

## Richard Hooker and Mysticism

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*As the judicious Richard Hooker celebrated divine revelation as well as law and reason, so too his emphasis on a mystical union with Christ, personally experienced and ecclesially oriented, serves to enrich the spiritual life of the church. Hooker concentrates on gradual growth in holiness rather than individual ecstatic experiences. Union with Christ is experienced relationally in an ecclesial context, and unitive individual prayers are perfected within the experience of the church's solemn common prayer. Thoughtful composition, rather than "effusions of undigested prayers," should be the norm. Equally significant is Hooker's attention to the sacramental dimension of the union with Christ. Characteristically, Hooker defines the sacraments as effective "moral instruments." Baptism incorporates the baptized into Christ, and the eucharist is instrumental in the "transmutation" of the souls of the participating believers. Throughout his mystical concerns, Hooker reflects an intense awareness of both being in the presence of God and sharing God's very life.*

### *The Role and Limits of Theology*

The title of Richard Hooker's magnum opus, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*, announced his fundamental orientation. With "law" as the key paradigm, Hooker proposed to offer a clear, biblically oriented, and rational outline of the structure of the church, based on his understanding of God, creation, and human existence. As a Reformation theologian, Hooker acknowledged the Bible as the source of all revealed truth. At the same time, as a learned scholar, Hooker made very extensive use of ecclesial and secular learning. Essential for this task of interpretation was the consensus of the wisest interpreters who drew upon Scripture, tradition, and the exercise of reason. Hooker's steadfast appeal to reason earned him the occasional

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critique of being a rationalist.<sup>1</sup> At the same time there was also another side to Hooker. C. S. Lewis has put it this way: "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 substances and his are wholly different.' God is unspeakably transcendent; but also unspeakably immanent."<sup>2</sup> As A. M. Allchin develops this insight, it becomes clear that the presence of God has to be understood both universally and personally: "to speak of man's participation in God, still more to speak of his deification, otherwise than in the context of a whole world which participates in God is to speak a non-sense."<sup>3</sup> Yet characteristically, as Hooker elaborated this mystical perception of all reality, he consistently sought recourse to clear and rational concepts of thought.<sup>4</sup>

In his historical situation near the end of the sixteenth century, the appeal to learned and wise reasoning appeared particularly necessary in confronting the two major critics of the Elizabethan Settlement. Against Roman Catholicism it was insufficient merely to quote Scripture. After all, Rome knew the Bible and could appeal to texts in its favor. To counter such appeals, Hooker needed to offer a reasoned account that his own hermeneutics and exegeses were in basic accord with traditional sacred and secular wisdom. Similarly, against the Puritans who appealed to Scriptures, experience, and even intuition, mere quotation of Scriptures would not be sufficient. Their

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<sup>1</sup> For example, "Hooker's God, like Aquinas' is rational, and the object of rational knowledge," Herschel Baker, *The Image of Man: A Study of the Idea of Human Dignity in Classical Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, (1947), 1961), 235; "a typical rationalist," Gunnar Hillerdal, *Reason and Revelation in Richard Hooker* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1962), 97.

<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 450.

<sup>3</sup> A. M. Allchin, *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* (Wilton, Conn.: Morehouse-Barlow, 1988), 8.

<sup>4</sup> These included Hooker's considerable reliance on Neoplatonic categories. W. J. Torrance Kirby has brilliantly elaborated that two of these strands are particularly complex: "Hooker's soteriological writings bear all the distinctive marks of the Augustinian emphasis on Christo-centric immediacy while the hierarchical ontology of the Pseudo-Dionysian *lex divinitatis* preponderates in his cosmology, ecclesiology and political theology." W. J. Torrance Kirby, "Grace and Hierarchy: Richard Hooker's Two Platonisms," in W. J. Torrance Kirby, ed., *Richard Hooker and the English Reformation* (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers B.V., 2003), p. 33.

spiritual father, the reformer John Calvin (1509-1564) from Geneva, had been a brilliant and immensely learned man. While theoretically all of his teachings were based on Scripture alone, in practice his spirituality drew on all of his learning. In other words, when Calvin claimed that “the Scripture says,” his interpretation was often not novel, but stood in a long line of the best exegesis in patristic and medieval traditions. Calvin’s English followers, the early Puritans, did not always display such erudition. Particularly their appeal to the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit appeared unduly subjective and hence did not persuade Hooker.<sup>5</sup>

Even though Hooker had largely made his case with rationally cogent concepts, he was not a rationalist. The Age of Enlightenment had not yet arrived, and the corrosive effects of sin and of human finitude were still taken seriously.<sup>6</sup> Above all, however, Hooker wrote as a believer in the grandeur and majesty of God, cognizant of human finitude and sinfulness. He was deeply aware that reason had definite limits, and therefore admonished:

Dangerous it were for the feeble braine of man to wade farre into the doings of the most High, whome although to knowe be life, and joy to make mention of his name: yet 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 and reach. He is above, and we upon earth, therefore it behoveth our wordes to be warie and fewe.<sup>7</sup>

While colorful, the idea was not new and was drawn from Christian intellectual history.<sup>8</sup>

### *The Question of Mysticism*

At the same time, such a humble observation and warning did not inhibit Hooker in his complex theologizing and writing. It was a

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<sup>5</sup> George F. Nuttall offers a concise account of the Puritan insights in *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> Egil Grislis, “The Role of Sin in the Theology of Richard Hooker,” *Anglican Theological Review*, 84.4 (Fall 2002): 881-896.

<sup>7</sup> *Laws*, 1.2.2; Folger Library Edition, 1.59.12-20.

<sup>8</sup> See Arnobius, *Adversus Gentes*, 1.31.

cautious reminder to himself and others that while the presence of God could be acknowledged and described, the result would never be complete. In the final analysis, God was ever greater than the best human explanations. Due to such a recognition, Hooker constantly nurtured a mystical sense of awe and adoration: “The booke of this law we are neither able nor worthie to open and to looke into. The little thereof which we darkly apprehend, we admire, the rest with religious ignorance we humbly and meekly adore.”<sup>9</sup>

In various contexts, and repeatedly, Hooker celebrated the God, who is “infinite, and “therefore . . . our felicitie and blisse.” Our souls are able to “injoy God” with “everlasting delight.” This experience Hooker explained further as mystical and unitive: “although we be men, yet by being unto God united we live as it were the life of God.”<sup>10</sup> Similarly, when reflecting on the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, Hooker suggested a lengthy process, leading to fruition. Faith begins “with a weake apprehension of things not sene,” and “endeth with the intuitive vision of God in the world to come.” Hope starts “with a trembling expectation of thinges far removed and as yet but onely heard of,” and “endeth with a reall and actual fruition of that which no tongue can express.” Finally, charity “beginning here with a weake inclination of heart towards him unto whome wee are not able to approach, endeth with endlesse union, the mysterie whereof is higher then the reach of the thoughts of men.”<sup>11</sup>

Such passages are neither rare nor exceptional in their vigor. Indeed, there are numerous texts that appear to be written by a mystic. But is Hooker a genuine mystic—or is he merely using traditional mystical expressions without a personal mystical orientation and experience?

On the very deepest level, the question may have to remain only partially answered. On the one hand, the personally shy and humble Hooker did not dwell on his own deepest religious experiences, as is acknowledged by his biographers. According to Izaak Walton, the seventeenth-century biographer, Hooker was a pious clergyman who spent much of his time in private prayer: Hooker “did usually every Ember-week take from the parish clerk the key of the church-door; into which place he retired every day, and lockt himself up for many

<sup>9</sup> *Laves*, 1.2.5; 1.62.10-13.

<sup>10</sup> *Laves*, 1.11.2; 1.112.12, 19-20.

<sup>11</sup> *Laves*, 1.11.6; 1.119.4-9.

hours; and did the like most Fridays, and other days of fasting.”<sup>12</sup> Philip B. Secor, a noted modern biographer, reports on Hooker’s pious evening prayers with his family, but suggests no mystical inclinations.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, it is now often acknowledged, that Hooker was a very able, even crafty, theological controversialist. The *Ecclesia Anglicana* which Hooker defended was coterminous with the state. As Hooker saw it, theological cohesiveness and administrative order were essential to its existence and continued survival. While celebrating the need for personal faith, Hooker nevertheless embedded it within the ecclesial community. Such a position would have to situate mysticism within the church as well.

### *Theology and the Holy Spirit*

Hooker defended the Elizabethan Settlement with his heart, soul, and mind. It was a defense grounded in his religious convictions. And these, Hooker believed, could be grasped by the judicious theologians within the ecclesial community—although only with concerted efforts in a dialogue with other theologians. Herein the Holy Spirit had an appropriately prominent role. The Holy Spirit remained, as always, the guide “into all truth.” And, as Hooker perceived, this guidance took place in two distinctive ways: “the one extraordinarie, the other common; the one belonging but unto some few, the other extending itselfe unto all that are of God; the one that which we call by a special divine excellency Revelation, the other Reason.”<sup>14</sup> This extraordinary or revelatory activity of the Holy Spirit Hooker sharply distinguished from what, in his view, the misguided Puritans had regarded as “the special illumination of the holy Ghost”<sup>15</sup>—which would disclose unique insights only to them as true believers and, in addition, certify them as special “Gods children.”<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Hooker noted with some regret that Puritans and people with similar convictions had not responded to reasonable persuasion: “they close up their eares.”<sup>17</sup>

As for his own views, Hooker acknowledged that human reason had been limited by sin and now, among Christian believers, re-

<sup>12</sup> *The Laws*, Keble seventh ed. vol. I, 80.

<sup>13</sup> Philip B. Secor, *Richard Hooker: Prophet of Anglicanism* (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns and Oates; Toronto: The Anglican Book Centre, 1999), 282.

<sup>14</sup> *Laws, Preface*, 3.10; 1.17.16-19.

<sup>15</sup> *Laws, Preface*, 3.10; 1.17.12-13.

<sup>16</sup> *Laws, Preface*, 3.14; 1.19.23-24.

<sup>17</sup> *Laws, Preface*, 3.11; 1.18.12.

mained in a restorative process undertaken by the Holy Spirit. Yet even under such circumstances reason remained a precious gift of the Holy Spirit. It is in this context that Hooker could make some use of the mystical term of illumination. He wrote: "The light of naturall understanding wit and reason is from God, he it is which thereby doth illuminate every man entering into the world."<sup>18</sup> Such illumination, however, was not focused on a subjective experience. As with Augustine,<sup>19</sup> illumination established the reality of truth, but did not vouch for its individual apprehension. Rather, the focus was on a dialogue in which reason could prove the truth of its insights in an encounter with others: "God hath not moved theire hartes to thinke such thinges, as he hath not inabled then to prove."<sup>20</sup> Seen in this way, truth is not established by one person's individual argument, but only in an ecclesially communal discourse. On this specific level, subjective rapture and ecstasy do not disclose insights that are universally valid. The situation is made worse when zeal is added to the dialogue: "zeale hath drowned charitie, and skill meknes."<sup>21</sup> With regret, Hooker lamented that in his day unsubstantiated, subjective criticism of the Elizabethan establishment had become commonplace: "The common conceipt of the vulgar sort is, whensoever they see any thing which they mislike and are angry at, to thinke that every such thing is scandalous."<sup>22</sup>

In Hooker's view, even more dangerous than the English Puritans were the Anabaptists on the Continent: "When they and their Bibles were alone together, what strange phantasticall opinion soever at any time entred into their heads, their use was to thinke the Spirit taught it them." Erroneously regarding their own "restlesse levitie" as an indication of their growth in "spirituall perfection," each of them sought to create "some speciall mysterie"<sup>23</sup> Hooker thought that in dealing with these people Luther had made a major error. Luther had recommended to Duke Frederick of Saxony "that within his dominion they might be favourably dealt with and spared, for that (their error excepted) they seemed otherwise right good men." By such

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<sup>18</sup> *Lawes*, 3.9.3; 1.238.25-27.

<sup>19</sup> Frederick C. Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 2: *Medieval Philosophy: Augustine to Scotus* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1953), 63.

<sup>20</sup> *Lawes*, 5.10.1; 2.47.7-9.

<sup>21</sup> *Lawes*, 4.1.1; 1.272.31-32.

<sup>22</sup> *Lawes*, 4.12.2; 1.320.6-8.

<sup>23</sup> *Lawes*, *Preface*, 8.7; 1.44.24-26, 45.1-2, 5.

“mercifull tolleration” the Anabaptists had gathered strength as “the people flocked unto them by thousandes.”<sup>24</sup> Without identifying the exceptional situation in the city of Muenster, Hooker generalized: “when the minds of men are once erroneously perswaded that it is the will of God to have those things done which they phancie, their opinions are as thornes in their sides never suffering them to take rest till they have brought their speculations into practise.”<sup>25</sup>

Here Hooker the scholar had given in to the temptation of subjective polemic, which precluded him from observing any major distinctions among English Puritans. He did not note that there were middle-of-the-road Puritans who retained their Calvinist theology and something of their Presbyterian orientation, and yet conformed to the demands of the Establishment.<sup>26</sup> As already noted, even more unfair was the identification of all Anabaptists with the violent Muensterites.<sup>27</sup> At the same time it should not be overlooked that Hooker’s sense of impending danger was not unrealistic. Hooker perceived that the radical Puritans would not be integrated into the *Ecclesia Anglicana*.<sup>28</sup>

On a far deeper level, a sense of realism also pervaded Hooker’s relation to mysticism. Faithful to the Establishment, Hooker did not celebrate an individualistic and subjective mode of encounter with God. He embraced a mystical spirituality that was ecclesially integrated and communally balanced.

### *The Mystical Union with Christ*

While rejecting what he viewed as the individualistic aberrations by the Puritans and Anabaptists, Hooker affirmed the reality of a mystical union with Christ within the church. At times Hooker believed that his interpretation of mysticism was so obviously correct that it demanded no specific defense. His statements then read more

<sup>24</sup> *Lawes, Preface*, 8.9; 1.47.1-3, 4-6.

<sup>25</sup> *Lawes, Preface*, 8.12; 1.49.3-6.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Dever, *Richard Sibbes: Puritanism and Calvinism in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2000).

<sup>27</sup> J. S. Oyer, *Lutheran Reformers against Anabaptists: Luther, Melancthon, and Menius and the Anabaptists of Central Germany* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964) offers a thorough defense of the evangelical Anabaptists.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), “The Prophecies of Richard Hooker,” 28-40.

like longer or shorter headlines, organized around a central affirmation. But Hooker could also headline his position with notable clarity:

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 possess by degrees and portions. But the participation of Christ importeth, besides the presence of Christes person, and besides the mysticall copulation thereof with the partes and members of his whole Church, a true actuall influence of grace whereby the life which wee live accordinge to godlines is his, and from him wee receive those perfections wherein our eternall happines consisteth.<sup>29</sup>

The key components of the above definition are interrelated: Christ and the church, the wholeness of the person of Christ which is indivisible and yet related to each church member, the participation or mystical copulation which binds the person of Christ and the believer, and the presence of grace which is the effective result of this participation.

Hooker could note further (he referred specifically to Irenaeus), that the ancient fathers also affirmed a “mystical conjunction” through which “oure verie bodies . . . receive that vitall efficacie which we knowe to be in his.”<sup>30</sup> But whether designated as “grace” or “vitall efficacie,” the divine gift was understood in reference to the risen Christ who “imparteth plainelie him selfe by degrees” and thus “inhabiteth whome he saveth.”<sup>31</sup> In accord with a traditional Protestant emphasis, Hooker thus accented the personal dimension of the divine-human relationship. A sense of personal intimacy was further enhanced by Hooker’s claim that Christ inhabits the saved person. In other words, Hooker included the Holy Spirit among the several synonyms for grace: Christ is “personallie” in each believer “by way of mysticall association wrought through the guift of the holie Ghost.”<sup>32</sup> In addition, Hooker also pointed out that what was said of an individual needed to be affirmed of all of the other faithful church members as well: the justified and sanctified members “belonge to the mysticall bodie of our Savior Christ.”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Lawes*, 5.56.20; 2.242.26-243.4.

<sup>30</sup> *Lawes*, 5.56.9; 2.241.14-15.

<sup>31</sup> *Lawes*, 5.56.10; 2.242.5-6, 13-14.

<sup>32</sup> *Lawes*, 5.56.13; 2.244.15-17.

<sup>33</sup> *Lawes*, 5.56.11; 2.243.15.



Now the effects of this union with Christ Hooker described in traditional and mystical terms. Most notably, such was his concern with “deification”: “God hath deified our nature, though not by turninge it into him selfe, yeat by makinge it his owne inseparable habitation.”<sup>34</sup> Yet just how it occurs, suggested Hooker, was more readily explained in negative rather than affirmative terminology. Thus, in the “body mysticall . . . the mysterie of their conjunction is removed altogether from sense.”<sup>35</sup> Or, Hooker could offer the insight in an eschatological mode:

For doth anie man doubt but that even from the flesh of Christ our verie bodies doe receive that life which shall make them glorious at the later daie, and for which they are allready accompted partes of his blessed bodie? Our corruptible bodies could never live the life they shall live, were it not that heere they are joyned with his bodie which is incorruptible, and that his is in oures as a cause of immortalitie, a cause by removinge through the death and merit of his owne flesh that which hindered the life of oures.<sup>36</sup>

Hooker did not ever look at death lightly.<sup>37</sup> He understood the gravity of fear and the finality of death and therefore celebrated the assurance<sup>38</sup> which believers receive by faith. Here the emphasis on the union with Christ was essential.

### *Some Additional Christological Reflections*

A further attempt at explaining this union may be seen in Hooker’s attention to some of the key details of the Christological doctrine. Hooker began with a hermeneutical observation: “Such as the substance of ech thinge is, such is also the presence thereof. Impossible it is that God should withdrawe his presence from any thinge because the verie substance of God is infinite.” Initially this was a negative insight: even though God “filleth heaven and earth,” since God’s substance is “immateriall,” it remains “incomprehensible” to us.<sup>39</sup> But not

<sup>34</sup> *Lawes*, 5.54.5; 2.224.14-26.

<sup>35</sup> *Lawes*, 3.1.2; 1.195.2-3.

<sup>36</sup> *Lawes*, 5.56.9; 2.241.2-9.

<sup>37</sup> *A Remedie Against Sorrow and Feare*, Folger Library Edition, 5.363-377.

<sup>38</sup> Egil Grislis, “The Assurance of Faith According to Richard Hooker,” in Arthur Stephen McGrade, ed., *Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community* (Tempe: Ariz.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997), 237-249.

<sup>39</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.3; 2.228.21-26.

unknown! That God is everywhere present can be discerned “partly by reason and more perfectlie by faith.” In either case, claimed Hooker, our knowledge is “firme and certaine.”<sup>40</sup> The paradigm is essentially Neoplatonic. The incomprehensible God does not remain such, but is disclosed through Wisdom or *Logos*. For this function in a Christian perspective Hooker turned to Christ, specifically to the roles of Christ’s two natures: “Christ is essentiallie present with all things in that he is verie God, but not present with all things as man, because manhood and the partes thereof can neither be the cause nor the true subject of such presence.”<sup>41</sup> That is, the human nature of Christ cannot “be present with all creatures.”<sup>42</sup> In traditional sixteenth-century Reformed perspective, Hooker had rejected the *communicatio idiomatum*, namely, “by force of union the properties of both natures are imparted to the person onlie in whome they are, and not what belongeth to the one nature reallie conveyed or translated into the other.” Stated in another way, although Christ has received “the grace of unction” which makes him more excellent than all other human beings, this fact does not destroy Christ’s authentic human nature: “supernaturall endowments are an advancement, they are no extinguishment of that nature whereto they are given.”<sup>43</sup> Now according to the Antiochene and (and subsequently the Reformed) interpretation, “Christ as man is not everie where present.”<sup>44</sup> Christ’s body and soul are therefore “not on earth but in heaven onlie.”<sup>45</sup> Hence, in accord with the traditional Reformed interpretation, Christ’s human nature “cannot have in it selfe universall presence.”<sup>46</sup> Consequently, Hooker’s understanding of Christ’s mysticism is basically oriented to the divine nature of Christ. Yet Hooker did not overlook the role of the human nature of Christ and, above all, the reality of the person of the risen Christ.

### *The Person of Christ*

Hooker’s real concern was not merely to distance himself from the Lutheran perspective of the ubiquitous presence of both natures

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<sup>40</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.3; 2.228.29-30.

<sup>41</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.4; 2.229.20-23.

<sup>42</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.5; 2.229.29.

<sup>43</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.6; 2.230.18-20, 23, 28-29.

<sup>44</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.7; 2.231.20.

<sup>45</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.7; 2.231.24.

<sup>46</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.7; 2.231.27.

of Christ, but to record a positive insight as well. In his search for a further and more inclusive explanation of the unity with Christ, Hooker now turned his attention to the person of Christ. His solution was to point out that, indeed, while Christ's divine nature was everywhere, his human nature "which cannot have in it selfe universal presence hath it *after a sorte by being no where severed*"<sup>47</sup> from the divine nature which is everywhere present. The Lutheran criticism had been that the Reformed position had split Christ in two. In addition, the devotional consequences were said to be problematic: to which Christ did one pray? Hooker's solution was essentially mystical: he affirmed a presence by conjunction—and "preasence *by waie of conjunction* is in some sorte presence."<sup>48</sup> Here Hooker's language was rather cautious, perhaps even hesitating. To suggest a presence of "some sort" pointed more to an intent than to an explanation. But Hooker accepted such an ambiguous solution: it is "in some sorte a kinde of infinite and unlimited presence"<sup>49</sup> since Christ's "bodilie substance hath everie where a presence of true conjunction with deity."<sup>50</sup>

At the same time Hooker appeared to be well aware that the term "conjunction" could benefit from further clarification. Here traditional Christological terminology continued to be useful. Thus, Hooker spoke of a "co-operation" between the two natures of Christ.<sup>51</sup> In this unique relationship Christ as man "assenteth" to everything which Christ does as God. At the same time, "nothinge which deitie doth worke is hid" from Christ as man;<sup>52</sup> or, "by knowledge and assent the soule of Christ is present with all thinges which the deitie of Christ worketh."<sup>53</sup>

As Hooker was reflecting on Christ's human nature, the role of Christ's body also required some reflection. According to Hooker, the "whole nature is presentlie joyned unto deitie," which is everywhere.<sup>54</sup> The concise statement may be interpreted in a two-pronged fashion. While creation binds God and nature causally and meta-

<sup>47</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.7; 2.231.1.26-28.

<sup>48</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.7; 2.232.7-8.

<sup>49</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.9; 2.234.6.

<sup>50</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.9; 2.234.9-10.

<sup>51</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.8; 2.233.29-30.

<sup>52</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.8; 2.234.2.

<sup>53</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.8; 2.234.2-4.

<sup>54</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.9; 2.234.7-8.

physically, redemption by way of Incarnation and atonement adds a soteriological and personal dimension. Hence “it followeth that his bodilie substance hath everie where a presence of true conjunction with deitie.”<sup>55</sup> This insight now serves both to explain and to defend the doctrine of atonement: the “sacrifice for the synnes of the world” on Calvary was made by “the bodie of the Sonne of God.”<sup>56</sup> And since Christ’s human nature was in conjunction with Deity, Hooker attributed to it “a *presence of force and efficacie* throughout all generations of men.”<sup>57</sup> As Hooker reflected further on the significance of the atonement, he pointed to the “value or merite of the sacrificed bodie of Christ.”<sup>58</sup> At this level participation was no longer viewed as only philosophical, but also as soteriological, seeking to connect Christ’s human nature or his body with his divine nature and thus to describe the unity with all believers in whom Christ dwells. But how could the human—and therefore finite—body of Christ, when sacrificed, share the benefits of this redemptive sacrifice with all the believers everywhere and in all ages? Hooker acknowledged once more that the body of Christ is not “*actullie infinite in substance*.”<sup>59</sup> God alone is infinite; however, Hooker suggests that the sacrificed body of Christ can be infinite in “*efficacie*,” that is, in the “*possibilitie of application*.”<sup>60</sup> And this redemptive application takes place through participation in Christ through the church.

Just how this participation takes place, Hooker begins to explain as follows: “Participation is that mutuall inward hold which Christ hath of us and wee of him.” The concluding part of the statement, however, is significantly less clear: “ech possesseth other by waie of speciall interest propertie and inherent copulation.”<sup>61</sup> Here Hooker is somewhat disappointing—although not self-contradicting, since he had from the very beginning warned of the impossibility to fully explain the divine-human unitive relationship.

Under such circumstances Hooker had done as well as he could; namely, he had generally relied on several key analogies between the Trinity and the unity of the church with God. He had written of par-

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<sup>55</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.9; 2.234.8-9.

<sup>56</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.9; 2.234.11-12.

<sup>57</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.9; 2.234.12-13.

<sup>58</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.9; 2.234.17-18.

<sup>59</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.9; 2.234.14.

<sup>60</sup> *Lawes*, 5.55.9; 2.234.19-20.

<sup>61</sup> *Lawes*, 5.56.1; 2.234.29-30.

ticipation, of mutual indwelling, of distinction without separation, and of a constant interaction in love.<sup>62</sup> These analogies point to some problems; for example, since the substance of God “whollie differeth” from the substance of human beings, “theire coherence and communion either with him or amongst them selves” is also completely different.<sup>63</sup> The difference lies between being and becoming, as well as between infinite and finite. The Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is uncreated and eternal. Hence their mutuality is equally eternal. Human relationships to God through Christ, however, are finite and unequal. From the human side they have to be viewed as a gift. From the divine vantage point the participation begins as an eternal event, as it may be seen, for example, in divine election and love: “But in God wee actuallie are no longer then onlie from the time of our actuall adoption into the bodie of his true Church, into the fellowship of his children.”<sup>64</sup> And although speaking of this “adoption” personally, Hooker’s plural language indicates that this subjectivity is corporal in character:

For in him wee actuallie are by our actuall incorporation into that societie which hath him for their head and doth make together with him one bodie (he and they are in that respect havinge one name) for which cause by vertue of this mysticall conjunction wee are of him and in him even as though our verie flesh and bones should be made continueate with his.<sup>65</sup>

As a rule, in elaborating the relationship between God through Christ to the church, Hooker had relied on the ideas and language of the New Testament and the early church. What thus emerged was a corporate mysticism, placed in an ecclesial context. In this way the ultimate goal of the interpretation to which Hooker pointed may be seen as a quest for salvation. Here the saving event of Christ significantly overshadowed attention to the details of the mystical encounter, including personal feelings and experiences. Hooker declared: “Wee are in Christ because he knoweth and loveth us even as partes of him selfe.”<sup>66</sup> Or restating the insight, along with Christ

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<sup>62</sup> See *Lawes*, 5.56.2-3; 2.235.3-236.7.

<sup>63</sup> *Lawes*, 5.56.5; 2.236.20-21.

<sup>64</sup> *Lawes*, 5.56.7; 2.238.22-25.

<sup>65</sup> *Lawes*, 5.56.7; 2.238.29-239.5.

<sup>66</sup> *Lawes*, 5.56.7; 2.239.5-6.

Hooker also emphasized grace, as these belong together in describing the Christian corporate existence in Christ: “Yea by grace we are everie of us in Christ and in his Church, as by nature we are in those our first parentes.”<sup>67</sup> Such was the sum total of being a Christian.

### *The Life of Prayer*

But being a Christian was not a static condition. In Hooker’s understanding the believer’s Christocentric grace mysticism, ecclesially situated, emerged in a vividly existential form on at least two occasions. One of them was a description of the life of prayer, and the other the theory and experience of the sacraments.

Hooker, on occasion, approached prayer with eloquently colorful symbolism. Thus Hooker reported that between “God in heaven” and the church militant on earth there is a “continuall intercourse”—namely, the angels descending from heaven bring down “Doctrine.” On their return flight the angels carry upward the prayers of the church. Hooker did not suggest that all this occurs literally—even though the intense relationship between God and the church at prayer is very real. Hooker wrote:

For what is thassemblinge of the Church to learne, but the receiuinge of Angels descended from above? What to pray, but the sendinge of Angels upward? His heavenly inspirations and our holie desires are as so many Angels of entercourse and commerce between God and us. As teachinge bringeth us to know that God is our supreme truth; so prayer testifieth that we acknowledg him as our soveraigne good.<sup>68</sup>

The central issue is clear: prayer is a mode of personal encounter with God through Christ within the church. Here God is celebrated with ecstatic gratitude in a most orderly manner. At the same time prayer expresses the full doctrinal agreement of the church with everything that delights God.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, prayer has also a powerful ethical dimension. Thus, Hooker was prepared to list the superiority of prayer to all manner of good deeds. His examples are illuminating. “Counsell” can be offered only when desired, and alms only to those who are in need. In fact, all our assistance to others can be rejected—

<sup>67</sup> *Lawes*, 5.56.7; 2.239.11, 17, 20-22.

<sup>68</sup> *Lawes*, 5.23.1; 2.110.7-8, 10-16.

<sup>69</sup> *Lawes*, 5.23.1; 2.110.17-22.

except intercessory prayers. Also it is worth noting that prayer “is the first thing wherewith a righteous life beginneth, and the last wherewith it doth ende.”<sup>70</sup> Prayer thus embraces and sustains all Christian existence. Moreover, since prayers are shared by saints in heaven, the angels, and the church on earth, we must realize “that so much of our lives is coelestiall and divine as we spend in the exercise of prayer.”<sup>71</sup>

On further reflection, Hooker turned special attention to common prayer and commented on the intensity of this complex “experience.” Here “religious minds are . . . inflamed,” largely due to the “vertuc, force and efficacy” which they encounter in “the verie forme and reverende solemnitie of common prayer.”<sup>72</sup> Fittingly, “coelestiall powers” are also present: God’s “Angels [are] intermingled as our associates.”<sup>73</sup> Such ecclesially located common prayer in worship, believed Hooker, nurtured devotional intensity. He even spoke of “ardent affections” as “the verie wynges of prayer.”<sup>74</sup>

Individual zeal, however, was not Hooker’s goal. In criticizing the Puritans, Hooker had harshly rejected “the irksome deformities whereby through endles and senseles effusions of indigested prayers they oftentimes disgrace in most unsufferable manner the worthiest parte of Christian dutie towards God.”<sup>75</sup> Yet concern with the individual participant’s role in common prayer remained significant. Here Hooker particularly valued the following interplay. On the one hand, “prayer kindleth our desire to behold God by speculation.”<sup>76</sup> “Speculation,” of course, refers to theological reflection, which, on the other hand, further encourages prayer:

the minde delighted with that contemplative sight of God taketh everie where newe inflammations to pray, the riches of the mysteries of heavenlie wisdom contínuallie stirring up in us correspondent desires towards him. So that hee which prayeth in due sorte is thereby made the more attentive to heare, and he which heareth the more earnest to pray, for the time which wee bestowe as well in the one as the other.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>70</sup> *Laves*, 5.23.1; 2.110.32, 111.12-13.

<sup>71</sup> *Laves*, 5.23.1; 2.111.18-19.

<sup>72</sup> *Laves*, 5.25.1; 2.113.19-22.

<sup>73</sup> *Laves*, 5.25.2; 2.114.14-16.

<sup>74</sup> *Laves*, 5.33.1-2; 2.140.6-7.

<sup>75</sup> *Laves*, 5.25.5; 2.116.29-32.

<sup>76</sup> *Laves*, 5.38.1; 2.140.23-24.

<sup>77</sup> *Laves*, 5.34.1; 2.140.24-31.

Without referring to specific prayers as particular examples, Hooker pointed to the Psalms, which he regarded as the most illustrious prayers. Here poetry and music support each other. “[M]usical harmonie” is able to touch “that verie parte of man which is most divine.”<sup>78</sup> In agreement with Plato,<sup>79</sup> Hooker suggested that the soul “it selfe by nature is, or hath in it harmonie.”<sup>80</sup> Here the effects, he thought, can vary. Some people are calmed, while others are carried “as it were into ecstasies, fillinge the minde with an heavenlie joy and for the time in a maner severinge it from the bodie.”<sup>81</sup> This is one of Hooker’s strongest statements about mystical ecstasy. Even though it is a relatively limited affirmation, it is not totally isolated, since it fits into Hooker’s entire understanding of the dynamics of prayer.

### *The Sacramental Context*

The second occasion where Hooker’s ecclesially-oriented mysticism received a vigorous personal emphasis was his interpretation of the sacraments. Most broadly, participation in Christ takes place by imputation and infusion. Imputation refers to the gift of God whereby the redemptive suffering of Christ, seen as payment for all sin, is given to humankind. This is also the central core of the doctrine of justification. Subsequently, by infusion the grace and the spirit of Christ both reach and remain in the human heart; this is the center of the doctrine of sanctification. In agreement with traditional Augustinian-Calvinist views, in sanctification Hooker expected a continued progress and intensity of participation in Christ and consequently a growth in goodness.<sup>82</sup> Accordingly, as tradition viewed the situation, imputation was immediate and complete.<sup>83</sup> In other words, in justification the gift of salvation was never partial but always total. At the same time, the imparting of grace and the presence of Christ in sanctification was always a gradual process.

In such a setting, the role of the sacraments can be seen as highly significant, particularly because here we are encountering two divinely

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<sup>78</sup> *Lawes*, 5.38.1; 2.151.5, 8-9.

<sup>79</sup> *Phaed.* C.36, 41, 43.

<sup>80</sup> *Lawes*, 5.38.1; 2.151.10.

<sup>81</sup> *Lawes*, 5.38.1; 2.152.2-4.

<sup>82</sup> *Lawes*, 5.56.11; 2.243.4-9.

<sup>83</sup> *Lawes*, 5.56.12; 2.244.1.



instituted ceremonies—baptism and eucharist. Hooker thought that for this institution he could recognize two key reasons: the sacraments serve as “markes”<sup>84</sup> that the imparting of grace has occurred, as well as “meanes conditionall which God requireth in them unto whome he imparteth grace.”<sup>85</sup> And the role of the sacraments is always most intense, as is well indicated by several events from the past. For example, Hooker pointed out that Moses could not see God face to face, yet “by fire” he knew that God was present.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, the Apostles, although they did not see the Holy Spirit, knew “by fierie tongues”<sup>87</sup> that the Spirit was actively present. According to Hooker the contemporary situation was analogous:

In like manner it is with us. 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 their accesse, because it pleaseth almightie God to communicate by sensible meanes those blessings which are incomprehensible.<sup>88</sup>

And because these blessings are incomprehensible, Hooker advised not to inquire just “how Christ performeth his promise.”<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, Hooker acknowledged that the experience was as intense as confessed by Moses and the Apostles. To describe it, Hooker made an impressive use of his own literary skills. Horton Davies<sup>90</sup> has noted, “The mystical approach to the sacrament elated Hooker with an almost Baroque ecstasy.” Horton referred to Hooker’s words:

the verie letter of the worde of Christ giveth plaine securitie that these mysteries doe as nailes fasten us to his verie crosse, that by them wee draw out, as touchinge efficacie force and virtue, even the blood of his goared side, in the woundes of our redeemer wee there dip our tongues, wee are died redd both within and without, our hunger is satisfied and our thirst for ever quenched, they

<sup>84</sup> *Laves*, 5.57.3; 2.245.31-33.

<sup>85</sup> *Laves*, 5.57.3; 2.246.1-2.

<sup>86</sup> *Laves*, 5.57.3; 2.246.8.

<sup>87</sup> *Laves*, 5.57.3; 2.246.13.

<sup>88</sup> *Laves*, 5.57.3; 2.246.14-20.

<sup>89</sup> *Laves*, 5.67.12; 2.343.2.

<sup>90</sup> Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Cranmer to Hooker, 1534-1603* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), 71,72.

are things wonderfull which hee feeleth, greate which hee seeth and unhard of which he uttereth whose soule is possest of this pascall lamb and made joyfull in the strength of this new wine, this bread hath in it more then the substance which our eyes behold, this cup hallowed with solemne benediction availeth to the endles life and wellfare both of soule and bodie, in that it serveth as well for medicine to heale our infirmities and purge our sinnes as for a sacrifice of thanksgiving, with touching it sanctifieth, it enlightneth with beliefe, it trulie conformeth us unto the image of Jesus Christ.<sup>91</sup>

In other words, in the eucharist, as in prayer, Hooker did not remain the calm, analytical theologian, but at times could even record the ecstasy which he had personally experienced.

Yet regardless of the intensity of the common prayer and of the sacramental experience, Hooker immediately saw to it that a thoughtful theological setting would keep, as it were, the holy fire in its fire-place. Thus we learn that the sacraments which are necessary for “life supernaturall” do not “containe *in them selves* the vitall force or efficacie.”<sup>92</sup> They are rather “not physicall but *morall instruments* of salvation”<sup>93</sup> and yet “effectual”<sup>94</sup> in delivering grace, which is appropriate for each sacrament.<sup>95</sup> In this way Christ and the Holy Spirit enter into the soul.<sup>96</sup> In baptismal regeneration the recipients are “incorporated into Christ.”<sup>97</sup> Similarly, in the eucharist Christ is present in the believers’ souls.<sup>98</sup> Hooker regarded such insights as essential and believed that he was pointing to one area of full agreement within the eucharistic controversies of his time:

It is on all sides plainly confest, first that this sacrament is a true and a reall participation of Christ, who thereby imparteth him selfe even his whole intire person *as a mystical head* unto everie soule that receiveth him, and that everie such receiver doth thereby incorporate or unite him selfe unto Christ as a *mysticall*

<sup>91</sup> *Lawes*, 5.67.12; 2.343.6-21.

<sup>92</sup> *Lawes*, 5.57.4; 2.246.26-28.

<sup>93</sup> *Lawes*, 5.57.4; 2.246.28-29.

<sup>94</sup> *Lawes*, 5.57.5; 2.247.20-21.

<sup>95</sup> *Lawes*, 5.68.2; 2.346.13.

<sup>96</sup> *Lawes*, 5.57.3; 2.246.14-20.

<sup>97</sup> *Lawes*, 5.60.2; 2.255.8.

<sup>98</sup> *Lawes*, 5.67.3; 2.337.12.

*member* of him, yea of them also whom he acknowledgeth to be his own; secondly 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; thirdly that what *merit force or vertue soever there is in his sanctified bodie and blood* we freely fullie and whollieave it by this sacrament; forthlie, that the *effect thereof in us is a reall transmutation of our soules and bodies* from sinne to righteousness, from death and corruption to immortalitie and life; fiftlie that because the sacrament being of it selfe but a corruptible and earthly creature must needs be thought an unlikely instrument to worke so admirable effectes in man, wee are therefore to rest our selves altogether upon *the strength of his glorious power* who is able and will bringe to passe that the bread and cup which he giveth us shalbe trulie the thinge he promiseth.<sup>99</sup>

In this lengthy summary statement Hooker brings together the key insights of his mystical theology. Again and again, he speaks of mystical participation. Initially, the term “mystical” may seem to be overused. Everything is “mystical”—Christ himself, the church, the believer, their mutual participation. But, at best, such is a continuous and heartfelt accenting of divine-human participation within the believing community. As such, it is a continuous process, as the transmutation of both soul and body continue to increase, proceeding from sin to righteousness. It is also a complete reorientation, with moments of intense feeling, even ecstasy, of being unified through the Holy Spirit in Christ with God. At the same time in a self-directed perspective, this is also a matter of continuous inward growth in sanctification. For the ultimate source of this sacred continuum Hooker celebrates God in Christ, who through the Holy Spirit, is salvifically active within the ecclesial community and initiates the mystical participation of the believer—which is the believer’s salvation.

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<sup>99</sup> *Lawes*, 5.67.7; 2.335.32-336.15

