie be as God the same which he naturallie is as man, yeat both natures may verie well concurre unto one effect and Christ in that respect be trulie said to worke both as God and as man one and the selfe same thinge.⁶⁷

The Puritan claim to godliness and special wisdom, particularly in its incipient Quaker expression, naturally gave rise to questions of the hermeneutical and epistemological limits with respect to Scriptural sources of truth, and also the limits of assurance with respect to faith. This was, however, preempted by Hooker's own conjunction of rationalism and mysticism between which he moves quite comfortably. He is quite prepared to follow the incarnational logic of Chalcedon and apply it in a manner that anticipates the later Puritans, where he asserts "The union . . . of the flesh with deitie is to *that flesh* a guift of principall grace and favor. For by vertue of this grace man is reallie made God, . . ."⁶⁸ and so the outcome of the incarnation is the redemption of sinful flesh in the glorified flesh of Christ yet without loss or alteration in

⁶⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.53.2: 2.218.12–28.

⁶⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.54.3: 2.222.19–21.

God's nature "from [man's] so neere copulation with deitie."⁶⁹ So in Hooker, this startling proposal for the salvation of man is accounted for primarily in the Trinitarian formulations that he took to be normative for any theology, and which he continued to develop in his understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit. Hooker's immersion in what Peter Munz has called Thomistic rationalism⁷⁰ needs to be qualified by the place Hooker assigned to the Holy Spirit in his larger theological schema. Torrance Kirby notes that Hooker's rationalism was not equivalent to philosophical abstraction any more than it was for St. Thomas Aquinas:

. . . Hooker's position is dialectically complex. In his theology . . . there is simultaneously disjunction and conjunction in the relation between the two kingdoms, the two kinds of discourse and the two ways of righteousness . . . The orders of nature and grace are very clearly distinguished by the magisterial reformers, Hooker included. Yet these distinct orders or realms of law are understood to be united in the simplicity of their common divine source as well as in our knowledge of them For Hooker just as for Luther, Calvin and the others, there is necessarily a conjunction of the orders of Grace and Nature, both in their divine author and in the souls of rational creatures.⁷¹

It was therefore the interplay of rationality and pneumatology that kept Hooker's theology in a creative tension with itself, and which, at the same time, gave rise to the hasty conclusion of Hillerdal, for example, that Hooker is simply confused and inconsistent, especially on the matter of grace.⁷²

⁶⁹ Hooker, *Laws*, III.54.5: 2.223.29.

⁷⁰ Peter Munz, *The Place of Hooker in the History of Thought* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1952), 171.

⁷¹ W. J. Torrance Kirby, *The Theology of Richard Hooker in the Context of the Magisterial Reformation*, Studies in Reformed Theology and History (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, 2000), 21.

⁷² Gunnar Hillerdal, *Reason and Revelation in Richard Hooker* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1962), 148f.

A Brief Evaluation of Some Key Secondary Texts

The work of Geoffrey Nuttall,⁷³ Peter Lake,⁷⁴ Peter Munz,⁷⁵ Gunnar Hillerdal,⁷⁶ and many others, provides representative sources of analysis for the present study, and offer several creative insights. Hillerdal's analysis of the role Hooker assigns to reason is respectful, while critical of Hooker's conclusions. Hillerdal engages Hooker as though Hooker were a systematic theologian, and therefore looks within the *Lawes* for a degree of consistency and coherence which theologians long for but seldom achieve. Hillerdal, for example, was alert to the implications of Hooker's attention to the Spirit, but did not develop them in any detail. His selection of texts from the *Lawes* was insufficient to describe the subtle use Hooker made of the doctrine of the Spirit. Yet it is in the context of Hillerdal's monograph *Reason and Revelation* that one might have expected a more extended treatment. Thus, in relation to the Holy Spirit, ". . . Hooker does not speak only of lacking factual knowledge but about lacking ability to use reason and will, the disableness being the result of the corruption after the fall."⁷⁷ The difficulty Hillerdal identified was Hooker's distinction between 'reason' and 'right reason' in which only the latter is decisive for discussions about salvation:

If reason is weakened to such a degree that it cannot work as "right reason" without the aid of the Holy Spirit, then the statement that men do evil things only because they do not use reason cannot be upheld. The impediment is much greater. Even those who do their utmost and labour must fail, if God does not help them by effusing his Holy Spirit, since reason without that aid does not

⁷³ Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁷⁴ Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterian and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988); Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

⁷⁵ Munz, *The Place of Hooker*.

⁷⁶ Hillerdal, *Reason and Revelation*.

⁷⁷ Hillerdal, *Reason and Revelation*, 147.

always point in the right direction.⁷⁸

It is consistent with Reformation thought in general to emphasise the inability of man to attain salvation either by the application of reason or *ex opere operato*, but Hillerdal has mistaken Hooker's motives for emphasising the place of reason in the economy of salvation. Hillerdal thought Hooker was guilty of contradiction and circularity in the key place he gave to reason, and hence the Spirit, since no matter how crucial reason was to the establishment of Christian claims to knowledge about God, it could never be final in obtaining saving grace. Yet Hooker never claims that reason, unaided by divine grace and the Holy Spirit—that is, right reason—could disclose the way of salvation. Although Hooker is not always careful to distinguish between natural reason and right reason—at times he simply uses the word “reason,” at which point context must determine his intent—nevertheless, Hooker normally does make the distinction clear. Whereas Hooker stressed the indispensable role of natural reason as consistent with a serious pneumatology, Hillerdal makes no significant use of Hooker's handling of the Spirit, and as a result created a false dichotomy between “reason” and “right reason” by ignoring a serious aspect of Hooker's theological and epistemological platform.⁷⁹ Hooker cannot be read piecemeal because the entire corpus of the *Laws*

⁷⁸ Hillerdal, *Reason and Revelation*, 147.

⁷⁹ David Neelands reaches a similar conclusion in his extended discussion of Hillerdal's work when he notes, “. . . for Hooker . . . divine grace aids the reason of the pagan and of the inexplicit convert. Hillerdal . . . has shown that if we deny or ignore the principle that grace does not destroy but perfects nature, then we will likely not notice the difference between *gratia sanans* and *gratia elevans*, and failing to mark this distinction will amount to blurring the difference between justification, which clearly exhibits the effects of *gratia sanans*, and sanctification, which clearly exhibits the effects of *gratia elevans*, a difference Calvin and the English Calvinists . . . acknowledged. As well, we will likely ignore the *integrity* of a nature that points to its own need for grace, in pointing to an infinite end beyond itself; and, therefore, we will likely not notice that nature and grace, Scripture and reason are, although different, not acting in alien spheres.” William D. Neelands, “The Theology of Grace of Richard Hooker,” Th.D. thesis (Trinity College and University of Toronto, 1988), 123. Neelands further concludes, with respect to Hillerdal, that he “. . . fails to realize that reason is,

covers such a great range of subject matter. Hooker was himself concerned to avoid the charge of Pelagianism,⁸⁰ and was very sensitive to the implications of his own arguments. Thus in the *Dublin Fragments* Hooker wrote:

And least ignorance what I mean by the name of grace, should putt into your head some new suspition, know that I doe understand grace soe as all the ancient Fathers did in their writings against *Pelagius*. For whereas the grace of Almighty God signifyeth eyther his undeserved love and favour, or his offerd means of outward instruction and doctrine, or thirdly that grace which worketh inwardlie in mens hearts, the Schollars of *Pelagius* denying originall sinne did likewise teach att the first, that in all men there is by nature abilitie to worke out their owne salvation.⁸¹

The “aptnes” needed to contemplate the significance of revealed truth in the Scriptures was understood by Hooker as the growth of reason, and part of the natural receptivity of persons to the acquisition and evaluation of new knowledge. But a person’s “ability” was only received through the Holy Spirit because of the lost capacity to will according to the mind of God:

Many things good to the judgement of sense, are in the eye of *right reason* [emphasis mine] abhorred as evill, in which case the voice of reason is the voice of God. Soe that they whoe being destitute of that spiritt which should certifie and give reason, follow the conduct of sensuall direction, . . . must needes thereby fall into actions of plaine hostilitie against God.⁸²

from first to last, a reason elevated by grace, because it is a creaturely reason, and not simply because the disorder consequent on the fall needs to be overcome.” Neelands, “Theology of Grace,” 130.

⁸⁰ Pelagius was a late fourth century British monk (or layman) who taught that man could satisfy the demands of divine law through free human decision and will unaided by the Holy Spirit. This contrasted the theology of St. Augustine in which man’s will was bound by sin and that without divine help, man was inherently incapable of keeping God’s commandments, thus meriting divine condemnation. Pelagius held an optimistic view of human nature (unlike Augustine’s traducian view of the inherent and inevitable liability of man to sin), in which grace functions to bring illumination to the soul, not forgiveness. The human grasp of God was therefore a cooperative factor in the scheme of salvation. Pelagius escaped the fall of Rome and spent his remaining years in North Africa and Jerusalem.

⁸¹ Hooker, *Dublin Fragments*, 10: 109.4–12.

⁸² Hooker, *Dublin Fragments*, 9: 108.5–10.

So what constituted for Puritans an *absolute* collapse of human epistemic and moral capability, was for Hooker the, “. . . foggie damp of originall corruption.”⁸³ That Hooker should embed an “irrationalist component”⁸⁴ in his thinking by pointing to the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit in the hermeneutical process was not a sign that his theology had failed, but rather that it succeeded in reflecting the true dynamic of divine-human “participation,” to use one of Hooker's favourite expressions, which by nature defied containment, but was Christologically defined as “. . . that mutuall hold which Christ hath of us and wee of him, in such sort that ech possesseth other by waie of speciall interest propertie and inherent copulation.”⁸⁵ It would therefore be impossible for Hooker to proceed without a more sophisticated development of revelation and epistemological limitation whereby the significance of the “inherent copulation” could be made tangible in a Christian society that did not at the same time run headlong into religious chaos. Thus, as John Booty has noted, the Spirit was the divine gift which brought “power to restore clarity to reason and ability to will.”⁸⁶

Geoffrey Nuttall situated his discussion of Puritanism and the Holy Spirit in the context of the epistemic certainty that was of considerable concern to Puritan conscience elevated by the reformation emphases of revelation and inspiration. Thus while asserting the absence of any link in Aquinas between revelation and the Spirit, Nuttall considered rekindled interest in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit to be the clear corollary of a reformation which relocated the centre of authority from ecclesiastical structures to

⁸³ Hooker, “Comfortable Sermon,” 71.17.

⁸⁴ Hillerdal, *Reason and Revelation*, 147.

⁸⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.1: 2.234.29–31.

⁸⁶ John E. Booty, “Richard Hooker,” in *The Spirit of Anglicanism*, ed. William J. Wolf (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow Co. Inc., 1979), 25.

the individual.⁸⁷ The outcome of Renaissance learning, the democratisation of language, the emergence of the printing press, and the rendering of Scripture in the vernacular increasingly placed the individual rather than the *ecclesia* at the centre of epistemological certainty. Edmund Campion⁸⁸ discerned the essential difference between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism rested not in competing systems of governance, or in debates over the place of Scripture in the appeal to authority, but in the status assigned to the nature of the Spirit's witness, and revelatory implications that were held to stem from this. The tension lay between Spirit and Word, and the soteriological outcome for individuals apart from the spiritual certainties claimed by the church for itself and the world. Nuttall also draws attention to Calvin's special doctrine of the Holy Spirit which resembled Hooker's approach with respect to the manner of its "secret" operation, which he described as "intuitive certainty"⁸⁹ and was followed by Hooker cautiously to avoid the risk of giving uncritical authority to private convictions on the ground that they were Spirit-inspired. Calvin declared:

. . . we ought to seek our conviction in a higher place than human reasons, judgments, or conjectures, that is, in the secret testimony of the Spirit . . . the testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason. For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit.⁹⁰

Clearly, while Hooker followed Calvin in the ways the Spirit operated within persons, he nonetheless had a more positive assessment than Calvin of the human

⁸⁷ Nuttall, *Puritan Faith*, 4 Nuttall's view that St. Thomas disconnected revelation from the role of the Spirit must be seen as an overstatement. In fact, the role of the Spirit in mediating the revelatory knowledge that would lead to salvation is necessary to Thomas' argument in the *Summa* that discusses the nature and extent of doctrine.

⁸⁸ Nuttall, *Puritan Faith*, 5.

⁸⁹ Nuttall, *Puritan Faith*, 6.

⁹⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.4.

capacity to be rationally persuaded by the truth of the Gospel. Still, the groundwork for Puritan convictions concerning the Spirit was anticipated by Calvin:

. . . those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that the Scripture is ἀπόπιστον;⁹¹ hence it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning. And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit. For even if it wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit Let us, then, know that the only true faith is that which the Spirit of God seals in our hearts.⁹²

This observation pointed to a more complex relation between Calvin and Hooker because it led to the preliminary conclusion that neither considered the objectivity of reason to be the final touchstone of faith, and both could be said to have arrived at parallel and yet different conclusions about the integrity of human certainty. Some concept of the congruence of faith and reason was still necessary to deflect claims to spiritual certainty where such certainty was clearly at variance with a reasoned understanding of the Scriptures and the Fathers. Hooker was unwilling to grant the sufficiency of unaided reason in attaining a saving knowledge of God and was suspicious of the Puritan ideal of individual certainty regarding the assured results of biblical interpretation. Hooker did not trust private opinion divorced from rational discourse and concluded this was one of the principle causes of dissent and confusion:

When they and their Bibles were alone together, what strange phantasticall opinion soever at any time entred into their heads, their use was to thinke the Spirit taught it them. Their phrensies concerning our Saviours incarnation, the state of soules departed, and such like, are things needlesse to be rehearsed. And for as much as they were of the same suite with those of whome the Apostle speaketh, saying, They are still learning, but never attaine to the knowledge of truth, it was no mervaille to see them everie daie broach some new thing, not heard of before. Which restlesse levitie they did interpret to be their growing to spirituall perfection, and a proceeding from faith to faith. The differences amongst them grewe by this meane in a maner infinite, so that scarcely was

⁹¹ “Self-authenticated.”

⁹² Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.5.

*there found any one of them, the forge of whose brayne was not possest with some speciall mysterie.*⁹³

Calvin, on the other hand, was prepared to accept the priority of personal conviction, and with an apparent willingness to understate its rational platform:

Such, then, is a conviction that requires no reasons; such, a knowledge with which the best reason agrees—in which the mind truly reposes more securely and constantly than in any reasons; such, finally, a feeling that can be born only of heavenly revelation.⁹⁴

Thus while Hooker appealed to rational discourse in debate and was confident that “*reason be the hand which the Spirite hath led them by*”⁹⁵ and hence the best guarantee of peace in the church, he was also very well aware that appeal to reason was simply instrumental in grasping its own limits. “Right reason” was the gift of the Spirit to those who had faith in God and allowed the human mind to apprehend and explore the truths of the Gospel in terms of its own mystery. It is from this vantage point that Hooker moved to discuss faith as a divine mystery which offers the promise of the believer’s union with God in Christ. So it may be said that Hooker’s so-called rationalism is a means by which the boundaries of human epistemological potential are delimited, and not a means of controlling an absolutely fixed agenda for reform in the church—any more than Calvin’s propositional logic was intended to rob the believer of mystery and conviction.

Scope, Method, and Structure

The present study will address the evidence for Hooker’s thought concerning the

⁹³ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 8.7: 44.24–45.5.

⁹⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.5.

⁹⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.10: 1.17.22f.

doctrine of the Holy Spirit found in the critical text of the *Lawes* in the Folger Edition.⁹⁶ The study of Hooker embodies those key aspects of his theology, which were shared by Hooker's Puritan contemporaries, such as William Whitaker (1548–1595), William Perkins (1558–1602), William Ames (1576–1633), and in the later writings of Richard Baxter (1615–1691) and John Owen (1616–1683). The influence of John Calvin on Puritan thought was so great, it is therefore important to analyse the effect of Calvin on Hooker himself. The value of assessing Hooker in relation to later Puritan writers is that it provides a check against the commonly held view that Hooker is attempting to distance the Elizabethan church from reform. Were this to be the case, one would expect an observable discontinuity between Hooker and major representatives of Puritan theology.

However, the goal of this thesis is to establish and analyse the distinctive contribution of Hooker's understanding of the Holy Spirit, and to evaluate its uniqueness with respect to his contemporaries. The results of this inquiry have suggested that where Hooker did depart from his reformation counterparts, it was not in such a way that placed him in fundamental conflict with key assumptions of Puritan⁹⁷ divinity⁹⁸ as it related to the centrality of Scripture and the necessity of faith. While, for

⁹⁶ For a full discussion of the publishing history of the *Lawes* see, Hooker, *Lawes*, xiii–xxvii; Paul G. Stanwood, "Forward," in *Volume 2: Richard Hooker and the English Reformation*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby, Studies in Early Modern Religious Reforms (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), xii–xviii. See also the extensive introduction in, Neelands, "Theology of Grace," 1–29, and W. Speed Hill, "The Evolution of Hooker's Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity," in *Studies in Richard Hooker*, ed. W. Speed Hill (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western University, 1972), 117–58.

⁹⁷ The term "Puritan" and its cognate "Puritanism" have already been used in this chapter but receive more detailed attention in Chapter 2. Hooker was not always careful to distinguish between extreme Puritans and those of more moderate disposition and temperament.

⁹⁸ The term "divinity" is broad and also trapped in history. It is used here to convey the breadth of Christian interest in theology, ecclesiology, and intellectual inquiry that both describes and investigates the experience of faith and worship in the

example, the sermonic contribution of Hooker may not be described as Laurence Chaderton's literal "conduit pipe for the Holy Spirit,"⁹⁹ it is clearly no less 'practical' in its divinity.¹⁰⁰ Since this is primarily an inquiry into Hooker, it is the trajectory of his thought that must control the agenda for the investigation.

Consequently, the procedure adopted in our assessments is to allow Hooker to speak by understanding the historical and intellectual context of the *Laws*. In dealing with this issue at length, Egil Grislis surveys the dominant approaches of nineteenth and the twentieth century scholarship to the complexity of Hooker's thought.¹⁰¹ Grislis notes that while scholarly consensus has identified Hooker's indebtedness to both St. Thomas and Calvin, any attempt to constrain Hooker theologically creates too sharp a distinction between his sources since "it can no longer be assumed without question that a Protestant theologian must differ essentially from a Catholic mediaeval scholar . . . that even such theologians as St. Thomas and Luther, separated by centuries and historic hostilities, may nevertheless share an essentially similar outlook."¹⁰² Grislis notes four overlapping categories within which scholarship has located Hooker: Hooker as a

Christian community, in a way analogous, for example, to the title of John and Charles Wesley's early hymnal, *An Exercise in Experimental Divinity*.

⁹⁹ Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, 127 Hooker thought the public reading of Scripture was a sufficient means by which the Spirit would make known the word of God. He was reacting to a view that held the sermon to be the prophetic word of God without reference to its content. Hooker's own view was that sermons were human creations, and therefore could not be said to be the word of God, since he already understood the term to refer exclusively to Scripture.

¹⁰⁰ See for example, John K. Stafford, "Sorrow and Solace: Richard Hooker's Remedy for Grief," in *Volume 2: Richard Hooker and the English Reformation*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby, *Studies in Early Modern Religious Reforms* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 131–47, where Hooker applies his understanding of reason to the context of a funeral sermon.

¹⁰¹ Egil Grislis, "The Hermeneutical Problem in Richard Hooker," in *Studies in Richard Hooker: Essays Preliminary to an Edition of His Works*, ed. W. Speed Hill (Cleveland and London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972), 159–206.

¹⁰² Grislis, "Hermeneutical Problem," 162.

rationalist; Hooker as Christian humanist; Hooker as secular humanist; and Hooker as a rationalist in complementary relation to revelation.¹⁰³ It is the latter view that comes closest to this thesis, and reflects the qualified confidence Hooker shows in reason described, for example, by Robert Kavanagh¹⁰⁴ as reason assisted and sustained by supernatural grace. The picture presented of Hooker in this thesis seeks to take account of the complex pattern of influences on his theology and suggests that the role Hooker assigned to the Holy Spirit represents a central theme around which the different facets of his thought are held together.¹⁰⁵ This results in a portrayal that shows Hooker to be primarily motivated by the overarching search for truth, regardless of the commitments occasioned by partisan debate: “. . . [Hooker’s] was a demand that truth be sought, not a claim that truth had been found.”¹⁰⁶ Consequently, the present work views Hooker as a unique thinker whose ultimate aim was to transcend the results of contemporary debate, to achieve a secure rational and theological basis for the global Christian hope of union with God.

Chapters one to three are predominantly historical analysis of the religious situation within which Hooker found himself. In particular, emergent Puritan, and later Quaker sensibilities and understanding concerning the Spirit are described. This provides the backdrop against which Hooker’s own pneumatological proposals can be

¹⁰³ Grislis, “Hermeneutical Problem,” 162–67.

¹⁰⁴ Robert V. Kavanagh, “Reason and Nature in Hooker’s *Polity*” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1944), 101.

¹⁰⁵ Grislis is certainly correct, though somewhat concessive, when he notes that “Hooker’s basic preference [was] not to cling to simplistic formulas but to suggest a process of reasoning that can take place under the assistance of grace. Which is to say that while Hooker certainly does not exclude the assistance of the Holy Spirit, he refuses to regard the work of the Holy Spirit as an irrational miracle that must bypass every use of reason.” Grislis, “Hermeneutical Problem,” 195. Nevertheless, the place of the Holy Spirit in Hooker is vital throughout the *Laws*.

¹⁰⁶ Wyndham M. Southgate, *John Jewel and the Problem of Doctrinal Authority*, Harvard Historical Monographs, 49 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 139.

assessed. Chapter four undertakes the necessary data-gathering from the *Lawes*, and collates and assesses relevant textual findings. Chapter five will be a synthesis of the strategies Hooker used to bring attention to the role Spirit, and their integration in the *Lawes*. Finally, chapter six draws together the findings of the thesis concerning the theological context for Hooker's understanding of the Holy Spirit, his distinctive contribution in the application of pneumatology to reason, revelation, sacramental theology, and divine grace.

Summary

This thesis makes a contribution to a dimension of Hooker studies that is under-represented in the literature considering the relative importance it plays in both Puritan divinity and Hooker's thought. Hooker's defence of the authority of the Elizabethan church could not have been addressed without a functional pneumatology because of the pressing questions over the sources of rational certainty in matters of faith and government. For if the question of ecclesial authority could not be resolved solely on rational grounds, or even in view of the realities of political expediency, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit would similarly appear to be compromised, since even if "aptnes" could grasp the facts of revelatory knowledge, there was no guaranteed human "ability," or capacity to grasp or act upon its significance. Thus Puritans had to maintain that only the common life of the elect could be pleasing to God for, as Calvin had stated it, ". . . the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit."¹⁰⁷ Although Hooker does not dispute this view of the Spirit, his pneumatology was large enough to accommodate a more generous response because it refused to bifurcate faith and reason, and limit the prior conditions wherein "the

¹⁰⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.4.

mysteries of supernaturall trueth”¹⁰⁸ could be apprehended. For Calvin, the oracles of God were in a larger measure hidden¹⁰⁹ from reasonable men regardless of their goodwill for:

If God has willed this treasure of understanding to be hidden from his children, it is no wonder or absurdity that the multitude of men are so ignorant and stupid! Among the “multitude” I include even certain distinguished folk, until they become engrafted into the body of the church.¹¹⁰

Hooker argued alongside, rather than against his opponents because both accepted the significance of revelation in regard to human knowing in matters of divinity and reason, as they applied to the justification of human knowledge and governance. Hooker even agrees with Calvin that “distinguished folk”¹¹¹ have no special advantage in the appropriation of spiritual knowledge, and are just as susceptible to the consequences of sin:

Soe in matters above the reach of reason, and beyond the compasse of nature, where only faith is to judge, by God’s revealed lawe what is right or good, the wisdome of the flesh severed and devided from that spiritt which converteth mans heart to the liking of Gods trueth, must needes be here as formall adversaries to him, and as farre from subjection to his lawe as before. Yett in these cases not only the carnall and more brutish sorte of men, butt the wittiest, the greatest in account for secular and worldly wisdome, *Scribes, Philosophers, profounde disputers* are the cheifest in opposition against God; Such in the Primitive Church were *Julian, Lucian, Porphyrie, Symachus*, and other of like note, by whome both the naturall lawe of God was disobeyed, and the mysteries of supernaturall truth derided; I conclude therefore, The naturall aptnes of mans will to take or refuse things presented before it; and the evidence which good things have for themselves, if reason were diligent to search it out, may be soundlie and safely taught without any contradiction to any syllable in that

¹⁰⁸ Hooker, *Dublin Fragments*, 9: 108.29.

¹⁰⁹ Hooker also uses the idea of “secret” and “mystical” to describe the hiddenness of divine disclosure which could only become manifest through the actions of faith.

¹¹⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.5.

¹¹¹ Calvin’s “distinguished folk” may be a group of skeptics in Paris led by Rabelais. Cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, I.7.4, n.14.

confession of the Church, or in those sentences of holy *Scripture* by you alleadged, whereas Gods especiall grace fayleth.¹¹²

However, Hooker's conclusions resulted in a greater openness than Calvin towards the capacity of human intellect. The pneumatic aspect of Richard Hooker's epistemology was a significant factor in maintaining his continuity with reformation principles, without conceding either the liberty of the Spirit to reveal, or constrain, the wisdom of the individual or community, or the freedom of human reason to find it.

Excursus on Hooker's use of the terms "secret" and "mysticall"

At different points in the thesis, it will be noted that Richard Hooker uses the terms "secret" and "mysticall" in relation to the human knowledge of God's being, and also with respect to human perception of God's actions discernible in creation. Hooker's sense of each term can frequently be determined by context. However, the purpose of this excursus is to provide additional information to allow the reader to weigh the options that would have been available to Hooker and thus provide a best fit for his usage.

From a contemporary perspective, the terms "secret" and "mysticall" tend to be associated with the practitioners of mysticism and secret, esoteric ritual not available to those uninitiated in its intellectual and spiritual framework. This view of religious mysticism is derived from the human claims upon the divine. For example, Evelyn Underhill thinks of the mystic as one who has "an overwhelming consciousness of God and of his own soul: a consciousness which absorbs or eclipses all other centres of interest"¹¹³ built upon the conviction of "a personal self capable of communion with

¹¹² Hooker, *Dublin Fragments*, 9: 108.18–109.4.

¹¹³ Evelyn Underhill, *The Essentials of Mysticism* (New York: AMS Press Inc, 1920), 2.

God.”¹¹⁴ The essential feature of mystical experience is that it is experienced and rooted in:

. . . the way the mystic feels about his Deity, and about his own relation with it; for this adoring and all-possessing consciousness of the rich and complete divine life over against the self’s life, and of the possible achievement of a level of being, a sublimation of the self, wherein we are perfectly united with it. . . . This is the common factor which unites those apparently incompatible views of the Universe [the mystic’s] intuition of the divine is so lofty that it cannot be expressed by means of any intellectual concept.”¹¹⁵

While the aim of the mystic is “the establishment of special relations with the spiritual order”¹¹⁶ it is to be noted that such a relationship is established by the intensity of the mystic’s desire and openness to the domain of the Spirit. The transcendental aspects of this relationship are attained by “immediate knowledge far more than by belief”¹¹⁷ and which results in “unmediated intercourse with the Transcendent.”¹¹⁸ Underhill does not make a case for the abandonment of the intellect, but it is clear that the assurances of relational union with the Godhead cannot as such be imparted by membership in a group and that mystical experience, in turn, cannot be imparted. Such assurances are therefore secret and highly personal. The hiddenness, or secrecy, of divine knowledge is well-known in Christian literature, including the Bible, and Richard Hooker draws upon this tradition. However, notwithstanding the Christian mystical tradition, Hooker’s use of the idea points to that of an open secret in which revelatory knowledge, disclosed by the Holy Spirit to those having faith, is actually the repair of knowledge lost in the Fall and now restored by divine grace, apart from the merits of the mystic. Thus, while Underhill’s conception of “mystical” is primarily directed ‘from

¹¹⁴ Underhill, *Mysticism*, 3.

¹¹⁵ Underhill, *Mysticism*, 4f.

¹¹⁶ Underhill, *Mysticism*, 27.

¹¹⁷ Underhill, *Mysticism*, 25.

¹¹⁸ Underhill, *Mysticism*, 25.

below,' inasmuch as mystical qualities reside "wholly in the temper of the self who adopts them,"¹¹⁹ it is the object of such contemplation that directs Richard Hooker.

Hooker's use of the terms is consistent with John Calvin and frequently simply means that which is hidden, abstruse, disguised, or concealed either through lack of initiation, or because the object is beyond ordinary human comprehension thus requiring special assistance to know or understand the object. In the context of transcendent union with God, Hooker often applies the term in relation to the sacraments and the church as the mystical body of Christ which is to say that their true identity is actually hidden behind the symbolic or analogical referents of, for example, bread and wine, or the community of belief in communion with itself and the object of worship. The initial point of departure from Underhill's view of the matter is that Christian mysticism does not view the divine-human union as an achievement of "personal temper" but as a gift of grace. Thus there is never an unmediated relationship between man and God even if, as Calvin affirms:

Manifold is the nimbleness of the soul with which it surveys heaven and earth, joins past to future . . . devises things incredible These are unfailing signs of divinity in man. . . . What ought we to say here except that the signs of immortality which have been implanted in man cannot be effaced.¹²⁰

So Calvin is clear about the capability of relationship and man's inner desire for it, but the initiative and imperative that secures the relationship belongs to God, not in mere generality, nor by the manipulation of fortune or chance but according to Calvin, since "all events are governed by God's secret plan,"¹²¹ desire itself he understands to be from God because, "philosophers teach and human minds conceive that all parts of the

¹¹⁹ Underhill, *Mysticism*, 5.

¹²⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.5.5.

¹²¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.16.2.

universe are quickened by God's secret inspiration."¹²²

In language that anticipates Richard Hooker, Calvin addresses the need for mediation as he discusses the mystical union of the believer with God and the doctrine of justification:

. . . it pleased God to reveal in the Mediator what was hidden and incomprehensible in himself. Accordingly, I usually say that Christ is, as it were, a fountain¹²³ open to us, from which we may draw what otherwise would lie unprofitably hidden in that deep and secret spring, which comes forth to us in the person of the Mediator.¹²⁴

The mystical comprehension of God outlined by Underhill resulted in a spiritual union with the Godhead which he took to be deeply personal. A similar sentiment is found in Calvin but having argued for the priority of divine initiative in such mystic contemplation Calvin, like Hooker, grasped its significance not so much personally, as corporately:

. . . that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts—in short, that mystical union—are accorded by us the highest importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not . . . contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body—in short, because he deigns to make us one with him.¹²⁵

And it is this sense of “mystical” that Hooker reproduces, that the “secret” knowledge of God ultimately manifests itself in personal acts of glorification and worship through the creation of a mystical community formed through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Again, as Calvin declares:

¹²² Calvin, *Institutes*, I.16.1.

¹²³ “Fountain” is a term also used by Hooker to describe Christ.

¹²⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.11.9.

¹²⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.11.10.

. . . God reforms us by his Spirit into holiness and righteousness of life. First . . . it must be seen whether he does this by himself and directly or through the hand of his Son, to whom he has entrusted the whole fullness of the Holy Spirit in order that by his abundance he may supply what is lacking in his members. . . . righteousness comes forth to us from the secret wellspring of his divinity . . . [emphasis mine].¹²⁶

Hooker shares Calvin's vocabulary and though at times lacks Calvin's precision, attempts to redirect the Puritan emphasis on the trustworthiness of inner illumination back to the essential features of Calvin's mysticism which, like Hooker, was willing to acknowledge its authenticity, but was suspicious when spiritual insight was disconnected from the constraints of Scripture and the collective wisdom of the church.

¹²⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.11.12 Calvin may be echoing the sentiments of St. Paul in Ephesians 3:14–19.

CHAPTER 2

RICHARD HOOKER AND THE PURITAN CONTEXT

The Challenge of Puritan Piety

The English reformation evolved and adapted to a wide range of stimuli, both from within England itself, and from the Continental reformers. The word “Puritan” is a catch-all term for both a clerical and congregational movement having social and political significance for national power structures, and also a theological and intellectual response to the religious precepts that developed and came to light in the Continental reformation. Peter Lake and Patrick Collinson have discussed the relative use of the terms “Puritan” and “Anglican” as being anachronistic in the context of Hooker's writing inasmuch as the term ‘Anglicanism’ does not yet exist. The terms themselves are late and open to interpretation. For example, Collinson draws attention to the distinction that may be made between early and later Puritans based on a perception of the “advanced”¹ character of their Protestantism, and the radical response that was precipitated by the Advertisements amongst those Puritans who might

¹ The term was intended to convey the higher state of a believer’s piety, and their “advance” in godliness, notably by comparison to those who could or would not describe their faith in overtly conversionist terms, or who did not conceive their faith to be a radical critique of the mundane life of the nation and its ‘earthly’ politics. Thus true believers could be distinguished from the perceived nominalism of conformists—encoding such distinctions in particular religious language and terminology did not originate during this period.

otherwise have remained identified with the church of the commonwealth.

Furthermore, a distinction between Puritans and Presbyterians² also needs to be made since while all Presbyterians were Puritans, the reverse was not universally the case.³

These considerations raise the question of the exact nature of the Elizabethan reformation because it establishes the theological, socio-political, and cultural conditions under which Hooker's thought was formed and developed. His relationship to the reformation agendas of both moderate and radical Puritans must be established in order to situate the distinctive aspects of Hooker's thought.

Characteristics of the Puritan Reformation

One of the difficulties associated with describing any movement is the application of consistent labels and definitions to what is likely to be a non-

² Following Lake, "Presbyterianism seemed to . . . resolve the tension between the godly minority and the ungodly majority, between the gathered and national churches, by simply handing control over the ungodly to the self-selecting oligarchies who would run each congregation. While the discipline might give the minister great power and status, it ensured that he achieved the votes of the 'people' and wielded them in conjunction with a panel of elected lay elders. A balance was thus struck between lay and clerical interests, as it was in the Presbyterian attitude to the Christian prince. He was given a residual right to reform a church too far gone in popery or corruption to reform itself but denied any quotidian role in the government of the church. Moreover the resulting schema of church government had the additional advantage of being contained in the word of God, . . . Its introduction into the church could thus be legitimated by the same juxtaposition of the authority of God (in scripture) against the authority of man (in the corrupt traditions of the church) which had been used to justify the doctrinal reformations of Edward and Elizabeth." Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* 3.

³ The difficulty of the terms themselves has been discussed by Lake in which Puritanism was simply the oppositionist Genevan-inspired protestantism and which appears to be the view held by Hooker. Lake is more anxious that the subtlety of definitions does not obscure the links, alignments, and differences that existed between the main representatives of people and groups who positioned themselves with respect to the idea of Elizabethan conformity. "The only serious threat to a proper understanding of the religious opinion of the period comes from historians whose devotion either to something called revisionism or the purity of their own conceptual categories, has led them to deny the existence of those differences and solidarities to which many contemporaries and most historians refer when they use the word puritan." Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* 6.

homogeneous series of developments, events, and outcomes. The hazard of doing so can result in a failure to appreciate the more nuanced positions attributable to the movement's main personalities, and an over-simplification of the forces that gave rise to it and sustained it. The Puritan Reformation had its own characteristics which gave it an identity that diverged from other reformed impulses, including its exemplar in Geneva. For while Calvin was the inspiration of Puritanism, this should not be taken to mean that it was identical with Genevan polity and theology. In fact it could never have replicated Geneva even if that was its fondest wish for there was a political and ecclesiastical establishment that crafted its concept of reformation around the royal supremacy and which understood well the deep links between religion, social cohesion, and the idea of a commonwealth which could withstand the political-expansionist aspirations of European powers that were now beginning to fully grasp the economic implications of the discovery of new lands. Since there had always been a disposition within the church to examine its habits of belief, for those concerned with the purity of Christian truth, the embrace of church and state brought an alliance of power and authority that could work for or against the interests of the Gospel. The new knowledge of the Renaissance came into contact with existing structures of national power in which it was now possible to assert the rights of the individual and the possibility of revolution. The Peasants' Revolt of 1525 served notice of this in Europe. England was no exception. The political alliances of Henry VIII inevitably connected religion with his diplomatic strategies though he did not ultimately embrace the reformed desire of an evangelical Protestant alliance against Charles V. Henry's *Ten Articles* of 1536 were a reluctant nod in the direction of Protestant reform in England inasmuch as the authority of the Scriptures were acknowledged. The difficulty for Henry was that while he was theologically literate, his "great matter" was the consuming issue which threw into sharp relief the collision of two forms of government. Henry was anti-papal for the sake of

royal supremacy but also pro-Catholic because of the unexplored implications of a full-fledged Reformation that would ultimately circumscribe the absolute authority of the monarchy.⁴ The urgency of Henry's divorce and its parliamentary sanction brought the arrangements of church and state into increasingly sharp relief, and Thomas Cranmer's contact with Martin Bucer, Paul Fagius and Peter Martyr strengthened the intellectual formation of reform in England through Oxford and Cambridge.

Henry's basic aim was the establishment of the absolute power of the monarch, not reform. Protestants and Catholics alike suffered under his reign. Henry's adviser, Thomas Cromwell (d.1540), had supported him in establishing royal supremacy and suffered beheading. William Tyndale (1492–1536) suffered execution at the hands of papal agents near Brussels for distributing Erasmus' New Testament after escaping authorities in England. Henry tolerated no dissent. For Protestants, this played out favourably as long as the king could be persuaded that such evangelical tendencies might cement his power base. His marriage to Anne of Cleves in 1540 was annulled within the year. Among English Protestants the desire for an increased pace of reform was restrained with Henry's rebuttal of the 1537 *Thirteen Articles* with his own *Six Articles*, but his was merely to delay the inevitable. The Marian persecutions (1553–1558) simply accelerated the sense of English nationalism and galvanised Protestant resolve under Elizabeth (1533–1603). Elizabeth's Protestant England emerged as the strongest nation in Europe following the execution of Mary Queen of Scots in 1587 and the crushing defeat of the papally inspired and financed Spanish armada in 1588.

Notwithstanding the close Continental relations that sustained reformation thought and dialogue in England, and its refugee population in Europe during the Marian persecutions, differences arose which became apparent as the Tudor

⁴ Hans J. Hillerbrand, *The World of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 119.

establishment both fostered and restrained a more thoroughgoing reformation in England. The general impossibility of arresting reform even by force of arms and astonishing acts of cruelty and violence in the execution of leading Protestant reformers such as Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley (d. 1555), and Thomas Cranmer (d. 1556) under Mary I was guaranteed by the publication of the Scriptures in the vernacular. The work of Erasmus and the publication in 1546 of Stephanus' edition of the Greek New Testament encouraged critical awareness and study of biblical manuscripts. The product of Renaissance learning found a natural home in biblical and theological study. What could be more vital than the critical appraisal of central authority held together as Egil Grisliis says by the glue of a theological and ecclesiological matrix that defined the probability structures of European society and the Holy Roman Empire. The publication of Tyndale's Bible in 1526 at Cologne and Worms did not attract its denunciation merely because it was an unofficially produced translation. Rather, Tyndale's preface, marginal notes and annotations were derived from Luther. The free dissemination of the Scriptures in the vernacular made possible by the printing press carried with it the practical implications of reform already anticipated by the Lollards. At the heart of dissent was an epistemological restlessness to which the Bible spoke with a perceived clarity, even if such clarity was sometimes more imagined than real. The Reformation zeal for learning and erudition produced the startling ideal that the Scriptures could be understood by any person. This fundamental precept fuelled the accessibility of reform and evangelical insistence on the priority of proclamation, and the Scriptural basis for the shaping of society and its laws.

However, it must be emphasised that dissent was not the only characteristic of the sixteenth century. Dissent brought with it an attendant response that stressed the binding character of authority. While the conditions that supported dissent were already

present in terms of the new knowledge, and the democratisation of learning, the Reformation did not make separation inevitable since it extrapolated the trends of dissent that could be found at various levels of society. Hans Hillerbrand is correct when he connects the self-confidence of Protestantism with the “. . . Protestant conviction that any pursuit of truth would confirm rather than deny religious truth . . . (and) the very division of Protestantism made for its relative congeniality to scientific endeavour.”⁵ Thus, the very Protestant ideal of *sola scriptura* that had been established through the call for intellectual and spiritual liberty, and freedom of individual conscience contained within it the epistemological seeds that would lead to secular religion through the abandonment of mediaeval ecclesial tradition and the revolutionary elevation of individual rights. The nature and character of the Reformation cannot therefore be defined absolutely as either wholly religious, or wholly secular. It was clearly supported or opposed politically, and its religious burden would conceivably have remained a “squabble among monks.”⁶ Similarly, the social and cultural restlessness which came to Britain and Europe, as the product of the Renaissance, both supported and was sustained by the Reformation. But the heart of reform was always idealistic. It is hard to imagine the willingness to disobey and confront authority, suffer martyrdom and loss, and embark on projects requiring a level of commitment and study for which there could be no immediate reward, without an inner passion and desire for a new vision of divine love and grace and, in Puritan terms, a pure church manifesting an explicitly biblical Christianity in full conformity with the Scriptures, as the Puritan mind understood them. Thus failure of the idea of the infallibility of the church, and the collateral appeal to the external authority of the

⁵ Hillerbrand, *The World of the Reformation*, 213.

⁶ Hillerbrand, *The World of the Reformation*, 188 Quoting Clement VII (1523–24).

Scriptures changed forever the epistemological landscape through which the world could be grasped.

Hooker has been traditionally taken to be the classic exponent of Anglican 'orthodoxy', though the term "Anglican" is not used by Hooker himself. The representation of Hooker as a defender of the Elizabethan Settlement was so understood by later generations and characterised Keble's appreciation of him. This picture of Hooker as the defender of Tudor establishment orthodoxy has been advanced by Peter Lake and others, but is not universally accepted. It has received criticism, from Egil Grislis, Nigel Atkinson, Torrance Kirby, Bruce Kaye, for example. The challenge in reading Hooker is the subtlety and sophistication of his thought. An attempt must be made to situate Hooker in the English reformation as one who shaped Anglican thought, and yet as one who learned his religion with a reformation already begun. A reading of Hooker which attempts to represent him through the varied interests of Puritan or establishment religion will certainly not explain Hooker's individuality, or his relatively irenic stance towards the profound theological controversies of his day. While there is an obvious need to locate Hooker in relation to his contemporaries, and gauge the contributions of his thought in that light, it quickly becomes apparent that Hooker was both a son of his age and yet a personality of distinguished and independent thought. This bears upon our estimation of Hooker as either one who simply restated the anxieties and answers of the Crown and Canterbury, or whether his religious and theological thought was genuinely unique, seeking neither adherence to Geneva or Canterbury where his own theological investigations would not allow him, and yet finally, anticipating the more moderate Puritan epistemology of Richard Baxter and John Owen.

Assessing Richard Hooker in the Midst of Reform

In any discussion of Hooker in context, it is important to make appropriate distinctions between terms when discussing categories. It has already been noted that the term “Anglican” is not one that was used in Hooker's lifetime to describe those loyal to the authority of the Crown in matters of religion. Yet neither is it true to represent Puritanism as a monolithic way of believing and acting. Both were susceptible to extremes, and both exhibited, at different times, a capacity for toleration and reform which was not always evident on the Continent. But the admixture of religious zeal and political conviction was similar in each case. The Puritan outlook which sought freedom of religious expression regularly did so by participation in the political machinery of Parliament, and with one eye on the power of the Crown. This appearance of duplicity and coercion should not blind one to the authenticity of the convictions in those who held them, nor of the assumptions of the age the boundaries of which were themselves being profoundly tested. The purpose in this section is to sketch the various approaches taken to “Hooker in context” and state the contours of his thought which will be used to analyse the place and role he assigns to the Holy Spirit. The essential question at this point is to what extent Hooker was truly a Reformer in the company of the Continental Reformers, or simply a powerful and independent thinker who, recognising the limitations of his age, sought to do no more than give a coherent view of the orthodoxy of the Christian faith in continuity with primitive tradition as it then stood in England. Or indeed, whether Hooker was actually both, the independence of his thought being the essential characteristic of the man. It is inescapable that people will reflect the temper of their times, but more interesting and useful to assess those ways in which they depart from the expectations the constraints of history place upon them.

Hooker as Defender of the Elizabethan Settlement

The early life of Richard Hooker has been well-described elsewhere.⁷ As a defender of the Settlement, Hooker embodied a vision of the church that was, as William Haugaard observes, not “. . . an ‘ism’ or a ‘denomination’ but simply Christianity as lived within the national church, a ‘distinct. . . visible society’ of ‘the Catholike Church’. When he took up his pen to defend its religious faith and practice, it was in defence of an institution that had nurtured and sustained him in his own life and ministry.”⁸ This picture of Richard Hooker places him in a position of some neutrality with respect to the ideals of reform. This was the essence of the conflict that characterised Hooker’s debates with Cartwright and Travers, namely that Hooker’s defence of the Settlement was at best incompatible with the alleged purity of Genevan reform, and at worst suspiciously comfortable with Rome.⁹ Nigel Voak contends that Hooker implicitly claimed “. . . to have been the inventor of Anglicanism.”¹⁰ This view

⁷ See for example, C. J. Sisson, *The Judicious Marriage of Mr. Hooker and the Birth of “The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940); David Novarr, *The Making of Walton’s “Lives,”* Cornell Studies in English, 41 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1958); W. Speed Hill, “Richard Hooker in the Folger Edition: An Editorial Perspective,” in *Richard Hooker and the Construction of the Christian Community*, ed. Arthur S. McGrade, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies no. 165 (Tempe, AZ: SUNY, 1997), 3–20; Philip B. Secor, “In Search of Richard Hooker: Constructing a New Biography,” in *Richard Hooker and the Construction of the Christian Community*, ed. Arthur S. McGrade, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies no. 165 (Tempe, AZ: SUNY, 1997), 21–37.

⁸ William P. Haugaard, “Commentary on the Preface,” in *Introductions; Commentary, Preface and Books I-IV*, vol. 6 Part One of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. W. Speed Hill and Egil Grislis, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993), 3. Haugaard is citing Hooker at Hooker, *Lawes*, III.1.14: 1.205.25–28.

⁹ Brook is no less tendentious in his admiration for Thomas Cartwright in the debate with John Whitgift over the Admonition. “Mr. Cartwright’s learning was displayed in admirable subserviency to his general purpose; while the power of his logic and the depth of his intellect enabled him to unravel the sophistry and refute the unsound reasoning of his opponent.” Brook’s heroic defence of reason and logic did not, however, permit him to ascribe similar powers to Hooker. B. Brook, *Memoir of the Life and Writings of Thomas Cartwright* (London: John Snow, 1845), 125.

¹⁰ Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology*, 5.

is predicated on Peter Lake's understanding that English reform was a cause designed to uphold "... the idea that the Church of Rome was a true church, indeed the true church of which the Church of England represented a reformed continuation . . ." ¹¹ This was certainly the charge against Hooker brought by Walter Travers to the Privy Council:

. . . when as he had taught, that *the Church of Rome is a true Church of Christ, and a sanctified church, by profession of that trueth which god hath revealed unto us by his sonne though not a pure and perfect Churche*, and further, that *he dowed not but thowsands of the fathers which lyved and died in the superstitions of that church, were saved becawse of their ignorance which excused them*, misaledging to that end a text of scripture to prove it: the matter being of set purpose, openlie and at larg handled by him, . . . that might prejudice the faith of Christ, encourage the ill affected to continue still in theirre damnable waies, and other weake in faith to suffer them selves easilie to be seduced, to the distruccion of their soules: . . . ¹²

Here Travers makes clear the central thrust of his objections to Hooker and the nature of the responsibility he felt towards those to whom he preached. It constitutes an expression of the objection to the infallibility of Rome, but also a Puritan reflection of the parallel ideal that all error similarly tarnished the purity of the church and was therefore intolerable because it, "... prejudice[d] the faith of Christ." So once discovered, error needed to be suppressed lest weak people "... continue still in theirre damnable waies." Interestingly, the question of biblical hermeneutics is never far from the discussion, and Travers charges Hooker with a misappropriation of Scripture. This latter hermeneutical question came to be of considerable importance in the *Lawes* and the groundwork of Hooker's epistemology. It may be said that if Hooker had made a more overt and explicit claim to a break with Rome and placed this at the centre of his

¹¹ Peter Lake, "Presbyterianism, The Idea of a National Church and the Argument from Divine Right," in *Protestantism and the National Church in Sixteenth Century England*, ed. Peter Lake and Maria Dowling (New York: Croom Helm, 1987), 219.

¹² Walter Travers, "A Supplication made to the Privy Counsel by Master Walter Travers," in *Tractates and Sermons*, vol. 5 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. Egil Grisliis and Laetitia Yeandle, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 200.

own polemic, the charge of Pelagianism (which he explicitly denies) might not have arisen. Although there was potential for a significant and controlling issue, Hooker was clearly aware of its sensitivity to Puritan minds, he did not permit the question of whether the Church of Rome could be a true church to dominate the agenda for the *Lawes* any more than he was prepared to allow his theology to be monopolised by resolving the central issue of predestination.¹³ Peter Lake locates Hooker within a wider movement of intellectual inquiry that was beginning to assert a more coherent critical response to “the high Calvinist synthesis.”¹⁴ Lake sums up his depiction of Hooker:

. . . instead of Hooker inventing ‘anglicanism’, perhaps the ‘anglican moment’ could be said to have invented Hooker. To put the matter crudely, the point had been reached where if Hooker had not made the crucial breakthrough someone else would. And yet the fact remains that it was Hooker who, with a unique combination of theoretical ambition and polemical acuity, who broke with the mainstream of English Calvinism. That he did so, . . . in a contribution to the debate on the government of English church was, . . . no accident If Hooker's *Polity* represented some sort of natural culmination or conclusion to the debate with presbyterianism it did so not because it summed up existing conformist arguments, . . . but because it resolved or tried to resolve the central cruxes and contradiction within the conformist case as it had developed since 1570 [the date of Cartwright's *Admonition*].¹⁵

While this may be agreed in general, one can never know quite what would have transpired if Hooker had not entered the debate. The point is that Lake has sought to identify Hooker as a representative churchman at a time when the meaning of the Settlement was the enforcement of the religious superstructure from which many thought they had just escaped. In this respect, the *Lawes* can be viewed purely as a document intended to defend the Prayer Book. To be sure, Hooker had broken with the “Calvinist synthesis” but not as a revolutionary—rather as one who had taken the time to assess the wider Reformation against the totality of Christian history. Therefore, how

¹³ Both these concerns surface strongly in the *Christian Letter*.

¹⁴ Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* 227.

¹⁵ Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* 228.

far he actually did break with Calvinism is open to debate. His marginal comments in *A Christian Letter* reveal Hooker at his sharpest and his clear impatience with the authors of the *Letter* is evident. But these are the private notations of one whose temperament was to avoid controversy. Hooker was preparing to reply to the *Letter* at the time of his death and though we do not know what tone a more formal rebuttal would have taken, there is no reason to suppose it would have been less developed and irenic than Hooker shows himself in the *Lawes* itself. For example, Hooker explicitly sought some unifying precept that would overcome the “*wearisome contentions*” that in his view compromised the public face of Christian truth:

Far more comfort it were for us (so small is the joy we take in these strifes) to labour under the same yoke, as men that looke for the same eternall reward of their labours, to be joyned with you in bands of indissoluble love and amitie, to live as if our persons being manie our soules were but one, rather then in such dismembered sort to spend our fewe and wretched dayes in a tedious prosecuting of wearisome contentions: the end whereof, if they have not some speedie ende, will be heavie even on both sides The only godlines we glory in, is to find out somewhat whereby we may judge others to be ungodly. Each others faults we observe as matter of exprobaton and not of grieffe. By these meanes we are growne hateful in the eyes of the Heathens themselves, and (which woundeth us the more deeply) able we are not to deny but that we have deserved their hatred. With the better sort of our owne, our fame and credit is cleane lost.¹⁶

Admittedly, Hooker is not quite so conciliatory in the marginal notes to the *Letter* (1599) but the time that transpired between it and the opening sentiments of the Preface to the *Lawes* (1593) was enough to try the patience of both sides. Hooker's appeal to an imagined brotherhood of English believers wherein differences could be settled without recourse to schism, appears to represent a position of moderation that may indeed be a self-conscious attempt not only to describe for posterity the course of the Settlement, but actually induce reconciliation. This is certainly a stated aspect of Hooker's purpose:

Though for no other cause, yet for this; that posteritie may know we have not loosely through silence permitted things to passe away as in a dreame, there

¹⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface 9.3: 1.52.11–31.

*shall be for mens information extant thus much concerning the present state of the Church of God established amongst us, and their carefull endeavour which woulde have upheld the same.*¹⁷

Hooker has a visionary eye here. He has assessed the weight of the issues and judged them to be sufficiently far-reaching to commit himself in a way he was not temperamentally disposed, “. . . *there was in my poore understanding no remedie, but to set downe this as my finall resolute persuasion.*”¹⁸ Thus in Peter Lake’s evaluation of Hooker, even if there is an Arminian indebtedness to him:

. . . it was not until after the collapse of Laudianism in the 1640s and particularly after 1660, that Hooker came into his own as the patron saint of ‘anglicanism’. For then the dominant need for apologists for the established church was for a non-Laudian, preferably Elizabethan, non-Calvinist and rabidly anti-puritan ancestry for the restored church. This Hooker was able, triumphantly, to provide.¹⁹

However, this creates its own difficulties because Lake also acknowledges the breadth of persuasion involved in using the term “Puritan.” The greatness of Hooker is not simply defined in terms of his acceptance in a given time and place. Such recognition is only one part of Hooker's contribution. That considerable efforts were made to preserve and perhaps suppress his writings immediately following his death in some measure points to the recognition of their value extant beyond the confines of theological and ecclesiological polemic. Lake again recognises the difficulty of locating Hooker strictly within the parameters of Elizabethan polemic and religious sentiment:

If the core of the moderate puritan position lay neither in the puritan critique of the liturgy and polity of the church nor in a formal doctrinal consensus, where can it be located? It lay in the capacity, which the godly claimed, of being able to recognise one another in the midst of a corrupt and unregenerate world. That capacity in turn rested on a common view of the implications of right doctrine, both for the private spiritual experience of the individual and for the collective experience and activity of the godly community. In short, what was involved in puritanism—and what should prevent modern scholars from seeking to conflate puritan divinity with a formal doctrinal consensus—was the insistence on the transformative effect of the word on the attitudes and behaviour of all true

¹⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface 1.1: 1.1.9–13.

¹⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface 1.2: 1.2.15f.

¹⁹ Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* 229.

believers . . . an impulse stemming from the experience of true justifying faith and the consequent integration of the individual into the community of the godly and the separation of that community, in the view of its members at least, from the profane and the ungodly.²⁰

The nature of the “community” remains part of the difficulty. Both Hooker and Cartwright understood the elect community to be transformative of society but that society was highly variable in its constituency, and filled with interests political as well as religious. Indeed, it is not always clear that Hooker himself made fine enough distinctions in his characterisation of the Puritan audience.

Debora Shuger has drawn attention to the identity of Hooker’s audience, and suggested a greater political neutrality in Hooker than has sometimes been held to be the case. This leads to a reappraisal of the *Lawes* as something other than anti-Puritan polemic. Her method is to look for “imagined community”²¹ since it is not “self-evident that Hooker was much interested in community.”²² If it is important for the church at any period in its life to understand the world as its context rather than its target, then Hooker’s polemic was actually quite restrained. His ecclesiastical vision was generous and assumed a community that included the simple and the sophisticated, gathered by the maternal ministrations of an ecclesiastical commonwealth. As has been mentioned, Hooker wrote with the assumption that reason is available to all persons. He did not assume that it would be uniformly applied but that nonetheless, the Scriptures and their

²⁰ Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, 282.

²¹ Debora K. Shuger, “‘Societie Supernaturall’: The Imagined Community of Hooker’s *Lawes*,” in *Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community*, ed. Arthur S. McGrade, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies no. 165 (Tempe, AZ: SUNY, 1997), 309.

²² Shuger, “The Imagined Community,” 309. Though Hooker’s community as may be hard to identify, the fact that he declares himself in the opening remarks of the *Preface* to be writing for posterity in the hope that future generations will understand the collapse of the ecclesiastical establishment, suggests Hooker does view himself as bound up in the fate of the community, however conceived. When addressing himself to his opponents in the *Lawes*, he is typically conciliatory and fraternal despite the much sharper tone of his *marginalia* in the *Christian Letter*.

message could be understood adequately by each generation. Peter Lake draws attention to the same idea of Thomas Cartwright in the *Confutation*, that the study of Scripture was possible, necessary, and a duty at every level of society.²³ The ecclesial community that both receives and transmits the kerygmatic proclamation is not, despite Hooker's defence of established Christianity, dominated by an elite. His deference to authority is observable in his dedicatory sections of the *Lawes*, but this does not overburden his purpose. Hooker's sensitivity towards the life of the church is protective, and made in response to the alienating Puritan position that "hath bred high tearmes of separation betweene such and the rest of the world, whereby the one sort are named *The* brethren, *The* godlie . . . the other worldlings, timeservers, pleasers of men not of God, with such like."²⁴ Hooker's impatience with a simplistic piety was not driven by lack of compassion, but by his reading of Puritan obduracy towards reason and appeal; ". . . let any man of contrarie opinion open his mouth to perswade them, they close up their eares, his reasons they waigh not, all is answered with rehearsall of the words of John, *We are of God, he that knoweth God, heareth us*, as for the rest, ye are of the world . . ." ²⁵ Hooker did not accept the conclusion that reasoned rejection of a Puritan hermeneutic was identical with their claim to suffer on account of truth, and a mark of authentic belief. On this point, he may simply be responding to popular characterisations of Puritan hermeneutic. As a parish priest, it is not clear that he regularly had serious dealings with uneducated and unsophisticated persons.

The generosity of Hooker's reading of Scripture made the language of reformed biblical faith accessible to those who could never belong to Puritan society. For although Hooker supported an elitism of his own, the results of that elitism still sought a

²³ Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, 288.

²⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.11: 1.18.14–17.

²⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.14: 1.19.23–26.

place of convergence that did not require absolute assent to the specific interpretative results of scriptural inquiry, but rather to the overall message of salvation, and resulting fellowship:

The Church being a supernaturall societie, doth differ from naturall societies in this, that the persons unto whom we associate our selves, in the one are simply considered as men, but they to whom wee be joyned in the other, are God, Angels, and holie men.²⁶

Hooker's hermeneutic was not disturbed by the limitations of faith or knowledge, and his concept of inclusion and comprehensiveness was guided by that of the loving condescension and election of God. Thus in respect to baptism, Hooker places faith and belief on a continuum which does no violence to justifying grace; "Wee are *then beleivers* because *then wee beginne to be* that which processe of time doth make perfect In summe the whole Church is a multitude of beleivers, all honored with that title, even hypocrites for their professions sake as well as saintes"²⁷ This, for Hooker, is not a liability but the end for which the church ministers, ". . . exact obedience [nourishes] crueltie and hardnes of harte,"²⁸ even where strict doctrinal rigour would not approve.

The sufficiency of Scripture was for Hooker, similar to the sufficiency of the church as the place of saving intersections and, as Debora Shuger remarks, "If Hooker's church does not contest the Tudor *status quo*, neither does it reproduce it." Quoting Peter Lake's idea of Hooker's "invented church,"²⁹ his church ". . . lodges at the outskirts and interstices of the nation-state."³⁰ Hooker's generous understanding of Scripture kept the warring parties in tension, and held before them a vision of its

²⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 15.2: 1.131.6–10.

²⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.64.2: 2.295.1, 17–19.

²⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.61.5: 2.268.14.

²⁹ Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* 227.

³⁰ Shuger, "The Imagined Community," 328.

Christocentric heart which was not simply the isolation of viewpoints, but a conscious attempt to sustain the fellowship of a variegated communion in Christ.

Again Lake observes:

. . . that the puritan style of practical divinity, and the view of the implications of right doctrine enshrined in it, contained a certain internal spiritual dynamic that forced the believer into a constant struggle to externalise his sense of his own election through a campaign of works directed against Antichrist, the flesh, sin and the world . . . if puritanism is to be defined at all it must be in terms of that spiritual dynamic.³¹

In Lake's analysis of Puritan identity, he offers a legitimate place within which the moderate Puritan divines can be located without identifying them too closely with any specific programme. It is one way of attempting to assess Puritanism as both a political movement (which any Elizabethan religious undertaking must involve), and a genuine act of public and private piety which can take place regardless of its political dimensions. Lake does not argue that Puritanism was an essentially political phenomenon and he clearly makes a distinction between the public (and hence, politically focussed) debates between Travers, Cartwright, and Hooker. He writes:

Presbyterianism itself was always predicated on the ineffectiveness of the church of England as a proselytising institution. Although the issue of church polity and the conduct of public polemic may dominate the printed works of Thomas Cartwright and Walter Travers, there is no reason to suppose that such issues and activities also dominated their lives as pastors and preachers.³²

Lake further declares that since the English reformers and Crown had each rejected papal authority, if for parallel but different reasons, “. . . protestants were left with the study of scripture (guided, of course, by properly trained clerics) and the internal testimony of the Spirit attendant upon it as the only source for, and validation of, true belief.”³³ It is the question of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit that can be used as the epistemological touchstone this thesis uses to shed light on Hooker's

³¹ Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, 282.

³² Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, 284.

³³ Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, 287.

situation within the English Reformation, and also to suggest the extent to which he really was at variance with mainstream Puritanism. If it can be shown that Hooker was in fact moving in directions that were highly original, notwithstanding the influence of Aristotle and Thomas, this should be manifested in his commitment to the expressions of Christian belief, both internally and externally.³⁴ This was a fundamental question of Puritan divinity, namely, the assurance of faith, the supreme status of the Scriptures in matters defining public and private piety, and the practical handling of Christian theology. Although the *Lawes* clearly point to Hooker's profound concern to defend what he considers the normative place of a national Christian polity as it had hitherto been understood, Hooker did not accord the place of tradition an absolute standing. He understood ecclesiastical tradition as a safeguard to piety and a natural aspect of human life but neither was it to function in such a way as to outlive its value for future generations. This naturally gave rise to the question of when, therefore, tradition could be abandoned, by whose authority, and on what grounds, since the very nature of the church as a gathered institution was always liable err. The idealised community to which Hooker spoke, envisaged by Deborah Shuger, carries within it a utopian flavour, where men of good will confer and take counsel together, weighing the words of the ancients, and with painstaking care, and bringing the community to a place of new faithfulness. It is clear that Hooker found the polemic of his day distasteful, and he frequently declares his preference for what he considers the self-authenticating witness of reason exercised by reasonable people.

Although Hooker can be depicted as the mere willing defender of the Settlement, it was clearly something worth defending, as the appeal to England's nationhood demanded just such cohesion during the uncertainties of perceived Catholic subversion.

³⁴ It is perhaps trivial to say that Hooker, like his contemporaries, was familiar with classical and Renaissance philosophers and thinkers. Hooker's reliance of Thomas, Augustine, and Aristotle has been well-documented elsewhere.

Nevertheless, to leave Hooker at this point fails to do justice to his avowed reformed commitments. Hooker was also a reformer, and the extent to which he was indebted to Calvin needs now to be discussed.

Richard Hooker as Reformer

The *Lawes* respond primarily to Thomas Cartwright and Walter Travers, against the backdrop of the *Admonition* and Puritan insistence that no reform could be complete that was tolerant of Rome. At one obvious level, the defence is a rebuttal of the Puritan epistemological stance towards Scripture, which demanded a prescriptive hermeneutic through which the life of both church and Commonwealth could be defined and controlled. If Catholic piety traded upon the anxiety of the common man to find life's centre through the overarching power and influence of ecclesial authority, Puritan piety nursed an anxiety of its own in which each detail of Scripture was held to be of equal weight and therefore applicable in every aspect of life to the same degree. Hence the authority of the Bible became the touchstone for Reformation orthodoxy. This was a well-established Protestant banner. Richard Hooker's response to this hermeneutic was not a retreat into tradition, or an abandonment of the Bible but a careful reworking of a Biblical hermeneutic the impact of which was fundamental to his entire religious thought. In other words, what does it mean to be human, what are the limitations of human knowing, how can humans attain certainty in knowing, and, most conclusively, how do humans relate to God?

The difficulty arises when Hooker debates Cartwright in the *Lawes*. It can appear that an enormous gap exists between the two in which one is forced to line up two vantage points that have no apparent point of contact. Thomas Cartwright was Hooker's Puritan foil who was defined by Hooker without obvious distinction from

radical Puritan reform. But this does no justice either to Hooker or the Puritans. Even if Hooker did not take time to acknowledge fully the breadth of Puritan sentiment the same must be said for Cartwright. Therefore, the case has been increasingly made that Hooker was actually much closer to Geneva than has been suggested by Lake. In this, the debate between Hooker and the Puritans needs to be seen in a more nuanced fashion. Both Hooker and the Puritans appealed to Holy Scripture; both appealed to the Fathers; both held to a high view of sacramental life, if not to the same extent; both were committed to a revelatory understanding of the Gospel. Egil Grislis points to the objectivity of Hooker's method through the subjection of personal ideals to the rational scrutiny of claims to truth.³⁵ The hermeneutical approach of each was different but not such that the task of theological inquiry should be viewed apart from the character of its participants:

. . . it needs to be noted that Hooker does not confuse objectivity with unconcerned detachment. The objectivity that Hooker proposes needs to be practiced at very close range and in direct involvement with the view under consideration. Hence the personality of the theologian becomes most important, as it must be transformed by Christian love without which real objectivity is impossible. Hooker counsels: “. . . there will come a time when three words uttered with charity and meekness shall receive a far more blessed reward than three thousand volumes written with disdainful sharpeness of wit. But the manner of men's writing must not alienate our hearts from the truth, if it appear they have the truth.”³⁶

Contemporary evangelicals have located in Hooker a spiritual ally mainly through the disciplined and principled hermeneutic Hooker applied to his reading of Scripture. Alan Bartlett notes that “A modern evangelical Anglican would argue, . . . that whilst we may have a more developed hermeneutical sensitivity, any position which would lay claim to building on Hooker's heritage must also take his principle of

³⁵ Egil Grislis, “Richard Hooker's Method of Theological Inquiry,” *Anglican Theological Review* 45 (April 1963): 191.

³⁶ Grislis, “Theological Inquiry,” 192.

scriptural revelation with utmost seriousness.”³⁷ The contemporary use being made of Richard Hooker by evangelicals points to a way of locating him as a genuinely unique theologian who chose to be aligned with the Elizabethan establishment but not, finally, constrained by it. Hooker was aware that the greatness of God was to be appropriated as the gift of God himself and through the means established by God. John Booty, writing to re-evaluate contemporary links with Hooker says:

The point to keep in mind is that the event/gift/grace of Jesus Christ provides the focal meaning of all else, but that meaning presupposes the universe as created by God (therefore possessing meaning) and human beings as capable of understanding the focal meaning and all else in relation to it. Hooker stood in awe of God, the universe, and humankind.³⁸

Booty finds in Hooker the sort of personality that traversed the hermeneutical divide of Puritan literalism and establishment exegetical method though the dichotomy is not clear. The Puritans essentially contended with the absence of biblical knowledge rather than what today would be viewed as biblical liberalism. Nonetheless, Booty is correct to point towards Hooker's dependence on a hermeneutic of the Spirit for a robust epistemology. The essence of Christian assurance was unavailable without an active doctrine of the Spirit interpenetrating Hooker's defence of reason and the varied grounds of human knowing. Thus Booty acknowledges Hooker “. . . argued that Scripture presupposed the operation of God's Spirit in and through persons, nature, and governments, and that it did not stand alone.”³⁹ The permanence of Hooker's thought lies partly in his anticipation of critical method, and the general sympathy he clearly bears towards those with whom he debates. There is after all, a broadly irenic tone in

³⁷ Alan Bartlett, “What Has Richard Hooker to Say to Modern Evangelical Anglicanism,” *Anvil* 15, no. 3 (1998): 201.

³⁸ John E. Booty, “An Elizabethan Addresses Modern Anglicanism. Richard Hooker and Theological Issues at the End of the Twentieth Century,” *Anglican Theological Review* 71 (Winter 1989): 22.

³⁹ Booty, “Modern Anglicanism,” 16.

the *Lawes* that suggests Hooker saw himself debating amongst brethren and taking counsel outside partisan interests. Hooker sets this tone in the *Preface*:

. . . two things I have heere thought good to offer into youre owne hands, hartely beseeching you even by the meekenesse of Jesus Christ, whome I trust ye love; that, as ye tender the peace and quietnes of this Church, if there be in you that gracious humilitie which hath ever bene the crowne and glorie of a christianlie disposed mind, if your owne soules, heartes, and consciences, (the sound integritie whereof can but hardlie stande with the refusall of truth in personall respects) be, as I doubt not but are, things most deere and pretious unto you, Let not the faith which ye have in our Lord Jesus Christ, be blemished with partialities, regard not who it is which speaketh, but waigh only what is spoken. Thinke not ye reade the words of one, who bendeth him selfe as an adversarie against the truth which ye have alreadie embraced; the words of one, who desireth even to embrace together with you the self same truth, if it be truth, and for that cause (for no other God he knoweth) hath undertaken the burthensome labour of this painefull kinde of conference. For the plainer accesse whereunto, let it be lawfull for me to rip up to the verie bottome, how and by whome your Discipline was planted, at such time as this age we live in began to make first triall thereof.⁴⁰

Hooker's magnanimity is evident in these words yet they are edged with irony.

The Puritan suspicion that established Christianity was less than Apostolic and biblical, too close in sympathy to Rome, is here turned back upon the unnamed Puritan audience. “. . . by the meekenesse of Jesus Christ, whome I trust ye love; . . .” gently provokes the Puritan reader to believe that if the authenticity of faith can be publicly probed amongst those thought outside “the Godly,” the pursuit of truth and must necessarily be applied evenly. Hooker therefore mildly puts the question of *Puritan* unbelief on the table for discussion. In short, he evidently seeks to establish some form of shared piety through which differences can be placed in context. Nonetheless, Hooker gives notice that he will debate with vigour just as the Puritans do and investigate their charge that reform in England was incomplete. Any argument he will “. . . rip up to the verie bottom,”

The sensitivity of modern evangelicals towards theological positions that diminish the stature of Scripture as divine word, its purity of doctrine, and inspired and revelatory origins, can be paralleled with Puritan concerns. Recent research has alerted

⁴⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 1.3: 1.2.24–3.9.

us to the range of Hooker's sympathies and the corresponding likelihood that while clearly a defining figure as a defender of the Settlement, his theological persuasions cannot be simplistically or located at some point on a straight line between Puritans and proto-Anglicans. Recent attempts to press Hooker into the service of a special or localised agenda must necessarily contend with Hooker's particular propensity to follow wherever rational investigation would lead. Nigel Voak has refined the interpretation of Hooker's doctrine of grace by seeking to establish a more nuanced evaluation of Hooker's situation as both a sympathetic reformer but also a firm critic of his Genevan exemplar. Thus Hooker must in general be viewed as an independent spirit who aligned himself theologically according to the same spirit that he claimed governed all true religion.

Although Hooker was a loyal defender of establishment religion in England, it must not be assumed that such loyalty was uncritical. His commitment to it was grounded in the belief that it best suited the situation in England. H. F. Woodhouse searches for the contemporary value of Hooker and finds it in the independence of Hooker's thought and his capacity "to detach himself so far from events that he saw issues and statements in their true perspective"⁴¹ as primarily a truth seeker, wherever it might lead. It may be doubted that Hooker was ever as "detached" as Woodhouse claims as even a cursory reading of the *Christian Letter* makes clear, where Hooker's marginal notes disclose him in less restrained frame of mind. Diarmaid MacCulloch is of the view that despite his long-term significance, Hooker remained "a footnote to the story of sixteenth-century reformation . . ."⁴² though he later describes him as an

⁴¹ Hugh F. Woodhouse, "Permanent Features of Hooker's Polity," *Anglican Theological Review* 42 (April 1960): 165.

⁴² Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation, 1547–1603*, British History in Perspective (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave, 2001), 51.

“individual writer of genius,”⁴³ Certainly, MacCulloch is looking for the best location from which to view Hooker and in this respect places him in a wholly adversarial stance toward his Puritan “adversaries” while writing apart from the “eddies of dissent . . . mainly for his own intellectual satisfaction.”⁴⁴ It is difficult to conceive Hooker writing in a self-serving fashion. He does assume an audience in Walter Travers and Thomas Cartwright at the very least, and he clearly writes with at least a glance in the direction of John Whitgift. In addition, Hooker’s erudition and modesty argues against such a project as the *Lawes* undertaken for personal satisfaction. Indeed, the stated purpose of the *Lawes* is to provide a record of debate and dissent from a critical perspective sympathetic to the Elizabethan establishment.

The titles of a wide variety of recent articles points to an appreciation of Hooker as an independent thinker evincing a truly catholic spirituality matched with an intellectual and personal piety that tracked an authentically personal perspective on reform that would form a model for a Christian commonwealth conceived around the rationale of law and gospel.⁴⁵ Where others had driven a wedge between the two, Hooker strived to keep the two in solution without simultaneously diluting the prevenient and superlative claims of the Gospel, or the positive responsibility of humans to govern themselves according to the light of natural reason. Egil Grislis points to the Puritan charge that Hooker had abandoned reformation too quickly by his relaxed

⁴³ MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation*, 79.

⁴⁴ MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation*, 83.

⁴⁵ For example, the following articles probe especially the changing and uncertain parameters of contemporary Anglican identity, significantly turning to Richard Hooker to support the exploration. John E. Booty, “Hooker and Anglicanism. Into the Future,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 36 (Easter 1993): 215–26; Bruce N. Kaye, “What Might Alistair MacIntyre Learn from a Reading of Richard Hooker? Rivalry, Commonality, and Their Projects,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 42 (Pentecost 1999): 332–49; Kaye, “Australian Anglicanism”; Ronald R. Williams, “Richard Hooker on the Church and State Report,” *Churchman* 85 (Summer 1971): 97–104. Walton, “Tradition”; Timothy F. Sedgwick, “The New Shape of Anglican Identity,” *Anglican Theological Review* 77 (Spring 1995): 187–97.

attitude to Rome. “Hooker rejected the charge, as he did not attribute to the Anglican Church an infallible, Holy-Spirit-supplied interpretative power to build truth by declaration without exegesis and thoughtful reasoning.”⁴⁶ But the nature of Hooker’s apparent sympathy towards Rome was the attitude of a Christian thinker who felt a moral obligation to follow truth, as he perceived it, wherever it might lead. And insofar as Rome had not abandoned the foundations of salvation in Christ, he held that it was possible to enjoy the benefits of the Christian soteriological claims even if they were tainted with error and, in fact, repugnant to truth. This was a hazardous view to espouse given the political climate of Elizabethan England. Nevertheless, this is Hooker’s view.

It will be argued in this thesis that Hooker’s pneumatology is to a remarkable degree compatible with Puritan and Roman epistemological claims and that, as a consequence, it has been tempting to press Hooker one way or the other. But no monochromatic view of Hooker the theologian is possible. If one assumes him to be an authority for Anglicans, the risk is that his authority will be ignored in matters where he is less amiably disposed to a cherished position. Stephen McGrade looks to Hooker for ways to approach contemporary issues that divide modern Anglicanism. Owing to “his ability to maintain sympathy—indeed, charity—during controversy, Hooker is not only a rare spirit for his own time but a model for us as well.”⁴⁷ Interestingly, McGrade understands the *Lawes* as a mainly pastoral work, offered in the context of a shared community of believers.⁴⁸ There is merit to this as Hooker specifically mentions his desire for fraternal unity and his distaste for acrimonious debate, though he does not turn aside from it when he deems it necessary.

⁴⁶ Egil Grislis, “The Anglican Spirituality of Richard Hooker,” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (1996): 38 And it was just such a hermeneutic that Hooker thought characterised the Puritan approach to Scripture.

⁴⁷ McGrade, “Apologist,” 19.

⁴⁸ McGrade, “Apologist,” 37.

Nigel Atkinson pursues a reading of Hooker with respect to recent debate in the Church of England concerning the ordination of women. Atkinson is no supporter of the ordination of women and uses Hooker's commitment to ancient tradition as a priority to buttress a reformed Scriptural dogmatic. He writes:

Hooker's vision was one that trembled at Scripture, paid humble and close attention to God's dealings with his people in the past, and was suspicious of so-called continuing revelations from God. It is a deeply attractive and deeply Christian approach and for many hundreds of years was able to sustain the *Ecclesia Anglicana*. This Hookerian vision is one that best represented the Church of England's commitment to Reformed orthodoxy and it is one that should be eagerly defended within the Church of England today.⁴⁹

However, even if Hooker "trembled at Scripture" this did not mean that his hermeneutic was identical with Calvin or Luther. Hooker's attitude to Scripture retains the absolute place it had in the theology of Calvin and other reformers, including the Puritans. He did not depart from this but added a greater level of sophistication in his practical handling of exegetical matters, and notably, in the place he reserved for natural reason in handling the Bible as literature. It must be carefully noted that Hooker at no time replaced the revelatory status of Scripture with natural human capacities nor on a par with either the content or divine will in the disclosures of the Gospel. Indeed, it is only the rational mind made alive by the Holy Spirit that is able to comprehend revelation as revelation. The beginning of this process resides, for Hooker, in baptism, and is thereafter advanced and replenished by the sacramental life of the believer in the corporate life of the church. But to utilise Hooker, as Atkinson does, to establish a political vantage point based only upon Hooker's congruence with reformation principles fails to take account of those directions where Hooker appears to be reaching for a much broader consensus. In the present example, Hooker's attitude to women was consistent with the outlook of his day and accuses Puritans of deviously targeting women as converts with the suggestion of moral uncertainty. But Hooker also betrayed

⁴⁹ Atkinson, "Hooker's Theological Method," 62.

a liberality towards the role of women in ministry that may well have signalled the sort of gender freedom that became characteristic of Wesley and Wilberforce. He was also willing to break with tradition, and the ceremonies associated with it, where the tradition no longer served its own ends. As Stephen Sykes points out,⁵⁰ it is not that Hooker held to a view of women that was in any way different from the scholastic and reformation synthesis of the sixteenth century, but rather Hooker's willingness to subject existing discipline to critical scrutiny and to allow for the likelihood of local and national variations in the ways Christian faith and practice could be externalised. The place of Scripture was absolute for Hooker since it was divinely authored and breathed by the Holy Spirit and qualitatively distinct from mere human prophetic endeavours:

. . . when we open our lips to speake of the wonderfull workes of God, our tongues doe faulter within our mouthes, yea many time wee disgrace the dreadfull mysteries of our faith, and grieve the spirit of our hearers by words unsavory, and unseemely speeches Yet behold, even they that are wisest amongst us living, compared with the Prophets, seem no otherwise to talke of God, then as if the children which are caried in armes should speake of the greatest matters of state. They whose words doe most shew forth their wise understanding, and whose lips do utter the purest knowledge, so long as they understand and speake as men, are they not faine sundry waies to excuse themselves?⁵¹

But Scripture was still historically and culturally conditioned, and due allowance had to be made for this, as well as discriminating between what is simply *described* in the Bible from what is *prescribed* as the basis for moral action:

When that which the word of God doth but deliver historically, wee conster without any warrant as if it were legally meant, and so urge it further then wee can prove that it was intended doe wee not adde to the lawes of God, and make them in number seeme moe then they are?⁵²

⁵⁰ Sykes, "Ordination," 206.

⁵¹ Richard Hooker, "Jude: The First Sermon," in *Tractates and Sermons*, vol. 5 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. Egil Grislis and Laetitia Yeandle, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 4: 5.16.5–17.

⁵² Hooker, *Lawes*, III.5.1: 1.215.13–17.

In other words, the biblical authors were theologically and historiographically driven which does not make their historical markers intrinsically unreliable, but cumulatively, they may be insufficient to produce fully convincing historical reconstructions. Still, this was not for Hooker the final criterion for the truth and revelation of Scripture. Stephen Sykes is correct to remind us that reason “can both refute error and build up faith, aided and directed by the Holy Spirit.”⁵³ This is the emphasis in Hooker, that reason is the common gift of God to humanity and that it is this inherent human “aptnes” that, in his view, the Holy Spirit generally relies upon to convince and disclose the things of God in a way discernible to persons:

Wherefore if I believe the gospel, yet is reason of singular use, for that it confirmeth me in this beleefe the more: If I doe not as yet beleefe, nevertheless to bring me to the number of beleevers except reason did somewhat help, and were an instrument which God doth use unto such purposes, what should it boote to dispute with Infidels or godles persons for their conversion and perswasion in that point? Neither can I thinke that when grave and learned men do sometime hold, that of this principle there is no prooffe but by the testimonie of the spirit, which assureth our harts therein, it is their meaning to exclude utterly all force which any kind of reason may have in that behalfe; but I rather incline to interpret such their speeches, as if they had more expresly set downe, that other motives and inducements, be they never so strong and consonant unto reason, are notwithstanding uneffectual of them selves to worke faith concerning this principle, if the special grace of the holy ghost concur not to the inlightening of our minds.⁵⁴

It is therefore clear that Hooker refused to drive a false dichotomy between the capacity of human reason and the work of God’s Spirit in which the “voice of reason is the voice of God.”

. . . lawes humane must be made according to the generall lawes of nature, and without contradiction unto any positive law in scripture. Otherwise they are ill made. Unto lawes thus made and received by a whole Church, they which live within the bosome of that Church, must not thinke it a matter indifferent either to yeeld or not to yeeld obedience.⁵⁵

⁵³ Sykes, “Ordination,” 207.

⁵⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.14: 1.232.10–25.

⁵⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.9.2: 1.237.27–32.

Hooker is wrestling with a tension that he has earlier noted: “the scripture hath not provided by any law, but left them unto the careful discretion of the Church; And what is so in these cases, partly scripture and partly reason must teach to discern.”⁵⁶ That laws governing the acts of the church may be mixed by containing divine law, natural law, and positive laws, the latter of which may in themselves be mixed in ways that are not evident, in itself compounded the problem of certainty in the process of decision-making:

God never ordayned any thing that could be bettered. Yet many things he hath that have bene chaunged, and that for the better. That which succeedeth as better now when change is requisite, had bene worse when that which now is chaunged was instituted. Otherwise God had not then left this to choose that, neither would not reject that to choose this, were it not for some new growne occasion making that which hath bene better worse. In this case therefore men doe not presume to chaunge Gods ordinance, but they yeelde thereunto requiring it selfe to be chaunged.⁵⁷

Even if Hooker could not believe that holy orders for women were anything other than “a grosse absurdity” he nevertheless yielded to the circumstance of midwives and laity baptising in cases of necessity. And finally, at the risk of opening himself to the charge of a more profound relativism, Hooker expresses the responsibility of the church continually to evaluate its practice in light of new investigations though note that in the following quotation, he is careful to supply tight limits on the extent to which the church may do so:

. . . the whole body of the Church hath power to alter, with general consent and upon necessary occasions, even the positive laws of the Apostles, if there be no command to the contrary, and it manifestly appears to her, that change of times have clearly taken away the very reason of Gods first institution⁵⁸

The point to be made here, with Sykes, is that Hooker, by his own principles, would have been compelled to re-assess the generally held assumption of the

⁵⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.9.1: 1.236.4–8.

⁵⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.10.5: 1.243.23–31.

⁵⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, VII.5.8: 3.167.8–12.

subordination of women, even if it was the result of “the positive laws of the Apostles.” Claiming Hooker as ‘merely’ a defender of the establishment will certainly work but can only be done at the expense of his inherent catholicity.

A more direct example can be found in evaluating Hooker’s attitude towards the Church of Rome. It is clear that Hooker was charged with an excessively comfortable outlook towards Rome, and therefore in the eyes of Puritans, tolerant towards heresy. It is on this question that the reformation sympathies of Richard Hooker might logically stand or fall despite his evident admiration for Calvin. In at least two instances, Hooker was compelled to defend his patriotism, his high view of Scripture, and in so doing, managed to mock the anonymous author of *A Christian Letter* for his lack of learning. In reply to the accusation that Hooker thought too highly of Aristotle and the Schoolmen⁵⁹ Hooker retorted acidly that, “If Aristotle and the Schoolmen be such perilous creatures, you must needs think your self an happie man whome God hath so fairely blest from too much knowledg in them.”⁶⁰ Again the author of the *Letter* takes Hooker to advocate that “Reason is highlie sett up against holie scripture, and reading against preaching; the church of Rome favourably admitted to bee of the house of God; *Calvin* with the reformed churches full of faults; . . .”⁶¹ And even worse, that Hooker was treading close to sedition, while setting forth the spectre of civil war which, in light of events to occur in less than fifty years, must seem ironic:

Shall wee doe you wronge to suspect you as a privie and subtill enemie to the whole state of the Englishe Church, and that you would have men to deeme her Majestie to have done ill in abolishing the Romish religion, and banishing the Popes authoritie; and that you would be glad to see the backsliding of all reformed churches to be made conformable to that wicked synagogue of Rome,

⁵⁹ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Attack and Response: A Christian Letter*, vol. 4 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. John E. Booty, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill, Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982), 20: 4.64.25–65.18.

⁶⁰ Hooker, *A Christian Letter*, 20: 4.65.6–8.

⁶¹ Hooker, *A Christian Letter*, 20:4.67.1–3.

and shame and reproche to all faithfull Ministers, whom GOD hath rayseed up to reveale and beate downe Antichrist: and that you esteeme the preaching and writing of all the Reverend Fathers of our Church, and the bookes of holy scripture to bee at the least of no greater moment then *Aristotle* and the Schoolmen? Or else do you meane to bring confusion in all things, to reconcile heaven and earth, and to make all religions equall? Will you bring us to Atheisme, or to Poperie? or to prepare a plott for an *Interim*, that our streetes may runne with blood, when all religions shalbee tollerated, and one shall bearde and provoke another? Are there not sufficient of unspeakeable massacres abroad? unlesse wee should fett the same home to our countrie, rejoycing under the blessed unities of the Gospell of peace.⁶²

This hysterical tirade by the writer of the *Christian Letter* bears no relationship to anything in the *Laws*, but in the climate of religious invective, Hooker's irenic disposition towards balanced reason as a necessary correlate to the recovery of theological method and relatively charitable attitude to error and doubt could not have met with the sympathy of more radical Puritans. Hooker's marginal replies betray his bewilderment at being so misunderstood as one who defended the Thirty-Nine Articles, and yet he himself displays no obvious awareness of the extent to which dissenting pastors had suffered for their reformed convictions:

Goodman goose I defend not that which is abolisht butt that which is establish. Where speake I a word against the banishing of the Popes authoritie? Doth not spite possesse your hart and deadly malice make you speake against the Light of your own conscience? . . . I think of the scripture of God as reverently as the best of the purified crew in the world. I except not any no not the founders themselves and captaines of that faction. In which mind I hope by the grace of almighty God that I shall both live and die.⁶³

Hooker explicitly rejected the view that he was a defender of Rome and this has lead some observers to conclude that he was actually abandoning reform. While it may be that Hooker was insufficiently politically astute to notice the effect that even moderate sympathy to the plight of Rome (from his point of view), might imply, the most clear explanation is simply that Hooker was an individual in whom authentic piety and scrupulous intellect met. If rational investigation called forth sympathy with Rome

⁶² Hooker, *A Christian Letter*, 20: 4.67.21–68.24.

⁶³ Hooker, *A Christian Letter*, 20: 4.68.2–16.

because the “foundation” was not denied, whatever else had been distorted, then that much could be honoured. Similarly, while Hooker was not a dissenter, this did not mean he was an uncritical defender of the Settlement. In a notable chapter Hooker displays precisely this openness which could so easily cast him in the role described in the *Christian Letter*:

Touchinge our conformitie with the Church of Rome, as also of the difference betwene some reformed Churches and oures, that which generallie hath bene alreadie answered may serve for answer to that exception which in these two respectes they take particularlie against the forme of our common prayer. To say that in nothinge they maie be followed which are of the Church of Rome were violent and extreme. Some thinges they doe in that they are men, in that they are wise men and Christian men some thinges, some thinges in that they are men misled and blinded with error. As far as they followe reason and truth, we feare not to tread the self same steppes wherein they have gon, and to be their followers. Where Rome keepeth that which is ancienter and better; others whome we much more affect leavinge it for newer, and changing it for worse, we had rather followe the perfections of them whome we like not, then in defectes resemble them whome we love. For although they professe they agree with us touchinge *a prescript forme of prayer to be used in the Church*, yeat in that verie forme which they say is *agreable to Gods word, and the use of reformed Churches*, they have by speciall protestation declared, that their meaning is not it shalbe prescribed as a thinge whereunto they will tye their minister. *It shall not (they say) be necessary for the minister dayly to repeat all these things before mentioned, but beginning with some like confession to precede to the sermon, which ended he either useth the prayer for all estates before mentioned or els praieth as the spirite of God shall move his harte.* Herein therefore we hold it much better with the Church of Rome to appoint a prescript forme which everie man shalbe bound to observe⁶⁴

And so with remarkable neglect of how his words would surely be construed, Hooker almost naïvely allows himself to express his absolute commitment to the pursuit of truth, even to the extent of following Rome, regardless of the predicable reaction. “As far as they followe reason and truth, we feare not to tread the self same steppes wherein they have gon, and to be their followers.”⁶⁵ The idea that a truly reformed pastor could sympathise with Rome let alone “be their followers” left Hooker open to complete misunderstanding with respect to his attitude towards. Since Rome was the

⁶⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.28.1: 2.121.28–122.10.

⁶⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.28.1: 2.122.8f.

touchstone by which to measure heresy in the eyes of Puritans, Hooker had to rely upon the likelihood that alert readers would be able to distinguish between matters indifferent and matters central to Christian faith. The passage from Book V just quoted shows Hooker resting on the horns of a dilemma. His commitment to reform was for him the most natural of loyalties. He learned his theology under the Puritan John Rainolds at Oxford, was John Whitgift's second choice for the Temple Church when his cousin Walter Travers was passed over, and was ever the loyal subject of Elizabeth. So it cannot be argued that Hooker was unsympathetic to the Puritan cause. Nevertheless, the tension of keeping to a reformation agenda in every respect could not be the final determinant for Hooker. The independence of his thought compelled the idealism of the search for truth, and so in this regard, it may be properly argued that Hooker is indeed framing an independent agenda for reform which does depart from the expectations of Calvinism but not in such a manner, as argued by Nigel Voak, to lead to the conclusion that he actually rejected reform. This tension is best described in his own words: ". . . we had rather followe the perfections of them whome we like not, then in defectes resemble them whome we love . . ." ⁶⁶ Truth was therefore to be sought as though quite independently offered by heaven, revelatory in character, and could not be apprehended by a defective epistemology where if the rational capacity of persons was not honoured as common, how much less could the higher learning of divinity be grasped.

In a valuable article by Richard Bauckham, he argues that the supposed tolerance of Hooker towards Rome is based primarily upon a misunderstanding of the nature of the controversy between Travers and Hooker at the Temple Church:

Hooker's controversy with Travers has been misunderstood through being read in the light of his later anti-Puritan concerns. The climax of the controversy arose not from a sermon against Calvinism or Puritanism, but from a wholly conventional piece of anti-papist apologetic which Travers mistakenly took to be tolerant of Roman errors. As the dispute developed Hooker, as always, developed his own lines of thought, becoming more scholastic and less Calvinist

⁶⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.28.1: 2.122.9.

the more deeply he thought out the problem for himself. But at no point in the controversy was he defending an Anglican position against Travers' Puritanism. At no recorded point in his preaching at the Temple was Hooker a spokesman for Canterbury against Geneva, though he was sometimes a spokesman for Canterbury against Rome and sometimes a spokesman for Hooker against Geneva.⁶⁷

To argue further, Hooker's tolerance of Rome went only so far as Rome did not reject truth and reason, and more fundamentally, did not reject the doctrine of salvation through Christ alone. Popish accretions to the question of justification might be variously reprehensible and damaging to faith, robbing sinful men of the comfort of divine grace, but could still be understood as error and even wilful ignorance rather than heresy so long as the 'foundation' was not denied.

The purpose of this chapter has been to set Hooker in context and to arrive at a view of his relationship to the processes of reform in England. The competing views that Hooker either rejected reform or sought an ameliorated hostility towards Rome do not express adequately his independence of thought. It is the necessary attribute of independence that gives Hooker the image of partisanship and apparent polemical misrepresentation of his Puritan opponents. The real surprise however, is the rational restraint Hooker brings to both *Lawes* and *Sermons and Tractates*. His was an age of polemical excess and Hooker only responds in an exasperated tone to what he considers at best obduracy, at worst malice: "Ignorant asse."⁶⁸ "How this asse runneth kicking up his heeles as if a summerfly had stung him. Great corsing but to no end."⁶⁹ "Would such an idiot be taught or taken and braid in a mortar."⁷⁰ As Paul Avis notes:

Hooker is an unequivocally reformed divine—his sermon on justification is alone sufficient evidence for that—but he is conscious of working within a broader catholic tradition, stretching back through the mediaeval schoolmen to

⁶⁷ Richard J. Bauckham, "Hooker, Travers and the Church of Rome in the 1580s," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 29 (January 1978): 50.

⁶⁸ Hooker, *A Christian Letter*, 6: 4.22.10.

⁶⁹ Hooker, *A Christian Letter*, 15: 4.42.15f.

⁷⁰ Hooker, *A Christian Letter*, 15: 4.42.21.

the fathers. He keeps a not uncritical distance from all human authorities: as Sir Thomas Browne later put it in the *Religio Medici*, 'neither believing this because Luther affirmed it or disproving that because Calvin hath disavouched it'.⁷¹

To situate Hooker outside reform, or as simply the most eloquent defender of the Settlement is to restrict his independence of mind and pre-judge the outcome of his theology. This brief review has sought to demonstrate responses associated with Hooker research. The present work now presses more closely the ways in which Hooker's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is central to an epistemology necessary for the successful implementation of both rational and revelatory discovery of Christian faith within the limits of human knowing, and the way Hooker sought to confirm its results. Hooker's doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been overshadowed by the more common measures of reformed orthodoxy of the sufficiency and inspiration of Scripture, justification by faith, salvation by faith apart from works, the sacraments, and the orders of ministry comprehended as the priesthood of all believers.

⁷¹ Paul D. L. Avis, "Richard Hooker and John Calvin," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 32 (January 1981): 27f.

CHAPTER 3

CALVIN AND THE PURITANS ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

The purpose of this chapter is to track the role and function of the Holy Spirit in Puritan theology, and Calvin. This provides the necessary setting for assessing Hooker's response in his debate with the Puritans, but especially as he weaves the fabric of his own doctrine of the Holy Spirit which will be explored in chapters four and five

In his *Pneumatologia*, John Owen (1616–1683), one of the most prolific Puritan scholars, defended the integration of revelatory knowledge with reason. The process by which this could take place in the polemical environment of seventeenth century theology had been anticipated by Richard Hooker, and to a lesser extent by Owen's contemporary, one time chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, Richard Baxter (1615–1691).

Owen identified, as did Richard Hooker almost a century before, the crucial conditions under which he thought the church and Gospel would prosper. Owen writes: "In all the dispensations of God towards his people under the Old Testament, there was nothing of good communicated unto them, nothing of worth or excellency wrought in them or by them, but it is expressly assigned unto the Holy Spirit as the author and cause of it."¹ He further declares ". . . in the New Testament, that whatever concerns the

¹ John Owen, *Pneumatologia: Discourse on the Holy Spirit*, vol. 3 of *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1966).

conversion of the elect, the edification of the church, the sanctification and consolation of believers, the performance of those duties of obedience which we owe unto God, with our conduct in all the ways thereof, . . . that it is withal declared that nothing of it in any kind can be enjoyed or performed without his especial operation, aid, and assistance; . . .”² He points to the polemical issues that made the rule of Scripture suspect:

. . . for let any avow or plead for the known work of the Spirit of God, and it is immediately apprehended a sufficient ground to charge them with leaving the rule of the word to attend unto revelations and inspirations, as also to forego all thoughts of the necessity of the duties of obedience; whereas no other work of his pleaded for, but that only without which no man can either attend unto the rule of the Scripture as he ought, or perform any one dutie of obedience unto God in a due manner.³

For Owen, any published desire to discuss the pneumatological essence of Christian belief was compromised by charges of enthusiasm and a withdrawal into the charismatic excesses of early Quakers and Brownists.⁴ His *Pneumatologia* is an attempt to rehabilitate the place of the Spirit in Christian theology because the “. . . practical contempt of the work of the Holy Spirit being grown the only plausible defiance of religion, is also to be the most pernicious, beyond all notional mistakes and errors about the same things, being constantly accompanied with profaneness, and commonly issuing in atheism.”⁵ So nervous was Owen about this that he rejects any hint of enthusiasm as

² John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 3, 7f.

³ John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 3, 8.

⁴ The Quakers, also known as the Society of Friends, were founded in England by George Fox (1624–1691) in 1648. They were distinguished by their reliance on the authority of the inner light of religious experience rather than use of the Scriptures and sacraments. Their form of worship rejected orders of ministry and liturgical forms. The term “Quaker” was originally pejorative, describing their ecstatic experience during worship, but also referred to their call to “tremble” at hearing the Word of God preached. “Brownists” drew their religious inspiration from the Puritan Robert Browne (c. 1550–1633) who advocated congregationalist autonomy in opposition to the power and authority of bishops. Owen is not specific as to the source of the charges of “enthusiasm.”

⁵ John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 3, 8.

worthy of his consideration. “Wherefore, as to enthusiasms of any kind, which might possibly give countenance unto any diabolical suggestions, we are so far from affirming any operations of the Holy Ghost to consist in them, or in any thing like unto them, that we allow no pretence of them to be consistent therewithal.”⁶

Owen is concerned to rebut the charge that Puritan theology has abandoned rational inquiry in favour of a charismatic ideology that elevated human experience as the touchstone of authentic Christian knowledge and claim to truth. In this respect, he reflected the thinking of Richard Baxter who was also pre-occupied with maintaining a rational theological posture against charges of new revelation through direct spiritual experience. Baxter’s restraint, with Owen, is highly reminiscent of Hooker:

Quest. CLVIII: Should not christians take up with Scripture wisdom only, without studying philosophy and other heathens’ human learning?
Answ. I have already proved the usefulness of common knowledge called human learning . . . 1. Grace presupposeth nature; we are men in order of nature at least before we are saints, and reason is before supernatural revelation. 2. Common knowledge therefore is subservient unto faith: we must know the Creator and his works; and the Redeemer restoreth us to the due knowledge of the Creator: human learning in the sense in question is also divine, God is the author of the light of nature, as well as of grace.⁷

A similarly remarkable feature is the extent to which Baxter continues his discussion of the Holy Spirit as the basis for epistemic certainty. So much is this the case, that it is necessary to consider whether there is a disjunction in Puritan thought on the role of the Holy Spirit and whether the place of the Holy Spirit was as crucial to reformed thought in general as it is in the *Laws*.

The new reformation emphasis on the central role of the Bible, the salvation of the individual, the freedom to believe beyond the boundaries of received truth, together

⁶ John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 3, 13.

⁷ Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, vol. 1, reprinted from the 1846 edition published in London by George Virtue (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2000), 1.3: 721.

with the dissemination of the literature of dissent, meant that Puritan reform had to contend with an unconstrained epistemology in which the Holy Spirit was a key motive.

William Haller points to this:

Belief in the eventual coming of the New Jerusalem and triumphing of the saints, too confidently proclaimed from the pulpit, led some men to grow impatient with the slow process of reform and to attempt the erection of the true church themselves in their own time. The doctrine, too convincingly set forth, of God's immediate concern with the individual soul and of the individual's aptitude for understanding what the Holy Spirit revealed through the spoken and the printed word, encouraged some to the idea that they need trust nothing so much as their own untutored notions even in defiance of sense and sound learning.⁸

Clearly, by the mid-seventeenth century, the question of the human capacity to reason had taken a more nuanced position from that characterised by Thomas Cartwright, William Whitaker, and Laurence Chaderton. All three disputed any notion that human powers of reason could augment or appeal to the certainties only Scripture could supply.

Cartwright wrote:

The natural corruption which is in us hath blotted out all that beautiful image of God . . . instead thereof set another deformed and ugly image of ignorance and profanenes We deny not but that we have the natural power to will or nill, choose or refuse, but we deny that by the natural power of our will unreformed and unrenewed we are able to will or choose any good or nill or refuse any sin, especially as it is sin.⁹

Nevertheless, what restrained Cartwright from an unbridled spiritualised hermeneutic such that Scripture was self-interpreted by no other authority than their God-breathed character, was his own university-trained background. Cartwright was himself bound to accept the logic of his own desire for a highly educated ministry.

In his introduction to Geoffrey Nuttall's *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, Peter Lake stresses the multidimensional aspect of Puritanism extending

⁸ William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (New York, 1957), 175.

⁹ Taken from Thomas Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemist translations, glosses and annotations on the New Testament* (Leyden, 1618), and quoted by Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, 311, n.16.

from John Field as revolutionary and radical idealist, to the charismatic experience of the Quakers, and the less obvious ways “. . . in which the Elizabethan establishment was shot through with Puritan attitudes and personnel.”¹⁰ Nuttall’s assessment of Puritanism is to cast it in terms of the inner spiritual consciousness of believers. In other words, for Nuttall, the power of Puritanism lay in its theological and spiritual emphases which represented the bloom of reformation thought brought about by the accessibility of newly perceived religious freedom and obedience to the law of God that were held to be commanded and revealed through the Scriptures. The enlightenment of the individual soul through the direct disclosure and revelation of the divine will in the Scriptures made effective by the inner work of the Holy Spirit resulted in transformed and converted lives; from a disposition of rebellion against the law of God to one of personal obedience to it. Nuttall writes:

. . . the Puritans’ conviction may be measured by our ability to see their political life, or at least their political ideals, in the way they saw these, as springing directly from the spiritual principle which was central to their faith and experience. . . . if we turn in again towards the centre, and observe the way in which, both personally and socially, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit controlled their devotional life. . . . [Puritanism] has evinced itself to be a movement towards immediacy in relation to God. Men felt keenly that it was insufficient to believe in the gospel simply as a true story of what happened once long ago. If the gospel were to be powerful and saving, it must be realized as affecting the believer now and particularly: the word must be very nigh, in the mouth and in the heart. In Baxter’s words: “An historical belief, which is true in its kind, . . . you may come to by rational persuasions, without special grace: but not that deep and firm belief, which shall carry over the will effectually to God on Christ, and captivate the whole man into obedience of his will.”¹¹

The profound grasp of the centrality of the Holy Spirit as the key determinant for Christian knowledge, truth, and personal assurance had come from Calvin. While the centre of Calvin’s theology at first blush appears the glory of God in creation and redemption, the predestined choice of God’s elect, and the Scriptures as the centre of

¹⁰ Nuttall, *Puritan Faith*, xiii.

¹¹ Nuttall, *Puritan Faith*, 134f.

revealed knowledge, yet it must be argued that in fact, it is Calvin's pneumatology that constitutes the binding principle of his theology. The immediacy of spiritual experience which Nuttall describes found full effect amongst Quakers in the interior life of personal devotion and charismatic worship. Despite the obvious caution of Baxter and Owen, the centrality of the Spirit was an experiential reality around which the "godly" could identify each other. The rationality of established religion left too much room for the structural complacency that dissent sought to rectify. Geoffrey Nuttall prefers to think in terms of a Puritan mysticism as against their being largely overshadowed by a stern depiction of them as hostile to art and imaginative piety. Yet he argues that this piety, even if ". . . Puritans kept an active and firm control of their personalities, allowing small place for relaxation or passivity . . . [it was] a piety which was essentially a movement towards immediacy in communion with God . . . it is evident that the type of experience defined was keenly desired and gladly welcomed by at least the more radical among the Puritans."¹²

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in John Calvin

In his historical and theological review of Calvin (1509–1564) and his thought, François Wendel draws regular attention to the role played by the Holy Spirit and Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ.¹³ For example, Calvin wrote:

. . . I confess that we are deprived of this utterly incomparable good until Christ is made ours. Therefore, that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts—in short, that mystical union—are accorded our highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his

¹² Nuttall, *Puritan Faith*, 147.

¹³ François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Developments of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 3rd printing, 2002).

righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body—in short, because he deigns to make us one with him.¹⁴

Wendel's remarks on this text, based on the French version of the *Institutes*, that *unio mystica* renders *union sacrée*, reflect his anxiety that the language of "union," mystical or otherwise will result in ontological confusion. "It remains true that, close as that union may be, man and the Christ are not confused together, but on the contrary keep their own characteristics. Although Calvin calls it so, it is not, in the technical sense of the term, a mystical union."¹⁵ However, there is some special pleading here for Calvin continues quoting "'Through Christ,' says Peter, 'were granted to us precious and very great promises . . . that we might become partakers of the divine nature.'¹⁶ As if we now were what the gospel promises that we shall be at the final coming of Christ! Indeed, John¹⁷ then reminds us we are going to see God as he is because we shall be like him."¹⁸ "As if we now were what the gospel promises . . ."¹⁹ and ". . . deigns to make us one with him . . ."²⁰ suggests Calvin has more in mind than Wendel is willing to permit. One can speak of union in a structural or conceptual sense but Calvin is using ontological language here. The idea of union with God is not, for him, an intellectual construct only, but derived from the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is a logical Trinitarian and incarnational derivation but one that calls forth both rational and mystical human experience. Wendel is much less certain than Calvin himself about that divine union which, "No doubt becomes closer every day, but it does not attain its

¹⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.11.10.

¹⁵ Wendel, *Calvin: Origins*, 237.

¹⁶ 2 Peter 1:4.

¹⁷ 1 John 3:2.

¹⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.11.10.

¹⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.11.10.

²⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.11.10.

culminating point until the life to come; all we can know about it on earth is only a commencement. Finally, this is a purely spiritual union. Calvin says so with a clarity that leaves nothing to be desired in the *Institutes* and in his other writings.”²¹ However, in Calvin’s commentary on John 17:21, he appears to speak of a transcendental Trinitarian union which is communicable through both the community of faith and also by the godhead specifically through the Holy Spirit:

So that the unity of the Son with the Father be not vain and useless, it is necessary that the virtue of the same should spread throughout the body of the faithful. Whence we also gather that we are one with the Son of God, not to say that he transmutes his substance into us, but because by virtue of his Spirit, he communicates to us his life, and all the benefits he has received from the Father.²²

Further, on John 17:26, Wendel quotes Calvin in such a way that surely presupposes more than an abstract proposition of divine love:

He begins to love us when we are united with the body of his well-beloved Son. . . . We are not otherwise included in that love, except that Jesus Christ is dwelling in us.²⁴

Wendel goes on to note that “Union with Christ makes us participants in the life and spirit of the Lord, until even the angels themselves ‘wonder at the riches that God has displayed in uniting us with the body of his Son’.”²⁵ Calvin describes his own formulation of the ontological union of man with God:

²¹ Wendel, *Calvin: Origins*, 238.

²² Wendel, *Calvin: Origins*, 238. Calvin is extremely careful to avoid any charge that his idea of mystical union involves transference of actual divinity. Cf. “. . . when Paul discusses the restoration of the image, it is clear that we should infer from his words that man is made to conform to God not by an inflowing of substance, but by the grace and power of the Spirit. For he says that by ‘beholding Christ’s glory, we are being transformed in to his very image . . . as through the Spirit of the Lord’ (2 Corinthians 3:18), who surely works in us without rendering us consubstantial with God.” Calvin, *Institutes*, I.15.5.

²³ Wendel, *Calvin: Origins*, 238.

²⁴ Wendel, *Calvin: Origins*, 238.

²⁵ Wendel, *Calvin: Origins*, 238.

First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us . . . all that he possesses is nothing to us until we grow into one body with him. It is true that we obtain this by faith. Yet since we see that not all indiscriminately embrace that communion with Christ which is offered through the gospel, reason itself teaches us to climb higher and to examine into the secret energy of the Spirit, by which we come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits.²⁶

Calvin's remarks on John 14:20 again emphasise the radical priority of the Holy Spirit in any action of man with respect to knowledge, faith, belief, conversion, and therefore sanctification. "One cannot know by any idle speculation what it is, that holy and spiritual union that is between him and us, and first of all between him and his father, but here is the sole means to that knowledge, when he never tires of repeating that 'the Holy Spirit is the bond, as it were, by which the Son of God unites us to him effectually.'²⁷ Yet although Christ "deigns to make us one with him"²⁸ points to the priority and prevenience of divine action, necessitated of course by the Biblical doctrine of election (and Calvin's commitment to it), Calvin's commentary on John 17:26 and his sermon on Ephesians 3:9–12, noted by Wendel respectively, suggest a more conditional appropriation of divine forbearance:

. . . union with Christ is, then, the indispensable condition for our access to the spiritual life. 'Neither justification nor sanctification, nor perseverance nor the final perfection is possible without that insertion into Christ that the Holy Spirit effects through faith.' It renders us pleasing to God: 'He begins to love us when we are united with the body of his well-beloved Son We are not otherwise included in that love, except that Jesus Christ is dwelling in us.' Union with Christ makes us participants in the life and spirit of the Lord, until even the angels themselves 'wonder at the riches that God has displayed in uniting us with the body of his Son.' This it is, lastly, that gives us the divine affiliation and the celestial inheritance.²⁹

²⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.1.1.

²⁷ Wendel, *Calvin: Origins*, 239.

²⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.11.10.

²⁹ Wendel, *Calvin: Origins*, 238.

To be “not otherwise included in that love” *until* a person is united with Christ raises the important soteriological question of whether there is an implied prior action of faith that rescues us from such an *impasse* which, by Calvin’s own account, cannot occur without the Holy Spirit being given. According to Calvin, “Insertion into Christ” comes from faith stimulated and implanted by the Holy Spirit, and which subsequently releases divine love towards us. However, the burden of the New Testament doctrine of salvation³⁰ is that love is the directing motive whereby God acts soteriologically, as an act quite separate from human readiness or worth. Consequently, the capacity to believe cannot create an *impasse* in the divine will or salvation would not be possible. This is Calvin’s problem here. Humans can will their own salvation, but they cannot attain it. But the very act of willing is the capacity to desire, and what Hooker calls “aptnes.” As Richard Hooker’s approach to the matter is assessed, it will be seen that he takes a considerably more nuanced approach than does Calvin, though the similarities to Calvin are clear. The human *impasse* cannot be solved internally because death preempts any such resolution, and any act of God that is not defined in some sense as emanating from a will controlled by love is contrary to the emphasis of the New Testament. Calvin’s reply to this has the appearance of envisioning the Holy Spirit as primarily a rational prerequisite for faith where faith and knowledge seem to converge:

When we call faith ‘knowledge’ we do not mean comprehension of the sort that is commonly concerned with those things which fall under human sense perception. For faith is so far above sense that man’s mind has to go beyond and rise above itself in order to attain it. Even where the mind has attained, it does not comprehend what it feels. But while it is persuaded of what it does not grasp, by the very certainty of its persuasion it understands more than if it perceived anything human by its own capacity . . . those things which we know through faith are nonetheless absent from us and go unseen. From this we conclude that the knowledge of faith consists in assurance rather than comprehension.³¹

³⁰ See for example, the classic expressions found in John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Titus 3:3–8.

³¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.2.14.

And yet Calvin's own understanding of faith seems to preclude any notion of prior intellectual capacity which was indeed Hooker's own position. Faith for Calvin is the instrument that secures righteousness and must itself be the gift of God. The question therefore remained about what a person could possibly bring to realise salvation and thus union with God. According to Calvin:

. . . properly speaking, God alone justifies; then we transfer this same function to Christ because he was given to us for righteousness. We compare faith to a kind of vessel; for unless we come empty and with the mouth of our soul open to seek Christ's grace, we are not capable of receiving Christ. From this it is to be inferred that, in teaching that before his righteousness is received Christ is received in faith, we do not take the power of justifying away from Christ. . . . Therefore, I say that faith, which is only the instrument for receiving righteousness, is ignorantly confused with Christ, who is the material cause and at the same time the Author and Minister of this great benefit.³²

If we are to understand Calvin's logic here, it is “. . . the secret energy of the Spirit, by which we come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits”³³ and its mystical influence (to anticipate one of Hooker's favourite ideas), which brings a believer to the minimalist situation of coming “. . . empty and with the mouth of our soul open to seek Christ's grace,”³⁴ Nevertheless, this does raise the question of the means the Holy Spirit might use to fill the “mouth of our soul.” The next two sections will therefore review Calvin's treatment of the Scriptures and the Sacraments in light of his teaching on the Spirit.

Calvin and the Scriptures

Donald Wiebe locates the central philosophic issues in Anglicanism not in concerns over authority and comprehensiveness, but in epistemological vision.³⁵ Egil

³² Calvin, *Institutes*, III.11.7.

³³ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.1.1.

³⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.11.7.

³⁵ Donald Wiebe, “Comprehensiveness: The Integrity of Anglican Theology,” in

Grislis had made a similar point in relation to Hooker's hermeneutic: "Hooker recognizes that a mere appeal—be it to reason or Scripture—does not automatically produce truth. There . . . is no theological method . . . that can itself ensure its own infallibility."³⁶ Wiebe, speaking to a contemporary audience seeks to replace the idea of an Anglican magesterium with a morality of knowledge that offers, "the possibility of 'discretionary' epistemic choices . . . (that) will give the notion of comprehensiveness solid support."³⁷ Yet this is not far removed from Hooker's goal of a commonwealth of conformity that included faith, one shared by Puritans, but with many disagreements about how far dissent could be carried before the commonwealth itself became threatened. So the ground of knowing represents the heart of any method by which both Calvin and Hooker need to be understood. The *Lawes* therefore begin at the intersection of shared respect which strategically should have placed his debate with the Puritans on more irenic ground.³⁸

A founder it had, whome for mine own part, I thinke incomparably the wisest man that ever the french Church did enjoy, since the houre it enjoyed him. His bringing up was in the studie of the Civill Lawe. Divine knowledge he gathered, not by hearing or reading so much, as by teaching others. For, though thousands were debtors to him, as touching knowledge in that kinde; yet he to none but onely to God, the author of that most blessed fountaine, the booke of life, and of that admirable dexteritie of wit, together with the helpes of other learning which were his guides: . . .³⁹

The Future of Anglican Theology, ed. M. Darrol Bryant, Toronto Studies in Theology 17 (Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 55.

³⁶ Grislis, "Hermeneutical Problem," 179.

³⁷ Wiebe, "Comprehensiveness," 55.

³⁸ Hooker is normally prepared to overlook differences of temperament and style in his opponents though he regularly impatient with what he takes to be the spiritual pride of Puritans: "Wherefore to come unto you whose judgement is a lantarne of direction for all the rest, you that frame thus the peoples heartes, not altogether (as I willingly perswade my selfe) of a politique intent or purpose, but your selves being first overborne with the waight of greater mens judgementes: on your shoulders is laide the burthen of upholding the cause by argument." Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 4.1: 1.21.12–16.

³⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 2.1: 1.3.13–20.

Hooker is very clear about respect for Calvin but is equally clear that His discussion is not *per se* about personalities but about truth, and in particular, as it is to be found in Scripture. His method sought truth wherever it was to be found, which in the case of his debate with Cartwright in the *Lawes*, he was unwilling to trivialise into simple bipolar arguments, as though truth was something that, by nature, resists examination or could only be grasped as a point along a line. Such a position softens the severely rationalist image often attributed to Hooker,⁴⁰ and, in light of Baxter and Owen, might well have satisfied Cartwright had the debates occurred fifty years later.

In her response to Stephen Sykes' essay, "The Integrity of Anglicanism," Joan O'Donovan⁴¹ emphasises the methodological priority of scriptural meditation over against contextualised ecclesiology, as the preferred starting point for theology, and hence proclamation. In her defence of this priority, O'Donovan argues for the inseparable linkage of integrity and authority, and the public understanding of biblical revelation in the counsels and clarifications of the church. Describing the pre-Chalcedon fathers as "dedicated and serious biblical exegetes," she laments the general loss of early patristic resources for developing the identity of Anglican theological thought and method, and asserts that "there is no reason why the theological inheritance of Anglicanism should begin with Cranmer and Hooker." Although both were patristic scholars, they were concerned to draw the English reformation tradition into congruency with Scripture in such a way as to demonstrate the reformation's apostolic continuity. One reason to begin with Hooker is simply the manner in which he was able to traverse

⁴⁰ Noted by the authors of the *Christian Letter*.

⁴¹ Joan O'Donovan, "Proposals Regarding the Future of Anglican Theology," in *The Future of Anglican Theology*, ed. M. Darrol Bryant, Toronto Studies in Theology 17 (Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 143–50.

the arguments which, if they had been decided differently, would have resulted in a different Anglicanism observable today.

The English reformation was faced with epistemic issues basic to the status of the Scriptures in general, and the interpretative stance most appropriate to them. The truth claims of the church have always been public claims, and therefore, there can be no avoidance of the justification for the source of its appeal. The Puritan dichotomy in this regard forced a choice between the “educational matrix” of public worship, and “dedicated and serious biblical exegesis.”⁴² This choice was established by the traditional reformation claim for the self-authenticating, independent status of the Scriptures, the inviolable Word of God that needed nothing more than obedience to the plainness of its prescriptions. Richard Hooker offered the church a more irenic epistemology which did not pit the contingencies of human intellect against the realm of the Spirit but rather shared the same incarnational domain of the created order.

Richard Hooker found in Calvin the necessary starting point where agreement could be reached with the Puritans. Hooker and Calvin knew the classic philosophic and theological texts of Augustine, Aquinas, and Bonaventure, and Hooker is careful to offer a picture of Calvin which would itself tentatively probe where such a shared intellectual tradition might lead.

Hooker’s *Preface* makes clear that Calvin was, in his estimate, “incomparably the wisest man that ever the french Church did enjoy,”⁴³ but with the implied caveat that the “french Church” did not have exclusive rights to wisdom. The learning of Calvin is honoured by Hooker, in particular by reference to Calvin’s own indebtedness to the philosophers who informed his work. Since the nature of the Bible is to become a

⁴² O’Donovan, “Proposals,” 148f.

⁴³ Hooker, *Laws*, Preface, 2.1: 1.3.13.

major focus for debate, Hooker also points, somewhat obliquely, to his own estimate of the Bible as “that most blessed fountaine,” intimating that whatever else is to be discussed, his readers should not overlook his own reverence for the text.

Calvin’s hermeneutic of the Spirit declared that:

. . . the testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason . . . so also the Word will not find acceptance in men’s hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded.”⁴⁴

So there is a spiritual pre-condition necessary, in Calvin’s view, for the right handling of Scripture necessitated by the “foul ungratefulness” of the human condition.⁴⁵ The reader of Scripture is simply the humble beneficiary of the ancient texts, such that when understanding fails, the text can still be appropriated with the full assurance of faith:

. . . those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is ἀυτόπιστον;⁴⁶ hence it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning. And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit. For even if it wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit. Therefore illumined by his power, we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else’s judgment that Scripture is from God; but above human judgment we affirm with utter certainty (just as if we were gazing upon the majesty of God himself) that it has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men. We seek no proofs, no marks of genuineness upon which our judgment may lean; but we subject our judgment and wit to it as to a thing far beyond any guesswork! This we do . . . fully conscious that we hold the unassailable truth . . . more vitally, and more effectively than by mere human willing or knowing!⁴⁷

However, both Calvin and the Puritans held to a view of Scripture that created its own difficulties. Calvin’s grasp of the “unassailable truth” was the corollary to his understanding of the ways humans encountered divine revelation in nature, which

⁴⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.4.

⁴⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.5.4.

⁴⁶ Meaning, “self-authenticated.”

⁴⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.5.

Calvin held to comprise the self-awareness of man as unique within the created order, the capacity to surmise the created order as an order, and reflection on the course of human history. Further, there is an inherent knowledge of God which Calvin viewed negatively because it offered only the knowledge of condemnation and deprived men of any excuse for their sinfulness before God.⁴⁸

There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretense of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty. . . . And they who in other aspects of life seem least to differ from brutes still continue to retain some seed of religion. So deeply does the common conception occupy the minds of all, so tenaciously does it inhere in the hearts of all!⁴⁹

Again, Calvin's expression of despair over human religiosity is so complete, it achieves its own rhetorical effect:

Where they ought to serve him in sanctity of life and integrity of heart, they trump up frivolous trifles and worthless little observances with which to win his favour. Nay, more, with greater license they sluggishly lie in their own filth, because they are confident that they can perform their duty toward him by ridiculous acts of expiation. . . . Finally, they entangle themselves in such a huge mass of errors that blind wickedness stifles and finally extinguishes those sparks which once flashed forth to show them God's glory. Yet that seed remains which can in no wise be uprooted: That there is some sort of divinity; but this seed is so corrupted that by itself it produces only the worst fruits. From this, my present contention is brought out with greater certainty, that a sense of divinity is by nature engraven on human hearts.⁵⁰

However, the supreme instrument of divine disclosure were the Scriptures themselves. For Calvin, the only knowledge that was soteriologically relevant was that which was derived from or pointed towards Jesus Christ, the locus and end of all Biblical texts. But the problem was that if indeed it was the case that human reason was so corrupted then there would be no reason to believe that any person's assessment of Scripture as the infallible truth about God should be trusted. Moreover, Calvin's

⁴⁸ Wendel, *Calvin: Origins*, 162.

⁴⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.3.1.

⁵⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.5.4.

suspicion of human knowing and rational capacity to weigh the evidence of investigative discovery could only be moderated by his linking of the Spirit to human rationality. Yet even here, Calvin's pneumatology sometimes amounts to special pleading:

And so it happens that no real piety remains in the world. But as to my statement that some erroneously slip into superstition, I do not mean by this that their ingenuousness should free them from blame. For the blindness under which they labor is almost always mixed with proud vanity and obstinacy. Indeed, vanity joined with pride can be detected in the fact that, seeking God, miserable men do not rise above themselves as they should, but measure him by the yardstick of their own carnal stupidity, and neglect sound investigation;
. . .⁵¹

Yet even if there is to be "sound investigation," it is not truly clear if by this Calvin means the human intellect apart from the Holy Spirit:

. . . we ought to observe that we are called to a knowledge of God: not that knowledge which, content with empty speculation, merely flits in the brain, but that which will be sound and fruitful if we duly perceive it, and if it takes root in the heart. For the Lord manifests himself by his powers, the force of which we feel within ourselves and the benefits which we enjoy. . . . Consequently, we know the most perfect way of seeking God, and the most suitable order, is not for us to attempt with bold curiosity to penetrate to the investigation of his essence, which we ought more to adore than meticulously search out, but for us to contemplate him in his works whereby he renders himself near and familiar to us, and in some manner communicates himself.⁵²

Calvin's witness of the Spirit as the singular hermeneutical test for authentic interpretation was rejected by Hooker on epistemic grounds, but not because he excluded the Spirit from the hermeneutical process, or believed intellectual certainty came only from rational inquiry, but because Hooker refused to drive a wedge between nature and Spirit.⁵³ It was this false dichotomy that compelled Hooker to establish a hermeneutic based on a pneumatic epistemology that was as foundational for Hooker as

⁵¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.4.1.

⁵² Calvin, *Institutes*, I.5.9.

⁵³ The doctrine of the incarnation guaranteed for Hooker that the divine-human conflict lay not in the order of nature, as in the order of sin.

for Calvin, but which was more sophisticated and sympathetic to life outside the utopian ideals of Geneva.

Thus, as noted by Hooker himself, while Calvin was well-read and familiar with mediaeval scholastics, he was hostile to speculative analysis, and reasoned debate. This strange dichotomy in Calvin opened the way for English Puritans to adopt an evaluation of human reason that spilled over into extreme forms of proof texting Biblical exegesis on the one hand, and a charismatic hermeneutic that subordinated the Scriptures to notions of inspiration that held to the possibility of new extra-Biblical revelation:

. . . we ought to seek our conviction in a higher place than human reasons, judgments, or conjectures, that is, in the secret testimony of the Spirit . . . the testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason. For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit.⁵⁴

The irony was that Calvin had reached his own conclusions, and committed them to the *Institutes* and Commentaries through a process of rational inquiry and conviction just as his opponents had done (notwithstanding his hostility to them). Consequently, persons can mis-read the text of Scripture, God-breathed as it was, as much as they may err in any other way, and therefore they can mis-apprehend what the indwelling Spirit may also be saying in the souls of men. But for Calvin, error was a sure sign of the general corruption which beset all persons, and from which only the Holy Spirit could rescue a man's mind contingent upon faith. Hooker was very alert to this likelihood of error. For Hooker, Christian belief did not by any means rule out the potential for error but error in belief was not automatically the same as sin:

The best and safest waie for you therefore my deere brethren is, to call your deedes past to a new reckoning, to reexamine the cause yee have taken in hand, and to trie it even point by point, argument by argument, with all the diligent exactness yee can; to lay aside the gall of that bitternes wherein your mindes have hitherto overabounded, and with meekenes to search the truth. Thinke yee are men, deeme it not impossible for you to erre: sift unpartiallie your owne hearts, whether it be force of reason, or vehemencie of affection, which hath

⁵⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.7.4.

bread, and still doth feede these opinions in you. If truth doe anie where manifest it selfe, seeke not to smother it with glosing delusions, acknowledge the greatnes thereof, and thinke it your best victorie when the same doth prevaile over you that ye have bene earnest in speaking or writing againe and againe the contrarie waie, shall be no blemish or discredit at all unto you.⁵⁵

“Thinke yee are men, deeme it not impossible for you to erre;”⁵⁶ The divine origin of the Scriptures did not in itself change that aspect of human reality. Nor could it be argued that Calvin’s grasp of the Holy Spirit be any more infallible than Rome’s claim to the final guardian of truth. The Puritan prescriptive ideals for Scripture ultimately ran aground on the very nature that was held to be corrupt. Calvin’s pneumatology was adequate to offer a prescriptive critique of Scripture,⁵⁷ such that the individual believer could appropriate the necessary experience of assurance by which he had been taught, in circular fashion, to judge the authenticity of his own faith, but not for a situation of legitimate inquiry, which would always, by definition, be suspect. Still, this was not a difficulty inasmuch as the church, the elect community, was validated as the primary hermeneutical authority only so far as it held to the primacy of Scripture. The circularity of this situation therefore, lead naturally, as Compier notes,⁵⁸ to the withdrawal of spiritual groups from society under the special illumination of the Spirit since Scripture concurred with what was already held to be true, and called for general conformity to this view. As Hooker has it:

⁵⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 9.1: 51.24–52.3.

⁵⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 9.1: 51.29.

⁵⁷ A process that relied heavily on proof texts, and simple exegetical assertion. Calvin’s Biblical hermeneutic stood at the intersection of scholasticism and the newly emerging critical method which had been accelerated by the discovery of hitherto unknown and inaccessible manuscripts, and the production of Stephanus’ critical text of the Greek New Testament. Perhaps one should speak of “rediscovery” insofar as critical issues were understood and probed by, for example, copyists and the Eusebian Canon of the Gospels.

⁵⁸ Don H. Compier, “Hooker on the Authority of Scripture in Matters of Morality,” in *Richard Hooker and the Construction of the Christian Community*, ed. Arthur S. McGrade, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies no. 165 (Tempe, AZ: SUNY, 1997), 255.

. . . a custome of inuring your eares with reproofe of faults especially in your governors; an use to attribute those faults to the kind of spirituall regiment under which ye live; boldnes in warranting the force of their discipline for the cure of all such evils; a slight framing of your conceits to imagine that Scripture every where favoureth that discipline; perswasion that the cause why ye find it in Scripture is the illumination of the spirite, that the same Spirite is a seale unto you of your neerenes unto God.⁵⁹

What Hooker offered was a hermeneutic that was accessible to persons as they were, not as they might become. To achieve this, he sought a convergent process that was permissive as well as judicious, so as to avoid the charge of arbitrariness. He is consistently at pains to uphold the “perfection of Scripture” and its “sufficiency” *for the purposes to which it was intended*. The Puritan paradox, to name it such, was that a rigorous defence of the absoluteness of Scripture as an absolutely objective, prescriptive code, quite apart from any historical conditioning, could not be made without a critical analysis of the contents of Scripture itself. Since the subjectivity of human investigation was basic to this process, where Scripture was silent on a particular matter, be it church governance, the wearing of vestments, or the right of a woman to baptise, conclusions could only be drawn on the basis of their scriptural congruence. Consequently, such a process could best be informed by the “benefite of natures light.”

In addition, the irony of Calvin’s attitude to the relationship of reason to Spirit gave radical adherents of reform considerable latitude for charismatic liberty in interpretation which, as earlier noted, John Owen found necessary to bring under discipline. Calvin’s approach to Scripture was intimately bound by his belief in the divine origin of the texts and, because of human sin and obduracy, understood the texts to be too “dark” to be comprehended by persons in their unregenerate condition, apart from the secret indwelling of God’s Spirit. Yet the Spirit could not be received apart from faith and faith was the necessary precondition to receive the Spirit.

⁵⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.16: 1.20.27–21.6.

Hooker himself displays an acute awareness that the hermeneutical task is not simply the intellectual assent to truth. Humans are beset with many occasions for error, and it was therefore improbable that a prior ideological commitment alone would establish the truth or significance of the Scriptures as a whole. Thus, the Puritan propensity to weigh arguments as ‘Scriptural’ did not render them true simply on that account. Hooker, by contrast, argued for a more nuanced appreciation for the limitations of Scriptural evidence. For Calvin, the Scriptures stood above contention which meant human engagement with them did not in itself alter the way the texts could or should be read. Therefore the final appeal to biblical reasoning was based less upon the integrity of reason itself than the external majesty of its sacredness:

If we desire to provide in the best way for our consciences—that they may not be perpetually beset by the instability of doubt or vacillation—we ought to seek our conviction in a higher place than human reasons, judgments, or conjectures, that is, in the secret testimony of the Spirit. True, if we wished to proceed by arguments, we might advance many things that would easily prove . . . that the law, the prophets, and the gospel come from him.⁶⁰

Again, Calvin’s hermeneutic of the Spirit declared that:

. . . the testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason . . . so also the Word will not find acceptance in men’s hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded.⁶¹

Such, then, is a conviction that requires no reasons; such, a knowledge with which the best reason agrees—in which the mind truly reposes more securely and constantly than in any reasons; such, finally, a feeling that can be born only of heavenly revelation.⁶²

So there is a spiritual pre-condition necessary, in Calvin’s view, for the right handling of Scripture necessitated by the “foul ungratefulness” of the human

⁶⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.4.

⁶¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.4.

⁶² Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.5.

condition.⁶³ The reader of Scripture is simply the humble beneficiary of the ancient texts, such that when understanding fails, the text can still be appropriated with the full assurance of faith:

. . . those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning. And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit. For even if it wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit. Therefore illumined by his power, we believe neither by our own nor by anyone else's judgment that Scripture is from God; but above human judgment we affirm with utter certainty (just as if we were gazing upon the majesty of God himself) that it has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men. We seek no proofs, no marks of genuineness upon which our judgment may lean; but we subject our judgment and wit to it as to a thing far beyond any guesswork! This we do . . . fully conscious that we hold the unassailable truth . . . more vitally, and more effectively than by mere human willing or knowing!⁶⁴

At least in the *Institutes* Calvin did not feel moved to supply criteria by which his own "judgements might lean," because he already acknowledged the primary categories and concepts of Patristic Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy. Indeed such "proofs [or] marks of genuineness" were not necessary if one's theology was self-authenticating. In so doing, Calvin came close to driving a wedge between Spirit and reason because to assign a positive role to reason appeared, superficially, to diminish the absolute dependence of right reason on divine initiative and grace.⁶⁵ This is really a hermeneutical *impasse*, and as we shall see later one important enduring emphasis in the *Laws* is Hooker's attempt to redirect Calvin, with whom he is ideologically bound. Hooker sought a more nuanced position that achieved a life of authentic Christian faith with the same certainties of the Holy Spirit which did not simultaneously abandon

⁶³ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.5.4.

⁶⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.5.

⁶⁵ Calvin's commentaries on Scripture are the principle sources for his exegetical work which by their nature provided more substantial rational discourse on his Scriptural views.

reason as itself the gift of God Calvin himself needed to construct his theology. Calvin's assurance was utopian, whereas Hooker's was sufficiently generous for a Christian commonwealth, that if England were to survive as a Protestant state, it had to embrace a theology where many different Christians might find a home. Hooker, in this light, had some utopian views of his own!⁶⁶ The spirit of continental reform which had resulted in such deep conflict and bloodshed was less than 50 years away from threatening the very Commonwealth that Hooker's *Lawes* sought to protect.

Calvin and the Sacraments

The Scriptures were Calvin's fundamental source of truth and revelation about God. The Holy Spirit was the divine agency that authored the Scriptures and was given to believers that they could believe them and act towards God in faith which alone could save a person from divine condemnation. However, faith was not an entirely volitional act for Calvin since, unaided, all persons were trapped by culpable hostility and alienation towards God. Calvin asserts that the atoning death of Christ was actually ineffective without the concomitant response of faith. Thus unbelief was itself an act of rebellion against God. The believer needed sacramental means to sustain that relationship with God and which needed, by definition, a perception of the Holy Spirit having begun the work of faith within a believer, the power to continue it. In general, Calvin understood the sacraments in two ways; as a confirmation of divine promises made in Christ, and visible means through which divine grace is perceived:

We have in the sacraments another aid to our faith related to the preaching of the gospel. It is very important that some definite doctrine concerning them be taught, that we may learn from it both the purpose for which they were instituted and their present use. . . . a simple and proper definition would be to say that it is an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith; and we in turn

⁶⁶ See Shuger, "The Imagined Community" Shuger, "The Imagined Community", for a perspective on Hooker's idealism.

attest our piety toward him in the presence of the Lord and of his angels and before men. . . . one may call it a testimony of divine grace toward us, confirmed by an outward sign. . . . it does not differ in meaning from that of Augustine, who teaches that a sacrament is ‘a visible sign of a sacred thing,’ or ‘a visible form of an invisible grace,’ but it better and more clearly explains the thing itself.⁶⁷

It is also important to note here that Calvin draws a close connection between sacraments and preaching. Hooker did not make such a close connection because he did not understand the proclamation of the “Word” to be identical with preaching. Puritans linked the sermon to the Scriptures so closely that they were able to declare in effect “no sermon, no service.”⁶⁸ Calvin himself made this connection but with restraint:

Paul . . . glories that he has the ministry of the Spirit, as if the power of the Holy Spirit were joined by an indissoluble bond to his preaching for the inward illumination and moving of the mind. . . . Thus the apostles express the power of the Spirit in their preaching, as far as God uses the instruments ordained by himself for the unfolding of his spiritual grace. Nevertheless, this distinction is to be kept: we should remember what man can do of himself, and what is reserved to God.⁶⁹

In Calvin, the value and efficacy of the sacraments is connected, as it were, iconically, to the integrity of the Scriptures as the preeminent medium of truth:

The Sacraments, . . . are exercises which make us more certain of the trustworthiness of God’s Word. And because we are of flesh, they are shown us under things of flesh, to instruct us according to our dull capacity, and to lead us by the hand as tutors lead children. Augustine calls a sacrament ‘a visible word’ for the reason that it represents God’s promises as painted in a picture and sets them before our sight, portrayed graphically and in the manner of images.⁷⁰

But Calvin has a more specific role for the Holy Spirit with respect to the sacraments. They are objective means of grace whose efficacy may be hindered by sin, but not their

⁶⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion Vol. 2*, vol. XXI of *The Library of Christian Classics*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), IV.14.1.

⁶⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.28.3: 2.122.22–28.

⁶⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.11 “. . . we should remember what man can do of himself, and what is reserved to God.” This is a very important notice in Calvin for it is exactly the argument raised by Hooker as he debates the boundaries and limits of human knowing, and especially, the limits of Scripture.

⁷⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.6.

value:

. . . however much impious and hypocritical men may, by their own perversity, oppress or obscure or hinder the working of divine grace in the sacraments—still that does not prevent these . . . from bearing true witness to the communication of Christ, and the Spirit of God himself also from revealing and fulfilling what they promise.⁷¹

Indeed, the Holy Spirit is for Calvin the crucial factor that allows him to attribute the language of divinity, including “faith,” to the sacraments. In one short but direct section of the *Institutes*, Calvin rejects any inherent value in the sacraments apart from the Spirit:

As to the confirmation and increase of faith . . . I assign this particular ministry to the sacraments. Not that I suppose there is some secret force or other perpetually seated in them by which they are able to promote or confirm faith by themselves. Rather, I consider that they have been instituted by the Lord to the end that they may serve to establish and increase faith.⁷²

But to establish faith, something other than human action was necessary because Calvin had already declared faith to be the work and action of the Holy Spirit.⁷³ Therefore, the same Spirit must in some manner be active in the sacraments. And that is where Calvin goes with his argument:

. . . the sacraments properly fulfill their office only when the Spirit, that inward teacher, comes to them, by whose power alone hearts are penetrated and affections moved and our souls opened for the sacraments to enter in. If the Spirit be lacking, the sacraments can accomplish nothing more in our minds than the splendour of the sun shining upon blind eyes, or a voice sounding in deaf ears. Therefore, I make such a division between the Spirit and sacraments that the power to act rests with the former, and the ministry alone is left to the latter—a ministry empty and trifling apart from the action of the Spirit, but charged with great effect when the Spirit works within and manifests his power. . . . the sacraments profit not a whit without the power of the Holy Spirit, and nothing prevents them from strengthening and enlarging faith in hearts already

⁷¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.8.

⁷² Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.9.

⁷³ He restates the matter: “If we ascribe to creatures either the increase or the confirmation of faith, injustice is done to the Spirit of God, who should be recognized as its sole author. For we do not snatch from him the credit for confirming and increasing it; rather, we assert that what increases and confirms faith is precisely the preparation of our minds by his inward illumination to receive the confirmation extended by the sacraments.” Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.10.

taught by that Schoolmaster. There is only this difference: that our ears and eyes have naturally received the faculty of hearing and seeing; but Christ does the same thing in our hearts by special grace beyond the measure of nature.⁷⁴

Although Hooker is much more likely to discuss the relationship of grace than faith to sacraments, it is evident that Calvin is alert to the manner by which believers can be sensibly assured of the truth of their faith, and the truth of those means that confirm faith.

Calvin's understanding of faith rendered it a measurable quantity. It was susceptible to inquiry, and therefore suspicion. Notwithstanding, Calvin assumes a role for reason, ". . . there are very many stubborn heads which you can never bend by reasoning."⁷⁵ ". . . where faith is suspect, where authority is despised, there is little progress even among the teachable."⁷⁶ This was further emphasised by his use of interiority, such that faith and truth was something to be "felt" and which came with the conviction of "inward illumination," and secret knowledge. Indeed Calvin even declares his suspicion of rational discourse in relation to faith. "Such, then, is a conviction that requires no reasons; such, a knowledge with which the best reason agrees . . ."⁷⁷ meant that reason could only ever be the servant of faith but it did not mean that the convictions of faith could ever be defined or modified by reason, only explicated by the boundaries of Scripture. And, as has been seen, for Calvin, those Scriptural boundaries were confirmed, principally by the Holy Spirit, not by reason. However, when Calvin uses the term reason, the context must determine whether he really means *speculative* reason, not the inherent intellectual capacities of man. The principal hindrance to faith is human stubbornness occasioned by rebellion and sin.

⁷⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.9.

⁷⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.10.

⁷⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.10.

⁷⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.7.5.

Therefore, the congruence of mind, word, and sacrament were the necessary elements to the Holy Spirit, because this was the defining identity of humanity through which faith could be manifest:

. . . that the Word may not beat your ears in vain, and that the sacraments may not strike your eyes in vain, the Spirit shows us that in them it is God speaking to us, softening the stubbornness of our heart, and composing it to that obedience which it owes the Word of the Lord. Finally, the Spirit transmits those outward words and sacraments from our ears to our soul. . . . The Spirit confirms it when, by engraving this confirmation in our minds, he makes it effective. Meanwhile, the Father of Lights cannot be hindered from illuminating our minds with a sort of intermediate brilliance through the sacraments, just as he illumines our bodily eyes by the rays of the sun.⁷⁸

Again, the sacraments are a consistent means of grace for Calvin as indeed they are for Hooker. The benefits of the sacraments “. . . are conferred though the Holy Spirit, who makes us partakers in Christ; conferred, indeed with the help of outward signs, if they allure us to Christ; . . .”⁷⁹ But Calvin remains greatly concerned, as was Hooker, that he not be understood to say that the signs convey inherent grace:

. . . to think that a hidden power is joined and fastened to the sacraments by which they of themselves confer the graces of the Holy Spirit upon us, as wine is given in a cup, while the only function divinely imparted to them is to attest and ratify for us God’s good will toward us. And they are of no further benefit unless the Holy Spirit accompanies them. For he it is who opens our minds and hearts and makes us receptive to this testimony. . . . They do not bestow any grace of themselves. . . . The Holy Spirit . . . is he who brings the graces of God with him, gives a place for the sacraments among us, and makes them bear fruit. We do not deny that God himself is present in his institution by the very-present power of his Spirit. Nevertheless, that the administration of the sacraments which he has ordained may not be unfruitful and void, we declare that the inner grace of the Spirit, as distinct from the outward ministry, ought to be considered and pondered separately.⁸⁰

However, this distinction was not easy to maintain without a measure of special pleading because the ministry of sacramental presidency was still required and though the doctrine of sacramental efficacy could be maintained without absolute linkage to the

⁷⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.10.

⁷⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.16.

⁸⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.17.

worthiness of the presider, the logic of the sacraments was still that the Holy Spirit was pleased to act through the physicality of the elements:

We must also note this: that God accomplishes within what the minister represents and attests by outward action, lest what God claims for himself alone should be turned over to a mortal man. Augustine also wisely admonishes this. ‘How,’ he says, ‘do both Moses and God sanctify? Not Moses on God’s behalf: but Moses by the visible sacraments through his ministry, God by invisible grace through the Holy Spirit’⁸¹

The characteristic features of Calvin’s language about the sacraments speak notably to the conferring of grace inwardly to the believer, as a secret gift of God, that was attainable only through faith. The inwardness of Calvin’s doctrine of grace in relation to the sacraments and the Holy Spirit, is the language of metaphysical union with Christ to which he consistently appeals. In his discussion of regeneration by the Spirit in Romans 7,⁸² Calvin again appeals to the radical doctrine of union with Christ. “. . . those whom the Lord Jesus has once received into grace, engrafts in to the communion of his Christ, and adopts into the society of the church through baptism . . . are absolved of guilt and condemnation.”⁸³

We turn now to consider the Puritan William Ames (1576–1633) who was a slightly younger contemporary of Richard Hooker. Though not as well-known as Hooker, Travers, or Cartwright, the work of William Ames was very influential. Death prevented him from reaching the New England colonies from his exile in Rotterdam yet his reputation had already extended that far. John Eusden, quoting Cotton Mather (1663–1728) describes Ames as “That profound, that sublime, that subtle, the irrefragable—yea, that angelic doctor.”⁸⁴ Ames shared the consistent Puritan and reformed concern for the work and certainties of the Holy Spirit and the divine-human

⁸¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.17.

⁸² Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.12.

⁸³ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.15.12.

⁸⁴ Ames, *Marrow*, 11.

union, and the cure of souls. Only the Holy Spirit could give the special ability to analyse the signs and symptoms of spiritual sloth and decay, as well as the fortitude to persevere in their reformation. Like Calvin, Ames proceeds from the usual Trinitarian assumptions by which any discussion of the deity of the Holy Spirit must necessarily be predicated.⁸⁵ It is to be noted that in Ames, there is a concern for the catholicity of belief which is also reflected in Calvin and very much related to the language of mystical union and “invisibility.” The catholicity of the church is a function of its essence, or invisibility whereas its visible attributes can be measured “according to the degree of communion it has with Christ.”⁸⁶ Similarly:

The essential form is invisible both because it is a relation which cannot be perceived by the senses and also because it is spiritual, and so farther removed from sense perception than many other relations. The accidental form is visible because it is an outward profession of inward faith, easily perceived by sense. The visible profession is the manifest communion of the saints which they have with Christ and among themselves.⁸⁷

In the sacred society of the church then, the invisibility of its secret life is actually the guarantee of the Spirit’s presence, safeguarding the foundations which were for both Calvin and Hooker, the essential marks of the church. Hooker simply extends the range of Calvin and Ames to the church of Rome insofar as it did not deny the Christological foundations of the Gospel. These were simply the external marks of Word and sacrament, and the internal cleaving to Christ. There was therefore, no justification for schism merely because the church was a tarnished spiritual society. In fact, Hooker’s own generosity can be found in Calvin:

. . . overscrupulousness is born rather of pride and arrogance and false opinion of holiness than of true holiness and true zeal for it. Therefore, those who more boldly than others incite defection from the church, and are like standard-

⁸⁵ Ames, *Marrow*, 88–91.

⁸⁶ Ames, *Marrow*, 177.

⁸⁷ Ames, *Marrow*, 177.

bearers, have for the most part no other reason than by their contempt of all to show they are better than the others.⁸⁸

Similarly, with respect to the Scriptures Ames clearly follows Calvin in that “The Scriptures need no explanation through light brought from outside, especially in the necessary things. They give light to themselves, which should be uncovered diligently by men and communicated to others according to their calling.”⁸⁹ This is simply because, like Calvin, it could scarcely be denied that special skills were needed to read the Scriptures in their original languages. No translation, according to Ames, could be trusted because “. . . no versions are fully authentic except as they express the sources, by which they are also to be weighed. Neither is there any authority on earth whereby any version may be made absolutely authentic.”⁹⁰ So a distinction was needed to hold reason at bay to avoid confusion over what was of God, and what was ‘merely’ intellectual workmanship. This was the distinction that Hooker was prepared to blur, as well as uphold, as will be seen in the next chapter:

Some knowledge, at least of these languages is necessary for a precise understanding of the Scriptures, for they are to be understood by the same means required for other human writings, i.e., skill and experience in logic, rhetoric, grammar, and the languages. However, there is one exception: The special light of the Spirit must be sought for in the Scriptures by the godly. The Scriptures are not so tied to these first languages that they cannot and ought not to be translated into other languages for common use in the church.⁹¹

Ames could hardly argue that the Scriptures should *not* be translated since that had been done from the time of the Septuagint (c. 250 B.C.E.). He also recognises the need for rational inquiry—his entire chapter on Holy Scripture is designed to establish the historical and linguistic context of Scripture that necessitates such study. Yet “The

⁸⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.1.16.

⁸⁹ Ames, *Marrow*, 188.

⁹⁰ Ames, *Marrow*, 189.

⁹¹ Ames, *Marrow*, 188.

special light of the Spirit must be sought for in the Scriptures by the godly.”⁹² So the letter of the texts could be understood, but not their significance without the particular insights of faith and the Holy Spirit. Ames’ linkage of Spirit and Word necessarily linked Spirit and preaching which was the view of Calvin. But even this carried its own internal tension. The human mind was the object of doubt and suspicion because it was corrupt, and even with the gifts of grace through the Holy Spirit, subject to degrees of error and prejudice. Here we see Ames attempting to validate the need for rational speech and inquiry, and the ministry of preaching, while maintaining the absolute independence of Scripture:

It is the word of the Spirit, the word of life, which is preached for the building up of faith in God. If anything be not fitly spoken or done to this end, it is as useless as hay and stubble. Therefore, neither human testimonies, no matter what they be nor stories known only to the learned ought to be mixed in, Much less should words or sentences in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew be used which the people do not understand. The purity, perfection, and majesty of the word of God is violated when it is said to need the admixture of human words. And at the same time a disservice is done to hearers who get so accustomed to human flourishes that they often contract the disease of itching ears, begin to dislike the simplicity of the gospel, and will not endure sound teaching. . . . The power of the Holy Spirit more clearly appears in the naked simplicity of words than in elegance and luster.⁹³

In his further discussion of the means of grace, which Ames calls the “means of the Spirit”⁹⁴ he makes the usual practical distinction between sign and signified,⁹⁵ and reiterates Calvin’s (and Hooker’s) understanding that the sacraments have their origin in

⁹² Ames, *Marrow*, 188.

⁹³ Ames, *Marrow*, 194f.

⁹⁴ Ames, *Marrow*, 196.

⁹⁵ While Ames does make this distinction, it done to avoid any suggestion of trans- or consubstantiation. He clearly reaches for some doctrine of metaphysical union. “The form of a sacrament is the union between the sign and the things signified. This union is neither physical nor yet imaginary; it is rather a spiritual relation by which the things signified are really communicated to those who rightly use the signs.” Ames, *Marrow*, 198.

God and as such, are neither contrived by human experiment, nor “bare signs which merely indicate and represent.”⁹⁶

None can institute such a holy sign but God alone. No creature can communicate the thing signified, or make its communication certain to us, or finally add such force to signs that they can confirm faith and confidence, or stir up spiritual grace in us, more than anything else can. Therefore, the sacraments do not properly exist apart from their being used, i.e., they are not revered sacraments either before or after their use.⁹⁷

Like Calvin, though with much less emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit, Ames reflects the reformed understanding of the sacraments as the seal of the covenant, as analogous to the invisible inner reality of grace and faith. His concern is practical divinity:

The primary end of a sacrament is to seal the covenant. And this occurs not on God's part only but secondarily on ours, for not only are the grace and promises of God sealed to us but also our thankfulness and obedience towards him. Therefore, mystical signs of holy things cannot be instituted by man without prejudice to and violation of the sacraments, even though they do set forth the duty only of man. Such signs are not properly sacraments; they are rather sacramental signs, that is, they partake of the nature of sacraments. Even as such they cannot be instituted by man. A secondary end is the profession of faith and love. Taking the sacraments symbolizes the union we have with God in Christ and the communion we hold with all those who are partakers of the same union, especially with those who are members of the same church.⁹⁸

The language of mystical union is the language of Richard Hooker. Where Ames is reluctant to press the doctrine of the Spirit in sacramental worship, Calvin shows no such reticence. For each, the sacraments seal the covenant in Christ's death, and in the case of the Eucharist, its reception builds faith, assurance and love. But in Calvin, it is much more obvious that the Holy Spirit is the *necessary* sacramental power if they are to be understood as divinely ordained. For Calvin, the Spirit is the common factor that unites both word and sacrament as necessary for spiritual worship and grace.

⁹⁶ Ames, *Marrow*, 197.

⁹⁷ Ames, *Marrow*, 197.

⁹⁸ Ames, *Marrow*, 199.

Ames tends to limit his work on the Spirit to the authentication of the preached word. Since he regards the sacraments as symbols, the principle issue for him is their proper and reverend use:

The word of institution distinctly applied with appropriate prayer . . . called the word of consecration, blessing, sanctification, and separation . . . completely laid in the prescribed observance and use itself, which have such great force that if this or that person pays no heed to them, though he be present in body receiving, there is no sacrament for him, though for others it is most effectual.⁹⁹

In the following chapter, we will note that Richard Hooker has a much more generous assessment of the efficacy of sacramental worship that, perhaps surprisingly,¹⁰⁰ accords much more freedom to the work of the Holy Spirit than Ames, with a profound sense of the goals of human desire in the union of man with God.

⁹⁹ Ames, *Marrow*, 198.

¹⁰⁰ Because Hooker had gained the reputation of being an extreme rationalist and defender of Prayer Book orthodoxy.

CHAPTER 4

HOOKER'S PNEUMATOLOGIA

Hooker's development of his pneumatologia¹ in the *Lawes* is not presented systematically. For example, his theology of the Holy Spirit develops, especially in his discussion of the sacraments and the interior witness of the truth of the Scriptures in the believer, as axiomatic to Trinitarian orthodoxy. However, since Hooker did not understand the Christian claim to truth in isolation from the authority of the church, which was for him the birthplace of Christian consciousness, he also notes the role of the Spirit in relation to its ministry and the validation of its orders.

¹ The term "pneumatologia" is comparatively old and can be traced to the Calvinist Johannes Heinrich Alsted (1588–1638) in his discussions of the definition of ontology. He considered *pneumatica* or *pneumatologia* to be "the science of transnatural beings, . . . the science of God, angels, and separate souls" and as such a subset of the more general discipline of metaphysics or ontology. Leo Freuler, "History of Ontology," in *Handbook of Metaphysics and Ontology*, eds Hans Burkhardt and Barry Smith (München: Philosophie Verlag GMBH, 1991), s.v. "Ontology." The application of this general definition consistent with its usage in this thesis, and the subject matter of the role of the Holy Spirit in Hooker's theology, is reflected in John Owen's note to his readers that ". . . all the concernments of the Holy Spirit are an eminent part of the 'mystery' or 'deep things of God;' for as the knowledge of them doth wholly depend on and is regulated by divine revelation, so are they in their own nature divine and heavenly,—distant and remote from the heart of man, in the mere exercise of its own reason or understanding, can rise up unto. . . . He needs no furtherance in the forfeiture of his reputation with many, as a person fanatical, estranged from the conduct of reason, and all generous principles of conversation, who dares avow an interest in His work, or take upon him the defence thereof." John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 3, 5.

Calvin had argued that the uneducated mind when endowed with the Spirit was a more formidable defence of truth than the sophistry of the unguided intellect. That is, even the most sophisticated intellect was not a neutral arena and would not of itself lead a person to faith. Calvin contended that reason played no final role in guiding the elect because of the interior witness of the Spirit, through which truth could be both recognised and validated. It is therefore important to gauge the extent to which Hooker was prepared to depart from Calvin on these grounds of certainty, and hence in the soteriological program of God. It was evidently not Hooker's intention to handle the theology of the Spirit in a fully systematic fashion, certainly in comparison to the developed treatises of Richard Baxter and John Owen. As has been shown, the extent to which Calvin and his Puritan admirers depended on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as their binding epistemological principle, makes Hooker's response in the *Lawes* all the more critical.

Two aspects of Hooker's thought come together that support his distinctive appreciation of the place of the Holy Spirit. The first is his dependence on Thomistic categories which supplied the Aristotelian framework for his discussion on the limits of Scripture, the role and function of the sacraments, and the authority of ministry in the church, these three being the areas of most obvious contention. The second is the idea of Hooker's mysticism which he expressed in terms of "participation," "copulation," and "mystical union." The polemical situation in his debate with the Puritans is clearly everywhere to be noted in the *Lawes*, but the ground, justification, and constitution of belief in general is his real concern. To read the *Lawes* in this way is to be offered a paradigm for individual belief and faith, and a defence of the Christian commonwealth, not simply as a controversy to be won. Hooker was unwilling to create a false dichotomy between the belief of the individual and the belief of the church. Both could err, and both could be reformed.

There was for Hooker, as for Thomas, a necessary conjunction between faith and reason if humans were to know anything at all of the divine, and particularly if they were to know anything about salvation. Hooker's view of theology was that of Thomas, "the science of things divine."² and was susceptible to rational investigation but not absolutely authenticated by it. Reason was the hand by which the Spirit led but the instrumentality of revelation was the Scriptures and the sacraments. But Hooker identified the extremes of Puritan reform in the circularity of their reasoning such that the new discipline was affirmed by "*the illumination of the spirite, that the same Spirite is a seale unto you of your neerenes unto God*"³ whereas the Spirit was for Hooker a universal authority and not the particular possession of any given generation.⁴ At the centre of Hooker's theology stood the union of God and man, the idea that humans were capable of sharing the divine nature through grace, rather than ability. This transcendent union was the gift of God such that "The light of naturall understanding wit and reason is from God, he it is which thereby doth illuminate every man entering into the world. If there proceed from us any thing afterwarde corrupt and naught, the mother thereof is our owne darknes, . . ."⁵ Yet Hooker was very aware that humans were capable of a circularity that amounted to self-deception. The sovereignty of the work of the Holy Spirit was never denied by Hooker. Therefore the claims made for spiritual enlightenment and exegetical certainty over the interpretation of Scripture had to be subjected to critical scrutiny. The "secret suggestions" of the Spirit in the believer were not true because they were secret, nor because they were held sincerely, nor even generally consonant with Scripture, but because the convergence of faith and right

² Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.11: I.230.2 Hooker's use of the word "science" has already been discussed in Chapter 1.

³ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.16: 1.21.5f.

⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 6.2: 30.5–10.

⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.9.3: 1.238.25–28.

reason rendered them susceptible to examination the results of which might reject the inner testimony of the “suggestions.” Therefore, writes Hooker, “even to our owne selves it needeth caution and explication how the testimony of the spirit may be discerned, by what means it may be knowne, lest men thinke that the spirit of god doth testifie those things which the spirit of error suggesteth.”⁶ However, this left open the question of the certainty of faith with which Puritan piety was profoundly concerned. How then is it possible for humans to think or imagine anything about God since they are so prone to error? Hooker's answer is that the universal laws which frame human action and which observably tend to order and life are mediated by the Holy Spirit such that:

. . . the lawes which the very heathens did gather to direct their actions by, so far forth as they proceeded from the light of nature, God him selfe doth acknowledge to have proceeded even from him selfe, and that he was the writer of them on the tables of their hartes. How much more then he the author of those Lawes, which have bene made by his Saincts, endued furdur with the heavenly grace of his spirit, and directed as much as might be with such instructions, as his sacred word doth yeeld?⁷

But Hooker needed to converge on a solution to the problem of epistemic certainty, that was “probable,” that is, congruent with the claims of faith where the limits of natural reason had been reached. Also, Hooker was quite willing to accept the reality of the secret and hidden character of the divine transactions between heaven and creation:

Christ and his holie Spirit with all their blessed effectes, though enteringe into the soule of man wee are not able to apprehend or expresse how, doe notwithstandinge give notize of the tymes when they use to make accesse, because it pleaseth almightie God to communicate by sensible meanes those blessinges which are incomprehensible.⁸

⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.15: 1.232.30–33.

⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.9.3: 1.238.32–239.8.

⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.57.3: 2.246.15–20.

And so Richard Hooker has simultaneously rejected as arbitrary and circular the Puritan claims to independent spiritual insight, while directly positioning himself to rehearse a doctrine of the Holy Spirit that directly depends on the “sensible meanes” of grace accepted by both Puritans and Hooker, namely, word and sacrament, and which ultimately moves beyond the question of “meanes” to the goal of the Gospel, which is “participation” in the Godhead. However, as has been argued thus far, Hooker had to demonstrate the congruence of faith and reason, finally concluding that the constraint of reason was actually one of the Spirit’s gifts that tended towards “common peace.”⁹ In fact, since he considers peace to be a natural outcome of “beinge taught, led, and guided by his spirit”¹⁰ he is surprised that such claims to spiritual insight, for example, the idea that Scripture commands what Hooker would prefer to permit, presbyterial as opposed to episcopal forms of church government, have not found the sort of unity that would be expected. God may have indeed revealed new truth to some in the church, but:

. . . the same God which revealeth it to them, would also give them power of confirminge it unto others, either with miraculous operation, or with stronge and invincible remonstrance of sound reason, such as whereby it might appeare that God would in deed have all mens judgmentes give place unto it; whereas now the error and unsufficiencie of their argumentes doth make it on the contrarie side against them a strong presumption, that God hath not moved their hartes to thinke such thinges, as he hath not inabled them to prove.¹¹

Now, from a rather more defensive posture, in which Puritan claims to the Spirit have been laid out as suspect, Hooker moves more aggressively to assert the ways in which Puritan theology actually compromised the saving hope of the Gospel to which both word and sacrament pointed, and to which he, personally, was committed.

⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.10.1: 2.46.29.

¹⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.10.1: 2.46.28.

¹¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.10.1: 2.47.1–8.

Spirit and Scriptures

As has already been indicated, a distinctive feature of Richard Hooker's theology of the Holy Spirit was his stress on the divine gift of the Spirit to bring the necessary clarity to the hermeneutical matrix for a right understanding of Scripture to both elicit and nourish saving faith. John Booty notes that in the generations following Hooker's death in 1600, the question over whether the Scripture argued its own canonicity was frequently addressed by appeal to Hooker.¹² The nature of the attack was to re-establish the church as the primary hermeneutical principle. The Protestant response typically defended Hooker by recalling the larger context in which Hooker wrote. Thus, even if the church was the gateway to appreciating the Scripture authoritatively as the Word of God, it was not the final authority as Spirit and right reason coalesced to affirm what the church had declared all along to be true about the scriptural witness to God, and which in the end also commended the liberty of individual, Spirit-informed deductions from Scripture. John Booty states this well when he says:

[Hooker] saw no good reason why a person should question the interpretation of Scripture made by the church and the ancient Father. His view of the church and its authority was high without being idolatrous. The church not only introduced the Christian to the authority of Scripture as the Word of God, but it provided as well a foundation for the maintenance of this truth throughout life, a foundation that would be confirmed in its testimony by the internal evidence of Scripture, understood by reason.¹³

However, it does need to be further emphasised that when Hooker thought of the

¹² John E. Booty, "Hooker and Anglicanism," in *Studies in Richard Hooker*, ed. W. Speed Hill (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western University, 1972), 224 notes Sylvester Norris the Roman Catholic polemicist, who cited Hooker as one who "cast doubt upon those who claim to interpret Scripture by the power of the Holy Spirit: . . . following their own conjectures and grounding 'themselves on humane authority.'" Sylvester Norris, *An Antidote Or Sovereigne Remedie Against The Pestiferous Writings Of All English Sectaries* (St. Omer: English College Press, 1615), 20.

¹³ Booty, "Hooker and Anglicanism," 228.

ontology of Scripture as the Word of God he did so not from the point of view of pure rationality as though from a theoretical vantage point of detachment, but with right reason informed and constrained by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Clearly then, Hooker thought Scripture was best understood not from an external vantage point, as though it were an artifact, but internally, from the standpoint of belief. But the delicate balance he had to maintain was what the 'standpoint of belief' could mean. He had already argued against the undisciplined appeal of pneumatic exegesis which he accused his Puritan opponents of using. Their mistake was to believe that Spirit and reason were antithetical and in one memorable passage, Hooker describes his view of the Puritan error that faith is at its most pure where reason is absent:

If I believe the Gospell, there needeth no reasoning about it to perswade me: If I doe not believe, it must be the spirit of God and not the reason of man that shall convert my hart unto him. By these and the like dispute an opinion hath spread it selfe verie farre in the world, as if the waye to be ripe in faith, were to be raw in wit and judgement, as if reason were an enimie unto religion, childish simplicitie the mother of ghostlie and divine wisdom. The cause why such declamations prevaile so greatly, is, for that men suffer themselves in two respects to be deluded, one is that the wisdom of man being greatly debaced either in comparison with that of God, or in regard of some speciall thing exceeding the reach and compasse thereof, it seemeth to them (not marking so much) as if simplie it were condemned: another that learning, knowledge, or wisdom falsely so tearmed, usurping a name whereof they are not worthie, and being under that name controlled, their reproofe is by so much the more easily misapplied, and through equivocation wrested against those things whereunto so pretious names do properly and of right belong.¹⁴

The false dichotomy of faith and natural reason, "as if reason were an enimie unto religion, childish simplicitie the mother of ghostlie and divine wisdom" had, in Hooker's view, created a situation where the Gospel had become obscured for two reasons. First, the Puritans had made faith inaccessible to rational inquiry on the ground that such inquiry was incompatible with faith as the singular gift of the Holy Spirit, and that faith, if attained, had achieved its final goal in saving the believer. Reason as a

¹⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.4: 1.222.22–223.7.

natural human attribute was then an unnecessary appendage and the “wisdom of man . . . greatly debased.”¹⁵ Second, since faith is possible without any apparent worldly wisdom, to elevate in any way the fruits of human wisdom was in effect to detract from the greatness of God. Although Nigel Voak is correct to stress the primary link Hooker made between manifestations of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of reason, he has overstated his view whereby “Hooker’s belief that the Holy Spirit never ordinarily manifests itself apart from through the human reason.”¹⁶ On the one hand, Voak states that “Hooker’s attitude to the Holy Spirit, . . . appear[s] to have fluctuated over the course of time.”¹⁷ He is at particular pains to reject the idea, found in Calvin and I would argue, in Hooker himself:

. . . that Holy Scripture is self-authenticating, on the basis of the direct internal witness of the Holy Spirit within the believer. The corollary of this position is that reason can have no part in the authenticating process, as its religious judgement is of little or no value compared to that of the Holy Spirit. Hooker clearly feels that this approach is nothing other than a turn towards irrationalism, in a manner that ignores the rational nature of faith.¹⁸

But Hooker has taken a ‘worst case scenario’ in order to make the point that reason and Spirit are necessarily congruent in the life of the believer, at which point reason is to be understood as right reason since it is aided by the Spirit concomitant with faith. However, Geoffrey Nuttall points out that a distinction must be made between the more representative Puritan approach to the relationship of Scripture and Spirit and the sort of unexamined piety that Hooker thought was characteristic of Puritans. Nuttall quotes Richard Sibbes (d. 1635):

God, joining with the soul and spirit of a man whom he intends to convert, besides that inbred light that is in the soul, causeth him to see a divine majesty shining forth in the Scriptures, that there must be an infused establishing by the

¹⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.4: 1.222.30f.

¹⁶ Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology*, 226.

¹⁷ Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology*, 226.

¹⁸ Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology*, 226.

Spirit to settle the heart in this first principle, . . . that the Scriptures are the word of God. There must be a double light. So there must be a Spirit in me, as there is a Spirit in the Scripture before I can see any thing. The breath of the Spirit in us is suitable to the Spirit's breathing in the Scriptures; the same Spirit doth not breathe contrary motions. As the spirits in the arteries quicken the blood in the veins, so the Spirit of God goes along with the word, and makes it work.¹⁹

It is difficult to see anything here with which Hooker would have been in fundamental conflict. However, that the Scriptures could only be authenticated as the Word of God by the interior witness of the Holy Spirit in the individual believer, must surely be rejected by Hooker inasmuch as the church had always believed this and generations of believers had concurred. And as Egil Grislis reminds us faith was never, either for the Puritans or Hooker, “an autonomous accomplishment, but a divine gift: the Holy Spirit has granted to them a ‘first disposition towards future newnes of life.’”²⁰ The separation of Spirit and Scripture was as illogical as the separation of nature and grace, or the rejection of sound learning merely because *some* learning was unsound or fraudulent.²¹ There was, therefore, within natural reason itself, a reciprocal recognition of the need for divine assistance in those things where the limits of reason were reached, and a doctrine of the Spirit that was large enough in which the “voice of reason was the voice of God.”²² This was such an important consideration for Hooker, and so much

¹⁹ Richard Sibbes quoted in Nuttall, *Puritan Faith*, 23.

²⁰ Egil Grislis, “Hooker Among the Giants: The Continuity and Creativity of Richard Hooker's Doctrine of Justification,” *Cithara* 43, no. 2 (May 2004): 10 quoting Hooker, *Lawes*, V.60.2: 2.55.12f.

²¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.6: 1.223.24–224.3 See Egil Grislis, “Hooker's basic preference [was] not to cling to simplistic formulas but to suggest a process of reasoning that can take place under the assistance of grace. Which is to say that while Hooker certainly does not exclude the assistance of the Holy Spirit, he refuses to regard the work of the Holy Spirit as an irrational miracle that must bypass every use of reason.” Grislis, “Hermeneutical Problem,” 195.

²² Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Attack and Response: Dublin Fragments*, vol. 4 of *Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. John E. Booty, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982), 4.9.108.6f. Hooker appears to blur the distinction here between natural and right reason. His point is that natural reason recognises its own

depended upon it that he craves:

. . . that I be not so understood or construed, as if any such thing by vertue thereof could be done without the aide and assistance of Gods most blessed spirite. . . . For this cause therefore we have endeoured to make it appeare how in the nature of reason it selfe there is no impediment, but that the self same spirit, which revealeth the things that god hath set down in his law, may also be thought to aid and direct men in finding out by the light of reason what Lawes are expedient to be made for the guiding of his Church, over and besides them that are in scripture.²⁴

Now, it is not to be thought that Hooker was so at variance with the Puritans that there was absolutely no shared point of contact. It has already been argued that in fact, Hooker was much closer to Calvin than the Puritans were aware (or chose to be aware), and than some later Anglicans felt comfortable with. There were certainly nagging problems for the Puritans over Hooker's apparent relaxed attitude towards Rome, and as we have discussed, his confident role for the place of reason. Still, there were other issues that kept the controversy alive although Hooker seems to have recognised their secondary nature and would willingly have settled them amicably. For example, the place of preaching was critical for Puritans for without it, they alleged, the Gospel could not be heard. The mere public reading of Scripture was insufficient for this purpose. Further, with a new suspicion over the offices and ministrations of the established church, the Holy Spirit was understood to operate as a source of independent authority for the individual. Spiritual light and counsel now did not absolutely depend on ecclesial agreement.²⁵ Interestingly, Nuttall views the main antagonism as existing

limits and therefore its need for divine aid.

²³ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Attack and Response: Dublin Fragments*, vol. 4 of *Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. John E. Booty, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982), 4.9.108.6f.

²⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.17: 1.234.32–235.11.

²⁵ Hooker therefore argues that Christian vocation, even the calling to prayer, was not the result of "everie mans private Spirit and guift." Otherwise, the result is confusion, not the order and harmony he believed to be characteristic of the Gospel. "To

between Puritanism and Quakerism. In the case of Hooker, he merely has to argue that the bare reading of Scripture is not inferior to the combination of reading and preaching, despite the Puritan ideal that no service of worship should take place without a sermon. Hooker can argue this because, with some irony, he held to a view of Scripture that was potentially more exalted than that held by the Puritans:

Not about wordes would we ever contend, were not their purpose in so restrayninge the same injurious to Gods most sacred word and Spirit. It is on both sides confest that the worde of God outwardlie administered (his spirit inwardlie concurringe therewith) converteth, deifieth, and saveth soules. Now whereas the externall administration of his word is as well by readinge barely the scripture, as by explaininge the same when sermons thereon be made, in the one they denie that the finger of God hath *ordinarilie* certaine *principall operations*, which we most stedfastlie hold and believe that it hath in both.²⁶

The evident surprise, even offence, for Hooker is the idea that Scripture as the Spirit-mediated Word of God should be somehow incomplete by being *merely* read and worse, that stress on the sermon had the potential to alienate many from the centrality of Scripture. The irony was that such an emphasis brought about the opposite effect of converting the hearers for though “they labor to appropriate the *savinge* power of the holie Ghost, they separate from all *apparent* hope of life and salvation thousandes whome the goodenes of almightie God doth not exclude.”²⁷ Hooker was able to argue thus because he thought Scripture preached itself by virtue of its inspired origins.

him which considereth the grievous and scandalous inconveniences whereunto they make them selves dailie subject, with whome anie blinde and secret corner is judged a fit house of common prayer; the manifolde confusions which they fall into where everie mans private Spirit and guift (as they terme it) is the onlie Bishop that ordeineth him to this ministrie; the irksome deformities whereby through endles and senseles effusions of indigested prayers they oftentimes disgrace in most insufferable manner the worthyest parte of Christian dutie towards God, who herein are subject to no certaine order but pray both what and how they list; to him I say which waigheth dylie all these thinges the reasons cannot be obscure, why God doth in publike prayer so much respect the solemnitie of places where, thauthoritie and callinge of persons by whome, the precise appointment even with what wordes or sentenses his name should be called upon amongst his people.” Hooker, *Lawes*, V.25.5: 2.116.23–117.6.

²⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, V. 21.5: 2.87.8–17.

²⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.22.1:2.88.8–10.

Consequently, the mere reading of Scripture “doth convey to the minde that truth without addition or diminution, which Scripture hath derived from the holie Ghost. And the ende of all scripture is the same, . . . namely *faith*, and through *faith* salvation.” The means by which Scripture was heard was of secondary importance to Hooker when compared to the necessity of hearing it at all. He was never in any way opposed to preaching. It was simply that preaching was not itself the Word of God and he was quite clear that since any given sermon could be badly written or incoherent, it was therefore hazardous and fundamentally unsound to equate the two.

In his remarks concerning Hooker and the Holy Spirit, Nigel Voak attempts to position Hooker as setting reason as a “filter between the Spirit and the believer”²⁸ in order to establish a kind of polemical advantage in his debate with the Puritans. This, he says, was done in order to limit the Puritan appeal to direct revelations of the Holy Spirit for truth, and re-direct the argument on more rational grounds. However, Voak is also at pains to stress that he does not think this emphasis meant “Hooker disregarded the Holy Spirit, or felt no personal relationship with him: the Spirit guaranteed for him the veracity of sound reasoning in the Church,”²⁹ The overall consequence of this for Voak is that, following W. Speed Hill,³⁰ “it was thus in certain respects to Hooker’s advantage to minimize the role of grace and the Holy Spirit in the *Laws*, and to concentrate on rational argumentation.”³¹ However, this sets Hooker’s purposes in a rather bilateral situation of winners and losers, as Voak seems to recognise, and does not quite do justice to the pastoral tone that Hooker adopts on occasion, and the much wider

²⁸ Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology*, 238 Voak seems to be referring to reason here simply as the natural capacity for rational thought.

²⁹ Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology*, 239.

³⁰ W. Speed Hill, “The Doctrinal Background of Richard Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1964), 199–201.

³¹ Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology*, 239.

ranging dependence he places on the Holy Spirit than Voak acknowledges, and the ultimate goal of the Gospel as participation in the life of God which in Hooker's view stood much higher than polemical victory. It is Voak's view that Hooker was completely opposed to any idea that Scripture was self-authenticating and thus argued directly against the general Protestant position of *sola scriptura*. But Voak constantly tries have it both ways when he recalls that in "Hooker's view . . . Holy Scripture is intrinsically more certain than demonstrative reasoning, and even than human sense data, as it reveals God's very Word. . . . Presumably its primacy as a source of authority also stems from the fact that it is the sole source of revealed doctrines necessary for salvation."³² In this respect, Voak is correct in his estimation of Hooker. Hooker did think the authority of Scripture to be intrinsically superior to human reasoning but Voak continues, "Yet Holy Scripture is less evidentially certain than sense data for Hooker, as its revealed status cannot be intuitively known by human beings. . . . Holy Scripture is for him at best only as evidentially certain as the demonstrative arguments to be made in its favour, and the same is true of the dogmas necessary for salvation that it contains."³³ However, the situation is more nuanced than this. When Hooker discusses the limits of Scripture as a revealed source of truth, he does not simultaneously imply the subordination of its authority to the results of rational inquiry, nor that human capacity to recognise truth is suspect because it cannot be articulated in scholastic terms. Indeed, he is more skeptical of unregenerate human knowledge than of unformed faith. In fact, Hooker places his own limits on human reason in order to demonstrate the superiority of life in the Spirit and the right reason it produces. Hooker thought that humans can trace the hand of God in the Scriptures by the special and mysterious work of the Holy Spirit.

³² Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology*, 254f.

³³ Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology*, 255.

This was possible not simply by demonstrable force of reason but because of the inspired origins of Scripture. He actually relies on this as part of the mystical union that he asserts exists between Christ and the church. While he certainly rejected the Puritan claim to special revelation (something later Puritans also notably rejected, especially in relation to Quakerism), this must be viewed as a response to a special circumstance of aberrant claims.³⁴ Hooker himself assumes that the “bare reading of Scripture” is sufficient in its converting power since it bears the stamp of the Spirit. It is hard to believe Hooker could claim this if he did not think the human spirit capable of intuitively recognising the voice of God apart from rational proof since much human activity, including faith, must take place without it. However, once revealed, faith was now located in the domain where it could be examined by reason enlightened by faith. Now this prevenient situation was not the manner of all faith but since his theology of the sacraments was predicated on the priority of grace, Voak must be arguing mainly in terms of Hooker's polemic which he thinks was principally constrained by questions of religious authority. Ultimately, the more important factor for Hooker was the beginning of faith and a hermeneutic of acceptance rather than suspicion. The initial steps of reason and personal conviction remained unformed unless the actual text of Scripture became embedded in a person's consciousness:

Scripture teacheth us that saving truth which God hath discovered unto the world by revelation, and it presumeth us taught otherwise that it self is divine and sacred. The question then being by what means we are taught this, some answere that to learne it we have no other way then onely tradition, as namely that so we believe because both we from our predecessors and they from theirs

³⁴ Hooker thought the claims to Apostolicity were absolutely unique. So the possibility that the special revelations given to St. Paul by “intuitive revelation” should be viewed as generally accessible simply irresponsible. “*But consider I beseech you first as touching the Apostle, how that wherein he was so resolute and peremptorie, our Lord Jesus Christ made manifest unto him even by intuitive revelation, wherein there was no possibilitie of error. That which you are perswaded of, ye have it no otherwise then by your owne only probable collection, and therefore such bold asseverations as in him were admirable, should in your mouths but argue rashnes.*” Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 6.3: 31.10–16.

have so received. But is this enough? . . . the more we bestow our labor in reading or hearing the misteries thereof, the more we find that the thing it selfe doth answer our received opinion concerning it.³⁵

Therefore the Scripture declared the message of God's disclosure to the world as a series of revelatory acts, but the authority of its appeal arose from the matching recognition of its intrinsic authority. Hooker was not prepared to rest his case on the validation of long tradition or even on the authority of the church. The sufficiency of natural reason was only that the Spirit may have access to human consciousness so that faith could be provoked. But in the final analysis, the inner witness of the Spirit remained a strong guarantee of the believer's standing before God (cf. Romans 8:14–16), and the Scriptures the bearer of it such that “the more we bestow our labor in reading or hearing the misteries thereof, the more we find that the thing it selfe doth answer our received opinion concerning it.”³⁶

The Holy Spirit and the Orders of Ministry

One somewhat neglected aspect of Richard Hooker's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the very close connection he makes between the authority of the church's ministry and its authentication by the Holy Spirit. Hooker's defence of the Elizabethan establishment was always a critical defence. This is seen in his stance towards the relative authority of tradition, and his willingness to abandon tradition where its utility had vanished. Speed Hill hints at this when he describes Hooker's historical synopsis of the English Reformation as “benign, even complacent.”³⁷ Hill appraises Hooker's historiographic

³⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.14: 1.231.12–28.

³⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.14: 1.231.25–28.

³⁷ W. Speed Hill, “Richard Hooker and the Rhetoric of History,” *Churchman* 114, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 19.

practice as both skeptical of reform³⁸ and yet accepting the necessity of reform as “a normal process of self-correction.”³⁹ It is during his critical evaluation of the ministry of bishops and presbyters (a term Hooker prefers to “priest”) that he has occasion to weigh the authority of their origins and function. This was a natural question that had to be explored for although not all Puritans were Presbyterians, the form of political appointment in the office of bishop was a source of contention. Was it from God or not? It is here that Hooker offers his definition of Apostolic Succession as positive legislation which even from the hand of God was “not absolutely necessary, but of a changeable nature, because there is no Divine voice which in express words forbiddeth it to be changed.”⁴⁰ He accepts the primitive tradition of Apostolic descent as “an order descended from Christ to the Apostles, who were themselves Bishops at large”⁴¹ as something “universally established”⁴² and whose authority stands in Apostolic Succession, does so also by “conformity of truth”⁴³ and the voluntary consent of the whole church.⁴⁴ But if Hooker accepted the value of the office, he did not accept the permanent authority of the one holding office:

. . . their Authority hath thus descended even from the very Apostles themselves, yet the absolute and everlasting continuance of it, they cannot say that any Commandment of the Lord doth injoyne; And therefore must acknowledge that the Church hath power by universal consent upon urgent cause to take it away.⁴⁵

Hooker defends the episcopal office but is rather more sanguine about individual

³⁸ A term he notes Hooker “rarely uses . . . in addressing his opponents without being dismissive on diction or tone.” Hill, “Rhetoric,” 18.

³⁹ Hill, “Rhetoric,” 18.

⁴⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, VII.5.8: 3.167.20–22.

⁴¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, VII.5.8: 3.167.30f.

⁴² Hooker, *Lawes*, VII.5.8: 3.168.1.

⁴³ Hooker, *Lawes*, VII.5.8: 3.168.7.

⁴⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, VII.5.8: 3.168.5f.

⁴⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, VII.5.8: 3.168.8–12.

bishops. This was also true of Calvin as noted by Lucien Richard.

Calvin argued against making any external authority the ultimate criterion of truth, whether that authority was the Church, previous historical revelation, or the Bible itself when considered only as the record of past revelation. According to Calvin, the Holy Spirit was not bound to the preaching of Paul nor even to that of Jesus. With this in view, the successors to Paul and to Jesus should not presume the presence of the Spirit. 'Since therefore the Lord assigns this office to the word, let us know that he also gives his power to it, that it may not be offered in vain, but may inwardly move the heart. Not always, indeed, or promiscuously but when it pleases God by the secret power of the Spirit to work in this manner.'⁴⁶ The Spirit is never confined to any institution. It can work apart from the preaching of the Church.⁴⁷

Here we see Calvin sounding remarkably like Hooker, asserting the independence and "secrecy" of the Holy Spirit, even from acts of preaching. Hooker was mainly concerned to demonstrate the divine origins and integrity of the church's ministry which had come under fire from those Puritans who regarded presbyterial forms of governance to be mandated by Scriptural warrant. And this he has been moving towards in the latter stages of Book VI *where in a lengthy passage Hooker defends the outward ministrations of the clergy in relation to the sacraments whereby God authorises ministry but reserves any application of grace in the soul to the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit:*

Att the tyme therefore when he giveth his heavenly grace, hee applyeth by the hands of his Ministers, that which betockeneth the same, nor only betockneth, butt being alsoe accompanied for ever with such power as doth truely worke, is in that respect termed Gods instrument, a true efficient cause of Grace, a cause not in itselfe, butt only by connexion of that which is in itselfe a cause, namely Gods owne strength and power. Sacraments, that is to say the outward signes in Sacraments, worke nothing till they bee blessed and sanctifyed of God. Butt what is Gods heavenly benediction and sanctification, saving only the association of his Spiritt? Shall wee say that Sacraments are like Magicall signes of thus they have their effect? Is it Magik for God to manifest by things sensible what he doth, and to doe by his owne most glorious Spiritt really, what he manifesteth in his Sacraments? The deliverie and administration whereof remaineth in the hands of mortall men, by whome as by personall instruments God doth apply signes, and with signes inseparably joyne his spiritt, and through

⁴⁶ Quoted from Calvin's *Commentary on Isaiah 35:4*; OC, 36, 592.

⁴⁷ Lucien Joseph Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974), 163.

the power of his spiritt worke grace. . . . Butt God and man doe here meete in one action upon a third, in whome as it is the worke of God to create grace, soe it is his worke by the hande of the Minister, to apply a signe which should betoken, and his worke to annexe that Spiritt, which shall effect it. The action therefore is butt one, God the Author thereof, and man a Cooperator by him assigned, to worke for, with, and under him: God the giver of grace by the outward Ministrie of man, soe farre forth as he authoriseth man to apply the Sacraments of grace in the soule, which he alone worketh without eyther instrument or coägent.⁴⁸

So Hooker's conception of ministry perceives man as an instrument of divine will but only insofar as God condescends to have man "a Cooperator by him assigned."⁴⁹ For there is no inherent transmittal of grace by ministers through the Spirit since this is the exclusive operation of God who acts "without eyther instrument or coägent."⁵⁰ But this did create a difficulty. What then was the value of clerical orders and, as Nigel Voak observes, how were the words "*Receive the holie Ghost*" uttered by the bishop at ordination, to be understood? This was an important question because it lay at the heart of pastoral authority not least in the declaration of absolution or the reception of sacramental grace. And so at ordination:

The cause why wee breath not as Christ did on them unto whome he imparted power is for that neither Spirit nor Spirituall authoritie maie be thought to proceed from us which are but delegates or assignes to give men possession of his graces. Now besides that the power and authoritie delivered with those wordes is it selfe χάρισμα a gracious donation which the Spirit of God doth bestow, wee maie most assuredlie perswade our selves that the hand which imposeth upon us the function of our ministrie doth under the same forme of wordes so ty it selfe thereunto, that he which receiveth the burthen is thereby for ever warranted to have the Spirit with him for his assistance aid countenance and support in whatsoever he faithfullie doth to discharge dutie.⁵¹

It is clear that Hooker here implies a charismatic giving of the Holy Spirit into the ordinand for the strengthening of vocation for ministry. This however, does not transform the minister into an autonomous purveyor of grace. In the governance of the

⁴⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, VI.6.11: 3.90.15–91.26.

⁴⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, VI.6.11: 3.91.22f.

⁵⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, VI.6.11: 3.91.26.

⁵¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V. 77.8: 2.429.20–430.2.

church, both bishops and presbyters are thus debtors to the Holy Spirit and also the consent of the church. Hooker makes sure that right order exists between both presbyters and bishops:

. . . least [they] forget themselves, as if none on earth had Authority to touch their states, let them continually bear in mind, that it is rather the force of custome, whereby the Church having so long found it good to continue under the Regiment of her vertuous Bishops, doth still uphold, maintain, and honour them in that respect, . . . let this consideration be a bridle unto them, let it teach them not to disdain the advice of their Presbyters, but to use their authority with so much the greater humility and moderation, as a Sword which the Church hath power to take from them.⁵²

So in a moment of practical piety, Hooker makes it clear that the church that makes bishops can also *unmake* them if the need arises, which leads him to consider the limits of ecclesial authority. For there may indeed be circumstances where ordination might lawfully proceed without a bishop that seems to reflect a measure of Calvin's autonomy of the Spirit. The ordinary means of ordination was the laying on of hands by the bishop, but Hooker thinks "That there may be sometimes very just and sufficient reason to allow Ordination made without a Bishop"⁵³ because in reality, according to Hooker, the bishop did not exercise ultimate power in the church but rather "The whole Church visible being the true original subject of all power, . . ."⁵⁴ There were for him only two "just and sufficient" reasons and neither was fatal to the normative governance by bishops nor "a lineal descent of power from the Apostles by continued succession of Bishops in every effectual Ordination."⁵⁵ The first was the sovereign will of God to raise up, or identify, any person "whose labour he useth without requiring that men should Authorize them. But then he doth ratifie their calling by manifest signs and tokens himself from Heaven." Hooker could hardly argue otherwise since this was

⁵² Hooker, *Lawes*, VII. 5.6: 3.168.16–29.

⁵³ Hooker, *Lawes*, VII.14.11: 3.227.3f.

⁵⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, VII.14.11: 3.227.4f.

⁵⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, VII.14.11: 3.227.31f.

exactly how the church traced its own Apostolic origins. Secondly, the church might find the need to ordain without a bishop. But he finds these to be the exceptions that prove the rule, and it is the rule that he finds necessary for order. It is also of note that he places presbyters in collegial relation to bishops, which must surely have been viewed as a conciliatory move in the direction Puritan claims to reform of what they considered the abuse of the episcopal office. Nevertheless, reflecting on the role of bishops as those “appointed to take away factions, contentions and Schisms,”⁵⁶ even if subsequent ordinations had a mixed character, “surely the first institution of Bishops was from Heaven, was even of God, the Holy Ghost was the Author of it.”⁵⁷ But as Douglas Stout notes, even though Hooker offered no elaborate structure for ministry, he held an exalted view of the episcopacy, not as a sign of the essence of the church but as a divinely instituted, though not absolute, sign of the church's fullness.⁵⁸

The Idea of "Participation" in Hooker

In his small volume, *Participation in God*,⁵⁹ A. M. Allchin seeks to rediscover what he considers a forgotten strand of mystical piety within Anglicanism, the “mystery of endless union.” Quoting C. S. Lewis he writes:

Every great system offers us a model of the universe; Hooker's model has unsurpassed grace and majesty. . . . Few model universes are more filled—one might say, drenched—with Deity than his. ‘All things that are of God’, and only sin is not, ‘have God in them and they in himself likewise, and yet their substance and his are wholly different.’ God is unspeakably transcendent; but also unspeakably immanent.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Hooker, *Laws*, VII.5.10: 3.170.15f.

⁵⁷ Hooker, *Laws*, VII.5.10: 3.170.18–20.

⁵⁸ Douglas Stoute, “An Anglican Understanding of Ministry and Church Polity in the 16th Century,” *Consensus* 12, no. 1–2 (Spring 1986): 81.

⁵⁹ Allchin, *Participation*.

⁶⁰ Allchin, *Participation*, 8.

As Allchin (and Lewis) affirm, Hooker's exaltation of the divine majesty is never at the expense of human dignity but quite the converse—the only ground for human dignity, and the restoration of true humanity. John Booty makes the same point adding that “the concept of participation is basic in Hooker's spirituality. All of creation is dependent upon God's sustaining participation.”⁶¹ The transcendence of God which to Hooker could be glimpsed but not defined by human reason, was the start of the divine human narrative, and spoke immediately to the condition of human estrangement:

The light of nature is never able to finde out any way of obtayning the reward of blisse, but by performing exactly the duties and workes of righteousnes. From salvation therefore and life all flesh being excluded this way, behold how the wisdome of God hath revealed a way mysticall and supernaturall, a way directing unto the same ende of life by a course which groundeth it selfe upon the guiltines of sinne, and through sinne desert of condemnation and death. For in this waye the first thing is the tender compassion of God respecting us drowned and swallowed up in myserie; the next is redemption out of the same by the pretious death and merit of a mightie Saviour, which hath witnessed of himself saying *I am the way*, the way that leadeth us from miserie to blisse. This supernaturall way had God in himselfe prepared before all worldes.⁶²

The “light of nature,” which for Hooker was such an important epistemological principle in theological inquiry, must naturally be subsumed under the far greater mystery of the divine economy of salvation. For Hooker, as for the reformers in general, the weight of human transgression was the source of personal estrangement from God, yet, paradoxically, also the way by which we come to internalise our own need and God's preemptive grace. Now Hooker believed that we can be rationally aware of our need and also of our potential. We can know our own dignity and believe that it is God who makes this possible. But rational awareness is not the same as accomplishing the reality it anticipates:

⁶¹ John E. Booty, “The Spirituality of Participation in Richard Hooker,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 38 (Christmas 1994): 15.

⁶² Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.5: 1.118.11–23.

Happines therefore is that estate wherby we attaine, so far as possiblie may be attained, the full possession of that which simply for it selfe is to be desired, and containeth in it after an eminent sorte the contentation of our desires, the highest degree of all our perfection. Of such perfection capable we are not in this life. For while we are in the world, subject we are unto sundry imperfections, griefs of body, defectes of minde, yea the best thinges we do are painefull, and the exercise of them greevous being continued, without intermission, so as in those very actions, whereby we are especially perfected in this life, wee are not able to persist: forced we are with very wearines and that often to interrupt them: which tediousnes cannot fall into those operations that are in the state of blisse, when our union with God is complete.⁶³

Thus, while the beauty of God can be admired and contemplated, and the goodness of God loved, the particular attribute of perfection in Hooker's thinking is not so much moral perfection as it is perfection of desire. Therefore:

. . . wee now love the thing that is good, but good especially in respect of benefit unto us, we shall then love the thing that is good, only or principally for the goodnes of beautie in it self. The soule being in this sorte as it is active, perfected by love of that infinite good, shall, as it is receptive, be also perfected with those supernaturall passions of joye peace and delight. All this endlesse and everlasting.⁶⁴

Contemplation of the beauty of God, that "sea of goodness"⁶⁵ is a step towards perfection for Hooker and desirable in itself, but he is keenly aware that such desire awakens a further sense of incompleteness in that "Under man no creature in the world is capable of felicitie and blisse; . . ."⁶⁶ The reason, according to Hooker is that humans want what is best for them, "not in that which is simply best."⁶⁷ Now Hooker did not think such personal self-interest in itself was a sign of moral decay. Quite the opposite. Humans can perceive and enjoy beauty and holiness, and they can also desire these things very deeply because they were intended to do so. Therefore, contemplation of the

⁶³ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.3: 1.112.21–113.7.

⁶⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.3: 1.113.18–24.

⁶⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.3: 1.113.11.

⁶⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.3: 1.113.30.

⁶⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.3: 1.114.2.

good is completely natural and by God's design. We are intended to desire what is good for ourselves and Hooker is unequivocal about this, for:

. . . if men had not naturally this desire to be happie, how were it possible that all men shoulde have it? All men have. Therefore this desire in man is naturall. It is not in our power not to do the same: how should it then be in our power to do it coldly or remisly? So that our desire being naturall is also in that degree of earnestnes whereunto nothing can be added. And is it probable that God should frame the hartes of all men so desirous of that which no man can obtaine? It is an axiome of nature that naturall desire cannot utterly be frustrate.⁶⁸

The "triple perfection"⁶⁹ of sensory experience, intellectual inquiry, and spiritual satisfaction, leaves man in his third perfection partially satisfied and therefore partially unsatisfied because what Hooker recognised as the *partial* satisfactions of desire could only be met by union with the object of our desire. Union with God is the final satisfaction of human desire and Hooker correlates the *means* with the *goal* of desire just as he does with any good to which humans might aspire. The difference is that it is God who meets both human need in salvation, as well as bringing believers into participation with the godhead. The salvation begun in Christ, sustained sacramentally, and which the church perpetually holds before humanity in its narratives of worship, is absolutely real but awaits final consummation.

When Richard Hooker wants to speak about union with God, he does so with the full appreciation that our reach exceeds our grasp. Though thoughts of goodness and a desire for union are ours by nature and faith:

. . . the finall object whereof is that incomprehensible bewtie which shineth in the countenance of Christ the sonne of the living God; concerning these vertues, the first of which beginning here with a weak apprehension of things not sene, endeth with the intuitive vision of God in the world to come; the second beginning here with a trembling expectation of thinges far removed and as yet but onely heard of, endeth with reall and actuall fruition of that which no tongue can expresse; the third beginning here with a weake inclynation of heart

⁶⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.4: 1.114.8–16.

⁶⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.4.: 1.114.19.

towards him unto whom wee are not able to aproch, endeth with endlesse union, the misterie wherof is higher then the reach of the thoughts of men; . . .⁷⁰

God has nevertheless rectified “natures obliquitie withall.”⁷¹ It is still possible for Hooker to speak of union with God because of his adoption of the language of participation and “partakers of the divine nature.”⁷² It was axiomatic therefore, that even here, desire for the infinite good must still have some means to confirm the existence of the “reall and actuall fruition of that which no tongue can expresse” but which all men can properly desire. Such “participation,” this “mysticall copulation” is the result of the metaphysical identity of Christ with his body, the church:

Christ is whole with the whole Church, and whole with everie parte of the Church, as touchinge his person which can no waie devide it selfe or be possest by degrees and portions. But the participation of Christ importeth, besides the presence of Christes person, and besides the mysticall copulation thereof with the parte and members of his whole Church, a true actuall influence of grace whereby the life which wee live accordinge to godliness is his, and from him wee receive those perfections wherein our eternall happines consisteth. Thus wee participate in Christ partlie by imputation, as when those thinges which he did and suffered for us are imputed unto us for righteousnes; partlie by habituall and reall infusion, as when grace is inwardlie bestowed while wee are on earth and afterwarde more fullie both our soules and bodies made like unto his in glorie.⁷³

Now for Hooker, this is preeminently the work of the Holy Spirit. “Christ is whole with the whole Church” and the imputation of the merits of Christ in his death and resurrection are made effectual by the “habitual and reall” infusion of divine grace without partial measure. The union of God and man in Christ was resident in the world of Gospel propositional theology, and imaginative world of human desire and construal. To accept that such divine condescension was possible was itself an act of faith, and though in human life and experience the fulfilment of desire could only be experienced

⁷⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.6: 1.119.2–12.

⁷¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.6: 1.119.22f.

⁷² 2 Peter 1:4

⁷³ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.10: 2.242.26–243.9.

by degrees, the incorporation or participation in God was entirely complete through the fullness of godhead residing in Christ⁷⁴ whose gift was dependent on God alone and not on human effort. Therefore to grasp this message of the Gospel was to find a deep spiritual unity amongst all believers, notwithstanding their great variety and divisions, that was theologically agreeable to the Holy Spirit:

From hence it is that they which belonge to the mysticall bodie of our Savior Christ and be in number as the starres of heaven, devided successivelie by reason of their mortall condition into manie generations, are notwithstandinge coupled everie one to Christ their head and all unto everie particular person amongst them selves, in as much as the same Spirit, which anointed the blessed soule of our Savior Christ, doth so formalize unite and actuate his whole race, as if both he and they were so manie limmes compacted into one bodie, by beinge quickned all with one and the same soule. That wherein wee are partakers of Jesus Christ by imputation agreeth equallie unto all that have it. For it consisteth in such actes and deedes of his as could not have longer continuance then while they were in doinge, nor at that very time belonge unto aine other but to him from whome they came, and therefore how men either then or before or sithence should be partakers of them, there can be no waie imagined but onlie by imputation.⁷⁵

And because Christ is to us complete in God we do not receive a partial imputation so as to leave a believer in gross uncertainty as to salvation, nor to God's grace. For, with respect to imputation, it is all or nothing. We are saved by God's actions in Christ or we are not. As Hooker presses the logic of this he concludes that:

. . . a deed must either not be imputed to anie but rest altogether in him whose it is, or if at all it be imputed, they which have it by imputation must have it such as it is whole. So that degrees being neither in the personall presence of Christ, nor in the participation of those effectes which are oures by imputation onlie, it resteth that wee whollie applie them to the participation of Christes infused grace, although even in this kinde also the first beginninge of life, the seede of God, the first frutes of Christes Spirit be without latitude. For wee have hereby onlie the beinge of the Sonnes of God, in which number how far soever one may seem to excell an other, yeat touchinge this that all are sonnes they are all equales, some happellie better sonnes then the rest are, but none any more a sonne then another.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Colossians 1:19

⁷⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.11: 2.243.14–30.

⁷⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.12: 2.243.30–244.11.

The Trinitarian union of the godhead is therefore the source of any Christian theology which makes possible any claims to theosis:

Thus therefore wee see how the father is in the Sonne and the Sonne in the father, how they both are in all things and all things in them, what communion Christ hath with his Church, how his Church and everie member thereof is in him by originall derivation, and he personallie in them by way of mysticall association wrought through the giuft of the holie Ghost, which they that are his receive from him, and together with the same what benefit soever the vitall force of his bodie and blood may yeeld, yea by steppes and degrees they receive the complete measure of all such divine grace, as doth sanctifie and save throughout, till the daie of their finall exaltation to a state of fellowship in glorie. As for anie mixture of the substance of his flesh with oures, the participation which wee have of Christ includeth no such kinde of grosse surmise.⁷⁷

The kind of realised eschatology in which Christ is in us but not confused with us is what Olivier Loyer describes as a concept of man as “a being whose end is God himself” filled with “a natural desire for a supernatural end.”⁷⁸ And this according to Hooker has been achieved through the incarnation and gifted to man by the Holy Spirit. It should be noted however, that if the term “theosis” is to be used to describe man as “an associate of Deitie”⁷⁹ Hooker does not appear to use it in such a way as to confuse or conflate the identity of God, Christ, and man, but rather through a new *koinonia* mediated by the Holy Spirit, “Hooker echoes the ancient understanding of *theosis*: that we become by grace what God is by nature. . . . through the relationship between God and person, nurtured by the grace of the Eucharist, one is enabled to fulfill one’s human nature.”⁸⁰ Therefore, if Hooker’s Puritan debaters were able to concur thus far, they would of necessity have to concede his earlier remarks about the higher order of Christian unity and fellowship standing at the very centre of Christian identity, complete

⁷⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.13: 2.244.11–25.

⁷⁸ Olivier Loyer, *L’Anglicanisme de Richard Hooker* (Lille: Atelier des thèses, 1979), 353ff and noted by Allchin, *Participation*, 12.

⁷⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.54.5: 2.224.18.

⁸⁰ William O. Gregg, “Sacramental Theology in Hooker’s *Lawes*: A Structural Perspective,” *Anglican Theological Review* 73 (Spring 1991): 171.

in itself without reference to ecclesiology, as the irreducible gift of the Holy Spirit following upon the incarnation and the finished work of the Cross.

Nevertheless, although Hooker is clear that “Participation is that mutuall inward hold which Christ hath of us and wee of him, in such sort that ech possesseth other by waie of speciall interest and inherent copulation,”⁸¹ this hold is not determined by the strength of human grasp but rather “onlie by grace and favor.”⁸² The generations of fallen humanity, by Adamic propagation, “are reallie partakers of the bodie of synne and death, receaved from Adam, so except we wee be trulie partakers of Christ, and as reallie possessed of his Spirit, all wee speake of eternall life is but a dreame.”⁸³ However, Hooker’s burden is the meaning of “participation.” And it is the Spirit that brings humanity to life, and if they believe, they become sons (and daughters) without distinction:

That which quickneth us is the Spirit of the Second Adam, and his flesh that wherewith he quickneth. That which in him made our nature uncorrupt was the union of his deitie with our nature. . . . That which sanctified our nature in Christ, that which made it a sacrifice availeable to take away synne is the same which quickneth it, raised it out of the grave after death, and exalted it unto glorie. Seinge therefore that Christ is in us as a quickninge Spirite, the first degree of communion with Christ must needes consist in the participation of his spirit which Cyprian in that respect well termeth *germanissimam societam*, the highest and truest societie that can be betwene man and him which is both God and man in one.⁸⁴

For Hooker, the practical consequence of his theology was the creation of what Debora Shuger calls Hooker’s “imagined community”⁸⁵ which was never quite identical with the Elizabethan Commonwealth, but existed inside it, neither contesting nor

⁸¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.1: 2.234.29–31.

⁸² Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.6: 2.237.32.

⁸³ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.7: 2.240.10–12.

⁸⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.8: 2.240.13–30.

⁸⁵ Shuger, “The Imagined Community,” 328.

reproducing it, "it lodges in the outskirts and interstices of the nation-state."⁸⁶

The tangible marks of this partaking or participation in Christ are most nearly accessible to all believers through the sacramental life of the church which Hooker notes "doth not begin but continue life. No man therefore receyveth this sacrament before baptisme, because no dead thinge is capable of nourishment"⁸⁷ and:

. . . that the strengthe of our life begun in Christe is Christe, that his fleshe is meate, and his blood drinke, not by surmised imagination but trulye, even so trulie that through faithe wee perceive in the bodie and blood sacramentallye presented the verye taste of eternall life, and the grace of the sacramente is heere as the foode which wee eate and drinke.⁸⁸

In his discussion of Hooker's idea of "participation," David Neelands observes that "The notion of participation informs the whole christological and sacramental section of the *Lawes* and is related to that of *causality*, The effect participates the cause because the effect is "in" the cause or source."⁸⁹ Therefore the corporate identity of all persons as participants in Christ is not a simple proposition in light of the universal connection with the created order but it is not the same as saying all enjoy benefits of salvation which must be uniquely received through the mediation of the Holy Spirit, since "It must be confest that of Christ, workinge as a creator, and a governor of the worlde by providence, all are partakers; not all partakers of that grace wherby he inhabiteth whome he saveth. Againe as he dwelleth not by grace in all, so neither doth he equallie worke in all them in whome he dwelleth."⁹⁰

This very lengthy section in the *Lawes* is crucial for Hooker's thought because it supplied both continuity with Calvin's understanding of sacramental union, which

⁸⁶ Shuger, "The Imagined Community," 328.

⁸⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.1: 2.330.15f.

⁸⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.1: 2.331.11–16.

⁸⁹ Neelands, "Theology of Grace," 260.

⁹⁰ Neelands, "Theology of Grace," V.56.10: 2.242.11–15.

Thomas Cartwright should have identified, but also distanced Hooker from Zwingli in viewing the sacraments as memorials. Hooker sharpens the causal linkage even beyond Calvin who thought of the sacraments as the mystery of participation “through the symbols of bread and wine, his very body and blood . . . that we may grow into one body with him; . . . [and] having been made partakers of his substance, that we may also feel his power in partaking of all his benefits.”⁹¹ For Hooker, participation is not *through* the bread and wine but rather:

. . . by sacramentes he severallie deriveth into everie member thereof; morall instrumentes the use whereof is in our handes the effect in his; . . . wee are not to doubt but that they reallie give what they promise, and are what they signifie. For wee take not baptisme nor the Eucharist for bare *resemblances* or memorialls of thinges absent, neither for *naked signes* and testimonials assuringe us of grace received before, but (as they are in deed and veritie) for meanes effectuall whereby God when wee take the sacramentes delivereth into our handes that grace available unto eternall life, which grace the sacramentes represent or signifie.⁹²

And so the bread and the cup are more than instrumentally linked by faith to Christ in the hands of believers and through the will of God “whereof the *participation* of his bodie and blood ensueth. For that which produceth any certaine effect is not vainely nor improperlie said to be that verie effect whereunto it tendeth. Everie cause is in the effect which groweth from it.”⁹³ And as has been mentioned, Hooker makes a soteriological distinction between the general “influence of the heavens”⁹⁴ in creation, and the “farre more divine and mysticall kinde of union which maketh us one with him even as he and the father are one.”⁹⁵

⁹¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.17.11.

⁹² Hooker, *Lawes*, V.57.5: 2.247.7–22.

⁹³ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.5: 2.334.19–22.

⁹⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.5: 2.334.27.

⁹⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.5: 2.334.28–30.

Hooker held that “mysticall participation”⁹⁶ in Christ had its origins in the spirit-born word of Christ himself and the Trinitarian union of the godhead. What therefore ensued for the believer, taking the bread and wine, was not a *change* in substance, but an invisible addition to its usual effect of nourishment—a transubstantiation of the worshipper. Hooker understood this to take place through:

Christ assisting this heavenly banquet with his personall and true presence . . . by his owne divine power ad to the naturall substance thereof supernaturall efficacie, which addition to the nature of those consecrated elementes changeth them and maketh them that unto us which otherwise they could not be; that to us they are thereby made such instrumentes as mysticallie yeat trulie, invisiblie yeat reallie worke our communion or fellowship with the person of Jesus Christ as well in that he is man as God, our participation also in the fruit grace and efficacie of his bodie and blood, whereupon there ensueth a kind of transubstantiation in us, a true change both of soule and bodie, an alteration from death to life.⁹⁷

Bryan Spinks, assessing and comparing Richard Hooker and William Perkins with respect to the sacraments holds that Perkins also comprehended the sacraments as moral instruments but yet only as means of increasing grace in the elect. He depicts the view of Perkins in this way:

God's works are all those things that he does out of himself, out of the divine essence, the end of which is his glory. The work of the Triune God is the decree or its execution, and this is the double decree to elect some and reprobate others. Yet even this latter, since it is for God's glory, must be seen as good. For Perkins, everything else unfolds from the decree. The covenant is the outward expression of election; justification, sanctification, grace, union through the Spirit come as a result of election. Sacraments are signs and seals of the covenant. Perkins suggests that they impart grace, but immediately qualifies this. If the sacraments can be described as moral instruments it is because the church is under moral obligation to celebrate them. They are not themselves an instrument of grace. God uses them in the church as seals of the covenant—they confirm the grace imparted as a result of election. Perkins, to be sure, does speak of an increase of grace.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.9: 2.337.6f Here Hooker is referring to Jesus' words in John 6:63

⁹⁷ Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Faith and Works: Cranmer and Hooker on Justification* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow Co. Ltd, 1982), V.67.11: 2.338.16–340.1.

⁹⁸ Bryan D. Spinks, *Two Faces of Elizabethan Anglican Theology: Sacraments and Salvation in the Thought of William Perkins and Richard Hooker* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1999), 161f.

Certainly, Perkins saw the instrumentality of the sacraments but was nervous about such language because it appeared to open the door to efficacy in the elements themselves:

He that useth the elements aright, shall receive grace thereby: but I use elements aright in faith & repentance, said the mind of the believer: therefore shall I receive from God increase of grace. Thus, then, faith is confirmed not by the worke done, but by a kind of reasoning caused in the minde, the argument or prooffe whereof is borrowed from the elements, beeing signes and pledges of God's mercie.⁹⁹

But Perkins saw an instrumentality in the role of faith apart from which the Spirit could not be received and this, as it did for Calvin, created something of a double bind in that the unregenerate mind still needed some basis from which faith could proceed:

Againe, to speake properly, faith and the receiving of the spirit, are for a time both together. First of all, we heare the promise of God: then we beginne to meditate, and to applie the saide promise to our selves, to strive against douting, and to desire to beleeve: and in doing of all this, we receive the spirit. To beleeve, is the first grace in us that concernes our salvation: and when we beginne to beleeve, we beginne receive the spirit: and when we first receive Godds spirit, we beginne to beleeve. And thus by our faith receive we the spirit: and thus also the spirit dwells in us by faith.¹⁰⁰

Hooker himself was comfortable with the idea that faith and the rewards of faith were proper correlates and that works done might indeed confirm faith in the mind of the believer since this was proper to the outcome of faith as recognisably, 'faith'. This was also true for Perkins, who understood the dual inner testimonies of the Holy Spirit and the works of sanctification as confirmation of election, even if they were feeble. Yet with Perkins, there is a strong sense that, notwithstanding even the most fragmentary faith, it remains *our* faith that ingrafts a person into Christ.¹⁰¹ This is one place where Richard Hooker parts company with his Genevan exemplars. Mystical

⁹⁹ William Perkins, *The Works of William Perkins* (J. Legatt and C. Legge, 1616–1618), 1: 160.

¹⁰⁰ Perkins, *Works*, 1: 284.

¹⁰¹ See *A Golden Chaine*, ch. 57.

union with God and sacramental participation in Christ perfected the prevenience of God's sovereignty in salvation and removed the anxious variable of human faith from the equation. When relieved of this interior burden of certainty, the effectual particularity of the sacramental elements was no longer an epistemological confusion or theological incongruence isolated from divine causality, and therefore in their effects in the believer. Faith was still the necessary response to justifying grace but faith could yet be stimulated by the very elements themselves because of their particularity was defined by the word of Christ. Though Perkins could come close to this:

The word of God conferres grace (for it is the power of God to salvation to them that beleeve) and thus it doth by sygnifying the will of God, by the eare to the mind: now every sacrament is the word of God made visible to the eye: the sacrament therefore conferres grace by vertue of his signification, and by reason it is a pledge by the appointment of God, of his mercie and goodnesse. It may be said, a sacrament is not onely a signe and a seale but also an instrumente to convey the grace of God to us. *Answ.* It is not an instrument having the grace of God tyed unto it, or shut up in it: but an instrument to which grace is present by assistance in the right use thereof: because in and with the right use of the sacrament, God conferres grace; and thus is it an instrument, and no otherwise, that is a morall and not a physical instrument.¹⁰²

This sounds very much like Hooker who similarly considered that “grace is not absolutely tyed unto sacramentes.”¹⁰³ But since the sacraments were for him the means of participation, Hooker's emphasis on participation thus bound the authentication of that “mysticall union” with both their internal and external attributes.

Spirit and Sacrament

Richard Hooker thought the idea of “participation” in Christ was the prior condition upon which all other aspects of Christian thought and experience depended, and for which the sacraments were divinely appointed moral instruments. So it is

¹⁰² Perkins, *Works*, 1: 736f.

¹⁰³ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.60.6: 2.260.3f.

consistent with Hooker's own theological method that discussion of the sacraments should take its point of departure here. Hooker says:

That which sanctified our nature is Christ, that which made it a sacrifice available to take away synne is the same which quickneth it, raised it out of the grave after death, and exalted it unto glorie. Seinge therefore that Christ is in us as a quickninge Spirite, the first degree of communion with Christ must needs consist in the participation of his spirit¹⁰⁴

Since for Hooker grace was not absolutely tied to the sacraments the way was open for the absolute prevenience of God to determine the manner of the divine-human union. As we noted earlier, the incarnation was central to Hooker's appreciation of God's prior causality. Charles Irish reminds us that the atonement was also the other pole that established "Christ in us as a quickeninge Spirite" such that the rewards of Christ's obedience are imputed to believers in the same way that Christ died through the ministrations of the Spirit.¹⁰⁵ Hooker draws attention to Hebrews 9:14 which defines for him the efficacy of Christ's death as opposed to any other death, because it was a death offered "*through the eternall spirit he offered [him selfe] unto God without spott*"¹⁰⁶ as the first cause of the new law by which faith would become the new basis for righteousness. Therefore, since union with Christ was possible through the incarnation and atonement:

. . . because the worke of his Spirit to those effected is in us prevented by synne and death possessinge us before, it is of necessitie that as well our present sanctification unto newness of life, as the future restauration of our bodies should presupposes a participation of the grace efficacie merit or vertue of his body and blood, without which foundation first laid there is no place for those other operations of the Spirit of Christ to ensue.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.8: 2.240.22–27.

¹⁰⁵ Charles W. Irish, "'Participation of God Himselfe': Law, the mediation of Christ, and sacramental participation in the thought of Richard Hooker," in *Volume 2: Richard Hooker and the English Reformation*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby, Studies in Early Modern Religious Reforms (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 176f.

¹⁰⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.8: 2.240.21f.

¹⁰⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.9: 2.241.23–242.5.

But it is through the instrumentality of the sacraments that:

. . . we participate in Christ partlie by imputation . . . ; partlie by habituall and reall infusion, as when grace is inwardlie bestowed while wee are on earth and afterwarde more fullie both our soules and bodies made like unto his in glorie. The first thinge of his so infused into our hartes in this life is the Spirit of Christ, whereupon because the rest of what kinde so ever doe all necessarilie depende and infallible ensue . . .¹⁰⁸

Both Charles Irish and William Gregg¹⁰⁹ are correct in seeing law as an organising principle for Hooker, through which the importance of the sacraments function as instruments of grace for the individual believer, but also for “the mysticall copulation thereof with the partes and members of his whole Church”¹¹⁰ Gregg notes correctly that “Hooker situates the sacraments carefully within a larger theological scheme . . . so that in the theological structure of Hooker’s thinking, the proper starting place for doing sacramental theology . . . is to demonstrate that God the Father is the author of the Sacraments which he gives in the Church through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. As gift of God, the sacraments are part of the ordering of God’s relationship with the Church.”¹¹¹ Sacramental theology in Hooker begins with the assumption of their divine origins, and notably for Hooker, their ontological identity with the Holy Spirit which guaranteed their particular function for the life of faith and belief in the church, and because of which, no other symbolic representation of the work and person of Christ was admissible. As Hooker notes in his plenary statements concerning the Eucharist, “that to whome *the person of Christ* is thus communicated to them he giveth by the same sacrament his holie spirit to sanctifie them as it sanctifieth him which is their head.”¹¹² But Hooker is concerned that no confusion exist between

¹⁰⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.11: 2.243.4–10.

¹⁰⁹ Gregg, “Sacramental Theology,” 162.

¹¹⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.10: 2.242.3–243.1.

¹¹¹ Gregg, “Sacramental Theology,” 165.

¹¹² Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.7: 2.336.2–5.

the “corruptible and earthly creature”¹¹³ of the sacramental elements which nevertheless “also imparte unto us even in true and reall though mysticall maner the verie person of our Lord him selfe whole perfect and intire.”¹¹⁴ In doing so Hooker has aligned himself with Calvin and rejects any suggestion of transubstantiation because “a literall corporall and orall manducation of the verie substance of his flesh and blood”¹¹⁵ was not demanded by even a literal reading of Scripture. In the case of Calvin, who argued as Hooker did later that “a serious wrong is done to the Holy Spirit, unless we believe that it is through his incomprehensible power that we come to partake of Christ’s flesh, and blood.”¹¹⁶ Calvin’s complaint is that he thought Rome understood Eucharistic piety “with this one thorny question: ‘How does Christ’s body lie hidden under the bread, or under the form of bread?’”¹¹⁷ His answer is that “the manner is spiritual because the secret power of the Spirit is the bond of our union with Christ.”¹¹⁸ Now the path taken by Hooker adopted Calvin’s language of participation and union. However Calvin has a stricter view in that “all those who are devoid of Christ’s Spirit can no more eat Christ’s flesh than drink wine that has no taste. Surely, Christ is too unworthily torn apart¹¹⁹ if his body, lifeless and powerless, is prostituted to unbelievers.”¹²⁰ Although Hooker agrees with the letter of Calvin’s sentiments, and with Calvin “the presence of Christ in

¹¹³ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.7: 2.336.10.

¹¹⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.8: 2.336.27–29.

¹¹⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.9: 2.336.31f.

¹¹⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV. 17.33.

¹¹⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.17.33.

¹¹⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.17.33.

¹¹⁹ This is reminiscent of Hooker’s priority of the indivisibility of Christ with the church and the gift of the Holy Spirit. “Christ is whole with the whole Church, and whole with everie parte of the Church, as touchinge his person which can no waie devide it selfe or be possest by degrees and portions. But the participation of Christ importeth . . . a true actuall influence of grace” Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.10: 2.242.26–243.1.

¹²⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.17.33.

the centre of his Eucharistic theology—almost formally Catholic and materially Anglican”¹²¹ his concept of the manner of making believers is considerably more generous:

There is no sentence of holie scripture which saith that wee cannot by this sacrament be made partakers of his bodie and bloode except they be first contained in the sacrament or the sacrament converted into them. *This is my bodie*, and *This is my blood*, being woordes of promise, . . . wee all agree that by the sacrament Christ doth reallie and trullie in us performe his promise, . . .¹²²

But the central problem of how Christ is present in the Eucharist was handled as Calvin had done by emphasising participation through the Holy Spirit. Now for Calvin, this was inseparable from faith—it was also for Hooker—but for Hooker, faith was part of the divine mystery of how humans could enter the economy of salvation at all. The Eucharist was only part of this equation, and indeed, he argues that we are no less partakers of Christ in baptism than we are in Holy Communion despite the mystery of particularity in the elements:

If on all sides it be confest that the grace of baptisme is powred into the soule of man, that by water wee receive it although it be neither seated in the water nor the water chaunged into it, what should induce men to thinke that the grace of the Eucharist must needes be in the Eucharist before it can be in us that receive it? The fruite of the Eucharist is the participation of the bodie and blood of Christ.¹²³

This sentiment is entirely consistent with Hooker's approach to reason and faith in which the two each served the vital interests of the other, but when it came to the reception of the sacraments, saving faith had to be possible without analysis of personal merit. Calvin's form of receptionism begged the question of whether the communicant had possession of the Holy Spirit. Hooker appears to ask whether anyone would want

¹²¹ Egil Grislis, “Reflections on Richard Hooker's understanding of the Eucharist,” in *Volume 2: Richard Hooker and the English Reformation*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby, Studies in Early Modern Religious Reforms (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 216.

¹²² Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.6: 2.335.16–21.

¹²³ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.6: 2.335.10–16.

the sacrament that did not, at least in some secret fashion, have even the faintest desire to know God and be joined to God. The entire ministry of the church was predicated on the idea that salvation and future hope was possible apart from works, and that grace, out of which even human desire can be said to spring, was a reality that was logically prior to the sacraments. So Hooker is not concerned to evaluate the spiritual condition of man's heart since, "wee cannot know, so neither are wee bounde to examine, therefore alwaies in these cases the knowne intent of the Church generallie doth suffice, and where the contrarie is not manifest we may presume that he which doth outwardlie the work hath inwardly the purpose of the Church of God."¹²⁴ Clearly, it is the special relation which Hooker conceives between Christ and the church as something whose objectivity is guaranteed "even through the common faith and Spirit of God's Church,"¹²⁵ that makes sacramental worship causally and effectually possible and defensible. For while Thomas Cartwright was most anxious to defend the sacraments, especially baptism, from what he considered the presumption of a ceremony devoid of the evidences of faith, by which Cartwright meant "discretion to understand,"¹²⁶ Hooker contended that the gift of the Spirit remained in the hands of God, and that the process of sanctification, "alreadie begun in baptisme,"¹²⁷ made the rite of Confirmation a logical continuance since, "The Fathers everie where impute unto it that guift or grace of the holie Ghost, not which maketh us first Christian men, but when wee are made such, assisteth us in all vertue, armeth us against temptation and synne."¹²⁸ According to

¹²⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.58.3: 2.250.10–12.

¹²⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.64.5: 2.299.16.

¹²⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.59.5: 2.253.24.

¹²⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.66.1: 2.321.2.

¹²⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.66.4: 2.323.26–29.

Hooker, the Puritan argument against the baptism of infants¹²⁹ was retrogressive and so Puritans must conclude that such baptism is no baptism at all, because “those things which have no beinge can worke nothinge, and that baptisme without the power of ordination is as judgment without sufficient jurisdiction, voyde frustrate and of no effect.”¹³⁰ And of course, Hooker would not concede, in any way, that the grace of baptism depended on human validation. His answer to this rhetorical question depended on two poles of argument: first, that God had already chosen the sacraments as means of grace, and second, that the church only enacted what it understood to be inherent in the Gospel. It did not manufacture ceremonies to replace grace. Thus for Hooker:

. . . the fruite of baptisme dependeth onlie upon the covenant which god hath made; that God by covenant requireth in the elder sorte faith and baptisme, in children the sacrament of baptisme alone, whereunto he hath also given them right by speciall priviledge of birth within the bosome of the holie Church; that infantes therefore, which have received baptisme complete as touchinge the mysticall perfection thereof, are by vertue of his owne covenant and promise clesned from all synne, for as much as all other Lawes concerninge that which in baptisme is either morall or ecclesiasticall doe binde the Church which giveth baptisme, and not the infant which receiveth it of the Church.¹³¹

In Hooker's terms, the church was “undertakinge the motherlie care of our soules”¹³² and could offer baptisme to infants lawfully where no faith was present because the anticipation of faith was always the work of God, and the very existence of the church the key witness to that. Adoption into the family of God as the family of the Spirit (as it were), was no more contingent than our birth into a natural family since he had already established the absolute priority of the divine covenant. He further argues

¹²⁹ Since infants could not answer the interrogatories, or respond with faith, (or where faith was absent in the parents), baptism should be withheld—a position held by Menno and by Thomas Cartwright.

¹³⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.62.15: 2.282.33–283.1.

¹³¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.62.15: 2.282.1–12.

¹³² Hooker, *Lawes*, V.64.5: 2.299.18f.

that the covenant of circumcision has already anticipated the new covenant but that the laws that defined the terms under which the covenant of Moses would be administered were similarly binding in the case of the new commonwealth of faith. Private baptism might have been allowable in Hooker's eyes but it was discerned collectively because this was the guarantee that no spurious claims to spiritual insight could prevail that would countervail the objectivity of the sacrament. Therefore the use of interrogatories was justified because they represented the justifiable ecclesiastical and moral demands of baptism as entrusted to the community of faith as a proxy in the same way other just civil demands might also be met, but its mystical outworking was always in the hands of God. And this being the covenant which brought life and salvation, Hooker unapologetically defends the rite of infant baptism as the beginning of new life for "sith it tendith wee cannot sufficientlie expresse how much to their own good, and doth no waie hurte or endaunger them to begin the race of their lives herewith, they are as equitie requireth admitted hereunto," ¹³³ And yet the idea of a civil proxy did not fully define what Hooker wanted to say about infant baptism because, in the case of children, even if the responsive voice was ecclesial and parental, it was Christ and the Holy Spirit that drew the child into relationship, apart from works, and with sovereign grace:

Albeit therefore neither deafe nor dumbe men, neither furious persons nor children can receive civill stipulation, yet this kinde of ghostlie stipulation they may through his indulgence who respectinge the singular benefitt thereof accepteth children brought unto him for that ende, entreth into articles of covenant with them and in tender commiseration graunteth that other mens professions and promises in baptisme made for them shall availe no lesse then if they had bene them selves able to have made their own. None more fitt to undertake this office in their behalfe then such as present them unto baptisme. ¹³⁴

¹³³ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.64.4: 2.297.13–17.

¹³⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.64.4: 2.297.20–298.4.

Therefore the sacraments together enacted the Gospel by virtue of their singular manifestation of divine grace. The obedience of the church in refusing to hinder even the most ill-formed human desire to know God was simply an act of condescension that was a fitting response to God's grace into which the baptised person could be expected to mature.

CHAPTER 5

HOOKER ON THE HOLY SPIRIT—HIS PRINCIPLE OF THEOLOGICAL COHESION

The purpose of this chapter is to bring to light the distinctive contribution of Hooker to the place of the Holy Spirit in Reformation theology. In Chapter 3, Hooker's representative exemplars, principally John Calvin, were examined to correlate their doctrine of the Holy Spirit with Scripture, the sacraments, ministry, and the epistemological basis for Christian faith and assurance. Comparisons will now also be made between Hooker and later Puritans (represented by Richard Baxter and John Owen), where it will be contended that there is little to differentiate their pneumatology.

When Hooker wanted to introduce the distinction between the methods to be employed in reading the Bible with a sensitivity towards its logical limitations, he should not be construed to imply a diminution of the place of Scripture. His procedure deliberately objectified the Scriptural texts, not because Hooker was unwilling to exalt the place of the Bible, but because he contended Puritan exegetical methods had not done enough to limit the subjective aspect of a theology derived from Scripture:

Most sure it is, that when mens affections doe frame their opinions, they are in defence of error more earnest a great deale, then (for the most part) sound believers in the maintenance of truth apprehended according to the nature of that evidence which scripture yeeldeth: which being in some things plaine . . . in some things . . . more darke and doubtfull, frameth correspondentlie that inward

assent which Gods most gracious Spirit worketh by it as by his effectuall instrument. It is not therefore the fervent earnestnes of their perswasion, but the soundnes of those reasons whereupon the same is built, which must declare their opinions in these things to have been wrought by the holie Ghost, and not by the *fraud* of that evill Spirit which is even in his illusions strong. After that the phancie of the common sort hath once throughlie apprehended the Spirit to be the author of their perswasion concerning discipline, then is instilled into their hearts, that the same Spirit leading men into this opinion, doth thereby seale them to be Gods children, and that as the state of the times now standeth, the most speciall token to know them that are Gods owne from others, is an earnest affection that waei.¹

Here Hooker demands to know how persons seeking truth will recognise it. The Puritan answer, following Calvin, was the notion of inner assent or testimony, whereby truth was felt. But this was inadequate to address the basic question because the reply was circular. Hooker displays an acute awareness that the hermeneutical task could not simply be either the intellectual assent to truth or the subjective sympathy towards whatever was claimed to be true in the name of the Holy Spirit. Hooker was logically and it appears, temperamentally, unwilling to adopt the Puritan paradigm for belief. Even if Hooker caricatured Puritan piety, he established his goal of rehabilitating the connection between right reason and the Holy Spirit although here Hooker seems to imply by reason both common sense, as in “wit and judgement” and the inherent ability of natural reason to “admire . . . the power and authority of the word of God.” Though in the following quotes, Hooker is more concerned to address the deliberate rejection of redeemed reason as one of the gifts of faith:

A number there are, who thinke they cannot admire as they ought the power and authority of the word of God, if in things divine they should attribute any force to mans reason. For which cause they never use reason so willinglie as to disgrace reason.²

If I believe the Gospell, there needeth no reasoning about it to perswade me: If I doe not believe, it must be the spirit of God and not the reason of man that shall convert my hart unto him. By these and the like dispute an opinion hath spread

¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.10: 1.17.29–18.4.

² Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.4: 1.221.25–28.

it selfe verie farre in the world, as if the waye to be ripe in faith, were to be raw in wit and judgement, as if reason were an enimie unto religion, childish simplicitie the mother of ghostlie and divine wisdom. The cause why such declamations prevaile so greatly, is, for that men suffer themselves in two respects to be deluded, one is that the wisdom of man being greatly debaced either in comparison with that of God, or in regard of some speciall thing exceeding the reach and compasse thereof, it seemeth to them (not marking so much) as if simple it were condemned: another that learning, knowledge, or wisdom falsely so tearmed, usurping a name whereof they are not worthie, and being under that name controlled, their reproofe is by so much the more easily misapplied, and through equivocation wrested against those things whereunto so pretious names do properly and of right belong.³

The human mind and personality is beset with many occasions for error, and it is therefore improbable that a prior ideological commitment alone would establish the truth or significance of the Scriptures as a whole. Thus, the Puritan propensity to weigh arguments as ‘scriptural’ did not render them true simply on that account. Hooker, by contrast, argued for a more nuanced appreciation for the limitations of scriptural evidence. For Calvin, the Scriptures stood above contention which meant human engagement with them did not in itself alter the way the texts could or should be read. Therefore Calvin’s final appeal to biblical reasoning was based less upon the integrity of reason as part of the created order, than the sacredness of the Bible. This was, of course, the result of rational choice in itself:

If we desire to provide in the best way for our consciences—that they may not be perpetually beset by the instability of doubt or vacillation—we ought to seek our conviction in a higher place than human reasons, judgments, or conjectures, that is, in the secret testimony of the Spirit. True, if we wished to proceed by arguments, we might advance many things that would easily prove . . . that the law, the prophets, and the gospel come from him.⁴

The mutuality of grace and nature in Hooker lies in the summary expression that “nature hath need of grace . . . grace hath use of nature,”⁵ and that the created order

³ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.4: 1.222.22–223.7.

⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.4.

⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.6: 1.223.28 Hooker is speaking here about Paul before Festus to whom he reckons Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, must have seemed

itself, coming from the hand of God, was not at variance with divine purpose. Nature's corruption was not complete, and thus the Scriptures themselves presupposed the human capacity to reason and debate, as good in itself as a defining attribute of the human situation, and not fatal to faith or obedience. It is to be particularly noted that Calvin locates here, and in many other places, the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing the necessary conviction upon which faith can proceed. Even more important is the apparent conflict that exists for Calvin between Spirit and reason, even though he concedes the potential of reason. What Calvin points to here is the dichotomy, as he perceives it, between the realms of nature and grace, which Hooker is much more sanguine about. Indeed, for Hooker, reason and Spirit are necessarily linked:

There are but two waies whereby the spirit leadeth men into all truth: the one extraordinarie, the other common; the one belonging but unto some few, the other extending it selfe unto all that are of God; the one that which we call by a speciall divine excellency Revelation, the other Reason.⁶

This is Hooker's epistemological manifesto. Hooker is quite prepared to rely upon reason where doubt is a routine aspect of any belief system. David Neelands⁷ points to Hooker's use of the term "aptness" to emphasise the receptivity of humans to divine grace and which was not lost in the Fall since, "had aptnes beene alsoe lost, it is not grace that could worke in us more than it doeth in brute creatures."⁸ However, the question remains about how validity in interpretation should be sought if now, in principle, any reasonable mind might make a contribution to the understanding of

"learnedly mad." Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.6: 1.223.26.

⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.10: 1.17.15–19.

⁷ William D. Neelands, "Hooker on Scripture, Reason, and 'Tradition,'" in *Richard Hooker and the Construction of the Christian Community*, ed. Arthur S. McGrade, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies no. 165 (Tempe, AZ: SUNY, 1997), 87.

⁸ Hooker, *Dublin Fragments*, Dublin Fragments, 4.101.30–31.

Scripture. Compier⁹ notes that Hooker was afraid of the elitist results of Puritan conviction, and the church fragmented on the basis of moral discriminations around a perception of orthodoxy that was predefined by one's understanding of Scripture and simply, therefore, a witness in its own cause. So Puritan prescriptions on church government and morality, for example, could not logically be free of human bias and "affection" any more than could Hooker's.

Hooker's Interpretive Framework

Attention has been drawn to Hooker's emphasis on the normative capacities of reason and the interpretative outcome of "probable" results. Compier concludes:

Confined as we are to the realm of the probable . . . we can hardly afford to dispense with reason. But we miss Hooker's meaning if we understand reason in a post-Cartesian fashion, construing it as the faculty for precise logical demonstration. Instead this product of humanist rhetorical training is pointing to a discursive trait which permits human beings to reach a consensus which can provide sufficient assurance for the business of living.¹⁰

The "sufficient assurance" depicted by Compier is not unconstrained pragmatism that offers only personal conviction, but one that by definition, secures the resources of heaven by virtue of the primary authority and meta-narrative of the Scriptures. Hooker can do this because he has already formed an ontological construct between Scripture, the capacity of humans to reason, and the prior (and divinely sovereign) bestowal of the Holy Spirit that unites these three. Hooker locates his interpretative model within the general capacity of humans to probe, understand and describe their environment, and to self-reflect on the basis for certainty, including the limits to knowledge which "have their certaine boundes and limits."¹¹ For Hooker, these

⁹ Compier, "The Assurance of Faith," 255.

¹⁰ Compier, "The Assurance of Faith," 258.

¹¹ Hooker, *Laws*, I.14.1: 1.125.18.

limits were conditioned merely by the reality of the created order as humans know it. Within such an order, knowledge is appropriated in varying ways, and humans vary in their capacity to know. “All things necessary” must imply accessibility also, since knowledge and society make laws and decisions based on the integration of such knowledge that is available at the time, and in this respect, the writers of Scripture were no exception to the general rule that all literature is shaped by its purpose, *genre*, and context:

The severall bookes of scripture having had each some severall occasion and particular purpose which caused them to be written, the contents thereof are according to the exigence of that speciall ende whereunto they are intended. Hereupon it groweth that everie booke of holie scripture doth take out of all kinds of truth, naturall, historicall, forreine, supernaturall, so much as the matter handled requireth.¹²

The powers of human reasoning are therefore not to be thought absolutely corrupt but open to divine appeal since if this were not so, “eyther all flesh is excluded from possibilitie of salvation, which to thinke were most barbarous, or else that God hath by supernaturall meanes revealed the way of life so far forth as doth suffice.”¹³ It is also worth noting that Hooker saw the sufficiency of Scripture in the closing of the canon, as the conclusive example of God’s saving will being available to human inquiry:

. . . because otherwise men could not have knowne so much as is necessarie, his surceasing to speake to the world since the publishing of the Gospell of Jesus Christ, and the deliverie of the same in writing, is unto us a manifest token that the way of salvation is now sufficiently opened, and that we neede no other meanes for our full instruction, then God hath alreadye furnished us withall.”¹⁴

Hooker himself submits to the constraints of human knowledge which in his duality of

¹² Hooker, *Lawes*, I.14.3: 1.127.21–26.

¹³ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.14.3: 1.127.10–13.

¹⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.14.3: 1.127.30–128.3.

grace and nature, has the effect, not of diminishing the sacredness of Scripture, but of setting its divine particularity in even sharper relief as utterly indispensable:

. . . the bookes of auncient scripture doe not take place but with presupposall of the Gospell of Christ embraced: so our owne wordes also when wee extoll the complete sufficiencie of the whole intire bodie of the scripture, must in like sorte be understoode with this caution, that the benefite of natures light be not thought excluded as unnecessarie, because the necessitie of a diviner light is magnified. There is in scripture therefore no defect, but that any man what place or calling soever hee holde in the Church of God, may have thereby the light of his naturall understanding so perfected, that the one being relieved by the other, there can want no part of needfull instruction unto any good worke . . . It sufficeth therefore that nature and scripture doe serve in such full sort, that they both joyntly and not severally eyther of them be so complete, that unto everlasting felicitie wee neede not the knowledge of any thing more than these two, may easily furnish our mindes with on all sides, and therefore they which adde traditions as a part of supernaturall necessarye truth, have not the truth, but are in error.¹⁵

Calvin's hermeneutical assurance was located in the ontology of the Bible, and its sympathetic union with readers who shared the same Spirit that Calvin held had authored the texts. Nevertheless, his understanding of Scripture's Spirit-derived origins could not supply a way of handling disagreement over the meaning of the text even if one's convictions of its sacredness were not in doubt. In Hooker, disagreement as to biblical interpretation was normative, and the occasion to debate and apply the wisdom that was implicit in the act of understanding itself. Therefore, the results of exegesis would always be, to a degree at least, partial, and susceptible to new light which could only come through reason informed by the character of the texts themselves. There is in Hooker's hermeneutic a sympathetic resonance which the reader must bring to Scripture, if reason is to uncover in texts the mind of God, and in response, be uncovered itself. It is a hermeneutic which cannot operate in isolation from the

¹⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.14.4: 1.128.28–14.5.129.16.

community of reason. This marked an important point of escalation in Hooker, Calvin, and the Puritan party in England.

Hooker's Hermeneutical Community

Debora Shuger has drawn attention to the identity of Hooker's audience, and suggested a greater political neutrality in Hooker than has sometimes been held to be the case. This leads to a reappraisal of the *Lawes* as something other than anti-Puritan polemic. Her method is to look for "imagined community"¹⁶ since it is not "self-evident that Hooker was much interested in community."¹⁷ If it is important for the church at any period in its life to understand the world as its context rather than its target, then Hooker's polemic was actually quite restrained. His ecclesiastical vision was generous and assumed a gathered community that included the simple and the sophisticated. It is not until the reply to the *Christian Letter* that his rhetoric becomes notably sharper. As has been mentioned, Hooker wrote with the assumption that natural reason is available to all persons. He did not assume that it would be uniformly applied but that nonetheless, the Scriptures and their proclamation can be understood adequately by each generation whether such knowledge resulted in saving faith or not. The ecclesial community that both receives and transmits the kerygmatic proclamation is not, despite Hooker's defence of established Christianity, dominated by an elite. His deference to authority is observable in his dedicatory sections of the *Lawes*, but this does not overburden his purpose. Hooker's sensitivity towards the life of the church is protective, and made in response to the alienating Puritan position that "hath bred high tearmes of separation betweene such and the rest of the world, whereby the one sort are

¹⁶ Shuger, "The Imagined Community," 309.

¹⁷ Shuger, "The Imagined Community," 309.

named *The* brethren, *The* godlie . . . the other worldlings, timeservers, pleasers of men not of God, with such like.”¹⁸ Hooker’s impatience with a simplistic piety is not driven by lack of compassion, but by Puritan obduracy towards reason and appeal; “. . . let any man of contrarie opinion open his mouth to perswade them, they close up their eares, his reasons they waigh not, all is answered with rehearsall of the words of John, *We are of God, he that knoweth God, heareth us*, as for the rest, ye are of the world”¹⁹

Hooker did not accept the conclusion that reasoned rejection of a Puritan hermeneutic was identical with their claim to suffer on account of truth.

The generosity of Hooker’s reading of Scripture made it accessible to those who could never belong to Puritan society. For although Hooker supported an elitism of his own, the results of that elitism still sought a place of convergence that did not require absolute assent to the specific results of scriptural inquiry, but rather to the overall message of salvation, and resulting fellowship. “The Church being a supernaturall societie, doth differ from naturall societies in this, that the persons unto whom we associate our selves, in the one are simplye considered as men, but they to whom wee be joyned in the other, are God, Angels, and holie men.”²⁰ Hooker’s hermeneutic was not disturbed by the limitations of faith or knowledge, and his concept of inclusion and comprehensiveness was guided by that of the loving condescension and election of God. Thus, with respect to baptism, Hooker places faith and belief on a continuum which does no violence to justifying grace; “Wee are *then beleivers* because *then wee beginne to be* that which processe of time doth make perfect In summe the whole Church is a multitude of beleevers, all honored with that title, even hypocrites for their

¹⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, I.3.11: 1.18.14–17.

¹⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.14: 1.19.23–26.

²⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 15.2: 1.131.6–10.

professions sake as well as saintes”²¹ This, for Hooker, is not a liability but the end to which the church ministers for, “. . . exact obedience [nourishes] crueltie and hardnes of harte,”²² even where strict doctrinal rigour would not approve. This is an example of what was earlier described in Chapter one, quoting Kirby, as the “dialectical complexity” of Hooker’s position in which “there is simultaneously disjunction and conjunction in the relation between the two kingdoms,” but which are yet “understood to be united in the simplicity of their common divine source as well as in our knowledge of them”²³

What unites the distinct orders of nature and grace in both Calvin and Hooker is the presence of the Holy Spirit in both the church as God’s spiritual commonwealth, and the individual believer as united to that commonwealth. For Hooker, the dialectic of church and Elizabethan society was resolved around the categoric gifts of Scripture, sacrament, and the Holy Spirit which constituted all that was needed to conform to the necessity of divine law. The sufficiency of Scripture was for Hooker, similar to the sufficiency of the church as the place of saving intersections and, as Debora Shuger remarks, “If Hooker’s church does not contest the Tudor *status quo*, neither does it reproduce it.” Quoting Peter Lake’s idea of Hooker’s “invented church,”²⁴ his church “. . . lodges at the outskirts and interstices of the nation-state.”²⁵ Hooker’s generous understanding of Scripture held that it could only be properly understood if was understood “rightly” which meant recognising its epistemic limits, as well as its divine

²¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.64.2.: 2.295.1, 17–19.

²² Hooker, *Lawes*, V.61.5: 2.268.14.

²³ Kirby, *The Theology of Richard Hooker in the Context of the Magisterial Reformation*, 21.

²⁴ Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* 227.

²⁵ Shuger, “The Imagined Community,” 328.

origins as the “blessed fountain of life.”²⁶ Even if this kept the warring parties in tension, it held before them a vision of its Christocentric heart which was not simply the isolation of viewpoints, but a conscious attempt to sustain the fellowship of a variegated communion in Christ. The position Hooker took in his debate with the Puritans offered both freedom and discipline for a church entering the new age of critical method because it did not compromise the centrality of the Scriptures as the touchstone for reform while maintaining the crucial role of reason in biblical interpretation. And with the magisterial reformers, part of Hooker’s appeal lay in the role played by natural theology and his refusal to confine the arena of divine-human communion to the human capacity to read and digest Scripture:

Whatsoever either men on earth, or the Angles of heaven do know, it is as a drop of that unemptiable fountaine of wisdom, which wisdom hath diversely imparted her treasures unto the world. As her waies are of sundry kinds, so her maner of teaching is not meerey one and the same. Some things she openeth by the sacred books of Scripture; some things by the glorious works of nature; with some things she inspireth them from above by spirituall influence, in some things she leadeth and trayneth them onley by worldly experience and practise. We may not so in any one speciall kind admire her that we disgrace her in any other, but let all her wayes be according unto their place and degree adored.²⁷

Hooker’s theological generosity was predicated on his appreciation for the varied ways in which humans are brought to a place of comprehension and response. So the revelatory character of Scripture for Hooker was truly unique, but not such that its uniqueness could be established by rejecting other ordinary means of divine disclosure including the “glorious works of nature,” “spirituall influence,” and those generally understood factors of “worldly experience and practise.” Nevertheless, the Scriptures were the repository of a very particular revelation, and Hooker was alert to this and believed it. In describing the Psalms alone, Hooker in typical fashion piles up an

²⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 2.1: 1.3.10–15.

²⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, II.1.4: 1.147.23–148.6.

enormous list of attributes that seem designed to convince his Puritan audience that so far as the Scriptures were concerned, Hooker was equally committed:

What is there necessarie for man to knowe which the psalmes are not able to teach? They are to beginners an easie and familiar introduction, a mightie augmentation of all vertue and knowledge in such as are entered before, a stronge confirmation to the most perfect amongst others. Heroicall magnanimitie, exquisite justice, grave moderation, exacte wisdom, repentance unfained, unwearied patience, the mysteries of God, the sufferings of Christ, the terrors of wrath, the comfortes of grace, the workes of providence over this world and the promised joyes of that world which is to come, all good necessarilie to be either knowne or don or had, this one coelestiall fountaine yeldeth. Let there be any grieffe or disease incident unto the soule of man, anie wounde or sicknes named, for which there is not in this treasure house a present comfortable remedie at all tymes readie to be found. Hereof it is that we covet to make the psalmes especiallie familiar unto all.²⁸

But this did not mean that Scripture could be understood simplistically as a *prescriptive* repository of divine wisdom. Reason and Spirit were both alike needed in order that the texts might disclose what natural reason alone could not establish. Reason was the fundamental resource the Holy Spirit placed at the disposal of all human beings, so that the revelation of God could be acknowledged. As Hooker writes:

That which is true and neither can be discerned by sense, nor concluded by meere naturall principles, must have principles of revealed truth whereupon to build it selfe, and an habit of faith in us wherewith principles of that kinde are apprehended. The mysteries of our religion are above the reach of our understandinge, above discorse of mans reason, above all that anie creature can comprehend. Therefore the first thing required of him which standeth for admission into Christes familie is believe. Which believe consisteth not so much in knowledg as in acknowledgment of all thinges that heavenlie wisdom revealeth; thaffection of faith is above hir reach, hir love to Godward above the comprehension which she hath of God.²⁹

Hooker makes a similar point earlier in the *Lawes* as he defends the charge of excessive reliance and confidence upon human insight and reason:

The light of naturall understanding with and reason is from God, he it is which thereby doth illuminate every man entering into the world. If there proceed from us any thing afterwarde corrupt and naught, the mother thereof is our owne darknes, neither doth it proceede from any such cause whereof God is the author.

²⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.37.2: 2.150.16–31.

²⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.63.2: 290.20–31.

He is the author of all that we thinke or doe by vertue of the light, which himselfe hath given. And therefore the lawes which the very heathens did gather to direct their actions by, so far forth as they proceeded from the light of nature, God him selfe doth acknowledge to have proceeded even from him selfe, and that he was the writer of them in the tables of their hartes. How much more then he the author of those lawes, which have bene made by his Saints, endued further with the heavenly grace of his spirit, and directed as much as might be with such instructions, as his sacred word doth yeeld?³⁰

Hooker's view of reason is always conditional on the source of its inspiration. Good laws are declared by him to be good not simply because they are utilitarian but because they have been influenced by divine grace. This is particularly true for Ecclesiastical law, where Hooker's logic is that if grace has been an effectual influence, even if invisible, then this is evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit. So Hooker contends that no *doctrine* of inspiration is actually required in order to believe this, and to derive the benefits associated with it. Rather, Hooker is content to think in terms of the "instinct of the holy Ghost" which accords well with his trusted acceptance³¹ of divine omnipresence:

Herein therefore we agree with those men by whome humane lawes are defined to be ordinances, which such as have lawfull authority given them for that purpose, do probably draw from the laws of nature and God, by discourse of reason, aided with the influence of divine grace. And of that cause it is not said amisse touching Ecclesiasticall canons, that by *instinct of the holy Ghost they have bene made, and consecrated by the reverend acceptance of all the world.*³²

Yet even redeemed reason has boundaries and this is particularly acknowledged by Hooker when he considers the ability of persons to respond to what natural reason

³⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.9.3: 1.238.25–239.8 Hooker's perceived Pelagian tendencies was something to which he was very sensitive. He spends considerable effort refuting the charge in *Book 3*. The *Christian Letter* also raises this question. However, Hooker consistently makes clear the limitations of rational investigation, and his superior reliance on the inspiration of Scripture: "Readinge doth convey to the minde that truth without addition or diminution, which scripture hath derived from the holie Ghost. And the ende of all scripture is the same which St John proposeth in the writinge of that most divine Gospell, namely *faith*, and through *faith salvation*." Hooker, *Lawes*, V.22.6: 2.92.9–15.

³¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.55.3: 2.228.22–30.

³² Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.18: 1.235.11–16.

discloses of the works of God in creation. In this respect, he is completely Pauline in his grasp of human responsibility and the mortifying inability of humans to achieve what reason would normally direct, namely, worship of the Creator:

Impossible it is that God should withdraw his presence from any thing because the verie substance of God is infinite. Hee filleth heaven and earth although he take up no roome in either, because his substance is immateriall, pure, and of us in this world so incomprehensible, that albeit no parte of us be ever absent from him who is present whole unto everie particular thing, yeat his presence with us wee no way discerne farther then only that God is present, which partly by reason and more perfectlie by faith we knowe to be firme and certaine.³³

The very order of reason which lay under suspicion for Calvin, was the provocation to faith for Hooker because faith was the perfection of reason.

Hooker on the Sacraments

David Neelands points out that Hooker's principal conflict was the expression of Calvinist logic in his debate with Cartwright.³⁴ The Puritan concern over baptism lay in doubt over the necessity of the ministrations of the church, the role of ministers, external ritual, and not the character of grace in light of the doctrines of regeneration and election. The Anabaptist rejection of paedobaptism lay in the notion of the impossibility of baptism where no prior faith could be demonstrated, and there are occasions in Hooker where Puritan objections appear indistinguishable from the Anabaptist, particularly in the Puritan assertion that one can only perform in the name of God, what the Scriptures expressly command. Hooker does this for polemical effect but only when pressed. Naturally, infant baptism, in such a view, was the obvious abuse which turned the gracious command of Christ into a transforming work in its own right. The strength of the controversy might be measured by the length and detail of its

³³ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.55.3: 2.228.22–30.

³⁴ Neelands, "Theology of Grace," 278ff.

treatment in the *Lawes*. To marshal his argument, Hooker synthesises the Puritan polemic that understood reformation to be the complete abandonment of catholic tradition and the associations of Rome. Although Hooker recognises the general impermanence of human counsel, it remains for him no small thing to abandon a custom merely on the grounds of its antiquity or association with Rome:

True it is that neither counsels nor customes, be they never so auncient and so generall, can let the Church from taking away that thing which is hurtefull to be retained. Where things have beene instituted which being convenient and good at the first, do afterwards in processe of time waxe otherwise; we make no doubt but they may be altered, yea, though counsell or customes generall have received them . . . that things so ordained are to bee kept, howbeit not necessarily any longer, then till there growe some urgent cause to ordaine the contrary.³⁵

The evenhandedness of his observation distances Hooker from a slavish support of church polity, and begs the question of whose interests are served when “customes” are retained or abandoned. Hooker was not blindly obedient to tradition but the recognition that “two are better than one”³⁶ saw tradition as affording the necessary constraint upon individual action. Hooker is conciliatory here. His method is to establish the essential character of the sacramental rite of baptism and to affirm that the mere use of ceremonies, even where they may be flawed by virtue of simple error or inadvertence, is not fatal to their general value and intent. The crucial ceremonies derive their sacramental significance by virtue of their origin in God. Hence, they are few in number but indispensable:

Sacraments are those which are signes and tokens of some generalle promised grace, which alwaies really descendeth from god unto the soul that duly receiveth them; other significant tokens are onely as sacraments, yet no sacraments: which is not our distinction but theirs. For concerning the Apostles

³⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, IV.14.5: 1.340.11–22.

³⁶ Cf. Qoh. 4:9. Grislis, “The Anglican Spirituality of Richard Hooker,” 39.

imposition of handes are their owne wordes *Manuum signum hoc et quasi sacramentum usurparunt*. They used this signe or as it were sacrament.³⁷

So the special character of the sacrament was established by God and recognised as duly received through the general ministrations of the church in which divine revelation was guarded. Hooker argued that the valid actions of the church could not be so tightly bound to the text of Scripture since some rites and ceremonies which called upon the Holy Spirit were not of dominical command but yet by their inner nature and congruence, conferred the special blessing of God. For example, the laying on of hands fitted this idea of sacrament and was accepted by Calvin, though not as an ordinary sacrament because it was too close to the sacrament of anointing.³⁸ Still, Calvin was not prepared to view the action as more than a gesture of Christian solidarity since the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit in baptism had rendered the laying on of hands unnecessary and so “. . . the grace had ceased to be given.”³⁹ Calvin has a clear sense of the delimiting nature of the sacraments rather than their theological and pastoral potential. For him, the sacramental value of the laying on of hands was compromised by the idea of grace infused and the consequent obscuring of God’s word which “. . . had been excellently enough disclosed.”⁴⁰ So the sacraments become a way of defining the boundaries of the elect community. The charitable Calvinism of Hooker was prepared to acknowledge predestination as a logical expression of God’s inscrutable will, but that human explorations in this were hazardous:

There is in the knowledg both of God and man this certaintie that life and death have devided betwene them the whole bodie of man kinde. What portion either of the two hath, God him selfe knoweth; for us he hath left no sufficient means to comprehend and for that cause neither given any leave to search in particular

³⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, IV.1.4: 1.276.14–20.

³⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.14.20.

³⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.19.6.

⁴⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.19.6.

who are infallible the heirs of the kingdom of God, who cast away. Howbeit . . . the safest axioms for charity to rest it self upon are these, . . . *there is hope of every mans forgiveness the possibilitie of whose repentance is not yeat cut of by death.* And therefore charity which *hopeth all thynges* prayeth also for all men. Wherefore . . . for us there is cause sufficient in all men whereupon to ground our prayers unto god in their behalfe.⁴¹

The generosity of Hooker's sentiments is evident and may account for the lasting appeal and respect the *Laws* achieved. Certainly, Hooker is a Calvinist but in his discussion of the sacraments in general, he defends the catholic traditions of the church—the issue is the reform of those traditions, not their abandonment. Since the sacraments are moral instruments of salvation, their appeal is to the conscience and the stimulation of the human heart to seek the good since the *imago Dei* is not obliterated 'merely' disfigured. Human depravity had not robbed persons of the capacity to act responsibly:

Seeing therefore that grace is a consequent of Sacramentes, a thing which accompanieth them as their end, a benefit which he hath receiveth from God him selfe author of sacramentes and not from any other naturall or supernaturall qualitie in them, it may be hereby both understood that sacramentes are necessarie, and that the manner of their necessitie to life supernaturall is not in all respectes as foode unto naturall life, because they containe *in them selves* no vitall force or efficacie, they are not physcally but *morall instrumentes* of salvation, duties of service and worship, which unlesse we performe as the author of grace requireth, they are unprofitable. For all receive not the grace of God which receive the sacramentes of his grace. Neither is it *ordinarily* his will to bestowe the grace of sacramentes on any, but by the sacramentes. Which grace also they that receive by sacramentes or with sacramentes, receive it from him and not from them.⁴²

There is therefore, a view of Christian religious devotion which Hooker located in both the order of divine providence and also, since it pleases God to do so, in the ministrations of his elect. Hooker's plea situated grace within a positive evaluation of

⁴¹ Hooker, *Laws*, V.49.2: 2.203.9–49.3: 2.203.30.

⁴² Hooker, *Laws*, V.57.4: 2.246.20–247.2.

nature as the singular and universal expression of divine goodness without which, any appeal to moral change or amendment could only be met with human resistance. The order of nature must be susceptible to divine calling even while sin exploits ἡ σάρξ. Hooker's appreciation for the varied state of humanity leads also to his specific evaluation of infant baptism since the sacraments proclaim divine grace not only by rational edification but also by the mystery of God.⁴³ Clearly, if the sacraments were to have only a pedagogical function, there could be no rationale for infant baptism. For both Calvin and Hooker, this amounted to the denial of grace and spiritual comfort to Christian parents.⁴⁴ Sacraments have therefore, a mixed character as to the exact manner of their spiritual reception which Hooker has already established as lying beyond the scope of another person to determine. Since the sacraments are not arbitrary human creations, their character as divine instruments of grace is upheld, and there is no dispute as to their necessity even if their benefits are not inevitable. Hooker is of the view that some of the disagreement is more apparent than real.⁴⁵ The inscrutability and invisibility of God necessitates the sacraments, notwithstanding John 20:20, because of the limitations of human capacity for the divine.⁴⁶ Again, Hooker embraces the outcome of God's election as blessing and joy rather than the opportunity to more accurately define membership of the Christian community. One may term this as Hooker's 'generous orthodoxy' in describing what is essential in belief and hopeful in its outcome:

⁴³ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.57.1: 2.244.28–245.9.

⁴⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.17.32.

⁴⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.57.2: 2.245.17f.

⁴⁶ This raises no difficulty for Hooker because nature and grace are not in opposition, rather sin and grace. The natural order is the only order sensate persons can use to posit the possibilities of a heavenly order. Hence the physicality of the sacramental elements though not absolute in themselves, takes on an importance which is incarnationally related to the order of existence.

. . . they serve as bondes of obedience to God, strict obligations to the mutuall exercise of Christian charitie, provocations to godliness, preservations from synne, memorialls of the principall benefites of Christ; . . . regarde the weaknes which is in us, and they are warrantes for the more securitie of our belief; . . . For sith God in him selfe is invisible and cannot by us be discerned workinge, therefore . . . he giveth them some plaine and sensible token whereby to know what they cannot see.⁴⁷

Thus there is a clear instrumentality which is never absolutely distinct from the internal disposition of the believer. Inasmuch as the worshipper is actually present and desires to receive the sacramental elements, this is sufficient warrant for presuming the presence of faith. The sacrament never functions without such tension though in the hands of Hooker, this does not compromise the effectual nature of either grace or the human capacity to receive it. The initiative to receive sacramentally may appear to be human but their effectual nature is entirely divine. Hooker thought that the presence of the worshipper at the sacrament implied their faith, without the need to inquire further about its authenticity. Hooker understood this to be a charitable assumption.⁴⁸

Hooker on Baptism

In infant baptism however, the special problems of infused grace were heightened. The Anabaptist solution was direct—such baptism was no baptism at all:

To all those who, by their own invention and without Scriptural warrant, argue for the regeneration of infants because they are baptised, notwithstanding there are no fruits in them as may be plainly seen, to them I reply: First, that they do not know what the new birth is. Second, with the same propriety and reasonability, bells are baptised. God in His word has no more commanded one than the other, for according to their nature, there is as little faith in the one than there are in the other.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.57.2: 2.245.20–57.3.246.7.

⁴⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.57.5: 2.247.12.

⁴⁹ *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, ed. J. C. Wenger, trans. Leonard Verduin (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 266.

Nevertheless, Menno was sure that children were saved by grace until the age of discretion. But the problem was that children were therefore elect, and if elect, there was no ground for denying the baptism of infants since they were thus saved.⁵⁰ Calvin was clear that the regeneration of infants “. . . though beyond our understanding, is still not annulled.”⁵¹

. . . infants are baptised into future repentance and faith, and even though these have not yet been formed in them, the seed of both lies hidden within them by the secret working of the Spirit.⁵²

Hooker, who followed Luther and Calvin on this matter, upheld the generosity of God’s grace in infant baptism. This leads to the question of whether he really held to a view of baptismal regeneration since the logic of election would seem to demand, or at least, permit it. Grislis points to this when he suggests that Calvin does not apply the idea of sacramental instrumentality in an absolute way.⁵³ The work of regeneration has its trajectory in grace and the work of Christ, and the believer together with the believing community, receives the sacrament as part of its consistent spiritual alignment. For Hooker, the issues of infant baptism were really a subset of the more general question of how baptism may be viewed as achieving anything at all, since he is well aware that one who is baptised as a believing adult may be as liable to err *as an adult*, as a baptised infant might fail to mature morally into that same adult. So one does not know *how* baptism is effectual in an adult any more than in an infant. How does Hooker build his

⁵⁰ This point is also made by Grislis in tracking the distinctions between Menno and Luther on infant baptism. Egil Grislis, “Martin Luther and Menno Simons on Infant Baptism,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 12 (1994): 7–25. Menno is also clear that “. . . the Holy Spirit does not operate nor reveal Himself to be in [children], and since they cannot serve in the body of Christ as is required by the Word of God . . . therefore they should not be baptised.” *Complete Writings*, 274.

⁵¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.16.17.

⁵² Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.16.20.

⁵³ Egil Grislis, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Baptism,” *Church History* XXXI, no. 1 (March 1962): 56.

doctrine of baptism? A number of features can be identified. First, as previously mentioned, Hooker establishes the inherent nature of sacraments as effectual vehicles for persons to apprehend the ineffable claims of divinity. The fragility and variability of human powers of comprehension makes his sacramental theology very appealing. Second, Hooker never disconnects baptism from the larger ministry of the church. The Anabaptist position had located baptism within the locus of personal belief and autonomy, linked to the fruits of faith, and subsequently worked out in relation to the church. Calvin had subsumed baptism under the overarching doctrine of election whereby baptism was a recognition of the prevenient reality of regeneration. As we have seen, the idea of instrumentality is not absent in Hooker, yet it is mitigated by the limitations of sin, rather than nature because the sacramental instrument is understood by Hooker to be divinely appointed with the contingencies of human nature in mind. This means that human responsibility does have limits though such limits may be known to God alone. The incarnational core of the gospel guaranteed the dignity of the contingent aspects of life—the real issue of separation resided in human sin. Third, Hooker is motivated by pastoral considerations which place the question of instrumentality and moral obedience in the only location where the reality of grace can be affirmed or denied; the existence of the believing, or unbelieving, person or community.

For Hooker then, the grace of Christ is received corporately but distinctly through human engagement and conscious participation.⁵⁴ Human nature does not compromise the reception of grace though he is clearly aware of the tension between receptionism and instrumentality,⁵⁵ and offers his own clarification with respect to

⁵⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.57.5: 2.247.5–8.

⁵⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.57.4: 2.247.1.

baptism. He places baptism and its grace at the centre of divine mystery whose epistemic centre lies in the word of God but whose reception does not require the absolute ability to comprehend it, for as Hooker writes, “. . . then doth baptisme chalenge to it selfe but the inchoation of those graces, the consummation whereof dependeth on mysteries ensewinge.”⁵⁶

This is the grace that is “proper unto baptisme”⁵⁷ but which is never in itself a work set apart from the divine intention to give grace, and the human desire to receive it. The Scriptures provide the touchstone for sacramental actions but commanded and congruent with the mind of the apostolic witness. The worshipper is therefore always given the benefit of grace unless there is any evidence which might compromise it:

. . . because definitions are to expresse but the most immediate and nearest partes of nature, whereas other principles farther of although not specified in defininge are notwithstandinge in nature implied and presupposed, wee must note that in as much as sacramentes are actions religious and mysticall, which nature they have not unlesse they proceede from a serious meaning, and what everie mans privat minde is, as wee cannot know, so neither are wee bounde to examine, therefore alwaies in these cases the knowne intent of the Church generallie doth suffice, and where the contrarie is not manifest we may presume that he which outwardlie doth the work hath inwardly the purpose of the Church of God.⁵⁸

There is, in baptism particularly, a concurrence of grace, word, and element, though it is only the declaration of the word of grace which absolutely settles the character of baptism and its necessary use of elements. The priority is always grace however, which sin cannot derail. Hooker illustrates this by pointing to the originality of sacramental intent which the respective elements “adorne.” Thus Hooker removes the central argument from pedantic questions of emergency baptism, the possibility of women baptising, or necessary solemnities. On the one hand, he has no interest at all in

⁵⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.57.6: 2.248.2.

⁵⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.57.6: 2.248.7.

⁵⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.58.3: 2.250.3–14.

abandoning the honoured sacramental traditions “. . . which the wisdom of the Church of Christ is to order according to the exigence of that which is principall,”⁵⁹ since these constitute the normative witness of the church to the grace of God. On the other hand, life is filled with ‘exigencies’ and so the question of due ceremony never dominates his discussion of baptism:

. . . in cases of necessitie which will not suffer delay till baptisme be administred with usuall solemnities (to speak the least) it may be tollerably given without them, rather then any man without it should be suffered to departe this life.⁶⁰

Though Hooker may speak of the normative administration of baptism, he is more concerned with its inner nature. This is perhaps where Hooker is his most compelling. The logic of the sacrament depends upon its origins. The scriptural witness links baptism to regeneration but the Puritan view was that Hooker had made baptism a necessity in and of itself and that its use was not justified where discretion could not be exercised.⁶¹ This came close to the Anabaptist contention which bifurcated reality on the ground of nature but which Hooker rejected:

There are that elevate too much the ordinarie and immediate meanes of life relyinge whollie upon the bare conceipt of that eternall election, which notwithstandinge includeth a subordination of meanes without which wee are not actuallie brought to injoy what God secretlie did intende, and therefore to build upon God’s election if wee keepe not our selves to the waies which he hath appointed for men to walke in is but a self-deceavinge vanitie.⁶²

Predestination bringeth not to life, without the grace of externall vocation, wherein our baptisme is implied. For as wee are not naturallie men without birth, so neither are wee Christian men in the ey of the Church of God but by new birth, not accordinge to the manifest ordinarie course of divine dispensation new borne, but by the baptisme which both declareth and maketh us Christians . . . the first apparent beginnige of life, a seal perhaps to the grace of *election* before received, but to our sanctification heere a step that hath not anie before it.⁶³

⁵⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.58.4: 2.250.17.

⁶⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.58.4: 2.251.1–4.

⁶¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.60.1: 2.254.1.

⁶² Hooker, *Lawes*, V.60.3: 2.255.13–256.1.

⁶³ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.60.3: 2.256.18–26.

Hooker's claim that, "Predestination bringeth not to life . . ." was not a rejection of the doctrine but a way to link the concept pastorally with faith, and the sacraments. Hooker's critics wondered whether he attached any soteriological importance to baptism, as in *A Christian Letter*: ". . . shew us your minde, whether righteousnes commeth by baptisme, or by faith."⁶⁴ Hooker made no marginal notes on this point and it appears that the Puritan understanding of Hooker took him to say that regeneration happened at baptism probably because he was still prepared to use the language of infusion. However, the consistent claim of Hooker is that baptism is protected from an uncritical doctrine of infusion, by the inherent character of the sacrament as divinely given so that such grace as is first received depends not upon the action of the Church in itself, but the promises of God and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the dignity of the doctrine of predestination is never compromised, but eased by the more general soteriological assumption that regardless of individual cases, God's will is that all should be saved. That being so, baptism enters any person upon a new life and incorporation in Christ.⁶⁵ Moving very carefully between predestination and human freedom, Hooker defends as a first principle, the prevenience of grace. If baptism was not the way to secure grace, it nevertheless most surely pointed to the washing of regeneration already achieved by God. However, Hooker needed to maintain its instrumentality, without compromising the freedom of God to act in bringing faith to reality where baptism has not taken place. Indeed, Hooker argued that baptism is not absolutely essential to salvation because the fairness of God demands it; ". . . life by vertue of inward baptisme even where outward is not found."⁶⁶ The contingencies of life must allow for occasions where baptism is not possible. However, Hooker really does

⁶⁴ Hooker, *A Christian Letter*, 4.45.4.

⁶⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.57.6: 2.248.4.

⁶⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.60.5: 2.258.15.

not have in mind situations where baptism is wilfully rejected.⁶⁷ As to the origins of anyone's faith and salvation, Hooker never loses sight of the comprehensive experience of the Church as the bearer of God's word and the iconic presentation of that word sacramentally. For Thomas Cartwright, baptism was the public declaration of a faith decisively appropriated, "He which is not a Christian before he came to receive baptisme cannot be made a Christian by baptisme which is only the seal of the grace of God before received."⁶⁸

But one cannot prosper without the company of the faithful, and older and wiser believers had concluded that belief could not be defined solely on the grounds of credibility, for it made *sola fide* dependent upon human decision whereas *sola gratia* was the better moderated viewpoint of Hooker. Therefore, neither the Church nor the individual could preempt how God's grace might be manifest. Since sanctification and baptism were linked as a result of the gift of the Holy Spirit in baptism, it was possible to say that the grace of baptism might be lost if one did not grow in it. To speak of grace and not Spirit was impossible:

. . . although . . . wee make not baptisme a cause of grace, yeat the grace which is given them with their baptisme doth so farre forth depend on the verie outward sacrament that God will have it imbraced not only as a signe or token what wee receive, but also as an instrument or meane whereby wee receive grace, because baptisme is a sacrament which God hath instituted in his Church to the ende that they which receive the same might thereby be incorporated in to Christ and so through his most pretious merit obtaine as well that savinge grace of imputation which taketh away all former guiltiness, as also that infused divine vertue of the holie Ghost which giveth to the powers of the soule their first disposition towards future newnes of life.⁶⁹

This is not the same as Luther's dormant faith against which Menno⁷⁰ argues, as though an essential seed is merely being watered but rather a sacramental dynamism whereby

⁶⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.60.5: 2.259.7–15.

⁶⁸ Footnote 'u' in Hooker, *Lawes*, V.60.3: 2.256.24.

⁶⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.60.2: 2.255.1–13.

⁷⁰ *Complete Writings*, 242.

new birth is imputed through which true human responsibility slowly emerges for an indeterminate, though soteriologically secure, future. In fact, Hooker makes no serious attempt to argue for faith in infants. His position is a modified Lutheran perspective arguing ‘from above’ whereas Menno argues ‘from below’.⁷¹

Hooker and the Baptism of Infants

As mentioned earlier, the particular debate around the nature and efficacy of baptism was worked out by Hooker as a moderated Calvinism which he believed would appear reasonable to the Puritans. The debate was sharpest however around infant baptism, whether women could baptise, the value of interrogatories in the case of infants, and the merit of marking the child’s forehead with the sign of the Cross at baptism. To the Puritan mind, this reflected a lack of reforming resolve. For Hooker, the real issue was the extensive and prevenient character of grace, over and above human response. Calvin had spoken mainly of infant baptism because his conflict lay with the Anabaptists and Roman sacramentalists. It is only in the latter stages of his defence of infant baptism that he speaks to its pastoral value as comfort for the assurance of parents concerning the eternal destiny of their children. It is interesting that Calvin’s scriptural defence of infant baptism is primarily confined to the analogy of circumcision and the general congruence of the New Testament whereas Hooker expanded the biblical analogies to include the washing of Naaman, the brazen serpent, the baptism of Christ, and his blessing of children.⁷² Similarly, Hooker employs the analogy of Zipporah⁷³ positively in defending the legitimacy of women baptising while

⁷¹ Grislis, “Infant Baptism,” 14.

⁷² Hooker, *Lawes*, V.60.4: 2.257.10.

⁷³ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.62.21: 2.288.7.

Calvin uses the same text negatively for the same contingency.⁷⁴ It is strange that Calvin would do this since circumcision in Israel is used by him as an analogy for infant baptism in general, the particular case of Zipporah being an exception rather than an affirmation. As far as Menno Simons was concerned, the analogy was worthless in any case, because according to him, Israel would have circumcised their children regardless of the ordinance of God. Exactly how Menno knew this he does not disclose, though he may have been aware that circumcision was practised outside Israel. It is possible he assumed that analogy and prototype were the same thing.⁷⁵ For Hooker, the injunction to wash was the corollary to *sola fide*. Since grace could not be tied absolutely to baptism, Hooker's appeal lay in the general beneficence of the created order which also reflected the glory of God:

. . . seinge grace is not absolutely tyed unto sacramentes, and besides such is the lenitie of God that unto thinges altogether impossible he bindeth no man, but where wee cannot doe what is injoynd us he accepteth our will to do in stead of the deed itself; . . . And of the will of God to imparte his grace unto infantes without baptisme, in that case the verie circumstance of their naturall birth may serve as a just argument . . .⁷⁶

It was cruel, therefore, for Puritans to assert the destruction of the unbaptised in general especially if only through one's lack of knowledge or opportunity. Even in the case of emergency baptism, Hooker did not view such baptism as an intellectual necessity but would, for mercy's sake, offer such sacramental ministry as was consistent with the greater demands of mercy and love. Since neither Cartwright nor Hooker⁷⁷ believed that those infants would be damned if they died unbaptised, Puritan rigour in avoiding private baptism at all times seemed perverse and harsh to Hooker, who

⁷⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.15.22.

⁷⁵ *Complete Writings*, 238.

⁷⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.60.6: 2.260.3–8, 15–18.

⁷⁷ Hooker seems to have misquoted Cartwright on this point. See footnote 'u': Hooker, *Lawes*, V.61.4: 2.266.21.

understood the church as a mother, not a schoolteacher.⁷⁸ Love, mercy, and divine mystery drove the ministrations of the gospel not intellectual purity. Hooker's rebuttal of Puritan rectitude on this point is worth quoting in full:

. . . you that would spurne thus at such as in case of so dreadfull extremitie should lye prostrate before your feete, you that would turne away your face from them at the hower of their most neede, you that would damne up your eares and harden your harte as iron against the unresistable cryes of supplicantes callinge upon you for mercy with termes of such invocation as that most dreadful perplexitie might minister if God by miracle did open the mouthes of infantes to expresse their supposed necessitie, should first imagin your selfe in their case and in your mouth, and your answere out of theirs.⁷⁹

Even if Hooker is padding the point here, his closing remark, “. . . exact obedience [nourishes] crueltie and hardnes of harte”⁸⁰ speaks loudly in a Reformation which had known precisely that. There is a significant issue at stake here when, for example, one compares the baptismal thinking of Menno:

Since children have no faith by which they can realize that God is, and that he is a rewarder of both good and evil, as they plainly show by their fruits, therefore they have not the fear of God, and consequently they have nothing upon which they should be baptized. Yet they have the promise of everlasting life, out of pure grace.⁸¹

In fact, Menno has a somewhat dry appreciation of childhood in general. “All they do is nurse, drink, laugh, cry, . . . but the fruits of faith they do not show.”⁸² In his view, the faith to which baptism is the response saves a person, and is the result of hearing the gospel with discretion and understanding, both in its promise and call to obedience. The authenticity of one's response is publicly evident by “fruits” and as such is beyond infant discretion. This does not, of course, resolve the matter for Menno since his baptismal logic demands to know what becomes of a child that dies without baptism.

⁷⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.60.7: 2.261.14.

⁷⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.64.4: 2.267.1–10.

⁸⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.61.5: 2.268.14.

⁸¹ *Complete Writings*, 240.

⁸² *Complete Writings*, 240.

His answer is simply that such a circumstance is attended by the universal atonement of God.⁸³ Therefore, a person may be comforted though Menno is also clear that no child before baptism has the Holy Spirit.⁸⁴ However, since Menno has argued that all infants are saved by the universal grace of God which he can presumably conceive as existing without the Holy Spirit, a child reaching an age of discretion and refusing to believe the preached word, would be damned, baptised or not.⁸⁵

Judged by Hooker's thinking, Menno has become trapped by his own logic because baptism must then be construed as a saving work while he holds the conviction that grace has priority. Menno is similarly unconvinced by any analogy to circumcision, though only where this does not suit his overall purpose. Least of all is Menno impressed by the integrity of doctrine established by "long usage."⁸⁶ Menno has construed what he takes to be the plain meaning of the Scriptures. Wherever he sees faith connected with righteousness, it is inevitably held to be personal faith and personal righteousness. Hooker's faith however, has a corporate context which is not at variance with the interests of either the individual or the church. Neither is he sufficiently naïve to believe that persons can hide behind a ceremony without some sensible awareness of the grace that makes it possible. Ultimately, the sacraments never belong to the church but to God. Also, the primary faith to which appeal is made is perhaps best understood as the faith which Jesus himself possessed, and into which baptism speaks of union with Christ. While Menno's piety is understandable in a context of ecclesial corruption, whether Protestant or Roman,⁸⁷ Hooker's piety assumes a more settled role for the

⁸³ *Complete Writings*, 280.

⁸⁴ *Complete Writings*, 274.

⁸⁵ *Complete Writings*, 241.

⁸⁶ *Complete Writings*, 266.

⁸⁷ Menno's depiction of the church he had just left. *Complete Writings*, 250.

church and a pastoral view of human frailty that allows a person “time for amendment of life.” The most obvious hermeneutical distinction however is that Hooker will allow the mind of the church to embrace the things that are congruent with Scripture whereas Menno will only permit those things he believes are commanded. The Scriptures are therefore prescriptive documents for Menno without obedience to which, the most serious fruit of faith toward God is impossible. Hooker’s own description of baptism is perfectly cognizant of the potential for harm if the sacraments are inadequately offered but that in the case of infants, culpability lies with the church, for which the infant cannot be held accountable. The promise of grace remains firm:

. . . the fruite of baptism dependeth onlie upon the covenant which god hath made; that God by covenant requireth in the elder sorte faith and baptisme, in the children the sacrament of baptisme alone, whereunto he hath also given the right by speciall priviledge of birth within the bosome of the holie Church; that infantes therefore, which have received baptisme complete as touchinge the mysticall perfection thereof, are by vertue of his owne covenant and promise clesned from all synne, . . . if anie thinge be therein amisse, the harme which groweth by violation of holie ordinances must altogether rest where the bondes of such ordinances hold.⁸⁸

The mixed realities of human life which might make the sacraments objects of disgrace, as in Menno for example,⁸⁹ retain their dignity in Hooker on the grounds of the prevenience of grace, not faith, since “. . . when God had created all thinges, he looked upon them and loved them, because they were all as him selfe had made them.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, the special standing of the children of believers spoke again to the dignity of belief for which there was scriptural warrant.⁹¹ The “intellectual habit of the minde”⁹² is not in itself a guarantee of moral action as Hooker is well aware⁹³ and though “. . . the

⁸⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.62.15: 2.282.1–14.

⁸⁹ *Complete Writings*, 273.

⁹⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.63.1: 2.291.4.

⁹¹ Cf. 1 Corinthians 7:14.

⁹² Hooker, *Lawes*, V.63.2: 2.291.20.

⁹³ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.63.2: 2.291.22.

minde . . . maie abide in the light of faith, there must abide in the will as constant a resolution to have no fellowship at all with vanities and workes of darkenes.”⁹⁴ This prepares Hooker for a discussion of interrogatories and a debate over the wisdom of having godparents.

While Hooker is not disturbed by the limitations or contingent doubts associated with faith, Menno refused to baptise anyone until they came to the perfection of intent and holiness of life with a piety that can be observed.⁹⁵ Hooker on the other hand was able to believe that faith could be appropriated over time, and also, since no one can guarantee that even a sensible adult will never sin or collapse under the weight of evil, baptism should not be withheld from them on the grounds of that sort of contingency, neither should it be withheld from an infant. Here we see Hooker’s positive understanding of sacramental grace which sought to replicate the intentions of God.⁹⁶

For that which there wee professed without anie understandinge, when wee afterwarde come to acknowledg, doe wee any thinge els but onlie bringe unto ripenes the verie seed that was sowne before? Wee are *then beleviers* because *then wee beginne to be* that which processe of time doth make perfect. And till wee come to actuall beliefe, the verie sacrament of faith is a shielde as stronge as after this the faith of the sacrament against all contrarie infernall powers If therefore without anie feare or scruple wee may accompt them and terme them beleviers onlie for outwarde professions sake, which inwardlie are farther from faith then infantes, why not infantes much more at the time of their sollemne initiation by baptisme the sacrament of faith, whereunto they not onlie conceyve nothinge opposite, but have also that grace given them which is the first and most effectual cause out of which our beliefe groweth? In summe the whole Church is a multitude of beleviers, all honored with that title, even hypocrites for their professions sake as well as saintes because of their inwarde sincere perswasion, and *infantes as beinge in the first degree of their ghostlie motion towards the actuall habit of faith*⁹⁷

So in the context of the larger discussion of the validity of interrogatories and ceremonies, Hooker prepares the reader to appreciate again that sin, not our humanity, is

⁹⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.63.2: 2.292.28.

⁹⁵ *Complete Writings*, 274.

⁹⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.62.15: 2.281.3.

⁹⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.64.2: 2.294.30–295.26.

the enemy of our souls. In this way, Hooker integrates the discussion of baptism with the key *motifs* of grace, sin, and nature, and establishes within that triad, the essential hierarchy of saving participation in Christ. He connects tradition and ceremony to valid Christian action as something merely consistent with the need for all persons to create an imaginative mental structure with which they can contemplate the entirely ‘other.’ Such constructs must be suitable, because these awaken the soul to resistance, the remembrance of our baptism to the meaning of grace, the liberality of God “while we were yet sinners,” and a bar against “. . . nature’s secret suggestion.”⁹⁸ In a marvellous description of human reflection, Hooker describes his clear sympathies with those for whom their religion was woven into their very being, as he discusses the general usefulness of signing the baptised:

If men of so good experience and insight in the maimes of our weake flesh, have thought these fancied remembrancers available to awaken shamefastnes, that so the boldnes of sinne may be stayed ere it looke abroad, surlye the wisdome of the Church of Christ which hath to that use converted the ceremonie of the cross in baptisme it is no Christian mans parte to despise, especiallye seinge that by this meane where nature doth earnestlie implore aide, religion yeeldeth hir that readie assistance then which there can be no helpe more forcible servinge only to relieve memorie and to bringe to our cogitation that which should most make ashamed of sinne. The minde while wee are in this present life whether it contemplate, meditate . . . worketh nothinge without continueall recourse unto imagination the onlie storehowse of witt and peculiar chaire of memorie. On this anvil it ceaseth not daye and night to strike; by meanes whereof as the pulse declareth how the hart doth worke, so the verie thoughtes and cogitations of mans minde be they good or bad doe no where sooner bewray them selves, then through the crevesses of that wall wherewith nature hath compassed the celles and closettes of phancie.⁹⁹

Thus the validity of baptism in Hooker relied upon the interplay of the three poles of sacramental worship namely, moral, ecclesial, and mystical, all of which draw their power from the mind and will of God. The order of nature is not hostile to the order of

⁹⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.65.7: 2.307.20.

⁹⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.65.6: 2.306.22–307.9.

the Spirit since we are its temple.¹⁰⁰

The continuity of reform and Scriptural faith brought grace, sin, and nature into conjunction, where grace must powerfully confute the disfigurement of sin without the destruction of the good we know from God in nature. In a beautiful piece of ironic wit, Hooker responds to the Puritan criticism that interrogatories are a pointless discipline, by revealing their own over-zealous inquiry into the suitability of baptismal candidates, and suggesting they themselves have misrepresented the will of God:

. . . whereas God hath appointed them ministers of holie thinges, they make them selves inquisitors of mens persons a greate deal farther than neede is. They should consider that God hath ordeined baptisme in favour of mankind. To restraine favors is an odious thinge, to enlarge them acceptable both to God and man.¹⁰¹

Though it is true that tradition is to be honoured, Hooker makes no claim that one should remain committed to ceremonies that have lost their significance.¹⁰² The sphere of religious comprehension lay not only within the intellect, but in the total experience of the divine within nature, which comes also from the hand of God, and cannot be limited by human projections of what divine intention can or cannot will. The necessity of understanding the language of religion as analogous and metaphoric must therefore lead to a new appreciation of the symbolic in Christian worship. The extreme sensitivity of the Puritans to the visual and aesthetic aspects of worship had caused them to reject such legitimate devices. Yet, Calvin himself was not hostile to the arts.¹⁰³ In relation to signing the forehead with the cross at baptism, Hooker is sanguine about the matter:

It is not (you will say) the crosse in our foreheades but in our hartes the faith of Christ that armeth us with patience constancie and courage. Which as wee

¹⁰⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.3.2: 1.65.20–33.

¹⁰¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.64.5: 2.298.4–17.

¹⁰² Hooker, *Lawes*, V.65.5: 2.303.25.

¹⁰³ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.11.12.

graunt to be most true, so neither dare wee despise no not the meanest helpes that serve though it be but in the verie lowest degree of furtherance towards the highest services that God doth require at our handes. And if anie man deny that such ceremonies are available at the least as memorials of dutie . . . it is but reasonable that in the one the publique experience of the world overwaigh some fewe mens perswasion, and in the other the rare perfection of a fewe condescend unto common imbecillitie.¹⁰⁴

The Puritan anxiety of idolatry in signs and artifacts was one which Hooker took seriously but which he pointed out was a hazard more apparent than real. The integrity of the sign was important because it was not arbitrary, but always took the pious worshipper beyond the sign to the signified. Hooker viewed such Puritan arguments as being something of an insult to one's intelligence:

. . . no such error can growe by adoring in that sorte a dead image which everie man knoweth to be voyd of excellence in it self, and therefore will easilie conceyve that the honor done unto it hath an higher reference.¹⁰⁵

The regenerate mind, he argues, is not likely to confuse image for reality, but since the church is represented by Hooker as a thoroughly comprehensive and varied cross-section of humanity, the use and value of 'devices' was only consistent with the general patterns of human life, and not dubious in itself. Baptism and its ceremonies offered a window into the reforming mind of Hooker. With respect to Menno, Hooker lived in a different epistemological world, but he addressed the Puritans as spiritual kinsmen, and attempted to share common ground though his frustration is evident in his notes to *A Christian Letter*:

If Aristotle and the Schoolmen be such perilous creatures, you must needes think your self an happie man whom God hath so fairely blest from too much . . . knowledg in them.¹⁰⁶

Again, Hooker's reformation assumed a fair and reasonable exchange of knowledge and goodwill, and was fearful of extremes, to which he believed the Puritan

¹⁰⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.65.10: 2.310.5–16.

¹⁰⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.65.15: 2.315.9.

¹⁰⁶ Hooker, *A Christian Letter*, 4.65.6.

position had exposed itself:

. . . are not your Anabaptists, Familists, Libertines, Arrians and other like extreme reformers of popery grown by that very meanes . . . hateful to the whole world? Are not their heresies a thousand times more execrable and hateful then popery?¹⁰⁷

Presumably, Hooker smarted at the Puritan analysis of the *Lawes* as unpatriotic (quite apart from being theologically suspect), especially by those whom he took, “. . . for no competent judg.”¹⁰⁸ Here, Hooker’s detractors introduced the possibility that the *Lawes* might even be seditious:

. . . what shall we have cause to thinke of these your tedious and laborious writings? Shall wee doe you wronge to suspect you as a privie and subtill enemie to the whole state of the Englishe Church, and that you would have men to deeme her Majestie to have done ill in abolishing the Romish religion, and banishing the Popes authoritie: and that you would be glad to see the backsliding of all reformed churches to bee made conformable to that wicked synagogue of Rome, and shame and reproche to all faithfull Ministers, whom God hath rayseed up to reveale and beate downe Antichrist: and that you esteeme the preaching and writing of all the reverend fathers of our Church, and bookes of holy scripture to bee at the least of no greater moment then *Aristotle* and the Schoolemen?¹⁰⁹

For Richard Hooker, nature was the arena of grace, not its enemy, since it bore the stamp of its creator, and appeal to it could therefore be made as a positive good without confusing the equal reality that sin manifested itself within the order of nature. Hooker attempted to answer what he took to be bad theology and faulty reasoning with good theology, not an abandonment of everything that error touched, to be replaced with a religious discipline that brought serious errors of its own, and an arid experience of grace. His starting point was a constructive understanding of sacramental theology within which baptism held its place, rather than beginning with baptism and weaving

¹⁰⁷ Hooker, *A Christian Letter*, 4.67.7.

¹⁰⁸ Hooker, *A Christian Letter*, 4.69.25.

¹⁰⁹ Hooker, *A Christian Letter*, 4.67.20.

sacramental thought around it. Grace addresses humans embodied in varied moral and spiritual conditions, and in Hooker, baptism pre-eminently offered a sacramental assurance of divine grace and pardon “while we were yet sinners.” While it is true, as Spinks¹¹⁰ observes, that Hooker spent a great deal of time defending the baptismal practice of the church, I think it fair to say that his theology (and epistemology), is offered more than in passing.¹¹¹ Hooker is really no more interested in propping up a ceremonial system devoid of theological significance than his Puritan critics:

Ceremonies have more in waight than in sight, they worke by commonnes of use much, although in the severall actes of their usage wee scarcely discern any good they doe. And because the use which they have for the most parte is not perfectlie understood, superstition is apt to impute unto them greater vertue then indeed they have.¹¹²

And in reply to the assertion that Christ has rendered unnecessary the (legal and Parliamentary) use of ceremonies:

Which strange imagination is begotten of a speciall dislike they have to heare that ceremonies now in use should be thought significant, whereas in truth such as are not significant must needs be vaine. Ceremonies destitute of significance are no better then the idle gestures of men whose broken wittes are not masters of that they doe Doth not our Lord Jesus Christ him selfe impute the omission of some corteous ceremonies even in domesticall intertainment to a colder degree of loving affection, and take the contrarie in better parte, not so much respectinge what was lesse don as what was signified lesse by the one then the other?¹¹³

Therefore, Hooker arguing *a fortiori*, observes that if the ‘ceremonies’ of common life are to be honoured because they manifest the dignity of human relationships (since dominical precedent also acknowledged this), how much more, Hooker emphasises, are

¹¹⁰ Spinks, *Two Faces of Elizabethan Anglican Theology*, 147.

¹¹¹ Spinks, *Two Faces of Elizabethan Anglican Theology*, 147.

¹¹² Hooker, *Lawes*, V.65.4: 2.303.2.

¹¹³ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.65.5: 2.303.22–27, 304.7–12.

the religious rites which similarly honour the doctrines of God, and reflect his grace.¹¹⁴ The irenic position of Richard Hooker was remarkable for a church that seemed permanently locked in conflict over its order of discipline. The relative simplicity of his appeal to the good will that could be found in human nature was anchored in his belief that not all that could be labelled “evell” in Christian ritual, was any more than routine human negligence, which the “scouring” of reform would satisfy:

. . . to speake the truth as the truth is, our verie nature doth hardlie yelde to destroy that which maie be frutefullie kept and without any great difficultie cleane scoured from the rust of evell which by some accident hath grown into it.¹¹⁵

Hooker's Source of Faith

For Calvin reason, even reason illumined by the Holy Spirit, supported the claims of faith but did not validate faith. This was true also for Hooker. Since both Calvin and Hooker worked with a pre-Enlightenment epistemology, there still remains some surprise that Calvin would so readily dismiss the sort of Hookerian “probability” of texts that is necessitated by any exegetical venture. By the mid-seventeenth century, Richard Baxter was handling the same question with responses that echoed those of Hooker rather than Calvin.

Hooker’s pneumatology is under-represented in the literature compared to the importance it played in both Puritan divinity and in Hooker's thought. His defence of the authority of the Elizabethan church could not have been addressed without a functional pneumatology because they each pressed the question of the sources of rational certainty. The Commonwealth existed in Hooker’s polity in terms of both faith

¹¹⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.65.5: 2.304.20.

¹¹⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.65.20: 2.318.29.

and government. For if the question of ecclesial authority could not be resolved solely on rational grounds, or even by the realities of political expediency, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit would similarly appear to be compromised, since the church had been called into existence through the Spirit at Pentecost. Thus, Puritans had to maintain that only the common life of the elect could be pleasing to God for, as Calvin had said, “. . . the Word will not find acceptance in men’s hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit.”¹¹⁶ Although Hooker does not dispute this view of the Spirit, his pneumatology was large enough to accommodate a more generous response because he refused to locate faith and reason in mutually exclusive categories, and thereby limit the prior conditions wherein, as he says, “the mysteries of supernaturall trueth”¹¹⁷ could be apprehended. But for Calvin, the oracles of God were in large measure hidden from reasonable men regardless of their goodwill for:

If God has willed this treasure of understanding to be hidden from his children, it is no wonder or absurdity that the multitude of men are so ignorant and stupid! Among the “multitude” I include even certain distinguished folk, until they become engrafted into the body of the church.¹¹⁸

Hooker shared this view of a revelatory concept of human knowing in matters of divinity and reason, as they applied them to the justification of human knowledge and governance. Hooker agrees with Calvin that “distinguished folk” have no special advantage in the appropriation of spiritual knowledge, and are just as susceptible to the consequences of sin:

Soe in matters above the reach of reason, and beyond the compasse of nature, where only faith is to judge, by God’s revealed lawe what is right or good, the wisdom of the flesh severed and devided from that spiritt which converteth mans heart to the liking of Gods trueth, must needes be here as formall adversaries to him, and as farre from subjection to his lawe as before. Yett in these cases not only the carnall and more brutish sorte of men, butt the wittiest, the greatest in account for secular and worldly wisdom, *Scribes, Philosophers,*

¹¹⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.4.

¹¹⁷ Hooker, *Dublin Fragments*, 9: 108.29.

¹¹⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.5.

profoude disputers are the cheifest in opposition against God; Such in the Primitive Church were *Julian, Lucian, Porphyrie, Symachus*, and other of like note, by whome both the naturall lawe of God was disobeyed, and the mysteries of supernaturall truth derided; I conclude therefore, The naturall aptnes of mans will to take or refuse things presented before it; and the evidence which good things have for themselves, if reason were diligent to search it out, may be soundlie and safely taught without any contradiction to any syllable in that confession of the Church, or in those sentences of holy *Scripture* by you alleadged, whereas Gods especiall grace fayleth.¹¹⁹

The unique and independent character of Hooker's thought is evident here.

Although he clearly recognises the truth of Calvin's position where faith and Spirit must prevail "in matters above the reach of reason" and where the negative corollary results in persons becoming "formall adversaries" to God, nevertheless Hooker accords a crucial and indispensable role to the role of reason. Therefore, Hooker's conclusions resulted in a greater openness than Calvin towards the capacity of human intellect to achieve biblically congruent (and hence faithful) parameters for the construction of human society. The pneumatic aspect of Richard Hooker's epistemology was a significant factor in maintaining his continuity with reformation principles, without conceding either the liberty of the Spirit to reveal, or constrain, the wisdom of the individual or community, or the freedom of human reason to find it.

¹¹⁹ Hooker, *Dublin Fragments*, 9: 108.18–109.4.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS: HOOKER'S HERMENEUTIC OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Rory Fox contends that Richard Hooker was trapped by the logic of his own apologetic to such a degree that:

Hooker's ecclesiastical polity is muddled, incomplete and quite simply incoherent. Despite his claims, and those claims made on his behalf, it should now be quite clear that he has not provided any meaningful apology for his faith, certainly not one that is supposed to show the rational superiority of it over both Puritanism and Roman Catholicism.¹

Fox reaches this conclusion from his analysis of Hooker's hermeneutical approach to Scripture, and his attempt to steer a middle course between the 'reasonable' claims of the Puritans and Rome. Indeed, according to Fox, "Far from producing a coherent doctrinal apology, . . . Hooker's argument contains a fatal flaw which vitiates his conclusion."² The conclusion to which Fox refers is the description by J. W. Packer of Hooker's *Lawes* as "one of the greatest apologies for Anglican doctrine that has ever been written."³ Fox argues that Hooker's hermeneutical dilemma was created by the need to respond to the Puritan demand for the exclusive sufficiency of Scripture which

¹ Rory Fox, "Richard Hooker and the Incoherence of 'Ecclesiastical Polity,'" *The Heythrop Journal* 44, no. 1 (2003): 57.

² Fox, "Incoherence," 43.

³ J.W. Packer, *The Transformation of Anglicanism: 1643–1660* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969), 173n. Quoted by Fox, Fox, "Incoherence," 43.

led to the circular difficulty of having to admit that Scripture itself did not supply a self-referential definition of its own canonicity. Hooker believed that Scripture itself pointed to the possibility of faith apart from the Scriptural witness:

. . . the object of fayth may not so narrowly be restrayned, as if the same did extend no further then to the only scriptures of God. *Though* (sayeth our Saviour) *ye beleeve not me, beleeve my workes, that ye may know and beleeve that the father is in me and I in him. The other Disciples sayd unto Thomas, we have seen the Lord; but his aunswere unto them was, Except I see in his handes the print of the nayles, and put my finger into them, I will not beleeve. Can there be any thing more plaine, then that which by these two sentences appeareth, namely, that there may be a certaine beliefe grounded upon other assurance then Scripture; any thing more cleare, then that we are sayd not onely to beleeve the thinges which we knowe by anothers relation, but even whatsoever we are certainly perswaded of, whether it be by reason or by sense?*⁴

The “certaine beliefe grounded upon other assurance then Scripture” is clearly a point made for polemical purpose and suggests a measure of special pleading.⁵ Hooker had already by Book II fully established his commitment to the inspiration and authority of Scripture. Hooker’s quotation above was not an attempt to relegate Scripture to a

⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, II.4.1: 1.152.5–15.

⁵ Hooker is quoting the Apostle Thomas’ words in John 20:25 and cites Jesus’ reply in John 2:29: “Might not, yea, did Thomas fully in the end perswade him selfe, that he did well to thinke that bodie, which now was raysed, to be the same which had bene crucified? That which gave *Thomas* this assurance was his sense, *Thomas because thou hast seene, thou beleevest*, sayeth our Saviour. What scripture had *Tully* for his assurance? Yet I nothing doubt but that they who alleage him, think he did well to set downe in writing a thing so consonant unto truth. Finally we all beleeve the Scriptures of God are sacred, and that they have proceeded from God; our selves we assure that wee doe right well in so beleeving. We have for this point a demonstration sound and infallible. But it is not the worde of God which doth or possiblie can assure us, that we do right well to thinke it his worde. For if any one booke of Scripture did give testimonie to all; yet still that Scripture which giveth credite to the rest, would require another Scripture to give credite unto it: neither could we ever come unto any pause whereon to rest our assurance this way, so that unlesse besides scripture there were some thing which might assure us that we do well, we could not thinke we do well, no not in being assured that scripture is a sacred and holie rule of well doing.” Hooker, *Lawes*, II.4.2: 1.153.7–25. Hooker’s point is simply that the sacredness of Scripture is evident by faith through the Holy Spirit’s enabling of human reason—that is, redeemed reason. His concern is to establish that it was not sin to do what the Scriptures did not expressly command. See his argument in Hooker, *Lawes*, II.4.7: 1.156.27–157.25.

secondary status, nor to defend Rome's commitment to ecclesiastical tradition. It was Scripture itself that pointed to the possibility of authentic faith even where knowledge of Scripture was lacking. However, Fox is correct to note Hooker's apparent difficulty, and we have already observed that his leniency towards Rome, though he rejected the authority of Rome, led him to accept the reasonable possibility that popish heresy was not everywhere the same as a culpable denial of the Gospel. Hooker does not position himself as an apologist for Rome. He only considers Rome to make the point that error is a probable phenomenon amongst humans, and that if the foundations of belief are not denied, then salvation is possible.⁶ The point at issue here was that Hooker understood the Puritan commitment to the absolutely prescriptive role of Scripture to be incompatible with Scripture itself. To place limits on the role of Scripture was not to compromise either the inspiration or revelatory character of Scripture—Hooker had already established his acceptance of that. Thus, if Rome erred by denying Scripture its central and indispensable place as a source of revelation, the Puritans erred by demanding more from Scripture than it was intended to supply.

Fox's observation of the Puritan claim that together with Scripture, the hermeneutical and epistemological norm was the interior witness of the Holy Spirit was the central platform for Calvin's hermeneutic and, as Fox notes, the Puritan appeal to Scripture set down the certainties of faith by which every matter could be decided, including divinely stipulated forms of church and public polity. But of course the problem was that for many questions, one could only *infer* principles for the resolution

⁶“Forasmuche therefore as it maie be said of the church of Rome she hath yett a *little strength*, she doth not directly deny the foundacion of christianitye. I maie I truste without offence perswade my self that thowsandes of our fathers in former tymes lyving and dying within her walles have found mercie att the handes of god.” Richard Hooker, “A Learned Discourse of Justification, Workes, and How the Foundation of Faith Is Overthrowne,” in *Tractates and Sermons*, vol. 5 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. Egil Grislis and Laetitia Yeandle, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 17: 5.125.6–10.

of key questions, such as the meaning of sacraments, prescribed forms of church government, and so on. In the *Preface* Hooker is well-aware of the problem. The following lengthy quote is worth citing in full as it describes Hooker's statement of the problem:

. . . how plainely do they imagine that the Scripture every where speaketh in favour of that sect? And assuredly the very cause which maketh the simple and ignorant to thinke they even see how the worde of God runneth currantly on your side, is that their mindes are forestalled and their conceites perverted before hand by being taught, that an Elder doth signifie a layman admitted onely to the office of rule or government in the Church . . . that by mysticall resemblance mount Syon and Jerusalem are the churches which admit, Samaris and Babylon the Churches which oppugne the said forme of regiment. And in like sort they are taught to apply all things spoken of repairing the wals and decayed parts of the City and temple of God, by Esdras, Nehemias, and the rest: as if purposely the holy ghost had therein ment to foresignifie, what the authors of admonitions to the Parliament . . . From thence they proceede to an higher point, which is the perswading of men credulous and over capable of such pleasing errors, that it is the speciall illumination of the holy Ghost, whereby they discern those things in the word, which others reading yet discern them not. . . . There are but two waies whereby the spirit leadeth men into all truth: the one extraordinarie, the other common; the one belonging but unto some few, the other extending it selfe unto all that are of God; the one that which we call by a speciall divine excellency Revelation, the other Reason. If the Spirite by such revelation have discovered unto them the secrets of that discipline out of Scripture, they must profess themselves to be all (even men, women, and children) Prophets. Or if Reason be the hand which the Spirite hath led them by, for as much as perswasions grounded upon reason are either weaker or stronger according to the force of those reasons whereupon the same are grounded, they must every of them from the greatest to the least be able for every severall article to shoue some special reason as strong as their perswasion therin is earnest. Otherwise how can it be but that some other sinewes there are from which that overplus of strength in perswasion doth arise?⁷

Hooker simply accuses the Puritans of circular reasoning having found in the Scriptures the form of church government they desired, and then concluding that such discovery was by virtue of the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, Hooker does not anywhere deny that such positive insight is lacking in Scripture. The Puritans might well be correct, but this was not directly relevant since Scripture offered no

⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.9: 1.16.24–3.10:17.29.

prescriptive wisdom on many matters, including the construction, for example, of church buildings, or vestments. Hooker had no disagreement with them about the nature of the human situation, its “foggie damp of original corruption,”⁸ and the impossibility of achieving salvation by anything other than divine initiative. There was however, dispute over the density of the fog:

The light of nature is never able to finde out any way of obtayning the reward of blisse, but by performing exactly the duties and workes of righteousnes. From salvation therefore and life all flesh being excluded this way, behold how the wisdome of God hath revealed a way mysticall and supernaturall, a way directing unto the same ende of life by a course which groundeth it selfe upon the guiltines of sinne, and through sinne desert of condemnation and death.⁹

The Puritan problem was that they had, ironically, dispensed with one of the key attributes of the Holy Spirit which was the gift of redeemed reason, a gift that Calvin himself did not reject. Hooker argues that reason and Spirit are not mutually exclusive domains of God’s action for indeed, reason is as likely to be “. . . *the hand which the Spirite hath led them by . . .*”¹⁰ and if this is true, reason could be used to judge Puritan claims.

As Fox notes, “Appeals to the Holy Spirit ‘work’ only by conceding precisely the key points which were at issue, namely that the scriptures as we have them are not ‘sufficient’ because they need to be supplemented by the Holy Spirit.”¹¹ Hooker broadened the base of the argument by highlighting the “. . . *two waies whereby the spirit leadeth men into all truth: the one extraordinarie, the other common; the one belonging but unto some few, the other extending it selfe unto all that are of God; the one that which we call by a speciall divine excellency Revelation, the other Reason.*”¹²

⁸ Hooker, “Comfortable Sermon,” 71.17.

⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.5: 1.118.11–18.

¹⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.10:17.22f.

¹¹ Fox, “Incoherence,” 48.

¹² Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.9: 3.10:15–19.

He could assert this confidently because the Scriptures themselves indicated that spiritual gifts were by no means common to everyone, and that revelatory knowledge in particular was granted to few.¹³ Here, in context, when Hooker talks about “reason,” he means “right reason” understood as that reason which has been inspired by the Holy Spirit and as such, able to recognise and submit to the demands of divine law. He draws a distinction between the superiority of right reason and the limited capacity of natural reason to discern the truth of divine law:

Many things good to the judgement of sense, are in the eye of right reason abhorred as evill, in which case the voice of reason is the voice of God. So that they whoe being destitute of that spiritt which should certifiye and give reason, follow the conduct of sensual direction, termed the *wisdom* of the flesh, must needes thereby fall into actions of plaine hostilitie against God. . . . Soe in matters above the reach of reason, and beyond the compasse of nature, where only faith is to judge, by Gods revealed lawe what is right or good, the wisdome of the flesh severed and devided from that spiritt which converteth mans heart to the liking of Gods trueth, must needes be heere as formall adversaries to him, and as farre from subjection to his lawe as before.¹⁴

Fox concludes however, that “Not only does Hooker actually fail to establish a convincing response to Roman Catholic criticisms [concerning the sufficiency of Scripture], but he then goes on to commit himself to precisely all the errors which he attributes to the Puritans.”¹⁵ The problem here is that Fox has located Hooker *outside* the so-called hermeneutical circle, and then found Hooker guilty of arguing from within it. But Hooker never saw himself as outside the hermeneutical circle; he understood himself to be sharing many of the same concerns as the Puritans, and in collegial fashion:

The case so standing therefore my brethren as it doth, the wisdom of governors ye must not blame, in that they further also forecasting the manifold strange and dangerous innovations which are more then likely to follow if your discipline should take place, have for that cause thought it hitherto a part of their dutie to withstand your endeavors that way. The rather, for that they have already some

¹³ Cf. Ephesians 3:1–6, 4:7–12; 1 Corinthians 12:27–31.

¹⁴ Hooker, *Dublin Fragments*, 4.9.108.5–23.

¹⁵ Fox, “Incoherence,” 56f.

*small beginnings of the fruits thereof, in them who concurring with you in judgement about the necessities of that discipline, have adventured without more ado, to separate themselves from the rest of the Church, and to put your speculations in execution. These mens hastines the warier sort of you doth not commend, yee wish they had held themselves longer in, and not so daungerously flowne abroad before the fethers of the cause had beene growne, their errour with merciful termes ye reprove naming them in great commiseration of mind, your poore brethren. They on the contrary side more bitterly accuse you as their false brethren, and against you they plead saying: "From your breasts it is we have sucked those things which when ye delivered unto us ye tearmed that heavenly, sincere, and wholesome milke of Gods worde, howsoever ye now abhorre as poison that which the vertue thereof hath wrought and brought forth in us."*¹⁶

Hooker understood well that the Puritans did not represent a uniform catalogue of opinions or viewpoints. He even points to the Barrowists as a radical offshoot of Puritanism which the "warier sort" of Puritan eschewed. *"Thus the foolish Barrowist deriveth his schisme by way of conclusion, as to him it seemeth, directly and plainly out of your principles. Him therefore we leave to be satisfied by you from whom he hath sproong."*¹⁷ Nevertheless, this shows that Hooker did hold the Puritans accountable for opening the door to extremism.

However, it should be noted that Hooker was not trying to win a debate based solely on force of argument. To be sure, he utilised the persuasive power of reason, and appealed to the value of tradition without being enslaved by it; he confirms his confidence in the inspiration of Scripture, and the sacraments as the divinely ordained means of grace all the while affirming that "grace is not absolutely tyed unto sacramentes."¹⁸ Furthermore, he calls forth obedience to the collective mind of the church despite recognising the contingent authority of Bishops which together provided a cumulative weight or argument:

As therefore Presbyters do know that the custom of the Church makes them subject to the Bishop which is set over them; so let the Bishops know that

¹⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 8.1: 36.18–37.3.

¹⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 8.1: 39.2–5.

¹⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.60.6: 2.260.3.

custom, rather than the truth of any Ordinance of the Lords maketh them greater than the rest, and that with common advice they ought to govern the Church. To clear the sence of these words therefore, as we have done already the former: Laws which the Church from the beginning universally hath observed were some delivered by Christ himself, with a charge to keep them till the worlds end as the law of baptizing and administring the holy Eucharist; some brought in afterwards by the Apostles, yet not without special direction of the Holy Ghost, as occasions did arise.¹⁹

In even stronger terms Hooker re-emphasised that the government of the church was based on consent notwithstanding his traditional view that the ministry of bishops “. . . was from Heaven, was even of God, the Holy Ghost was the Author of it.”²⁰ Still, the ministry of Bishops, even if derived by the authority of the Holy Spirit, was nevertheless a consensual model, at least in principle. Hooker can never be charged with naivete with respect to Bishops. They can be removed if the need arises—it is simply that the Puritans have not demonstrably offered a better choice in presbyterial governance:

Wherefore least Bishops forget themselves, as if none on earth had Authority to touch their states, let them continually bear in mind, that it is rather the force of custome, whereby the Church having so long found it good to continue under the Regiment of her vertuous Bishops, doth still uphold, maintain, and honour them in that respect, then that any such true and heavenly Law can be showed, by the evidence whereof it may of a truth appear that the Lord himself hath appointed Presbyters for ever to be under the Regiment of Bishops, in what sort soever they behave themselves; let this consideration be a bridle unto them, let it teach them not to disdain the advice of their Presbyters, but to use their authority with so much the greater humility and moderation, as a Sword which the Church hath power to take from them.²¹

This is a remarkable concession from Hooker and points to the independence of his thought. Hooker was not in fact “trapped” because he was already inside the hermeneutical circle. Therefore, it was probable that any statement he might make whose intent was to rebut Puritan separatist views was always going to be special

¹⁹ Hooker, *Lawes*, VII.5.8: 3.166.12–23.

²⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, VII.5.10: 3.170.19f.

²¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, VII.5.8: 3.168.16–29.

pleading to some degree. Neither was he primarily concerned with defending the church in England against Rome. Rather, he seeks to remove the bipolar contours of the debate by positing a third way to which those *inside* the English commonwealth of Christ might yield fundamental acceptance. This was his real concern because it would matter little if he won the argument over epistemology while watching the Elizabethan church disintegrate.

Hooker's Third Way

There is every indication that Hooker knew the old order of Christendom was at an end and that the church in England would be forever marked by the tensions of factionalism. Whether or not he believed he could arrest such inevitability, he clearly blames this situation on the intransigence of the Puritans. At the outset, he declares his purpose in writing and acknowledges that the church as he knows it (or would wish it to be) was vanishing:

Though for no other cause, yet for this; that posteritie may know we have not loosely through silence permitted things to passe away as in a dreame, there shall be for mens information extant thus much concerning the present state of the Church of God established amongst us, and their carefull endeavour which woulde have upheld the same.²²

And to further state his personal disinterest in any material gain from defending the *status quo*, Hooker remarks that “At your hands beloved in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ . . . I have no greate cause to looke for other then the selfesame portion and lot, which your maner hath bene hitherto to lay on them that concurre not in opinion and sentence with you.”²³

²² Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 1.1: 1.1.9–13.

²³ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 1.1: 1.1.13–18.

The remarkable feature of later Puritans such as John Owen and Richard Baxter is the extent to which they sound so much like Richard Hooker. If so, then we can say that so far as his epistemological stance is concerned, Hooker was 50 years too early, or that Owen and Baxter were 50 years too late. For example, here we see Baxter vigorously defending the positive relationship between reason and the Holy Spirit:

Quest. CLXVIII: Are not our own reasons, studies, memory, strivings, books, forms, methods, and ministry, needless, yea, a hurtful, quenching or preventing of the Spirit, and setting up our own, instead of the Spirit's operation?

Answ. 1. Yes; if we do it in a conceit of the sufficiency of ourselves, our reason, memory, studies, books, forms, etc. without the Spirit; or if we ascribe any thing to any of these which is proper to Christ or to his Spirit. For such proud, self-sufficient despisers of the Spirit, cannot reasonably expect his help. I doubt among men counted learned and rational there are too many such, that know not mans insufficiency or corruption, nor the necessity and use of that Holy Spirit into whose name they were baptized, and in whom they take on them to believe. But think that all that pretend to the Spirit are but fanatics and enthusiasts, and self-conceited people; . . .

2. But if we give to reason, memory, study, books, methods, forms, etc. but their proper place in subordination to Christ and to his Spirit, they are so far from being quenchers of the Spirit, that they are necessary in their places, and such means as we must use, if ever we will expect the Spirit's help. For the Spirit is not given to a brute to make him a man, or rational; nor to a proud despiser, or idle neglecter of God's appointed means, to be instead of means; nor to be a patron of the vice of pride or idleness, which he cometh chiefly to destroy; but to bless men in their laborious use of the means which God appointed him: read but Prov. i. 20, etc. ii. iii. v. vi. viii., and you will see that knowledge must be laboured for, and instruction heard; and he that will lie idle till the Spirit move him, and will not stir up himself to seek God, or strive to enter in at the strait gate, not give any diligence to make his calling and election sure, may find that the Spirit of sloth hath destroyed him, when he thought the Spirit of Christ had been saving him.²⁴

It is clear that Baxter is makes a distinction between reason that is “self-sufficient” that is, without awareness of man’s insufficiency or corruption,” and that which is self-consciously dependent on the Spirit’s operation in the realm of the intellect. Baxter is responding to the belief that personal labour and industry are a “needless, yea, a hurtful, quenching or preventing of the Spirit, and setting up our own, instead of the Spirit’s operation.” His reply typically points to the arrogance of human rational sufficiency, but is equally firm on the necessary value of reason. “For the Spirit

²⁴ Baxter, *Works*, I.3: 725.

is not given to a brute to make him a man, or rational; nor to a proud despiser, or idle neglecter of God's appointed means, to be instead of means; . . .” This is precisely Hooker's position—the Spirit does not produce the faculties of rational discourse but transforms them through the convergence of faith. The Spirit represents the higher order of reality but is not in a contrary relation to the order of nature. The Pauline doctrine of *σάρξ* which appeared to set these orders in opposition was not world-denying in the sense that the created order was anything other than a morally good creation, but that “flesh” was the moral aspect of creation which was deeply embedded in human nature and hostile to God. In effect, Baxter urges that personal industry gives the Holy Spirit the raw material whereby human choices can be pleasing to God. This is Hooker. Again, note Baxter's attitude towards grace and nature which is identical to Hooker's²⁵ view that nature is the context within which revelation is apprehended:

Quest. CLVIII: Should not christians take up with Scripture wisdom only, without studying philosophy and other heathens' human learning?
 Answ. I have already proved the usefulness of common knowledge called human learning . . . 1. Grace presupposeth nature; we are men in order of nature at least before we are saints, and reason is before supernatural revelation. 2. Common knowledge therefore is subservient unto faith: we must know the Creator and his works; and the Redeemer restoreth us to the due knowledge of the Creator: human learning in the sense in question is also divine, God is the author of the light of nature, as well as of grace.²⁶

Baxter takes it for granted that “Grace presupposeth nature . . .” and is as suspicious as Hooker over pretensions to special revelations of the Spirit:

. . . all sober christians should be the more cautelous of being deceived by their own imaginations, because certain experience telleth us, that most in our age that

²⁵ “. . . nature hath need of grace, whereunto I hope, we are not opposite by holding that grace hath use of nature. Philosophie we are warned to take heed of: Not that Philosophie, which is true and sound knowledge attained by naturall discourse of reason, but that philosophie, which to bolster heresie or error casteth a fraudulent shew of reason upon things which are indeed unreasonable, and by that meane as by a strategeme spoileth the simple which are not able to withstand such cunning.” Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.6: 1.223.28–224.3. Note Hooker's careful use of verbs which, grammatically, ensures no confusion about the priority of grace over reason.

²⁶ Baxter, *Works*, I.3: 721.

have pretended to prophecy, or to inspirations, or revelations, have been melancholy, crack-brained persons, near to madness, who have proved to be deluded in the end; and that such crazed persons are still prone to such imaginations.²⁷

Similarly, John Owen in his *Pneumatologia* is at great pains to rehabilitate the place of the Holy Spirit in a Christian epistemology, steering a course between Richard Baxter's "crack-brained" and "crazed persons" and sophists whom Calvin and Hooker each renounce. The agenda of reform had been brought into profound disrepute by unbridled charismatic claims and a rejection of reason which alienated thoughtful inquiry into matters of divinity, and the crucial role of the Holy Spirit. John Owen laments that any mention of the Holy Spirit brought derision upon the speaker:

The first and chief pretence of this nature is, that all those who plead for the effectual operations of the Holy Spirit in the illumination of the minds of men, the reparation of their natures, the sanctification of their persons, and their endowment with spiritual gifts, are thereby enemies to *reason*, and impugn the use of it in religion, or at least allow it not that place and exercise therein which is its due. Hence, some of those who are otherwise minded affirm that it is cast on them as a reproach that they are *rational divines*; although, so far as I can discern, if it be so, it is as Hierom was beaten by an angel for being a Ciceronian (in the judgment of some), very undeservedly. But the grounds whereon this charge should be made good have not as yet been made to appear; neither hath it been evinced that any thing is ascribed by us unto the efficacy of God's grace in the least derogatory unto reason, its use, or any duty of man depending thereon.²⁸

And like Hooker and Baxter, Owen recognised that natural reason had limits and that for theological investigations into faith, as matters of revelation, ". . . that natural reason cannot enable the mind of man unto a saving perception of spiritual things, as revealed, without the especial aid of the Spirit of God in illumination."²⁹ So reason,

²⁷ Baxter, *Works*, I.3: 722.

²⁸ John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 3, 11.

²⁹ John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 3, 12 Owen was in general extremely skeptical over the capacity of philosophic reflection to apprehend theological truth. He considers the mixture of theology and philosophic reasoning to be a dangerous mixture. By "reason" Owen usually does not mean "right reason" in Hooker's terms, but rather the manner in which he considers reason to abuse theology by introducing distortions and coined theological terms alien to Scripture. The epistemological priority was faith in the regenerate mind as a first principle for theological comprehension. Cf. Sebastian

according to Owen, has its necessary function in human life and is essential if the things of the Spirit are to be recognised as such. But to claim the higher reaches of spiritual wisdom did not thereby negate the value of reason for, “. . . we cannot conceive how reason should be prejudiced by the advancement of the rational faculties of our souls, with respect unto their exercise towards their proper objects—which is all we assign unto the work of the Holy Spirit in this matter; . . .”³⁰ Owen is not saying anything here that had not been said by Hooker, and Calvin before him with the exception that he is addressing audiences that are on the one hand hostile, and on the other, sympathetic towards spiritual enthusiasm inside Puritanism. “Wherefore, as to enthusiasms of any kind, which might possibly give countenance unto any diabolical suggestions, we are so far from affirming any operations of the Holy Ghost to consist in them, or in any thing like unto them, that we allow no pretence of them to be consistent therewithal.”³¹ His method of bringing relief to the question that Baxter addressed regarding the possibility of new revelation, was to attribute the closing of the canon to the work of the Holy Spirit:

. . . concerning *revelations*. They are of two sorts,—objective and subjective. Those of the former sort, whether they contain doctrines contrary unto that of Scripture, or additional thereunto, or seemingly confirmatory thereof, they are all universally rejected, the former being absolutely false, the latter useless. Neither have any of the operations of the Spirit pleaded for the least respect unto them; for he having finished the whole work of external revelation, and closed it in the Scripture, his whole internal work is suited and commensurate thereunto.³²

This corresponds to Hooker’s two kinds of revelation, special and ordinary. The

Rehman, *Divine Discourse: The Theological Methodology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 122–28.

³⁰ John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 3, 12.

³¹ John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 3, 13.

³² John Owen, *Works*, Vol. 3, 13.

point to be made here is that there is a continuum from Calvin to Owen³³ that includes Hooker. Nigel Voak's contention, and that of Peter Lake, that Hooker was writing to blunt the course of reform in England seems to be greatly overdrawn in light of Hooker's alignment with Calvin.

Hooker refused to be trapped between two incompatible extremes. He defended a principled position that could be maintained by persons of good will and one to which he was committed. Since the question of Christian foundations was so vital for Hooker, one that he uses explicitly to affirm individual salvation even where 'corporate' heresy is probable, this becomes his appeal. In his view, the ultimate goal of human existence is union with God. He insists that the means to achieve this is the operation of divine grace and forbearance of God made manifest in the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. To this end, faith is the personal expression of human acceptance of this truth, but one that is manifested in a dynamic relation between the orders of heaven and creation. It draws its inspiration from an acceptance of supernatural and supramundane realities which are mediated by the divine gift of the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the church and its sacramental life. The dynamic and secret relationship of the Spirit and the individual had already been hinted at by Calvin but Hooker made this the basis for the purposes of reform. Any process of reform, would naturally give rise to

³³In the case of John Owen, there are three principles: the ". . . inbred principles of *natural light*, and the first rational actings of our minds, . . . by rational consideration of things externally proposed unto us, . . . by faith." John Owen, *Pneumatologia: The Reason of Faith*, vol. 4 of *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), 82f. Thus, ". . . if any pretend unto *revelations by faith* which are contradictory unto the first principles of natural light or reason, in its proper exercise about its proper objects, it is a delusion." John Owen, *Works, Vol. 4*, 86, nevertheless with respect to to Scripture "The Spirit of God evidenceth the *divine original and authority* of the Scripture by the power and authority which he puts forth in it and by it over the minds and consciences of men, with its operation of divine effects thereon." John Owen, *Works, Vol. 4*, 93. As Sebastian Rehnman observes of Owen, ". . . noetical depravity can only be removed by the power of the Spirit of God." Rehnman, *Divine Discourse*, 137.

theological speculation and debate. Hooker's response was a third way, shared by Calvin, Baxter, and Owen, that presupposed an interior revelation and assurance he had earlier denied the Puritans but which he now re-visited having re-established the crucial link between faith, reason, and the Holy Spirit:

If we desire to provide in the best way for our consciences—that they may not be perpetually beset by the instability of doubt or vacillation—we ought to seek our conviction in a higher place than human reasons, judgments, or conjectures, that is, in the secret testimony of the Spirit. True, if we wished to proceed by arguments, we might advance many things that would easily prove . . . that the law, the prophets, and the gospel come from him.³⁴

The “third way” was one that should in principle have been welcomed by his Puritan protagonists because he used their language of dependency on the Holy Spirit and its “secret testimony” for all spiritual insight into matters of revealed truth not finally arbitrated even by “reasons, judgments or conjectures.” And since “nature even in this life doth plainly claime and call for a more divine perfection”³⁵ Hooker must be seen as showing himself consistent with the aims of both the Gospel and reform itself for “There resteth therefore eyther no way unto salvation, or if any, then surely a way which is supernaturall, a way which could never have entered into the heart of man as much as once to conceive or imagine, if God him selfe had not revealed it extraordinarilie. For which cause we terme it the mysterie or secret way of salvation.”³⁶ But although Hooker was always suspicious of private judgements concerning the truth of the Gospel and particularly prescriptive claims for the ordering of common life, he was never against the claim that the Spirit did actually secretly bestow wisdom to whomever he chose, though not ordinarily without the reasoning of those similarly blessed. Thus he can say that:

³⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.10: 1.17.29–18.4.

³⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.4: 1.115.23f.

³⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.5: 1.116.4–8.

The operations of the spirit, especially these ordinary which be common unto all true christian men, . . . things secret and undiscernable even to the very soule where they are, because their nature is of another and an higher kind then they can be by us perceived in this life. . . . yet bicause these workings of the spirit in us are so privy and secret, we therefore stand on a plainer ground, when we gather by reason from the qualitie of things beleaved or done, that the spirit of God hath directed us in both; . . .³⁷

Although Nigel Voak³⁸ has argued to the contrary, this is not so remote from the Reformed position as represented by Calvin. To be sure, it is a more refined argument than Calvin, but it is consistent with Calvin's language. The legitimate mystery of faith he took to be part of the essential character of faith itself, and as union with the Godhead which, if it was unattainable in life by virtue of any human effort, had actually been forensically bestowed by the "spirit of adoption" as the consequence of divine grace resulting in the believer's union with Christ:

God gyveth us both the one Justice and the other, the one by accepting us for righteous in Christe, the other by workinge christian righteousness in us. The proper and moste ymediate efficiente cause in us of this latter is the *spirite of adoption* which we have receyved into our hartes: that whereof it consisteth whereof it is really and formally made are those infused virtues proper and particuler unto saintes, which the spirite in that very momente when firste it is gyven of god bringeth with it. The effectes thereof are suche accions, as the apostle doth call *the fruites the workes the operacions* of the spirit: . . .³⁹

In fact, what Hooker has done is attempt to subsume Puritan arguments based on mere

³⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.15: 1.232.33–233.7.

³⁸ Nigel Voak argues that Hooker is ". . . a very long way indeed from the Reformed position that the sole source of infallible religious authority is Holy Scripture authenticated and interpreted by the direct internal witness of the Holy Spirit." Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology*, 265. However, we have already noted that while Hooker's epistemology is more refined than Calvin's, it is nonetheless consistent. Furthermore, as to the centrality of Scripture as the "sole source of infallible religious authority," Hooker asserts that "we are to knowe that the word of God is his heavenlie truth touchinge matters of eternall life revealed and uttered unto men; unto prophetes and apostles by immediate divine inspiration from them to us by their bookes and writings. We therefore have no *word of God* but the Scripture." Hooker, *Lawes*, V.21.1: 2.84.13–18. This can hardly be understood as representing anything less than a Reformed understanding of the central place of Scripture notwithstanding the "outward accidentes which maie befall it . . ." Hooker, *Lawes*, V.21.1: 2.84.13.

³⁹ Hooker, "Justification," 21: 5.129.7–16.

conviction, with foundational arguments that were traceable to Calvin, and later observed by Richard Baxter and John Owen. For example, most notably in Book V, we find Hooker associating spiritual union between the worshipper and Christ in the reception of the sacraments:

. . . their efficacy resteth obscure to our understandinge, except wee search somewhat more distinctly what grace in particular that is whereunto they are referred, and what manner of operation they have towards it. The use of sacramentes is but only in this life, yea so that here they concerne a farre better life then this, and are for that cause accompanied with *grace which worketh salvation*. Sacramentes are the powerfull instrumentes of God to eternall life. For as our naturall life consisteth in the union of the bodie with the soule; so our life supernaturall in the union of the soule with God. And for as much as there is no union of God with man without that meane betwene both which is both, it seemeth requisite that wee first consider how God is in Christ, then how Christ is in us, and how the sacramentes doe serve to make us partakers of Christ.⁴⁰

Sacraments can thus be understood as having both causal and effectual dimensions, comprehension of which is entirely contingent on their prior origins in God as mystical reflectors of saving grace, that reside in the union of Christ with God. This is Hooker's insistence on the implication of Chalcedonian Christianity. Hooker's way of expressing his sense of divine mystery is to reverence the idea of the secret actions of God, and "the secret grace which they signifie and exhibit"⁴¹ in a manner that symbolises his commitment to and grasp of, the deepest mysteries of the incarnation:

Christ and his holie Spirit with all their blessed effectes, though enteringe into the soule of man wee are not able to apprehend or expresse how, doe notwithstandinge give notize of the tymes when they use to make accesse, because it pleaseth almightie God to communicate by sensible meanes those blessinges which are incomprehensible.⁴²

That God was in Christ is his starting point for this discussion because only so can he speak of the character of humans being drawn into the Trinitarian relations of the

⁴⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.50.2: 2.208.13–209.2.

⁴¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.58.2: 2.249.3.

⁴² Hooker, *Lawes*, V.57.3: 2.246.15–20.

Godhead.⁴³ So the emergence of fully formed Christian life in Hooker is a slow gestative process whose end, by faith, can be grasped rationally, but whose workings only perceived by reason and the illumination of the Holy Spirit anticipated in baptism by “that infused divine vertue of the holie Ghost which giveth to the powers of the soule their first disposition towards future newnes of life”⁴⁴ including the rite of confirmation.⁴⁵ Despite the charges of arid intellectualism, Hooker is not in general interested in metaphysical speculations about the Eucharist and the manner of ontological absorption of the worshipper with the Godhead through the elements. The real “transubstantiation” for Hooker is “participation” in Christ, and occurs in the worshipper as the fruit of spiritual grace and real presence that “. . . invisiblie yeat reallie worke our communion or fellowship with the person of Jesus Christ:

. . . Christ assisting this heavenlie banquet with his personall and true presence doth by his owne divine power ad to the naturall substance thereof supernaturall efficacie, which addition to the nature of those consecrated elementes changeth them and maketh them that unto us which otherwise they could not be; that to us

⁴³ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.42.11: 2.175.27–176.1.

⁴⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.60.2: 2.255.10–13 Cf. Richard Baxter, “Quest. XLII: But the great question is, How the Holy Ghost is given to infants in baptism? And whether all children of true christians have inward sanctifying grace? or whether they can be said to be justified, and to be in a state of salvation, that are not inherently sanctified? And whether any fall from this infant state of salvation?

Answ. 2. It must be carefully noted, that the relative union between God the Mediator and the baptized persons, is that which in baptism is first given in order of nature, and that the rest do flow from this. The covenant and baptism deliver the covenant, 1. From divine displicency by reconciliation with the Father: 2. From legal penalties by justification by the Son: 3. From sin itself by the operations of the Holy Ghost. But it is Christ as our Mediator-Head, that is first given us in relative union; and then, 1. The Father loveth us with complacency as in the Son, and for the sake of his first Beloved. 2. And the Spirit which is given us in relation is first the Spirit of Christ our Head, and not first inherent in us; so that by union with our Head, that Spirit is next united to us, both relatively and as radically inherent in the human nature of our Lord, to whom we are united. As the nerves and animal spirits which are to operate in all the body, are radically only in the head, from whence they flow into and operate on the members as there is need (though there may be obstructions); so the Spirit dwelleth in the human nature of our Head, and there it can never be lost; and it is not necessary that it dwell in us by way of radication, but by way of influence and operation.” Baxter, *Works*, I.3:657.

⁴⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.66.1: 2.320.31–321.5.

they are made such instrumentes as mysticallie yeat trulie, invisiblie yeat reallie worke our communion or fellowship with the person of Jesus Christ as well in that he is man as God, our participation also in the fruit grace and efficacie of his bodie and blood, whereupon there ensueth a kind of transubstantiation in us, a true change both of soule and bodie, an alteration from death to life.⁴⁶

And even here, Hooker is at pains to liberate the boundaries of human ignorance to the “intuitive revelation”⁴⁷ of God by which Hooker seems to be pointing to the kind of “self-authenticating” knowledge that Calvin understood only the elect to apprehend.⁴⁸

This sounds somewhat similar to Richard Baxter’s view of the matter:

As the love of ourselves doth most powerfully (though not only) move us to close with Christ as our Saviour, so, while hereby we are united unto him, we have a double assistance or influx from him for the production of the purer love of God. The one is objective, in all the divine demonstrations of God’s love; in his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, in his doctrine, example, intercession, and in all the benefits given us, in our pardon, adoption, and the promises of future glory. The other is in the secret operation of the Holy Spirit which he giveth to us to concur with these means, and make them all effectual.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.11: 2.338.16–340.1.

⁴⁷ Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 6.3: 31.10–16.

⁴⁸ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.22.17: 2.105.7–16 Note also that Richard Baxter makes the same connections as Hooker between reason and Spirit in his dispute with the Quakers. “They do, as the quakers, maintain the popish doctrine of perfection, that they can live without sin, or that some of them can. They aspire after a visible communion with angels, and many of them pretend to have attained it, and frequently to see them. The rest have that immediate intuition of verities by the Spirit within them, or by revelation, that it is above mere rational apprehension, and therefore they will not dispute, nor be moved by any arguments or scriptures that you bring, affirming that ratiocination cannot prevail against their intuition. The sum of their doctrines is, that we must be perfect; and for subjecting the flesh to the intellect, we must live in contemplation, lay by all offices in the commonwealth, and own no fleshly relations, as they call them, not the relation of brother or sister, not the relation of a magistrate or of a master, not the relation of a father or mother, son or daughter, nor love any because of such a relation, but only as justice binds us to requital for what they have done for us. That none should own the relation of husband or wife, nor love each other as so related. That we should endeavour to be perfect, and therefore to forebear all carnal acts of generation, as being of sin and of the devil, and therefore husband and wife should part asunder, or abstain. That all things should be common, and none should own propriety, with abundance more, which are founded on certain vain, unproved fancies of Behmen, that only, and that containing both sexes virtually, having an angelic power of spiritual generation; and that this gross corporeity, and diversity of sex, marriage and generation, are all the fruits of sin and Satan, with abundance more such audacious vanities, not worth the reciting.” Baxter, *Works*, 2: 349.

⁴⁹ Baxter, *Works*, I.1.3: 160.95.

Baxter is somewhat more restrained than Hooker in that persons may enjoy a “relative union” with Christ, but for Hooker, that “union with God”⁵⁰ is “participation in Christ”⁵¹ and is as ontologically definite as the original sin that gave rise to the present entrapment of the created order by death. Hooker expresses this by reference to the familiar Chalcedonian formulations:

The mixture of his bodilie substance with oures is a thinge which the auncient Fathers disclaime. Yeat the mixture of his flesh with oures they speake of, to signifie what oure verie bodies through mysticall conjunction receive from that vitall efficacie which wee knowe to be in his, and from bodilie mixtures they borrowe divers similitudes rather to declare the truth then the matter of coherence betwene his sacred and the sanctified bodies of the Sainctes. Thus much no Christian man will denie, that when Christ sanctified his owne flesh givinge as God and takinge as man the holie Ghost, he did not this for him selfe onlie but for our sakes, that the grace of sanctification and life which was first received in him might passe from him to his whole race as malediction came from Adam unto all mankinde. Howbeit because the worke of his Spirit to those effected is in us prevented by synne and death possessinge us before, it is of necessitie that as well our present sanctification unto newness of life, as the future presuration of our bodies should presuppose a participation of the grace efficacie merit or vertue of his body and blood, without which foundation first laid there is no place for those other operations of the Spirit of Christ to ensue.⁵²

So participation in Christ is guaranteed not because of human desire or effort, but because “. . . when Christ sanctified his owne flesh givinge as God and takinge as man the holie Ghost, he did not this for him selfe onlie but for our sakes, . . .” Hence the absolute priority in any discussion of “mysticall conjunction” or “the matter of coherence” lies entirely within the Trinitarian relations of God, and the (secret) manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Therein lies Hooker’s idea of the divine-human “mysticall copulation,”⁵³ “neere copulation,”⁵⁴ and “. . . that Christ is in us as a quickninge Spirite, the first degree of communion with Christ must needes consist in the

⁵⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, VI.3.3: 3.9.16–29.

⁵¹ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.9: 2.337.5–7.

⁵² Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.9: 2.241.11–242.5.

⁵³ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.10: 2.242.30.

⁵⁴ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.54.5: 2.223.29.

participation of his spirit which Cyprian in that respect well termeth *germanissimam societatem*, the highest and truest societie that can be betwene man and him which is both God and man in one.”⁵⁵ So seriously did Hooker take the doctrine of the Holy Spirit that he affirms “As therefore wee are reallie partakers of the bodie of synne and death received from Adam, so except wee be trulie partakers of Christ, and as reallie possessed of his Spirit, all wee speake of eternall life is but a dreame.”⁵⁶ Similarly:

. . . our conjunction with Christ to be a mutuall participation wherby ech is blended with other, his flesh and blood with ours in like sort with his, even as reallie materialle and naturallie as wax melted and blended with wax into one lump, no other difference by that this mixture be sensible perceyved the other not.⁵⁷

Faith and salvation were impossible for Hooker unless “that small *vitall odor*”⁵⁸ of the Holy Spirit were preveniently given by God so that grace secretly mediated by the Holy Spirit was always, “. . . *both working inwardlie, and preventing the verie first desires*, or motions of man to goodnes.”⁵⁹ Thus Hooker establishes the grounds for a spiritually united commonwealth, predicated on a faithful ministry, itself called into being by the Holy Spirit,⁶⁰ that inherently delimited the Puritan logic that would purify the church along the lines of Geneva, by excluding those whom Hooker judged to be not necessarily impious, but simply ‘incomplete’ in their spirituality. Such incompleteness was to be expected and it was ultimately foolhardy to legislate the interior life of any

⁵⁵ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.8: 2.240.25–30.

⁵⁶ Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.7: 2.240.9–13.

⁵⁷ Richard Hooker, “A Learned Sermon of the Nature of Pride Abac. 2.4,” in *Tractates and Sermons*, vol. 5 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. Egil Grislis and Laetitia Yeandle, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 1: 5.326.20–327.4.

⁵⁸ Hooker, *Dublin Fragments*, 4.12.111.23.

⁵⁹ Hooker, *Dublin Fragments*, 4.12.111.8f.

⁶⁰ Hooker, *Lawes*, VIII.4.9: 3.377.11–28 Cf. Hooker, *Lawes*, VI.6.11: 3.90.15–91.26.

person where only the Holy Spirit could judge for, “We cannot examine the hearts of other men, we may our owne.”⁶¹

In a recent article by Rowan Williams in which he discusses Hooker’s theological method, the Archbishop of Canterbury considers Hooker to be “. . . perhaps the first major European theologian to assume that history, corporate and individual, matters for theology; and he is one of the inventors of that distinctive Anglican mood . . . called ‘contemplative pragmatism’”⁶² In so doing, Williams depicts Hooker as stepping softly between legitimate epistemological uncertainties at a time where Geneva promised the certainty of heaven through the propositions of election and the absolute truth of Scripture, and Rome promised certainty through an absolute trust in the labyrinth of ecclesiastical formulations and philosophical theology unattainable to most people. Hooker invited a return to the “foundation” of Christian thought and the promise of union with God through the Holy Spirit, not by absorption but by transformation, “becoming what we profess.”⁶³ Therefore, with Williams, the achievement of Richard Hooker is not only the development of a theological tradition built on inquiry, Scriptural evidence, and the experience of faith, but also the safeguarding of an imaginative and historically connected community of belief. The unity of its citizens, although not absolutely tied to ideological or intellectual conformity,⁶⁴ was simultaneously constrained by Scriptural revelation and liberated by the foundational and preemptive soteriological acts of God in history and the

⁶¹ Hooker, “Jude 1,” 13: 5.28.11f.

⁶² Rowan Williams, “Hooker the Theologian,” *Journal of Anglican Studies* 1, no. 1 (August 2003): 106.

⁶³ Hooker, *Laws*, V.64.2: 2.295.1f.

⁶⁴ Williams notes that “. . . Hooker’s cautious defences of tradition and usage is substantially offset by the genuinely Reformed emphasis that underlies the whole, the appeal to the priority of divine action as the true locus of unity for the Church.” Rowan Williams, “Hooker the Theologian,” 114.

incarnation. Together with the revelation of Scripture and the receptivity of human reason, through which Hooker's indispensable doctrine of the Holy Spirit interpenetrates, a saving knowledge of God can be received by individuals and collective actions enabled that tend toward the goal of their own createdness—union and participation with God. Rowan Williams has it completely right when he notes that:

Hooker's Roman sympathizers in the seventeenth century largely missed this dimension in his work of self-critical or self-checking reference to Christology, and thus missed the importance in his theology of the principle of God's hiddenness in the act of revelation, a hiddenness that secures divine freedom.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Rowan Williams, "Hooker the Theologian," 114.

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