

Richard Hooker's "Discourse on Justification" and his *Via Media* Theology

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ABSTRACT. This article focuses on the continuing contemporary debate over Richard Hooker's doctrine of justification. It also addresses two other controversies which permeate current Hooker scholarship, namely: (1) How much of the Roman Catholic or Thomistic and the Magisterial Reformation traditions are discernable in the thought of Richard Hooker? (2) Is Hooker an exemplar or a prototype of what was later to become known as the Anglican *via media* tradition? The article concludes that in spite of all past and present disputes over the most appropriate way to interpret Hooker's writings, his wisdom continues to be valuable both for the instruction of individual Christian believers and also for the various Christian churches.

KEY WORDS: justification, Richard Hooker, Magisterial Reformation, Anglo-Catholics, *via media*

Introduction

The author of this article has been privileged during the course of his professional career to have been an intimate part of two very different generations of Richard Hooker scholarship. The juncture between these two generations was punctuated sharply for me with the recent passing of W. Speed Hill, General Editor of the Folger Library Edition of the *Works of Richard Hooker* (1977-98). The new generation is represented by the group of Hooker scholars who have been meeting for the past several years under the auspices of the Sixteenth Century Studies Conference with the organizational skills of W. J. Torrance Kirby and Daniel Eppley. These generations are further bounded by

two important books in the history of Richard Hooker scholarship: namely, W. Speed Hill (ed.), *Studies in Richard Hooker. Essays Preliminary to an Edition of His Works* (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972), and W. J. Torrance Kirby (ed.), *A Companion to Richard Hooker* (Leiden: E. J. Brill Academic Publishers, 2008).

The first of several professional journal articles, written by the author of the present paper, and published while he was preparing his Introduction to and Commentary on Book I of Hooker's *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie* for the Folger Library Edition of *The Works of Richard Hooker* (1977-98), was "Richard Hooker's *Via Media* Doctrine of Justification." published in *Harvard Theological Review* 74.2 (1981), 211-220. Since this particular article has attracted more critical attention from contemporary Hooker scholars than any others written by the present author, this paper will be an attempt to summarize and to respond to some of the most important of these critiques by several eminent specialists within the field. Therefore, in the first section of this paper the author sets forth Hooker's three sermons on justification, collectively known as his "Discourse on Justification," delivered during the first year of his tenure (1586) as Master of the Temple Church in London, within their historical context. The second section sets the author's article on justification within its own autobiographical context. In the third section, several major criticisms of the above paper on Hooker's doctrine of justification are considered and responded to. Section four concludes with a few additional observations and reflections.

Hooker's "Discourse on Justification"

Hooker's so-called "Discourse on Justification" is best described as a tractate, even though it has traditionally been regarded as three separate sermons delivered on consecutive Sundays (before March, 1586) during Hooker's first year as Master of the

Temple Church in London. The tractate was first published in 1612.¹

In these sermons Hooker analyses several doctrines and beliefs that were often debated by his contemporaries. He examines in particular the doctrinal issues which divided him from the popular afternoon Lecturer at the Temple, Walter Travers and which Travers noted in his later appeal to the Queen's Privy Council, written as a plea to reinstate him after he had been silenced by Archbishop John Whitgift.² These issues included Hooker's assertion in a sermon now lost, but repeated in his *Discourse on Justification*, that "I doubt not but God was mercifull to save thousands of our fathers livinge in papische superstition in asmuche as they sinned ignorantly." (FLE, 5:118).³ This was the specific proposition of Hooker which elicited from Travers his caustic response: "I think the like to this and other such have not been heard in public places within this land since Queen Mary's days." (FLE, 5:208).

¹ See Laetitia Yeandle, "Textural Introduction: a Learned Discourse of Justification, Workes and How the Foundation of Faith Is Overthrowne," in *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990), 5:120 and 29-30; see also Paul E. Forte, "Richard Hooker as Preacher," in FLE 5:665; Philip Secor (ed.), *The Sermons of Richard Hooker. A Modern Edition* (London: SPCK, 2001), 47-56; and the judicious and carefully nuanced essay by W. David Neelands, "Justification in Richard Hooker the Pastor," in John K. Stafford (ed.), *Lutheran and Anglican. Essays in Honor of Egil Grislis* (Manitoba, CA: University of Manitoba, St. John's Press, 2009), 167-183.

² Walter Travers, "A Supplication made to the Privy Counsel," in FLE, 5:189-210.

³ Philip B. Secor persuasively discusses just how radical this proposal of Hooker's concerning the probable salvation of at least some Roman Catholics in the past, was in his time both doctrinally and historically, and also the damage which Hooker probably sustained in his career or advancement in the hierarchy of the Church of England because of this assertion. *Richard Hooker, Prophet of Anglicanism* (Toronto: The Anglican Book Centre, 1999), 191-92.

Autobiographical Context of Gibbs's Article on Hooker's "Discourse"⁴

The first article which I wrote as a neophyte Hooker scholar and had published while I was still preparing my Introduction to and Commentary on Book I of Hooker's *Lawes* for the Folger Library Edition of Hooker's *Works* was entitled "Richard Hooker's *Via Media* Doctrine of Justification" (1981). Although several other articles followed; of all the articles which I have published on Hooker, this one in particular has drawn the most attention and criticism from contemporary Hooker colleagues.

Therefore, in this section of the present paper, I will attempt to set my publication of that first article on Hooker's doctrine of justification within its own autobiographical context. First, it should be noted that I was not among the first members of the team of scholars chosen to write commentary on Hooker's *Lawes* for the FLE. Initially, the prestigious English scholar, H. C. Porter, was invited to write the Introductions to, and the Commentaries on the Preface, and Books I-IV of Hooker's *Lawes*. Because of other commitments, Porter declined the invitation. It was at that time I was recruited as a relative late-comer to join the team of FLE commentary editors, specifically, to write the Introduction to and Commentary on Book I. By this time William P. Haugaard had already been solicited to write the Introductions and Commentaries for the Preface and Books II-IV. When I joined the team, I suddenly found myself to be an unseasoned rookie in the midst of a mature group of scholars who had already spent much of their careers reading, teaching, and writing about Richard Hooker.

In order to help bring me as quickly as possible up to speed on my Hooker studies, with the strong support of the General Editor, W. Speed Hill, I applied for and received a Folger Library Fellowship for the summer of 1977 and a National En-

⁴ Since the next two sections of this paper are so heavily autobiographical, the author has chosen to use the first person singular rather than the more traditional and supposedly "objective" third person.

dowment for the Humanities Grant for Research and Publication during 1977-78. I knew that during this period of doing research, I needed, in order to bolster my credentials as a commentary editor on Hooker's *Laws*, to write and have published in a professional journal an article on Richard Hooker. My article on Hooker's "Discourse on Justification" became that first article.

It was in the midst of doing that original research that I was forcefully impressed by what I later, in the process of writing that first article was to describe as Hooker's *via media* way of thinking and doing theology. It was then and only then, that I first read Hooker's "Discourse on Justification." I still remember well my astounded response to reading the following passage, where immediately after Hooker has made a distinction between the righteousness imputed to the believer in justification, and the righteousness of sanctification that is ingrafted into the believer:

...which things being attentively marked, sheweth plainly how the faith of true believers cannot be divorced from faith and love; how faith is a part of sanctification, and yet unto justification necessary; how faith is perfected by good works, and yet no works of ours are good without faith... We are justified by faith alone and yet hold truly that without good works we are not justified.⁵

Upon reading this passage, I remember thinking to myself, "This is certainly one of the most amazing things I've ever read! Hooker has got St. Paul and St. James concisely together at one and the same time. He is going to have it both ways: he is putting the theology of the Epistle of James, wherein 'faith without works is dead,' side by side and simultaneously with the theology of St. Paul, especially in his letters to the Romans and Galatians, wherein 'justification comes by grace through faith alone.' This is also a position which is both Roman Catholic and Magis-

⁵ "Learned Discourse of Justification," FLE, 5:129-30.

terial Reformation at one and the same time, and it does indeed seem to me to be a truly unique and distinctive way of dealing with the issues under debate." I have to admit that this first reading of Hooker's Discourse, so impressed me that it shaped, from that time forward, my understanding of his *via media* way of thinking, living, and doing theology.

To return to my earlier narrative, when I first entered my intensive study of Hooker and his works, I was at that time still personally a dyed-in-the-wool Presbyterian very much entrenched in the works and doctrine of John Calvin, especially his magnum opus, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. At this time I was also still under the heavy influence of my early exposure to the Westminster Confessions of Faith (1648) and was just beginning my spiritual pilgrimage from Geneva to Canterbury under the tutelage of Richard Hooker, who, in his own time, was primarily involved with opposing the Elizabethan Presbyterians in his monumental *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*.

Therefore, before writing on Hooker I had been a Calvinist, officially registered as a candidate for the holy ministry in the Presbyterian church. At the end of my writing, I found myself an ordained priest in the Episcopal church. During this time of my own transition, another crisis occurred among the commentators at work on the FLE. A Jesuit scholar, Joseph G. Devine, who had written his as yet unpublished Ph.D dissertation at Hartford Seminary Foundation on "Richard Hooker's Doctrine of Justification and Sanctification in the Debate with Walter Travers, 1585-1586," (1976),⁶ had been invited to write the commentary on Hooker's much disputed "Essay on Repentance," which since the nineteenth-century edition of John Keble has been published as Book VI of the *Lawes*.⁷ Devine sud-

⁶ There is a succinct summary of the argument and the significance on Devine's dissertation in the essay by Ranall Ingalls, "Sin and Grace," in Torrance Kirby (ed.), *A Companion to Richard Hooker* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 7-83, especially 170.

⁷ See, for example, the painful words of the General Editor of the FLE, W. Speed Hill concerning his decision to even include the traditional Book VI in

denly found it necessary for personal reasons to withdraw from his editorial responsibilities on the FLE. The decision which the editorial board then faced was whether or not to search out and solicit a new scholar to write the commentary on the traditional Book VI, long after the textual and commentary editors had been working together for several years and had formed a vital *esprit de corps* or whether to choose someone who was already a part of the team.

Most of the FLE editors had originally been assigned multiple tasks. I, on the other hand had been assigned to write only the commentary for Book I. Since I had been making strong progress and my work was nearing completion, the editorial decision was made to assign me the additional task of writing the commentary on Book VI.

This personal account of some of the internal history of the publication of the FLE explains, at least in part, why my first published article on Hooker's *via media* doctrine of justification focuses so pointedly on Joseph Devine's unpublished doctoral dissertation on Hooker's doctrine of justification, and also why there can be discerned at the end of that article a shift of emphasis to Hooker's doctrine of repentance and contrition.⁸ In that first article I critiqued Joseph Devine's interpretation of Hooker's doctrine of justification in much the same way that some of the more recent Hooker scholars have been critiquing my use of the term *via media* in my early article on Hooker's doctrine of justification as well as my continuing argument in other published articles that Hooker was a "middle way" theologian in all of his major thought and writings.

the FLE, in his essay on "Works and Editions II," in Torrance Kirby (ed.), *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, 47-49; on the other hand, see also P. G. Stanwood, "Works and Editions I," in the same *Companion* volume, 34-39.

⁸ See Gibbs, "Richard Hooker's *Via Media* Doctrine of Justification," 220.

Criticism and Response

In this section of the present paper I shall consider and briefly respond to a few of the most important critiques made by some contemporary scholars concerning my early article on Hooker's *via media* doctrine of justification. Some years ago, William H. Harrison noted "the long-standing debate which has continued among scholars concerning Richard Hooker's understanding of salvation, especially as it concerns the relationship between Hooker's Thomism and his Protestant stand on justification."⁹

This contemporary debate among Hooker scholars over how much of the Roman Catholic and the Magisterial Reformation traditions are discernible within the thought of Richard Hooker is intimately bound together with the more recent but equally virulent debate over the interpretation of Hooker as a pioneer and prototype of a distinctive kind of Anglican *via media* theology.

I forthrightly admit that in my first article on Hooker's doctrine of justification I began by boldly stating that: "The 'judicious' Richard Hooker (1554-1600) gave classic expression to the *via media* position of Elizabethan Anglicanism. He attempted to steer a middle course, appropriating what he considered to be the truths and avoiding what he considered to be the errors and excesses, between Roman Catholicism and the Magisterial Ref-

⁹ "Powers and Influences of Grace in Hooker's *Lawes*," in W. J. Torrance Kirby (ed.), *Richard Hooker and the English Reformation* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2005), 5, Harrison here cites Gibbs, on "Hooker's *Via Media* Doctrine of Justification," along with articles by Philip Edgecumbe Hughes, William David Neelands, Bryan D. Spicks, P. G. Stanwood, and Gunnar Hillerdal. While claiming that he does not intend in his chapter to mediate this dispute, Harrison, does acknowledge, however, his agreement with Nigel Voak's argument in *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology* (Oxford: 2003), namely that there is a marked development in Hooker's thought from his earlier discourse on justification and his later writing in the *Lawes*. In the latter writing Harrison, in accord with Voak observes that Hooker regularly uses the term "sanctification" to describe the process of salvation while avoiding the term "justification" altogether. See Harrison, 16.

ormation (Lutheranism, and especially Calvinism)."¹⁰ I certainly acknowledge that I continued to argue this thesis in several of my subsequent articles published on Hooker.¹¹

W. J. Torrance Kirby is the leading exponent of the new revisionist school of interpretation which regards those, including me, who hold that Hooker is a leading representative of an emerging Anglican *via media* mode of living, thinking and doing theology are guilty of anachronism. Kirby is correct here when he observes that there is, in fact, wide current scholarly consensus that the terms, "Anglican" or "Anglicanism" were not used in the polemical literature of the sixteenth century. According to Kirby and his school supporters of the *via media* interpretation of Hooker are also guilty of being duped by the hagiographical efforts of Hooker's High Church seventeenth-century biographer, Izaak Walton, along with the nineteenth-century High Church Anglo-Catholics of the Oxford Movement, such as John Keble, editor of Hooker's *Works* (1836), and also John Henry Cardinal Newman, both of whom wanted to make Hooker an Anglo-Catholic and a patron saint of their view of Anglicanism.¹²

With regard to Kirby's thesis, and those contemporary scholars who are following his lead, I must confess that I remain un-

¹⁰ Gibbs, "Richard Hooker's *Via Media* Doctrine of Justification," 211.

¹¹ For example, Gibbs, "Richard Hooker's *Via Media* Doctrine of Repentance," *Harvard Theological Review* 84 (1991), 59-74; and "Richard Hooker's *Via Media* Doctrine of Scripture and Tradition," *Harvard Theological Review* 95.2 (2002), 227-35. Nigel Atkinson, with a certain shortness of patience, observes that "the [anachronistic] case is now so well entrenched that any doctrine that Hooker teaches is immediately presumed to be a doctrine that enhances the *via media*." At the end of this sentence he adds a footnote which lists of all the articles by Gibbs cited in the note above including the article on Hooker's doctrine of justification.

¹² See, for example, Torrance Kirby, "Hooker as Apologist of the Magisterial Reformation in England," in A. S. McGrade (ed.), *Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community* (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997), 219-33; see also Nigel Atkinson, "Hooker's Theological Method and Modern Anglicanism," *Churchman* 114.1 (2000), 40-70.

convinced and unwilling to concede that the origin of a concept so essential to what has been called “the spirit of Anglicanism” as that of the middle way is to be attributed to the nineteenth-century John Henry Cardinal Newman.¹³ Newman, more than any other theologian of his time certainly understood the concept of the *via media* clearly and perhaps even wrote about it more definitively than any other theologian in his time. Prior to his highly visible conversion to the Roman Catholic Church in 1845, Newman wrote his lectures on *The Prophetical Office of the Church*, which was published in two editions in 1836 and 1837, and republished in 1877 with a new preface and a new title, namely, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church*.¹⁴ Although Newman, acknowledges the ideal of a church that holds a middle ground position between the Protestant Reformation and the Church of Rome as a desirable one, eventually, however, he went on to reject this vision of the middle way because it was an ideal that only existed on paper but never in reality, and certainly *not* in the Church of England. In his own search for absolute certitude in his religious faith, Newman, before the end of his life finally renounced the Church of England altogether and submitted himself to the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, in which he was eventually elevated by Pope Leo XIII, in 1879, to the office of Cardinal.

It is interesting and probably important to note at this point that the critics of the interpretation of Hooker as an exponent of or pioneer of what later became identified as an Anglican *via media* theology do not agree among themselves as to exactly when and where to locate the actual beginning of what was to become this venerable tradition in later Anglican historiography. For example, Diarmaid McCullough, in his foundational article suggests that the *via media* interpretation of Hooker is to

¹³ For an excellent recent study of Newman’s life and thought, see Benjamin John King, *Newman and the Alexandrian Fathers. Shaping Doctrine in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009).

¹⁴ On Newman’s writing on the *via media*, see H. D. Weidner (ed.), *The Via Media of the Anglican Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

be identified with the High Church Laudians in the early seventeenth century.¹⁵

Torance Kirby, as stated above, has specified the nineteenth-century Tractarian, John Henry Newman as the original formulator of the "*via media* myth" of the Church of England as occupying a middle ground between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.¹⁶ Nigel Atkinson, however, finds the beginning of the *via media* interpretation of Hooker with John Keble, the nineteenth-century Tractarian editor of *Hooker's Works*.¹⁷ Corneliu Simuț opts for Hooker's sixteenth-century contemporary, Richard Bancroft, the successor of John Whitgift as Archbishop of Canterbury;¹⁸ while Michael Brydon traces the phrase *via media* back to a sixteenth-century sermon by Archbishop Samuel Parker, where Parker speaks of "a golden mediocrity between Rome and Geneva in the discipline and doctrine of the Church of England."¹⁹

In the midst of all this scholarly uncertainty, I personally remain more convinced than ever that the primary historical origin for the Anglican concept of the *via media* must be traced at least as far back as the ethical teaching about the nature of moral virtue by the ancient Greek Philosopher, Aristotle (304-322 BC). There is widespread consensus among Hooker scholars, past and present concerning the strong influence of the philosophy of Aristotle upon his teleological way of thinking. The place in Aristotle's thought where the concept of the *via media* emerges is in the realm of his ethical and moral theory. Aris-

¹⁵ "Richard Hooker's Reputation," *English Historical Review* 117 (2002), 790-791.

¹⁶ *Richard Hooker's Doctrine of the Royal Supremacy* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 36-37.

¹⁷ "Hooker's Theological Method and Modern Anglicanism," *Churchman* 114.1, 42-43.

¹⁸ *Richard Hooker and His Early Doctrine of Justification. A Study of his Discourse of Justification* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 5.

¹⁹ *The Evolving Reputation of Richard Hooker. An Examination of Responses, 1680-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 114-15.

tole defines moral virtue as an "excellence" (*aretē*), which he further defined as a "mean" (*mesotēs*). In other words, in Aristotle's view, virtue is a mean between two extremes, each of which in itself must be regarded as a "vice" or "excess." It is in this context, for example, that Aristotle interpreted the ancient Greek virtue of courage as being "the golden mean" between the vicious excess of two extremes; foolhardiness or rashness on the one hand, and the vicious excess of cowardice on the other.

There is another important reason for my general reluctance and unwillingness to surrender altogether the validity of the whole idea of an Anglican *via media*. After years of reading and studying philosophy and theology and their mutual interaction through the centuries of the history of Western Civilization, I strongly feel that I have never before come closer to what I have experienced as a viable working philosophy of life and faith in this pluralistic and postmodern era than that which I have found in the *via media* way of thinking. To explain this as simply and straightforwardly as I am able, I must first say a few words about what I understand the middle way to be and *not* to be. First of all it must not be understood as a kind of compromise negotiated between two conflicting parties. It is comprehensiveness or inclusiveness rather than compromise. The concept of the middle way is similar to what the great mystics of the church (both Eastern and Western) have called the "reconciliation of opposites" (*reconciliatio oppositorum*) within the framework of a larger and more all-encompassing whole. Further, *via media* thinking must be regarded as a very sophisticated and dialectical way of saying both "yes" and "no" to each of the extremes represented by two opposing parties, whether the issues that divide those parties be theological, philosophical, political, or moral in nature. This method of finding both truth and error in the extreme positions of two opposing parties allows for the rejection of error or excess, whatever its source, and for the affirmation of truth wherever it may be found. Such a perspective leaves room for a much more inclusive view than usual of the Christian church and allows not only for toleration, but, even

more, for affirmation of differences of opinions that may be held among the different members of a worshipping community.

Taken in this sense, the highly dialectical approach of *via media* thinking is strikingly similar to the dialectical logical thinking of the brilliant nineteenth-century German philosopher, G. W. F. Hegel, in whose thought a logical thesis, naturally generates its own opposite in an antithesis, both of which are "sublated" (*aufgehoben*) or reconciled by the human mind in the unity of a higher "synthesis."

This dialectical way of thinking makes possible the emergence of a set of new and more inclusive paradoxical combinations. It is possible religiously to call oneself a Reformed Catholic or, politically speaking, a liberal conservative, and morally speaking, to be a person who is both pro-life and pro-choice on the highly controversial issue of abortion; one may be a person who recognizes and affirms the wide range of perspectives and the convictions in the Episcopal church on issues related to human sexuality while still strongly supporting the full protection of the civil or human rights of all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation. Theologically speaking, it then becomes the obligation of the Christian Church to see the image of God in every human being and to love them all as members of Christ's Body, the Church, always recalling that every Christian is a sinner who has been forgiven and reconciled by God in and through the cross of His Christ.

Perhaps the most severe criticism of all concerning my *via media* interpretation of Hooker has come in the recent publications of Corneliu C. Simuț. For example, in the recent publication of his doctoral dissertation written originally for the Department of Divinity at the University of Aberdeen, he writes:

Though recent studies have shown that Richard Hooker should be understood in relation to Reformed Theology... Lee Gibbs has likewise [with the Tractarian John Keble] argued that Hooker's complex doctrine of justification incorporated insights and aspects of both Catholic and Protestant traditions [Simuț in a footnote here

cites my article on Hooker's doctrine of justification as arguing that Hooker advances a genuine *via media* between Rome and The Reformation]. Simuț continues: In Hooker, Gibbs observes the internal righteousness of sanctification and the external righteousness of Jesus Christ (which is imputed) are always united *in tempore* and received simultaneously.²⁰

Simuț continues his critique of my *via media* interpretation on Hooker's doctrine of justification by objecting that I largely interpret Hooker as "a non-reformed theologian, but rather as a *via media* Anglican or as a Catholic thinker."

Although Simuț as we have seen in one place cited above, identifies the sixteenth-century Archbishop of Canterbury, Richard Bancroft, as the beginning of the Anglican *via media* tradition, in another place where he writes he is found to be in agreement with Kirby by identifying John Henry Newman as the origin of the *via media* interpretation of Hooker. Simuț writes:

...it is vital to note here that Hooker is not a *via media* Anglican theologian as Gibbs has suggested. It seems that Gibbs followed the argument of John Henry Newman who in his *Lectures on Justification* was the first to argue that Hooker's views of justification occupied the *via media* of Anglican theology... To sum up, Newman's assessment of the doctrine of justification is incorrect and his entire argument is seriously flawed... Gibbs takes over Newman's interpretation of Hooker and writes that the internal formal cause of the external imputation of the righteousness of Christ is caused by the sanctification of believers. In other words sinners are first sanctified and then justified or forensically declared righteous. Newman, like Gibbs nowadays, seems to have missed Hooker's point.²¹

²⁰ Richard Hooker and his Early Doctrine of Justification, 1-2; see also his *The Doctrine of Salvation in the Sermons of Richard Hooker* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005).

²¹ Richard Hooker and his Early Doctrine of Justification, 114-116.

My initial response to this last critique is that at the time I was writing my article on Hooker's doctrine of justification I was familiar with John Henry Newman as a leading representative of the nineteenth-century Oxford Movement, and also as a later convert to the Roman Catholic Church in which he was eventually elevated to the office of Cardinal, the point here is that I had not, at the time of my early writing yet read Newman's important *Lectures on Justification*. I must, however, at the same time note that I was intensively reading the unpublished doctoral dissertation of the Roman Catholic, Joseph G. Devine, on Hooker's doctrine of justification. Upon a close reading, however, it is clear that Devine, in his dissertation, is primarily focused upon the Canon on Justification promulgated by the Council of Trent, rather than Newman's *Lectures on Justification*.

Simuț's criticism, that I wrongly followed the lead of John Henry Newman in identifying Hooker as an exponent of a *via media* theology, is intimately bound together with his further criticism that my writing on Hooker on justification, is incomplete, because I only discuss justification and sanctification while saying nothing about divine election and effectual calling. A related charge is that I have misleadingly reversed Hooker's *ordo salutis*, by suggesting that sanctification is followed by justification instead of *vice versa*.²²

Simuț, however, ends this particular argument with an apparent concession:

Despite his incorrect understanding of Hooker's *ordo salutis*, Gibbs is right when he mentions that the inherent righteousness of sanctification is worked by the Holy Spirit based on the merits of Christ obtained by His sacrificial death.²³

²² Richard Hooker and his Early Doctrine of Justification, 116.

²³ Richard Hooker and his Early Doctrine of Justification, 116.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would observe that it is important to note that in all of the revisionist critiques of Hooker as a *via media* theologian, there is an effort to attribute the creation and perpetration of this *via media* position to High Church Anglo-Catholicizing parties which are, thereby, concerned to emphasize any Catholic elements or tendencies which are imbedded within Hooker's thought and writings. The contemporary evangelical Anglican theologian, Alistair McGrath, has recently described just what is at stake for evangelical Anglicans in the *via media* interpretation of Hooker:

There is no doubt that Richard Hooker is one of the most important writers in the history of the Church of England. Yet he has remained neglected by those who stand to gain most from reading and appropriating him—namely, the evangelical wing of that church. The most significant reason for this neglect is not difficult to discern. John Henry Newman initiated a way of approaching Hooker as a theologian of the *via media* which deliberately underplayed his Reformed heritage, and portrayed Hooker as a writer determined to move the Church of England away from the Reformation to a more Catholic vision of the church. Evangelicals have largely accepted this portrait of Hooker and studiously ignored others in consequence.²⁴

In spite of the recent barrage of criticism of my *via media* interpretation of Hooker, I regard such criticism as deriving from the inherent Protestant tendency to think largely in disjunctive (that is, either...or) categories rather than in the more Catholic conjunctive (that is, both...and) categories on such issues as na-

²⁴ "Forward," Nigel Atkinson, *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Reason, and Tradition* (Carlisle, Cumbria CA: Paternoster Press, 1997), vii; compare Torrance Kirby's effort to dismiss the presence of any medieval Catholic aspects in Hooker's thought including any significant indebtedness to Thomas Aquinas as a misguided attempt to further remove Hooker from the Protestant Reformation, see *Richard Hooker, Reformer and Platonist* (Burlington, VT.: Ashgate, 2005), "Preface", ix-x.

ture and grace, revelation or Scripture and reason, and especially with regard to the presence in Hooker's writings of both Protestant and Catholic elements.

When I am confronted with the contemporary portrait presented by the new revisionist school of Hooker scholars, who portray him as a thoroughly orthodox representative of the Magisterial/Calvinist Reformation in England—a Hooker largely expurgated from all traces of Aristotelian or medieval Catholic influences—this is a portrait of Hooker which I can scarcely recognize after so many years of intensive study of the man and his works. Michael Brydon, in the conclusion of his recent study of Hooker has spoken words of wisdom which any interpreter of Hooker, past or present, would be well advised to heed. He rightly comments upon Hooker's, "elusive and often idiosyncratic formulations" which make it hard to categorize him or place him authoritatively into any theological group.²⁵

I remain firm in continuing to regard Hooker as being primarily a sixteenth-century Elizabethan theologian, who was under the heavy influence of the northern European Renaissance, and who was enlisted by the hierarchy of the Church of England as it struggled with the Genevan left and the Roman right, and strove to establish its own unique identity on the European stage which was characterized by vitriolic religious conflict. In assuming this charge Hooker was very critical of the weaknesses and corruptions of the very Church of England which he was so instrumental in helping to emerge into the light of history.²⁶

²⁵ Michael Brydon, *The Evolving Reputation of Richard Hooker. An Examination of Responses, 1600-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 203. Brydon also rightly observes that "different groups in the past and now have not necessarily misread Hooker, so much as they have emphasized different aspects of the *Polity* while ignoring others."

²⁶ Compare the position of Philip Secor in his biography of Hooker where he argues that Hooker is not so much the founder but the prophet of a later Anglicanism, *Richard Hooker, Prophet of Anglicanism* (Toronto: The Anglican Book Centre); see also Lee W. Gibbs, "Richard Hooker: Prophet of Anglican-

Even with remaining differences of opinion on the best way of interpreting Hooker, I am very grateful for, and challenged by the new scholarship which is helping to keep Richard Hooker and his works so much at the center of focus for ongoing scholarly research. For his rich and complex thought still has so much wisdom to contribute, both to individual Christian believers and to the one holy apostolic and catholic Church of Christ at large.

ism or English Magisterial Reformer?," *Anglican Theological Review* 84.4 (2004), 943-960.

PERICHORESIS 7.2 (2009)