

RICHARD HOOKER'S PNEUMATOLOGIA

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ABSTRACT. In the *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Richard Hooker defended the Elizabethan Settlement against what he took to be the excesses of Puritan reform. In this paper, it is argued that the theological cohesion of the *Lawes* took its centre from Hooker's dynamic and pervasive understanding of God's providence through both the objective reality of Scripture, sacrament, noetic redemption, church and Holy Spirit. Yet it was also the secret and mystical operations of the Holy Spirit that created and transformed objectivity into lived experience by which divine grace could be understood and received, joining us to Christ, and incorporating believers in mystical union.

KEY WORDS: Richard Hooker, Pneumatologia, Reformation, Scriptures, participation

The development of Richard Hooker's 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

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1 The term "pneumatologia" is comparatively old and can be traced to the Calvinist theologian 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, 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, Pneumatologia. Discourse on the Holy Spirit*, volume 3 of *The Works of John Owen*, ed. by William H. Goud (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1966), 5.

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.

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 thinges divine"² and was susceptible to rational investigation but not absolutely authenticated by it. Reason was the hand by which the

2 Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.11: I.230.2. "Science" was the process of investigation of the sources of knowledge and understanding, both natural and divine. In Richard Hooker, *Lawes*, vols. 1-4 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. by 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, 1977).

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 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 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?⁷

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.

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

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

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 blessings which are incomprehensible.⁸

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 “being 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

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

9 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.10.1: 2.46.29. In Richard Hooker, *Lawes*, vols. 1-4 and 5 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. by 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, 1977).

10 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.10.1: 2.46.28.

11 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.10.1: 2.47.1-8.

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.

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 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

12 John E. Booty, "Hooker and Anglicanism", in *Studies in Richard Hooker*, ed. By 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 Remedy Against The Pestiferous Writings Of All English Sectaries* (St. Omer: English College Press, 1615), 20.

13 Booty, "Hooker and Anglicanism", 228.

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 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.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 natural human attribute was then an unnecessary appendage and the “wisdom of man... greatly debaced”.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:

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

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

16 Voak, *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 226.

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

... 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 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,

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

19 Richard Sibbes quoted in Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 23.

20 Egil Grislis, “Hooker among the Giants: The Continuity and Creativity of Richard Hooker's Doctrine of Justification”, *Cithara* 43.2 (2004): 10, quoting Hooker, *Laves*, V.60.2: 2.55.12f.

21 Hooker, *Laves*, 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

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 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 endeavoured 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.²³

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 then 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.²⁴ Inter-

must bypass every use of reason”. Grislis, “Hermeneutical Problem”, in W. Speed Hill (ed.), *Studies in Richard Hooker. Essays Preliminary to an Edition of His Works* (Cleveland and London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972), 195.

22 Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity. Attack and Response: Dublin Fragments*, volume 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 limits and therefore its need for divine aid.

23 Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.17: 1.234.32-235.11.

24 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 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 manifold confusions which they fall into where everie mans private Spirit and guift (as they terme it) is

estingly, Nuttall views the main antagonism as existing 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.²⁵

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”.²⁶ Hooker was able to argue thus because he thought Scripture preached itself by virtue of its inspired origins. 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

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 worthiest 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 dulie all these thinges the reasons cannot be obscure, why God doth in publique prayer so much respect the solemnitie of places where, thauthoritie and callinge of persons by whome, the precise appointment even with what wordes or sentences his name should be called upon amongst his people”. Hooker, *Lawes*, V.25.5: 2.116.23-117.6. In *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. by 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, 1993).

25 Hooker, *Lawes*, V. 21.5: 2.87.8-17.

26 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.22.1:2.88.8-10.

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”²⁷ 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...”²⁸ The overall consequence of this for Voak is that, following W. Speed Hill,²⁹ “it was thus in certain respects to Hooker’s advantage to minimize the role of grace and the Holy Spirit in the *Lawes*, and to concentrate on rational argumentation”.³⁰ 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 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 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”.³¹ 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”.³² 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

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

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

29 W. Speed Hill, “The Doctrinal Background of Richard Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1964), 199-201.

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

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

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

results of rational inquiry, nor that human capacity to recognize 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. 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.³³ 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 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.³⁴

33 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.

34 Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.14: 1.231.12-28.

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".³⁵

The Idea of "Participation" in Hooker

In his small volume, *Participation in God*,³⁶ 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.³⁷

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".³⁸ 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 righteousness. From salvation therefore and life all flesh being excluded this way, behold how the wisdom 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 compas-

35 Hooker, *Lawes*, III.8.14: 1.231.25-28.

36 Arthur M. Allchin, *Participation in God. A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow), 1988.

37 Allchin, *Participation*, 8.

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

sion 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.³⁹

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:

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.⁴⁰

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.⁴¹

Contemplation of the beauty of God, that “sea of goodness”⁴² 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

39 Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.5: 1.118.11-23.

40 Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.3: 1.112.21-113.7.

41 Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.3: 1.113.18-24.

42 Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.3: 1.113.11.

the world is capable of felicitie and blisse...”⁴³ The reason, according to Hooker is that humans want what is best for them, “not in that which is simply best”.⁴⁴ 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 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.⁴⁵

The “triple perfection”⁴⁶ of sensory experience, intellectual inquiry, and spiritual satisfaction, leaves man in his third perfection partially satisfied and therefore partially unsatisfied because what Hooker recognized 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 inclnation of heart towards him unto whom wee are not able to aproch, endeth

43 Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.3: 1.113.30.

44 Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.3: 1.114.2.

45 Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.4: 1.114.8-16.

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

with endlesse union, the misterie wherof is higher then the reach of the thoughts of men...⁴⁷

God has nevertheless rectified “natures obliquitie withall”.⁴⁸ 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”.⁴⁹ 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 things which he did and suffered for us are imputed unto us for righteousness; 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.⁵⁰

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 by degrees, the incorporation or participation in God was entirely complete through the fullness of godhead residing in Christ⁵¹ 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:

47 Hooker, *Lawes*, I.11.6: 1.119.2-12.

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

49 2 Peter 1:4.

50 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.10: 2.242.26-243.9.

51 Colossians 1:19.

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.⁵²

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 aine 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 fruites 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.⁵³

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".⁵⁴ 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"⁵⁵ 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 under-

52 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.11: 2.243.14-30.

53 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.12: 2.243.30-244.11.

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

55 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.54.5: 2.224.18.

standing 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 fulfil one's human nature".⁵⁶ 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 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,"⁵⁷ this hold is not determined by the strength of human grasp but rather "onlie by grace and favor".⁵⁸ 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".⁵⁹ 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 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 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.⁶⁰

For Hooker, the practical consequence of his theology was the creation of what Debora Shuger calls Hooker's "imagined community"⁶¹ which was never quite identical with the Elizabethan Commonwealth, but existed inside it, neither contesting nor reproducing it, "it lodges in the outskirts and interstices of the nation-state".⁶² 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

56 William O. Gregg, "Sacramental Theology in Hooker's *Lawes*: A Structural Perspective", *Anglican Theological Review* 73 (1991): 171.

57 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.1: 2.234.29-31.

58 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.6: 2.237.32.

59 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.7: 2.240.10-12.

60 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.8: 2.240.13-30.

61 Shuger, "The Imagined Community", 328.

62 Shuger, "The Imagined Community", 328.

Hooker notes “doth not begin but continue life. No man therefore receyveth this sacrament before baptisme, because no dead thinge is capable of nourishment”⁶³ 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 faith we 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.⁶⁴

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”.⁶⁵ 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”.⁶⁶

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 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”.⁶⁷ 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

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

64 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.1: 2.331.11-16.

65 William David Neelands, “The Theology of Grace of Richard Hooker” (PhD Thesis, Trinity College and University of Toronto, 1988), 260.

66 William David Neelands, “The Theology of Grace of Richard Hooker” (PhD Thesis, Trinity College and University of Toronto, 1988), V.56.10: 2.242.11-15.

67 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.17.11.

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.⁶⁸

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”.⁶⁹ And as has been mentioned, Hooker makes a soteriological distinction between the general “influence of the heavens”⁷⁰ 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”.⁷¹

Hooker held that “mysticall participation”⁷² 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.⁷³

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. Therefore, it is consistent with Hooker’s own theological method that discussion of the sacraments should take its point of departure here. Hooker says:

68 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.57.5: 2.247.7-22.

69 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.5: 2.334.19-22.

70 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.5: 2.334.27.

71 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.5: 2.334.28-30.

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

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

That which sanctified our nature is 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...⁷⁴

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.⁷⁵ 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"⁷⁶ 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.⁷⁷

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...⁷⁸

74 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.8: 2.240.22-27.

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

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

77 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.9: 2.241.23-242.5.

78 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.11: 2.243.4-10.

Both Charles Irish and William Gregg⁷⁹ 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...”⁸⁰ 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.”⁸¹ 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”.⁸² But Hooker is concerned that no confusion exist between the “corruptible and earthly creature”⁸³ 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”.⁸⁴ 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”⁸⁵ 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”.⁸⁶ 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?’”⁸⁷ His answer is that “the manner is spiritual because the secret power of the Spirit is the bond of our union with Christ”.⁸⁸ 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

79 Gregg, “Sacramental Theology”, 162.

80 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.56.10: 2.242.3-243.1.

81 Gregg, “Sacramental Theology”, 165.

82 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.7: 2.336.2-5.

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

84 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.8: 2.336.27-29.

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

86 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.17.33.

87 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.17.33.

88 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.17.33.

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 apart⁸⁹ if his body, lifeless and powerless, is prostituted to unbelievers".⁹⁰ Although Hooker agrees with the letter of Calvin's sentiments, and with Calvin "the presence of Christ in the centre of his Eucharistic theology—almost formally Catholic and materially Anglican"⁹¹ 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...⁹²

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.⁹³

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 the sacrament that did not, at least in some secret fashion,

89 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.

90 Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.17.33.

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

92 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.6: 2.335.16-21.

93 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.6: 2.335.10-16.

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".⁹⁴ 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,"⁹⁵ 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,"⁹⁶ Hooker contended that the gift of the Spirit remained in the hands of God, and that the process of sanctification, "alreadie begun in baptisme,"⁹⁷ 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".⁹⁸ According to Hooker, the Puritan argument against the baptism of infants⁹⁹ was retrogressive and so Puritans must conclude that such baptism is no baptism at all, because "those thinges 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".¹⁰⁰ 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:

94 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.58.3: 2.250.10-12.

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

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

97 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.66.1: 2.321.2.

98 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.66.4: 2.323.26-29.

99 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.

100 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.62.15: 2.282.33-283.1.

... 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 privilege 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 clensed 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.¹⁰¹

In Hooker's terms, the church was "undertakinge the motherlie care of our soules"¹⁰² and could offer baptism 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 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..."¹⁰³ 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, yea this kinde of ghostlie stipulation they may through his indulgence who respectinge the singular benefitt thereof accepteth children brought

101 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.62.15: 2.282.1-12.

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

103 Hooker, *Lawes*, V.64.4: 2.297.13-17.

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.¹⁰⁴

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 baptized person could be expected to mature.

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