

# Mystical Elements in Richard Hooker's Theology

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**ABSTRACT.** One word that draws together Hooker's understanding of divine mystery and secrecy is his use of the term "participation". Hooker uses it to speak of the hiddenness of God disclosed in Christ and the anticipation of divine/human union to which the instruments of divine grace are always "mysticallie yeat trulie, invisiblie yeat reallie" effecting the worshipper's "participation" in the Godhead. Such a "conjunction" was only possible for Hooker if "that small *vitall odor*" of the Holy Spirit was preveniently given by God so that grace secretly mediated by the Holy Spirit was always, "*both working inwardlie, and preventing the verie first desires, or motions of man to goodnes*". Hooker invited a return to the "foundation" of Christian thought and the promise of union with God through the Holy Spirit, not by absorption but by personal transformation and participation in Christ. He simultaneously rejected as arbitrary and circular the Puritan claims of independent spiritual insight, while directly positioning himself to rehearse a doctrine of the Holy Spirit that directly depended on the "sensible meanes" of grace accepted by both Puritans and Hooker, namely, word and sacrament, but did not remain there. The achievement of Richard Hooker moved the debate beyond the question of valid "meanes" to the goal of the Gospel, and life in the believing community which is "participation" in the Godhead. Hooker's indispensable doctrine of the Holy Spirit made the saving knowledge of God possible for all people, not only the "godly".

## **Introduction**

Richard Hooker (1554–1600), author of the *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*, is typically recognised as the defender of the Elizabethan Settlement. The *Lawes* represent his assessment of Puritan divinity during the closing years of Elizabeth's reign and a defence

of the governance, ministry, and theology of the English Church, especially sacramental theology. In particular, Hooker expends significant effort developing a theological trajectory that locates the Church within the broad base of Genevan reform while maintaining an attitude of critical engagement with the Church of Rome. Hooker is known for his polemic against the Puritans<sup>1</sup> and numerous authors have drawn attention to the rationalist tone by which he defends the role of reason in both the gathered life of the church and also the personal experience of the believer. This aspect of Hooker is well-established and forms the basis of the oft-quoted Anglican triad that the basis for Christian understanding and knowledge of God lies in the interplay of Scripture, tradition and reason. However, Hooker himself does not express the matter in exactly this way since he observes that,

What successe God may give unto any such kind of conference or disputation, we cannot tell. But of this we right sure, that nature, scripture, and experience it selfe, have all taught the world to seeke for the ending of contentions by submitting it selfe unto some judicall and definitve sentence, whereunto neither part that contendeth may under any pretense or coulour refuse to stand. This must needes be effectual and strong. As for other meanes without this, they seldome prevaile.<sup>2</sup>

Practically speaking, Hooker was looking for some means where he could maintain a conversation with the Puritans that would satisfy their concern for rigorous biblical Christianity while simultaneously acknowledging the sources of knowledge available to the church. His proposal for “a conference” offered

<sup>1</sup> Hooker rarely makes any distinction between the Puritans and never acknowledges that many Puritans remained firmly within the embrace of Canterbury.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Preface, Books I to IV*, vol. 1 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. Georges Edehlen, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), Preface, 6.1:29.23-28.

no guarantees but the epistemic terms for such a gathering he insisted would include a mutual commitment to the role of "nature, scripture, and experience". Of course, for Hooker, these terms had very specific referents. By "nature" he implied nature redeemed by grace and the associated role of reason, similarly constrained by the Holy Spirit since "*reason be the hand which the Spirite hath led them by*".<sup>3</sup> Likewise, "experience" was a thoroughly rational term that acknowledged the act of observation as a source of knowledge. It was not a subjective term, or an internal religious condition. "Experience" could also be used to mean knowledge obtained by experimentation. Hooker used the word in its objective sense. Neither terms carried any sense of revelation except in the special case where apostolic recognition came through a process of "intuitive revelation".<sup>4</sup> This was however, a very special circumstance involving the self-disclosure of God that Hooker would not concede to be normative for human processes of decision making especially when they themselves were called upon to adjudicate truth. Hooker entertains no concept of private truth. But Hooker's primary source for revealed truth was the Scriptures. He held that, "we have no *word of God* but the Scripture"<sup>5</sup>, "that most blessed fountaine, the book of life"<sup>6</sup> and furthermore that

<sup>3</sup> Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.10:1.17.22f.

<sup>4</sup> Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 6.3:1.31.12 Hooker's use of the term "revelation" means that which could *not* be attained by the processes of natural reason or experimentation - it could only be disclosed. "Intuitive revelation" as it relates to the meaning of Christ's death and the manifestation of his resurrection could not, in his view, and with Calvin, was *sui generis* as to the apostolic witness of these things. Scripture was therefore the only secure guarantor for the believer as Spirit-laden testimony.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Book V*, vol. 2 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. W. Speed Hill, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), V.21.1:2.84.17f.

<sup>6</sup> Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 2.1:1.3.18f.

all good necessarilie to be either knowne or don or had, this one cœlestiall fountaine yeldeth. Let there be any grieffe or disease incident unto the soule of man, anie wounde or sicknes named, for which there is not in this treasure house a present comfortable remedie at all tymes readie to be found. Hereof it is that we covet to make the psalmes especiallie familiar unto all.<sup>7</sup>

This was the language of Puritan conviction concerning Scripture and Hooker simply followed the example of Calvin who was himself prepared to exalt the counsels of God beyond the reach of human wisdom. He noted, as had Calvin, that human reason had its limits and that the appropriation of the divine could never be constrained by the limits of human intellectual powers. After all, did not Calvin declare that

the testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason so also the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded.<sup>8</sup>

Not only that, Calvin understood the Scriptures to be "self-authenticating" such that,

those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning. And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit. For even if it wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Hooker, *Lawes*, V.37.2: 2.150.16-31.

<sup>8</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion Vol. 1*, vol. XX of *The Library of Christian Classics*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), *Institutes*, 1.7.4.

<sup>9</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, *Institutes*, 1.7.5.

Hooker also accepted the self-authenticating power of Scripture which in his language came close to what he meant by "intuitive revelation". Nevertheless, he was just as aware as the Puritans that the "Councels may erre",<sup>10</sup> as much as individual thoughts and speculations can err. "Thinke yee are men, deeme it not impossible for you to erre"<sup>11</sup> and furthermore, since we are so prone to error, Scripture must be,

... our chiefest direction... for nature is no sufficient teacher what we shoulde doe that we may attaine unto life everlasting. The insufficiencie of the light of nature is by the light of scripture so fully and so perfectly herein supplied, that further light then this hath added there doth not neede unto that ende.<sup>12</sup>

Part of the integrity of Hooker's thought lies in the strength of his commitment to theological investigation, to the proper and judicious use of the given sources, that is, "nature, scripture, and experience", combined with the sort of intellectual humility that allowed him recognise the limits of knowledge. This never resulted in an abandonment of scholarship but pressed the gift of intellect towards higher goal. In so doing, Hooker rescued theology from what he regarded with grave suspicion as the Puritan propensity to identify private opinion with the will of God. He concluded that the goal of Christian faith was not defined by the mere acquisition of knowledge, or facts, and certainly not with a prescriptive view of Scripture, but by the movement of the soul towards God, "extending it selfe unto all that are of God".<sup>13</sup> It was to this goal that the Gospel drove those who believed it and that in doing so, they must acknowledge the partiality of all human knowing and the secrecy by which God achieves the deification of the believer. Those forms of Puritanism that exhibited more extreme charismatic forms of

<sup>10</sup> Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 6.3:1.31.6.

<sup>11</sup> Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 9.1:51.29.

<sup>12</sup> Hooker, *Lawes*, II.8.3:1.188.2-7.

<sup>13</sup> Hooker, *Lawes*, Preface, 3.10:1.17.17f.

religious expression were viewed with disdain by Hooker. Egil Grislis identifies this aspect of Hooker's theology when he says that for Hooker, "subjective rapture and ecstasy do not disclose insights that are universally valid".<sup>14</sup> However, Hooker's view of what was universally valid was, as noted, confined to nature, Scripture, and experience, since these were accessible to all people, and that in general, people should accept the conclusions of ecclesiastical councils if only for the sake of unity and the public reputation of the Gospel. This remarkably relaxed attitude is not evenly distributed in Hooker but it is present since he is quite sanguine about the finitude of all human affairs. As often noted, Hooker simply thought that the Puritans had mishandled their sources, even to the ironical extent of failing to properly understand Calvin.

### **Mysticism in Richard Hooker**

Egil Grislis<sup>15</sup> has suggested the contours and categories that best describe Hooker's mysticism, but it is appropriate to pause and consider some working definitions that anticipate the special uses to which Hooker puts the term, since he commonly uses the word to describe the inner or secret experience of God in the soul. W. Speed Hill has noted:

Another facet of the traditional view largely missing from our portrait is that of Hooker the theologian, the English Aquinas. One could not produce a volume like Nicholas Lossky's analysis of the "mystical theology" of Lancelot Andrewes based on the *Lawes*. It is not that Hooker was not an innovative theologian. Topics like God's essential nature, the authority of Scripture, the extent to which original sin had impaired human reason, the definition of the church are implicit throughout the *Lawes*.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Egil Grislis, "Richard Hooker and Mysticism", *Anglican Theological Review* 87/2 (2005), 258.

<sup>15</sup> Grislis, "Richard Hooker and Mysticism".

<sup>16</sup> W. Speed Hill, "Richard Hooker in the Folger Edition: An Editorial Perspective", in *Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community*, ed.

However, the idea of Hooker's mysticism cannot be recast only as innovation since, with Grislis, mystical elements are to be found throughout Hooker whether in his sacramental theology, Christology, or pneumatology. To be sure, Hooker worked creatively with all the theological categories available to him, including the thought of Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Calvin, but he still added a dimension that can properly be described a mystical, producing a hermeneutic that synchronised rational theological discourse with the language of transcendent union. This meant that his theology was always grounded in, but never limited to, human intellectual capacity because while Scripture existed to teach us theology,<sup>17</sup> and theology existed to discipline the mind's speculations, the goal of such activity was for Hooker the movement of the soul toward God through his self-disclosure in Christ. The transcendence and wonder of God, and the trajectories of divine purposefulness therefore define the language he uses.

Richard Hooker used the terms "secret" and "mysticall" in relation to the human knowledge of God's being, and also with respect to the human perception of God's actions discernible in creation. The exact sense he intended is generally built on the context, but there are occasions of some obscurity.

From a contemporary perspective, the terms "secret" and "mysticall" tend to be associated with the practitioners of mysticism and secret, esoteric ritual not available to those uninitiated in its intellectual and spiritual framework. This view of religious mysticism is derived from the human claims upon the divine. For example, Evelyn Underhill thinks of the mystic as one

Arthur S. McGrade, *Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies* no. 165 (Tempe, AZ: SUNY, 1997), 18f. See also a very brief appreciation of Hooker and Andrews' "mystical theology" in Arthur M. Allchin, *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1988), Arthur M. Allchin, *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1988).

<sup>17</sup> Hooker, *Laws*, III.8.14:1.229.33-230.1.

who has “an overwhelming consciousness of God and of his own soul: a consciousness which absorbs or eclipses all other centres of interest”<sup>18</sup> built upon the conviction of “a personal self capable of communion with God”.<sup>19</sup> The essential feature of mystical experience is that it is experienced and rooted in:

...the way the mystic feels about his Deity, and about his own relation with it; for this adoring and all-possessing consciousness of the rich and complete divine life over against the self's life, and of the possible achievement of a level of being, a sublimation of the self, wherein we are perfectly united with it. This is the common factor which unites those apparently incompatible views of the Universe [the mystic's] intuition of the divine is so lofty that it cannot be expressed by means of any intellectual concept”.<sup>20</sup>

While the aim of the mystic is “the establishment of special relations with the spiritual order”<sup>21</sup> it is to be noted that such a relationship is established by the intensity of the mystic's desire and openness to the domain of the Spirit. The transcendental aspects of this relationship are attained by “immediate knowledge far more than by belief”<sup>22</sup> and which results in “unmediated intercourse with the Transcendent”.<sup>23</sup> Underhill does not make a case for the abandonment of the intellect, but it is clear that the assurances of relational union with the Godhead cannot as such be imparted by membership in a group and that mystical experience, in turn, cannot be imparted. Such assurances are therefore secret and highly personal. The hiddenness, or secrecy, of divine knowledge is well-known in Christian literature, including the Bible, and Richard Hooker draws upon this tradition. However, notwithstanding the Christian mystical tradi-

<sup>18</sup> Evelyn Underhill, *The Essentials of Mysticism* (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1920), 2.

<sup>19</sup> Underhill, *Mysticism*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Underhill, *Mysticism*, 4f.

<sup>21</sup> Underhill, *Mysticism*, 27.

<sup>22</sup> Underhill, *Mysticism*, 25.

<sup>23</sup> Underhill, *Mysticism*, 25.

tion, Hooker's use of the idea points to that of an "open" secret in which revelatory knowledge, disclosed by the Holy Spirit to those having faith, is actually the repair of knowledge lost in the Fall<sup>24</sup> and now restored by divine grace, apart from the merits of the mystic. Thus, while Underhill's conception of "mysticall" is primarily directed "from below", inasmuch as mystical qualities reside "wholly in the temper of the self who adopts them",<sup>25</sup> it is the object of such contemplation that directs Richard Hooker.

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

<sup>24</sup> Since noetic depravity was also at the heart of Reformation theology and especially prominent amongst the seventeenth century Puritans. What constituted for the Puritans an *absolute* collapse of human epistemic and moral capability, was for Hooker the, "... foggie damp of originall corruption". Richard Hooker, "A Learned and Comfortable Sermon of the Certaintie and Perpetuities of Faith in the Elect", in *Tractates and Sermons*, vol. 5 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. Egil Grisliis and Laetitia Yeandle, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 71.17. Naturally, such a fog could vary in its intensity, but it was still a fog!

<sup>25</sup> Underhill, *Mysticism*, 5.

Manifold is the nimbleness of the soul with which it surveys heaven and earth, joins past to future and devises things incredible. These are unfailing signs of divinity in man. What ought we to say here except that the signs of immortality which have been implanted in man cannot be effaced.<sup>26</sup>

So Calvin is clear about the capability of relationship and man's inner desire for it, but the initiative and imperative that secures the relationship belongs to God, not in mere generality, nor by the manipulation of fortune or chance but according to Calvin, since "all events are governed by God's secret plan",<sup>27</sup> desire itself he understands to be from God because, "philosophers teach and human minds conceive that all parts of the universe are quickened by God's secret inspiration".<sup>28</sup>

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

...it pleased God to reveal in the Mediator what was hidden and incomprehensible in himself. Accordingly, I usually say that Christ is, as it were, a fountain<sup>29</sup> open to us, from which we may draw what otherwise would lie unprofitably hidden in that deep and secret spring, which comes forth to us in the person of the Mediator.<sup>30</sup>

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

<sup>26</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I.5.5.

<sup>27</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I.16.2.

<sup>28</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, I.16.1.

<sup>29</sup> "Fountain" is a term also used by Hooker to describe Christ.

<sup>30</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III.11.9.

...that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts – in short, that mystical union – are accorded by us the highest importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed. We do not contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body – in short, because he deigns to make us one with him.<sup>31</sup>

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

...God reforms us by his Spirit into holiness and righteousness of life. First it must be seen whether he does this by himself and directly or through the hand of his Son, to whom he has entrusted the whole fullness of the Holy Spirit in order that by his abundance he may supply what is lacking in his members. *Righteousness comes forth to us from the secret wellspring of his divinity...* [emphasis mine].<sup>32</sup>

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

<sup>31</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III.11.10.

<sup>32</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III.11.12. Calvin may be echoing the sentiments of St. Paul in Ephesians 3:14-19.

### Hooker and the Deification of Nature

We can see that Hooker was deeply indebted to Calvin and adopted his use of language when discussing the secret working of God. The point of such secrecy was to annul any speculation that mystical union with God was a human achievement. Still, the language of union supplied the vocabulary of desire in Hooker's theology, partly because he believed Puritan theology had wrongly suppressed human desire as good in itself, but also because he thought the goals of such desire might serve to commend some basis for a theological common ground.

The incarnational character of Christian claims regarding God was central for Hooker. The Puritan claim to godliness and special wisdom, particularly in its incipient Quaker expression, naturally gave rise to questions of the hermeneutical and epistemological limits with respect to Scriptural sources of truth, and also the limits of assurance with respect to faith.<sup>33</sup> This was, however, preempted by Hooker's own conjunction of rationalism and mysticism between which he moves comfortably. He is quite prepared to follow the incarnational logic of Chalcedon and apply it in a manner that anticipates the later Puritans, where he asserts "The union... of the flesh with deitie is to *that flesh* a guift of principall grace and favor. For by vertue of this grace man is reallie made God..."<sup>34</sup> and so the outcome of the incarnation is the redemption of sinful flesh in the glorified flesh of Christ yet without loss or alteration in God's nature "from [man's] so neere copulation with deitie".<sup>35</sup> So in Hooker, this startling proposal for the salvation of man is accounted for primarily in the Trinitarian formulations that he took to be normative for any theology, and which he continued to develop in his understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit. Hooker's im-

<sup>33</sup> W. J. Torrance Kirby, "The Paradigm of Chalcedonian Christology in Richard Hooker's Discourse on Grace and the Church", *Churchman* 114/1 (Spring 2000), 22-39.

<sup>34</sup> Hooker, *Lawes*, III.54.3:2.222.19-21.

<sup>35</sup> Hooker, *Lawes*, III.54.5:2.223.29.

mersion in what Peter Munz has called Thomistic rationalism<sup>36</sup> needs to be qualified by the place Hooker assigned to the Holy Spirit in his larger theological schema. Hooker understood the Holy Spirit to be the source and agency for a restored humanity. By pointing to the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit in the hermeneutical process, he succeeded in reflecting the true dynamic of divine-human "participation", to use one of Hooker's favourite expressions, which by nature defied containment, but was Christologically defined as "that mutuall hold which Christ hath of us and wee of him, in such sort that ech possesseth other by waie of speciall interest propertie and inherent copulation".<sup>37</sup> It was therefore necessary for Hooker to proceed with a sophisticated development of revelation and epistemological limitation so that the significance of the liberty implied in "inherent copulation" could be made tangible in Elizabethan society while avoiding the religious chaos he thought would follow upon Puritan reforms. Thus, as John Booty has noted, the Spirit was the divine gift which brought "power to restore clarity to reason and ability to will".<sup>38</sup>

If there is one word that draws together Hooker's understanding of divine mystery and secrecy, it is his use of the term "participation". In some respects, this is a catch-all term because Hooker uses it in a variety of contexts, but invariably, it speaks to the hiddenness of God disclosed in Christ and the anticipation of divine/human union stimulated by the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the following quote, Hooker is thinking of Eucharistic transformation and while continuing to adopt the language of transubstantiation, applies it to the worshipper.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Munz, *The Place of Hooker in the History of Thought* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1952), 171.

<sup>37</sup> Hooker, *Laws*, V.56.1:2.234.29-31.

<sup>38</sup> John E. Booty, "Richard Hooker", in *The Spirit of Anglicanism: Hooker, Maurice, Temple*, ed. William J. Wolf (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow Co. Inc., 1979), 25.

...Christ assisting this heavenlie banquet with his personall and true presence doth by his owne divine power ad to the naturall substance thereof supernaturall efficacie, which addition to the nature of those consecrated elementes changeth them and maketh them that unto us which otherwise they could not be; that to us they are made such instrumentes as mysticallie yeat trulie, invisiblie yeat reallie worke our communion or fellowship with the person of Jesus Christ as well in that he is man as God, our *participation* [emphasis mine] 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.<sup>39</sup>

The instruments of divine grace are always “mysticallie yeat trulie, invisiblie yeat reallie” effecting the worshipper’s “participation” in the Godhead.

...our conjunction with Christ to be a mutuall *participation* [emphasis mine] wherby ech is blended with other, his flesh and blood with ours in like sort with his, even as reallie materiallic and naturallie as wax melted and blended with wax into one lump, no other difference by that this mixture be sensiblie perceyved the other not.<sup>40</sup>

Such “conjunction” was impossible for Hooker unless “that small *vitall odor*”<sup>41</sup> of the Holy Spirit were preveniently given by God so that grace secretly mediated by the Holy Spirit was al-

<sup>39</sup> Hooker, *Lawes*, V.67.11:2.338.16-340.1.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Hooker, “A Learned Sermon of the Nature of Pride Abac. 2.4”, in *Tractates and Sermons*, vol.5 of *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. Egil Grislis and Laetitia Yeandle, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 1:5.326.20-327.4.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Attack and Response: Dublin Fragments*, vol. 4 of *Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. John E. Booty, gen. ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982), 4.12.111.23.

ways, "...both working inwardlie, and preventing the verie first desires, or motions of man to goodnes".<sup>42</sup>

In a recent article by Rowan Williams in which he discusses Hooker's theological method, the Archbishop of Canterbury considers Hooker to be "... perhaps the first major European theologian to assume that history, corporate and individual, matters for theology; and he is one of the inventors of that distinctive Anglican mood... called 'contemplative pragmatism'..."<sup>43</sup> In so doing, Williams depicts Hooker as stepping softly between legitimate epistemological uncertainties at a time where Geneva promised the certainty of heaven through the propositions of election and the absolute truth of Scripture, and Rome promised certainty through an absolute trust in the labyrinth of ecclesiastical formulations and philosophic theology unattainable to most people. Hooker invited a return to the "foundation" of Christian thought and the promise of union with God through the Holy Spirit, not by absorption but by transformation and participation, "becoming what we profess".<sup>44</sup> The achievement of Richard Hooker was not only the development of a theological tradition built on inquiry, Scriptural evidence, and the experience of faith, but also the safeguarding of an imaginative (mystical?) and historically connected community of belief. The unity of its citizens, although not absolutely tied to ideological or intellectual conformity,<sup>45</sup> was simultaneously constrained by Scriptural revelation and liberated, to be sure, by the foundational and preemptive soteriological acts of God in history and the incarnation. Hooker was quite

<sup>42</sup> Hooker, *Dublin Fragments*, 4.12.111.8f.

<sup>43</sup> Rowan Williams, "Hooker the Theologian", *Journal of Anglican Studies* 1/1 (August 2003), 106.

<sup>44</sup> Hooker, *Lawes*, V.64.2:2.295.1f.

<sup>45</sup> Williams notes that "... Hooker's cautious defences of tradition and usage is substantially offset by the genuinely Reformed emphasis that underlies the whole, the appeal to the priority of divine action as the true locus of unity for the Church". Williams, "Hooker the Theologian", 114.

willing to accept the reality of the secret and hidden character of the divine transactions between heaven and creation:

Christ and his holie Spirit with all their blessed effectes, though enteringe into the soule of man wee are not able to apprehend or expresse how, doe notwithstandinge give notize of the tymes when they use to make accesse, because it pleaseth almightie God to communicate by sensible meanes those blessinges which are incomprehensible.<sup>46</sup>

Thus Hooker 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 depended on the “sensible meanes” of grace accepted by both Puritans and Hooker, namely, word and sacrament, and which ultimately moved beyond the question of “meanes” to the goal of the Gospel, which is “participation” in the Godhead. Hooker’s indispensable doctrine of the Holy Spirit made the saving knowledge of God possible for all people, not only the “godly”. With such gracious reception, the collective actions of believers had significance because under such circumstances, they tended toward the goal of their own createdness – union and participation with God.

<sup>46</sup> Hooker, *Lawes*, V.57.3:2.246.15-20.