

## ‘DIVINE OFFSPRING’: RICHARD HOOKER’S NEOPLATONIC ACCOUNT OF LAW AND CAUSALITY

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**ABSTRACT.** Richard Hooker’s (1554-1600) adaptation of classical logos theology is exceptional and indeed quite original for its extended application of the principles of Neoplatonic apophatic theology to the concrete institutional issues of a particular time and place—the aftermath of the Elizabethan Religious Settlement of 1559. Indeed, his sustained effort to explore the underlying connections of urgent political and constitutional concerns with the highest discourse of hidden divine realities—the knitting together of Neoplatonic theology and Reformation politics—is perhaps the defining characteristic of Hooker’s distinctive mode of thought. Hooker’s ontology adheres to a Proclean logic of procession and reversion (*processio and redditus*) mediated by Aquinas’s formulation of the so-called *lex divinitatis* whereby the originary principle of law remains simple and self-identical as an Eternal Law while it emanates manifold, derivative and dependent species of law, preeminently in the Natural Law accessible to human reason and Divine Law revealed through the Sacred Oracles of Scripture. For Hooker, therefore, ‘all things’—including even the Elizabethan constitution in Church and Commonwealth, are God’s offspring: ‘they are in him as effects in their highest cause, he likewise actually is in them, the assistance and influence of his deity is their life.’

**KEY WORDS:** Richard Hooker, Neoplatonism, ontology, Natural Law, ecclesiology

Central to the argument of Richard Hooker’s treatise *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie* (1593) is his claim that God is law. As ‘first originall cause’, this divine ‘aeternal Law’ contains within itself all derivative species of law; ‘as offspring of god, they are in him as effects in their highest cause, he likewise actually is in them, the assistance and influence of his deity is their life’ (Hooker 1977b: 23-25). Hooker distinguishes between a ‘first’ and a ‘second’ eternal law. The latter comprises all derivative species of law which participate the eternal law as discrete emanations ordered dispositively in hierarchical ‘procession’, while the former is the original, self-constituting divine source as it remains concomitantly and ineffably simple, at unity within itself—i.e. ‘verie Onenesse’ (Hooker 1977b: 14-15). Hooker’s account of eternal law as simultaneously unity in simplicity and participation of that unity

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by a multiplicity of derivative forms of law recapitulates the account of causality set out by Proclus in his *Elements of Theology* whereby ‘every effect remains in its cause, proceeds from it, and reverts upon it’ (1963: 38-39). Hooker anchors his elaborate exposition and defense of the Elizabethan religious settlement in a metaphysical theory of law which itself assumes a Neoplatonic ontology of ‘participation’ in the Proclean tradition:

All thinges are therefore pertakers of God, they are his ofspringe, his influence is in them, and the personall wisdom of God is for that verie cause said to excell in nimbleness or agilitie, to pearce into all intellectual pure and subtile spirites, to goe through all, and to reach unto everie thinge which is... All thinges which God in theire times and seasons hath brought forth were eternallie and before all times in God as a worke unbegunne is in the artificer which afterward bringeth it unto effect. Therefore whatsoever wee doe behold now in this present world, it was inwrapped within the bowells of divine mercie, written in the booke of eternall wisdom, and held in the handes of omnipotent power, the first foundations of the world being as yeat unlaide (1977b: 15-22).

From a purely metaphysical point of view, Hooker’s claim that ‘God is law’ is neither very original nor remarkable. The eternal law as hidden ‘first originall cause’ can reasonably be viewed as a restatement of a classical *logos* theology such as one finds in both Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics, in the thought of Philo of Alexandria, derived from such pre-Socratic sources as Heraclitus, and especially as formulated in the writings of the Neoplatonists of later antiquity (Chadwick 1967: 29-44). One finds Christian appropriation of this metaphysical theme among the early-church fathers, for example in the writings of Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, Eusebius of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, a theological trope later taken up by such medieval scholastics as Albertus Magnus, Bonaventure, Aquinas, and Nicholas of Cusa, and later still by certain Protestant reformers including Hooker himself and the Florentine reformer Peter Martyr Vermigli.<sup>1</sup> For all of these theologians, an uncreated divine principle, the Word (*logos*, or *ratio*, or *paradeigma*—reason, order, plan) constitutes the ‘idea of ideas’, the Platonic ‘archetypal idea’ and therefore the ‘first principle’ of all created order while the creation, both visible-material and invisible-spiritual, proceeds from and is wholly dependent upon this original, un-derived, hidden and transcendent first principle as its primary cause.

For Hooker, however, the investigation of this original source of being and order entails a great deal more than a metaphysical claim concerning the nature of the first principle. As the argument of Book I of the *Lawes* unfolds,

<sup>1</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia qq. 14, 15, 22, 33-35; IIa IIae, qq. 90-96. See Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.5; II.14 and Kirby (2003: 131-145).

it becomes plain that Hooker is as deeply invested in the practical, political, and constitutional consequences of his ontological claim that ‘God is law’ as he is committed to its underlying metaphysical sense:

The statelnesse of houses, the goodliness of trees, when we behold them delighteth the eye; but that foundation which beareth up the one, that root which ministreth unto the other nourishment and life, is in the bosome of the earth concealed: and if there be at any time occasion to search into it, such labour is then more necessary then pleasant both to them which undertake it, and for the lookers on. In like maner the use and benefite of good lawes, all that live under them may enjoy with delight and comfort, albeit the groundes and first originall causes from whence they have sprong be unknowne, as to the greatest part of men they are (1977b: 6-16).

Indeed the burden of his argument is to show that the Elizabethan constitutional and ecclesiastical order he seeks to explain and defend—the ‘stately house’ of the established Church and the ‘goodly tree’ of the flourishing commonwealth—has its ultimate ground and justification in an ineffably ‘hidden’ first principle, the unutterable ‘first original’ of all finite and external manifestations of order: ‘all that is unparticipated produces out of itself the participated; and all participated substances are linked by upward tension to existences not participated’ (Proclus 1967: 23). For Richard Hooker both metaphysical ontology and the institutions of the Elizabethan religious settlement rest upon the proposition that ‘God is Law’.

Hooker’s adaptation of classical *logos* theology is exceptional and indeed quite original for its extended application of the highest metaphysical principle to the most concrete institutional issues of a particular time and place, viz. England in the late sixteenth century. His sustained effort to explore the intimate connections of pressing political and constitutional concerns with the highest discourse of hidden divine realities—the knitting together of Neoplatonic theology and Reformation politics—is perhaps the defining characteristic of Hooker’s highly distinctive mode of thought. As C. S. Lewis points out, Hooker’s universe is ‘drenched with Deity’ (1954: 462). All dependent and derivative laws ‘participate’ a single eternal law which is the divine first principle and cause—‘the personall wisdom of God’ (Hooker 1977b: 236). In keeping with the thoroughly Proclean Neoplatonic presuppositions upon which his argument rests, by means of participation of the second eternal law ‘all thinges which God hath made are in that respect the ofspringe of god, they are in him as effects in their highest cause, he likewise actuallie is in them, thassistance and influence of his deitie is their life’ (1977b: 237).

Hooker defines law in general as ‘that which doth assigne unto each thing the kinde, that which doth moderate the force and power, that which doth appoint the forme and measure of working... so that no certaine end could

ever be attained, unlesse the actions whereby it is attained were regular, that is to say, made suteable for and correspondent unto their end, by some canon, rule or lawe' (Hooker 1977a: 58). This definition places him squarely within a scholastic teleological tradition derived ultimately from the metaphysics of Aristotle. Hooker's adaptation of this definition, however, goes beyond any ordinary Aristotelian or Thomistic account of causality. Working from the definition, Hooker asserts that everything works according to law, including God himself: 'the being of God is a kinde of lawe to his working: for that perfection which God is, geveth perfection to that he doth' (Hooker 1977a: 59). There are certain structural similarities between this argument in Book I of the *Lawes* and Thomas Aquinas's short treatise on law in the second part of the *Summa Theologiae*.<sup>2</sup> The principal resemblance is Hooker's adoption of Aquinas's logic of hierarchical *dispositio*. Just as the neo-platonic cosmology accounts for the genesis of the world by means of a emanation or *processio* from the principle of original unity, so also Hooker derives a diverse hierarchy of laws from the eternal law as their 'highest wellspring and fountaine.' His emphasis upon the divine unity is marked: 'our God is one, or rather verie Onenesse, and meere unitie, having nothing but it selfe in it selfe, and not consisting (as all things do besides God) of many things besides' (Hooker 1977a: 59). All derivative species of law participate in the undifferentiated unity of the eternal law which simultaneously remains ineffably one with itself, and are also discrete emanations from that original unity by way of dispositive 'procession' (Proclus 1963: 26). Hooker's account of this law which simultaneously 'contains' and 'emanates' its derivative species recapitulates the logic of causality set forth in Proclus's *Elements*.<sup>3</sup> For Hooker

... sith there can bee no goodnesse desired which proceedeth not from God himselfe, as from the supreme cause of all things; and every effect doth after a sort containe, at least wise resemble the cause from which it proceedeth: all things in the worlde are saide in some sort to seeke the highest, and to covet more or lesse the participation of God himselfe (1977a: 73).

Hooker's ontology adheres to a Proclean logic of procession and reversion (*epistrophē*) mediated by Aquinas's formulation of the *lex divinitatis*—so-called law of the great chain—the whereby the originative principle of law remains simple and self-identical as Eternal Law while, at the same time, proceeds out of itself through its generation of manifold, derivative and dependent species of law. As Proclus explains this metaphysical principle: 'Every order has its beginning in a monad and proceeds to a manifold co-ordinate therewith; and the manifold in any order may be carried back to a single monad' (Proclus

2 *ST* Ia IIae, qq. 90-96. These similarities have often been noted by Hooker's interpreters. See, for instance, Marshall (1963) and Munz (1952).

3 See Proclus (1963) and Allan (1985: 75).

1963: 21). In a consequential move Hooker distinguishes between a first and a second eternal law on the ground that God is a law *both* to himself (*in se*) in his inaccessible divine simplicity, *and* to all creatures besides (*ad extra*). This distinction enables him to gather together the totality of the derivative species of law within a single, unified emanation—viz. the second eternal law—rather than present these species as proceeding one by one in a dispositive emanation from the eternal law as on the account presented by Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica*.<sup>4</sup> His discussion of the first eternal law adheres closely to traditional formulations of ‘logos’ theology, while his use of the category of second eternal law introduces something distinctive, unusual, and unexpected from the perspective of the preceding scholastic theological tradition.<sup>5</sup>

‘All things’, Hooker maintains, including God’s own self, ‘do worke after a sort according to lawe’ (1977a: 58-59). Whereas all creatures work ‘according to a lawe, whereof some superiour, unto whome they are subject, is author’, nonetheless ‘only the workes and operations of God have him both for their worker, and for the lawe whereby they are wrought. The being of God is a kinde of lawe to his working’ (1977a: 59). As the first principle of law, God alone is *self constituted* (Proclus 1963: 40-51) and therefore *gubernator sui* (Proclus 1963: 141), and by virtue of the fullness of such being, is the cause and law-giver as well to all that is derivative of his creative will. ‘Being the first, it can have no other then it selfe to be the author of that law which it willingly worketh by. God therefore is a law both to himselfe, and to all other things besides’ (Hooker 1977a: 60). All that is—both the first principle itself and all that derives from it—have their ground concealed within the simplicity of that same first principle or cause, hidden, as it were, like a foundation stone or treeroot ‘in the bosome of the earth’ (Hooker 1977a: 57).

The second eternal law comprises the divine order as ‘kept by all his creatures, according to the severall conditions wherewith he hath indued them’ (Hooker 1977a: 63). It is through the working of this second eternal law that all creatures have their means of reversion back to their original source. The second eternal law has a variety of ‘names’ depending on the different orders of creatures subject to the single divine government. The two principal derivative *genera* of the second eternal law are first, the natural law and second, the revealed law of the scriptures, the latter of which is sometimes named by Hooker the ‘divine law’—not to be confused with the eternal law. The entire system of the laws comprised within the second eternal law thus expresses the Proclean twofold ‘*exitus-redditus*’ motion of creative procession from (*exitus*) and redemptive conversion back to (*reditus*) the original unity of the eternal law as embodied in this primary distinction between natural law accessible

4 Ia IIa pars, qq. 90-96.

5 See Lee Gibbs’ discussion of the two eternal laws in his ‘Introduction to Book I’, in *FLE* volume 6, part 1, pp. 92 ff.

to human reason and divinely revealed law contained in the scriptures. On Hooker's account, each of these two primary species of the second eternal law—the natural law and the revealed law—is further participated by manifold derivative and dependent forms. The natural law, by virtue of a further procession or unfolding, comprises in turn subordinate legal species which govern irrational natural agents as well as rational; the law which governs the rational creatures is distinguished further into a 'law cœlestial', which orders the angels understood according to the traditional metaphysics as 'intellectual substances', and a 'law of reason', often identified by Hooker simply as 'natural law', which orders humankind, the embodied rational animal. All of these sub-species of Natural Law comprise the flowing outward and downward, the '*processio ad extra*' of the second eternal law.

On the converse side of the second eternal law, the law of God's special revelation, manifested in the revealed law of the 'sacred oracles' of scripture, Hooker presupposes a breaking of the natural order, a disorder introduced into the cosmos by the Fall and original sin. The provision of a revealed law is treated as an instrument necessary to securing the ultimate restoration or 'conversio' of the creation back to its original condition of unity under and within the foundational eternal law. Hooker's distinction between these two *summa genera* of natural law and divinely revealed law corresponds to the Neoplatonic logic of creative emanation and conversional return; this metaphysical model also reflects an epistemological distinction central to his thought, namely the supposition of a twofold knowledge of God (*duplex cognitio Dei*), that is to say by the supernatural light of scriptural revelation and by the natural light of reason. On Hooker's account of the generic division of the eternal law there are composite species of law—such as human positive law and the law of nations, for example—which derive from a conscious, pragmatic reflection upon the general principles contained in the natural law. These additional derivative species of law are viewed by Hooker (following Augustine) as a consequence of human sin and, like the divine law, constitute a corrective to the disorder introduced by the Fall (*remedium peccati*).<sup>6</sup> Coercive human law serves to redirect or convert fallen humanity back to the lost original order. In all of this the human creature as the *imago dei* is the focal point of the cosmic operation of procession from and conversion back to the original creative fount of order established in dependence upon the simplicity of the first eternal law.

The emanation-conversion (*exitus-redditus*) structure of this generic division of law in Book I of the *Ecclesiasticall Politie* shows that Hooker has absorbed Neoplatonic metaphysics and indeed numerous scholars have noted that he had most likely read Thomas Aquinas's discourse on creation (*ST*, Ia

6 For coercive law as a *remedium peccati*, see Augustine's *De civitate Dei*, Book XIX.

pars) and on law (*ST*, IIa IIae) very carefully.<sup>7</sup> Hooker’s distinction between a first and a second eternal law proves, nonetheless, to be a highly significant departure from the Thomist scholastic model. The effect of the distinction between these two aspects of the eternal law is simultaneously to widen and to decrease the distance between the creator-lawgiver and the created cosmos—and thus alters the calculus of conversion in a highly significant manner. Hooker’s gathering together of all the derivative species of law within the second eternal law—a distinction absent from Aquinas’s model which presents the eternal law as undifferentiated in itself—challenges the assumption of the primary relation between creator and creature as governed by a gradual, dispositive, hierarchical model as found in earlier scholastic models, and emphasizes rather the common participation of these manifold species of law in a common source (i.e. the second eternal law) which, in turn, participates the divine source (the first eternal law) in its totality. In effect the second eternal law renders the participation of the manifold forms of law in their eternal source simultaneously both more transcendent and more immanent, and thus short-circuiting the gradual, dispositive linkage of derivative creatures with their creative original. The distinction between the first and second eternal laws thus entails a sharpened distinction and distancing of the hidden original source of law from the manifold derivative species of law. In effect, the distinction between first and second eternal laws serves to ‘hypostasize’ the relation between the divine source and the collected derivative manifestations of order rather than to present them—as Aquinas does, for example, in his questions on law in the Ia IIae of the *Summa Theologica*—as gradually and dispositively mediated. Hooker’s highly distinctive division of the eternal law exhibits a marked Augustinian tendency of his thought, a general theological bent which he shares with other magisterial Reformers.

The distinction between these two species of the eternal law marks a boundary between realms of apophatic and kataphatic theological discourse (Hooker 1977a: 63). The first eternal law is the law in its original simplicity and self-identity, the law as it is in and for the divine lawgiver, the law ‘whereof it selfe must needs be author unto it selfe’ (Hooker 1977a: 60). This is a hidden unity concerning which, Hooker states, our safest eloquence is silence.<sup>8</sup> The divine *logos* or wisdom whereby God works in creating is ‘that

7 *Summa Theologica*, Ia qq. 44-119; Ia IIae, qq. 90-108. See Munz (1952: 49-57); Passerin d’Entrèves (1952: chapters 5 and 6); Marshall (1963).

8 *Lawes* I.2.2; 1:59.12-19. ‘Dangerous it were for the feeble braine of man to wade farre into the doings of the most High; whome although to knowe bee life, and ioy to make mention of his name; yet our soundest knowledge is, to know that wee know him not as indeede hee is, neither can know him; and our safest eloquence concerning him is our silence when we confesse without confession, that his glory is inexplicable, his greatnesse aboue our capacitie and reach. Hee is aboue, and wee vpon earth; therefore it behoueth our wordes to bee warie and fewe.’



law eternall which God himself hath made to himselfe, and therby worketh all things wherof he is the cause and author.' This first eternal law 'has bene of God, and with God everlastingly: that law the author and observer whereof is one only God to be blessed for ever, how should either men or Angels be able perfectly to behold? The booke of this law we are neither able nor wor-thie to open and looke into' (Hooker 1977a: 61-62). By contrast, the second eternal law comprises the divine order as 'kept by all his creatures, according to the severall conditions wherewith he hath indued them' (Hooker 1977a: 63). At the level of the second eternal law, the source of order continues to be unified, yet this unity is nonetheless adapted, or rather accommodated to the finitude of mortal capacity by means of the second eternal law; the latter is the first eternal law as it is knowable *to us*. Its knowability in this secondary aspect profoundly shapes Hooker's account of the nature of conversion, particularly as it influences his presuppositions concerning the interaction of human reason with revealed knowledge.

It is with this second eternal law that the manifold variety of the forms of law first comes into view, yet a variety which is understood by Hooker throughout as 'contained' by the original unity that is the eternal law. The first and second eternal laws are one and the same law 'laid up in the bosome of God', as he puts it, viewed either from the standpoint of an eternal present in the ineffable self-identity of the divine law-giver, or from the standpoint of its reception by all creatures. In his distinction between two species of the eternal law, Hooker presents a marked departure from the Thomistic account of the mode of mediation of the manifold species of law from their source in eternal law. This second eternal law has a variety of 'names'—angelic, natural, positive, human, revealed, etc.—depending on the diverse modes whereby creatures are subject to the one divine government.

Hooker's approach to the definition of law is remarkable for its simultaneous appropriation of a systematically Neoplatonic structure of argument and an appeal to reformed Reformation assumptions with respect to the relation of the orders of Nature and Grace.<sup>9</sup> He begins with an allusion to the polemical occasion of the treatise in the ecclesiological controversies which arose in England as a consequence of the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559, and makes explicit the intimate connection intended between the metaphysical and the polemical arguments of the treatise:

Because the point about which wee strive is the qualitie of our *Lawes*, our first entrance hereinto cannot better be made, then with consideration of the nature of lawe in generall, and of that lawe which giveth life unto all the rest, which are commendable just and good, namely the lawe whereby the Eternall himselfe doth

9 See Neelands's essay 'Scripture, Reason and "Tradition"' in *RHC*, pp. 77. For an important discussion of related questions see Hankey (1998: 125-160).



worke. Proceeding from hence to the lawe first of nature, then of scripture, we shall have the easier accesse unto those things which come after to be debated, concerning the particular cause and question which wee have in hand (Hooker 1977a: 58).

By proceeding from 'the One' to the many—as he himself expresses his methodology, from 'generall meditations' to the 'particular decisions'—Hooker establishes an order of argument in his treatise which is itself presented as a literary imitation of the divine creative *processio*. By this account, the idea of law presents itself as both 'monad' and 'dyad'. First there is the law 'which God hath eternallie purposed himself in all his works to observe' (Hooker 1977a: 63). This eternal law is the 'highest welspring and fountaine' of all other kinds of law, the 'meere unitie, having nothing but it selfe in it selfe, and not consisting (as all things do besides God) of many things' (Hooker 1977a: 59). Of this original divine simplicity, of such 'verie Onenesse', says Hooker, 'our soundest knowledge is to know that we know him not as in deed he is, neither can know him: and our safest eloquence concerning him is our silence, when we confesse without confession that his glory is inexplicable, his greatnes above our capacitie to reach. He is above, and we upon earth, and therefore it behoveth our wordes to be warie and fewe' (Hooker 1977a: 59). Nonetheless, since God works not only as law to himself, but also as 'first cause, whereupon originallie the being of all things dependeth', and therefore also as law 'to all other things besides', there is a concomitant outward showing of this first law. The showing forth of the divine power in God's 'externall working'—as distinct from those 'internall operations of God' as Trinity, namely 'the generation of the Sonne, and the proceeding of the Spirit' (1977a: 59)—is for no other purpose than 'the exercise of his most glorious and most abundant vertue. Which abundance doth shew it selfe in varietie, and for that cause this varietie is oftentimes in scripture exprest by the name of *riches*. *The Lord hath made all things for his owne sake*' (1977a: 7-10).

The divine working which manifests itself in the riches and variety of the creation is presented by Hooker as follows:

I am not ignorant that by law eternall the learned for the most part do understand the order, not which God hath eternallie purposed himselfe in all his works to observe, but rather that which with himselfe he hath set downe as expedient to be kept by all his creatures, according to the severall conditions herewith he hath indued them (Hooker 1977a: 63).

There is indeed a considerable variety among the manifold forms of law derived from the fount of the first eternal law and understood by rational creatures under the aspect of the second eternal law (both angelic and human):

Now that law which as it is laid up in the bosome of God, they call *æternall*, recey-veth according unto the different kinds of things which are subject unto it different and sundry kinds of names. That part of it which ordereth natural agents, we call usually *natures* law; that which Angels doe clearely behold, and without any swarving observe is a law *cælestiall* and heavenly: the law of *reason* that which bindeth creatures reasonable in this world, and with which by reason they may most plainly perceive themselves bound; that which bindeth them, and is not knowen bu by speciall revelation from God, *Divine* law; *humane* lawe that which out of the law either of reason or of God, men propobable gathering to be expedient, they make it a law. All things therfore, which are as they ought to be, are conformed unto *this second law eternall*, and even those things which to this eternall law are not conformable, are notwithstanding in some sort ordered by *the first eternall lawe* (Hooker 1977a: 63).

Yet, in a manner to some extent analogous to the prior division of the eternal law into the two species of the first and the second eternal laws, here too at the level of the second eternal law the appearance of the ‘manifold’ riches of creation is itself ordered and limited within two principal derivative species of law: ‘natural law’ and ‘revealed law’. The former division embraces governance of the totality of creation—distinguished in a primary sense between visible and invisible, material and formal, sensible and intelligible—by containing within itself a completely exhaustive categorisation or division of the creatures and their diverse modes of subjection to the second eternal law: 1) *natures* law of ‘natural and necessary agents’, or the material, non-thinking creation; 2) the *cælestial* law of the purely intellectual and unfallen creation that comprises the angelic hierarchy (a law beheld by them ‘without any swarving’); and 3) the law of *reason* which governs intellectual creatures ‘in this world’ where they, unlike the angels, find themselves ‘bound’.

The third category, which governs the rational but mortal creature, i.e. the human condition, is clearly understood by Hooker to be in some sense a mixed combination of the previous two categories. As intellectual *natures* mortals share the desire of the angels for an infinite good in which alone such a nature can be finally satisfied. ‘Then are we happie therfore when fully we injoy God, as an object wherein the powers of our soules are satisfied with everlasting delight: so that although we be men, yet by being unto God united we live as it were the life of God.’ Yet, ‘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 arre painefull...’ (1977a: 112). The predicament of the human condition is to be of a mixed nature, partaking of both intellectual nature shared by the angels and the physical shared by the irrational ‘necessary agents’. For Hooker there can be no natural means of conversion to overcome this hiatus between a ‘natural’ desire for divine perfection and a complete natural incapacity to achieve that end desired. While the desire for divinisation (*theosis*), that is to

say reunion with the original source of cosmic order, is a *natural* desire—'so that nature even in this life doth plainly claime and call for a more divine perfection' (1977a: 115)—nonetheless in keeping with a thoroughly Augustinian assumption concerning the state of original sin Hooker observes that

the light of nature is never able to finde out any way of obtaining 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 (1977a: 118).

Thus in his delineation of the path of conversion he identifies the second primary division within the second eternal law, as the way of return. Unlike the natural law, this other way of accesse to the divine wisdom is a 'revealed' way—and therefore constitutes a mystical and 'supernatural' means rather than a 'natural' way. It is through such supernatural means that the natural desire for an infinite good overcomes the circumstance of the mortal condition of being 'bound'.

Thus, for Hooker, the form of law 'to be kept by all creatures according to their several conditions' is comprised within three *summa genera*—the eternal law, the natural law of reason and the divinely revealed law—where the latter two kinds are understood as comprehended within the first, and yet nonetheless radically distinct in their operation and in our knowledge of them. Together these forms constitute a comprehensive division of the all the many and various 'kinds' of law which are discussed throughout the remainder of Hooker's argument in the first book and indeed throughout his entire treatise. The mode of their derivation and their reversion provides a crucial insight into the underlying metaphysical structure of Hooker's argument in the *Lawes*, and provides, moreover, a vital instrument for interpreting Hooker's distinctive contribution to the sixteenth-century discussion of conversion in the form of an attempted reconciliation of a Neoplatonic ontology of participation with Reformation soteriology.

Viewed from the standpoint of their divine principle of origin—i.e. in the first eternal law—these three *summa genera* of law may be considered as simply one—God, who is law and is the source of all derivative species of law, as 'verie Onenesse'. Viewed from below, from the standpoint of creaturely, mortal finitude, this original divine unity assumes the aspect of diverse articulated

kinds all of which nonetheless all ‘participate’ and ‘proceed from’ the undivided unity that is their common source.<sup>10</sup> This claim regarding the simultaneous unity and multiplicity of the eternal law and its various derivative species lies at the core of Hooker’s Neoplatonic vision and provides in turn a vital instrument in his apologetic effort throughout the *Lawes* which is to demonstrate the consistency of the provisions of the Elizabethan Religious Settlement with the central tenets of Reformed theology. For Hooker, therefore, ‘all thinges’—including the Elizabethan constitution in Church and Commonwealth, are God’s offspring: ‘they are in him as effects in their highest cause, he likewise actually is in them, thassistance and influence of his deitie is their life (1977b: 236).’

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10 On the concept of the *procession* of the forms of law, see for example: 1.3.4; 1:68.6-8: ‘... the naturall generation and *processe* of all things receyeth order of *proceeding* from the settled stabilitie of divine understanding.’

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