

‘FROM THE FOOTSTOOL TO THE THRONE OF GOD’:
METHEXIS, METAXU, AND EROS IN RICHARD HOOKER’S
OF THE LAWES OF ECCLESIASTICAL POLITY

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ABSTRACT. Commentators have commonly noted the metaphysical role of participation (*methexis*) in Richard Hooker’s *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*: participation both describes how creation is suspended from God and also how believers share in Christ through grace. Yet, the role in Hooker’s thought of the attendant Platonic language of ‘between’ (*metaxu*) and ‘desire’ (*eros*) has not received sustained attention. *Metaxu* describes the ‘in-between’ quality of participation: the participant and the participated remain distinct but are dynamically related as the former originates from and returns to the perfection of the latter. Within this metaxological dynamic, desire (*eros*) acts as the physical and psychic motor driving the move between potentiality and perfect actuality, that is to say from multiplicity to divine unity: desire aims at goodness and so ultimately tends towards that which is goodness itself, namely God’s nature. For Hooker, desire becomes couched in amorous affectivity and has an erotic register. This essay explores, then, how Hooker appeals to a language of ‘between’ and ‘desire’ within his accounts of participation. First, it examines how human beings exist between the footstool and throne of God in Hooker’s legal ontology. Here, angelic desire acts as a hierarchical pattern of and spur to erotic participation in the divine nature. Second, this essay examines how theurgy transforms desire in Hooker’s account of liturgical participation as a redemptive commerce between heaven and earth. Here, angels still act as invisible, hierarchical intermediaries within earthly worship, but soon give way to immediate grace through participation in Christ within the sacraments.

KEY WORDS: desire, grace, hierarchy, *metaxu*, participation

Introduction

C. S. Lewis (1954: 462) writes that Richard Hooker’s universe in *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* is ‘drenched with Deity.’ Modern exegetes of the *Lawes* (such as Newey, 2002; Irish, 2003; Kirby, 2005) readily concur with Lewis’ pithy insight and particularly note the Platonic heritage of participation (*methexis*) in Hooker’s thought, emphasising the metaphysical role it plays in suspending creation from God, much as the sensible shares in the intelligible for Plato. Scholars have largely neglected, however, that Hooker also uses the attendant Platonic language of *met-*

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axu (an adverb or preposition meaning ‘between’) when he discusses participation. For Plato, *metaxu* images the relational, ‘in-between’ quality of participation: the sensible and intelligible are different but erotically related as the former shares in and tends towards the latter. This essay explores, then, the role of *methexis*, *metaxu*, and *eros* in Hooker’s *Lawes*. While God drenches Hooker’s participatory universe, angels and Christ also enchant creation in the *Lawes* as they mediate between heaven and earth and as they shape human desires to participate erotically in the divine nature.

Prologomena: *Methexis*, *Metaxu*, and *Eros*

As prologomena, what broadly constitutes the metaphysical tradition of *methexis*, *metaxu*, and *eros*? The Platonic heritage of participation (*methexis*) which Hooker inhabits revolves around an attempt to see the world as, in some sense, saturated with divine presence. For Plato, *methexis* attempts to express the relationship between the sensible and intelligible worlds, between the variety of objects and the transcendent, metaphysically simple, and unitive Forms. As Allen (1960) points out, there exists a real, constitutive (if asymmetrical) relation between an exemplary, transcendent, participable Form and the temporal participant of the Form, which embodies the Form in some diminished fashion. The metaphysical use of *metaxu* follows on closely from participation. For Plato, *metaxu* occurs on 99 occasions as a preposition and most typically has a mundane function to describe location, temporal hiatus, or the arrangement of physical features (see Brandwood, 1976: 573). In other uses, however, *metaxu* images the adverbial, relational, ‘in-between’ nature of participation, the way in which the spiritual and temporal realms are distinct but dynamically related. The dynamic that *metaxu* describes forms a participatory grammar in which the immanent and transcendent remain distinct (the former temporal, the latter transcendent) but linked (as the former depends upon, touches, and tends towards the latter). Plato indicates that reality accordingly has a metaxological character, a dynamic quality moving between the sensible and intelligible, as the unitive Forms remain transcendent but also appear immanently within the diversity of things in the world of becoming. In Plato’s *Symposium* (1997: 202e-203a & 205d; 485-486 & 488), Diotima links the dynamic of the adverbial *metaxu* to *eros*, parsed as both the generic desire for all good things, but also personified as one who communicates, along with other ‘divinities’ (*daimones*), desire between sensible and intelligible worlds. The value of the world comes through this metaxological character of participation: there is related difference, not dichotomy, between the divine and earthly as transcendence enlivens reality with immanent presence and draws it upwards towards perfection.

Under the influence of Neoplatonism (and the addition of Aristotelian ideas about causality), *methexis* becomes a central idea within late antique and medieval Christian thought. It forms a way to express how the manifold diversity of creation formally shares in the unitive divine source and also desires that perfect

source as a final end. Participation has a dynamic, ecstatic quality: it draws the universe from becoming to being, from multiplicity to unity, from finitude to God. Similarly, under the influence of Neoplatonism (as well as Aristotelian ideas about potentiality and actuality), antique and medieval Christian adds a plasticity to the relational image of Platonic *metaxu*, giving the adverbial 'between' an almost substantial quality in its own right. Accordingly human beings alternately form the lower or middle part of an equivocal *metaxu*: either they receive an action from above which dynamically draws them upwards towards pure actuality, or they exist as the substantial *metaxu* itself, as the 'between' nature which simultaneously touches heaven and earth. Here, *metaxu* now forms a liminal space in which human beings are suspended between beasts and God, corruption and perfection, diminishment and infinity, becoming and being, as well as potentiality and pure act. In either the adverbial or substantial sense of *metaxu*, *eros* becomes a principle of desire within created forms for something beyond themselves. This claim about erotic desire is not uncontroversial, of course. Nygren (1953) contrasted *eros* (which he characterises as love, often sexual, marked by desire and longing) with *agape*, that is, unselfish or 'Christian' love universally directed outwards as charity. Yet, this dichotomy seems false since, as Osborne (1994) for example points out, there was a productive interweaving of Platonic *eros* and Christian *agape* in much early Christian thought. Here, desire dynamically orients creatures to pursue and ascend towards erotic union with the exemplary goodness of God. God's perfect goodness satiates desire, perfecting the participant of God's love who then yields to participated delight. Erotic desire works as the existential motor which drives the world of becoming towards the perfect being of God.

In the *Lawes*, Hooker clearly sets himself within such a genealogy of participatory, metaxological, and erotic thought. Hooker writes that 'God hath his influence into the very essence of all things' (1977b: 236.7-13) and 'all things in the worlde are saide in some sort to seeke the highest, and to covet more or lesse the participation of God himselfe' (1977a: 73.8-10). Within this participatory ontology, Hooker appeals to *metaxu* and places human nature either as the middle or as the lower term in a participatory universe. First, in Book One of the *Lawes*, human nature itself exhibits a metaxological character: human beings participate in God as they substantially exist between the 'footstool' and the 'throne of God', the material and immaterial realms, the sensible and the intelligible, the earthly and heavenly (1977a: 69.22-23). In this ontological *metaxu*, the angels act as a 'paterne and a spurre' (1977a: 137.18-22) to draw human desire upwards into erotic participation of God's transcendental being, goodness, and beauty. Second, in Book Five of the *Lawes*, human beings at first form the lower term of a theurgic, adverbial *metaxu*: prayer and doctrine move 'betwene the throne of God and his Church upon earth here militant... as so many Angels of entercourse and comerce betwene God and us' (1977b: 110.7-16). In Book Five, angels populate and enliven worship such that its metaxological dynamic purges human desires to be ready for

union with God. For Hooker, worship participates in the transcendental truth, goodness, and beauty of God. In such worship (and especially in sacramental participation, which Hooker casts in erotic terms), Christ himself forms the ultimate *metaxu*, ‘that meane betwene both [God and humanity] which is both’ and which mediates ‘the union of the soule with God’ (1977b: 208.20-23). The transformed, deified human nature of Christ becomes the ladder through which believers ascend to union with God. The hierarchical, theurgic, angelic mediation finally gives way to the immediacy of participation in Christ, experienced in the sacraments as a *prolepsis* of heavenly union with God. Throughout Book Five, desire has an erotic frisson and an affective, often sexualised register, especially as it is directed at God.

Unpacking in turn these two aspects of how Hooker uses *methexis*, *metaxu*, and *eros* will show how he balances the utter ineffable transcendence of God with immanent participation in the divine nature. It will also illustrate how Hooker keeps in creative tension a Neoplatonic hierarchical ontology with Reformed commitments to salvation by faith and Christ alone (*sola fide* and *solus christus*). Torrance Kirby (2003a) helpfully labels this creative tension as Hooker’s ‘two Christian Platonisms’, namely hierarchy and grace. On one hand, then, this paper explores how Hooker stresses Dionysian mediation: created, dispositive hierarchies (the *lex divinitatis*) mediate divinity; and desire acts as the physical and psychic motor for participation in God. On the other hand, this paper examines how Hooker also stresses Augustinian immediacy: Christ’s hypostatic union itself forms the immediate *metaxu* through which believers erotically participate in God as a gift of grace.

Methexis, Metaxu, and Eros in Book One

Hooker’s first use of participation (*methexis*), between (*metaxu*), and desire (*eros*) occurs in the legal ontology of Book One in the *Lawes* where Hooker holds in tension the utter transcendence of God with God’s immanent causality in creation. In Book One, Hooker develops a Neoplatonic procession of hierarchical laws from the unitive eternal law, itself co-identical with God’s nature; these laws (as they participate in eternal law) govern creation (see Kirby, 1998). Hooker writes that ‘the naturall generation and processe of all things recyveth order of proceeding from the settled stabilitie of divine understanding’ (1977a: 68.6-8) Legal participation (*methexis*) grounds itself in analogy: for Hooker, everything is governed in one way or another by ‘law’. Hooker gives a general, Aristotelian-Thomistic definition of law as ‘that which doth assigne unto each thing the kinde, that which doth moderate the force and power, that which doth appoint the forme and measure of working’ (1977a: 58.26-29). In other words, ‘law’ represents a rule of action appropriate to the thing it directs, ‘a directive rule unto goodness of operation’ (1977a: 84.16-17). Analogy binds and separates. ‘Law’ analogically binds together God (as eternal law) and creation (through natural and revealed laws) into a non-contrastive legal community (1977a: 58.22-59.5). The analogy of ‘law’ also distin-

guishes, however, between the realm of becoming and the realm of being. Creatures are Aristotelian composites of potentiality and actuality; inherent formal laws represent 'the means whereby they tende to their owne perfection' through participating in goodness (1977a: 69.10). God alone is pure actuality (*purus actus*) and so eternal law remains co-identical with his perfect nature, transcendental goodness-itself, the archetype of participable order (1977a: 59.5-6; 112.12-13).

Just as analogy binds and separates God and creation, Hooker notionally distinguishes between a first and second eternal law in order both to preserve God's transcendence but also to open up the possibility of participated immanence (1977a: 63.6-29). The first eternal law describes the utter transcendence of the ineffable, self-constituted simplicity of the Trinity, what Hooker labels 'verie Oneness,' and which remains apophatically unknowable (1977a: 59.12-24). In contrast, the second eternal law circumscribes how creation participates in eternal law through derivative species of law which immanently dispose created forms towards God through a legal hierarchy, the Dionysian and Thomistic *lex divinitatis* [law of divine power]. Two legal species represent diminished likenesses of participated eternal law: first, natural law, which includes physical and celestial law as well as the law of reason which marks human nature; and second, divine law, which aids practical reason as a divine remedy for 'our imbecillitie' (1977a: 120.19-21) due to sin and provides salvific truths not self-evident to speculative reason (1977a: 63.17-26). Thus, Hooker's double aspect of eternal law balances transcendence and immanence, hypostatic distinction and dispositive hierarchy, as well as apophatic and kataphatic theological claims. Crucially, divine law forms part of the hierarchy of laws but not as a formal principle: it acts as God's remedial self-disclosure, the supernatural means by which the (frustrated) natural desire to participate in God may be fulfilled through faith in Christ (1977a: 121.29-35). Divine law does not abrogate natural law, but fulfils and exceeds it in a Thomistic manner. As Hooker later phrases it, 'nature hath need of grace' but 'grace hath use of nature' (1977a: 223.26-29). Thus, Hooker keeps in creative tension Neoplatonic hierarchy with Reformed commitments to the priority of grace in matters of salvation.

This participatory, legal ontology structurally frames human nature as *metaxu*, as between and across higher and lower principles. Hooker places the law of reason, which marks and governs human nature, between two other laws: on one side, nature's law of 'natural and necessary agents', the non-cognitive, material aspects of creation; and on the other side, the celestial law of the immaterial, un-fallen, and purely intellectual angelic orders. As he turns from the laws of nature to consider celestial law, Hooker quotes from Isaiah 66:1: 'we may lift our eyes (as it were) from the footstoole to the throne of God' (1977a: 69.22-24). Human nature, by implication, exists between the brute material order and the intuitive intellectual world, alternating between them. On the one hand, human beings exhibit a likeness to the angels: as analogues of God, both possess reason and will

(1977a: 64.9; 69.25; 77.20-21; 113.9). As such, the perfection of human nature (just as with the angels) comes from participation in God:

If then we be blessed, it is by force of participation and conjunction with him [i.e. God]... Then we are happier therefore when fully we enjoy God, as an object wherein the powers of our souls are satisfied with everlasting delight: so that although we be men, yet by being unto God united we live as it were the life of God (1977a: 112.17-20).

On the other hand, unlike the angels, human beings 'are at the first without understanding or knowledge at all' (1977a: 74.20-21, an Aristotelian *tabula rasa*), as well as being embodied and mortal. Furthermore, sin entails that:

Of such perfection [i.e. of union] capable we are not in this life. For while we are in the world, subject we are unto sundry imperfections, griefs of body, defects of mind, yea the best things we do are painful... (1977a: 112.24-113.1).

Hooker's account of human nature, as a blend of material and intellectual principles, here recalls the Neoplatonic *metaxu* found in Plotinus' *Enneads*:

But humanity, in reality, is poised midway [*hoi de metaxu eisin*] between gods and beasts, and inclines now to the one order, now to the other, some men grow like to the divine, others to the brute, the greater number stand neutral (1991: III.2.8; 144).

Hooker remains clear, however, that humanity's vocation remains to 'growe by degrees, till they come at length to be even as the Angels themselves are,' that is to have 'full and complete knowledge in the highest degree that can be imparted [by God] unto them' (1977a: 74.17-23). The adverbial *metaxu*, implicitly present in where Hooker places the human law of reason in his legal ontology, hints at the dynamic move from potentiality to actuality, from becoming to being, from imperfection to perfection, from sin to union with God.

Hooker's structural *metaxu* sees desire (*eros*) as the psychic motor that drives creatures in general, but also human beings in particular, to move upwards towards the transcendental goodness of God's being. The general and particular accounts of desire overlap and can be taken in turn in order to develop the centrality of *eros* in the *Laws*. First, then, Hooker offers a Plotinian-like account of desire in general. For Plotinus, *eros* marks the character of the One as 'lovable, very love', and the superabundance of the One generates multiplicity (1991: V.2.1 & VI.8.15-16; 361-362 & 528-529). In this causal relationship, *eros* also acts as the immanent, constellating category which drives multiplicity back to its desirable source, the procession and reversion (or *exitus-reditus*) of the Many from the One (1991: III.5 & IV.8.4; 174-186 & 338-339). As already shown, for Hooker the second eternal law similarly establishes God's general, immanent causality in creation: it describes the order which God 'hath set downe as expedient to be kept by

all his creatures,' the patterns of desire and behaviour intrinsically kept by all creatures according 'to the severall conditions wherewith he hath indued them' (1977a: 63.8-9). Divine love stands behind this legal entelechy. In Book Five, Hooker identifies God's creative activity with love: 'when God had created all things, he looked upon them and loved them, because they were all as him selfe had made them' (1977b: 291.4-6). Here, 'faith' describes the ecstatic, supra-rational, supernatural affection of love (received as a divine gift) which returns the believer 'Godward' just as God's love descends into and frames creation (1977b: 290.28-30). The same Neoplatonic idea of exit and return occurs in Book One, where natural desire powers the general, immanent, telic dimension of natural law: 'there is in all things an appetite or desire, whereby they incline to something which they may be: and when they are it, they shall be perfecter then nowe they are' (1977a: 72.30-73.2). In this general account of desire, the unitive principle of eternal law remains simple and co-identical with transcendent divinity; but eternal law also effusively generates the variety of laws which immanently turn creation back towards participation in the simple perfection of God. As such, for Hooker desire entails that 'all things in the worlde are saide in some sort to seeke the highest, and to covet more or lesse the participation of God himselfe' (1977a: 73.8-10). Hooker uses the two convertible transcendentals of being and goodness to explicate how God's perfect and simple nature is the source and site of all desirable perfections. God's transcendental goodness expresses the fullness of God's perfect being such that all created perfections 'are conteyned under the generall name of *Goodnesse*' (1977a: 73.2-3). Indeed, 'no good is infinite except God: therefore he [is] our felicitie and blisse' (1977a: 112.11-12). Desire aims to share in such transcendental goodness. Since God is the plenitude of being-in-itself and ground of all possible ontological perfection (1: 72.26-30), all things desire, then, 'the continuance of their being,' that is to say, to 'be like unto God in being ever' (1977a: 73.12-15). Furthermore, desire also drives created forms to imitate God's perfection through 'the constancie and excellencie of those operations which belong unto their kinde' (1977a: 73.18-20). Desire drives creation to act like a diminished similitude of divine simplicity and perfection.

For Hooker, human desires in particular exhibit a metaxological character as they straddle non-cognitive, material creation and the immaterial, intellectual order of the celestial realm. As Shuger (1997:44) notes, 'Hooker's spiritual psychology consistently makes desire rather than reason the epistemic ground'. Hooker again offers a Plotinian-like account of human desire. As Plotinus explores in the *Enneads* the Platonic myth of *Eros* found in the *Symposium*, he develops how *eros* acts as a cipher both for an 'emotional state... [which] rises in souls aspiring to be knit in the closest union with some beautiful object' and also for a 'celestial spirit (*daimon*)' (1991: III.5.1; 174-176). The daimonic *Eros* 'clings to the Soul, from which it sprang as from the principle of its Being' and strains towards 'some good which it sees in things of the partial sphere.' Similarly, as they share in desire for

goodness, ‘good men have no other Love—no other *Eros* of life—than for that Absolute and Authentic Good’ (1991: III.5.7; 183). Proper desire (as an affection in the soul or as a metaphysical reality) marks the pursuit of transcendence. Desire similarly characterises how humans naturally pursue goodness throughout Hooker’s *Laws*. Like his patristic sources, Hooker imagines a tripartite anthropology of body, soul, and spirit which, in a similar vein to Plotinus, tends ecstatically towards transcendence through desire (see Karamanolis, 2013: 181-213). The human soul mediates between (*metaxu*) two worlds, between the footstool (body) and throne of God (spirit). For Hooker, then, the soul mediates between material and spiritual desires which aim at particular aspects of the good, itself expressing that which perfects being. Hooker arranges in Aristotelian fashion humankind’s natural appetites and desires according to the powers of the soul (1977a: 72.30-73.5; 75.7-27): vegetative (with physical desire for nutrition, growth, and reproduction); sensitive (with embodied desire for sensory input); and rational (with intellectual desire for theoretical and practical knowledge). Later, Hooker adds an ultimate ‘spirituall and divine’ desire (1977a: 111.24-112.12; 114.8-119.23) to live in the beatitude of God’s perfect and perfecting presence. Here, the natural vocation of the soul is also ecstatic and supernatural, that is, beyond and outside of itself, towards spirit.

In this spiritual vocation, angelic desire in particular acts as a ‘paterne and a spurte’ (1977a: 137.18-22) for human beings, just as the daimonic *Eros* marks and inhabits the Platonic *metaxu*. For Hooker, the erotic activity of the angels works within the broader community of the Dionysian *lex divinitatis* [law of power] participating in the unitive eternal law. Hooker twice recapitulates the law of power elsewhere: in Book Eight he writes, ‘wheresoever there is a coagmentation of many, the lowest be knit to the highest by that which being interjacent may cause each to cleave unto other and so all continue one’ (1981: 331.19-332.1); and in his Autograph Notes Hooker summarises ‘it is a divine law, says Dionysius, for the lowest things to be led back to the highest by those that are intermediate’ (1981: 494.10-12). Angelic desire for spiritual, intellectual union with God couches their action in amorous affectivity and they work as intermediaries between heaven and earth. Angelic beings erotically participate in God’s rational being: angels ‘adore, love, and imitate’ God’s nature (1977a: 69.32), which is immediately present to them and through which they are themselves perfected. The intellectual desire of angels entails that, as they ‘behold the face of God’ (1977a: 70.6-7) they find formal and erotic fulfilment. God’s convertible, transcendental, and participable properties of being, goodness, and beauty fulfil angelic desire: ‘being rapt with the love of his beautie, they cleave inseparably for ever unto him’ and the ‘desire to resemble him in goodness maketh them unwearable’ (1977a: 70.8-10). The angels form a generous ‘societie or fellowship with men’ (1977a: 64.9; 69.25; 71.6-7), and angelic desire shapes and draws human beings to similar erotic participation in the transcendental properties of God. As he considers the human desire for God’s

goodness, Hooker appeals the Aristotelian premise that 'naturall desire cannot utterly be frustrate' (1: 114.15-16) in order to show that God acts as the guarantor for all desire. Indeed, as with the angels, the transcendental property of goodness, convertible with the plenitudinous being of God's nature, draws out all kinds of human desire such that it 'tendeth unto union with that it desireth' (1977a: 112.13). The final end of humanity is union with God, given as a gift of grace in light of sin. Accordingly, Hooker maps out the three theological virtues onto the medieval transcendentals of truth, goodness, and beauty, themselves linked to Christ (1977a: 118.27-119.11). Thus, the principal object of faith is 'eternall veritie' found in the 'treasures of hidden wisdom in Christ', the highest object of hope is 'everlasting goodness' found in Christ's resurrection, and charity expresses itself as 'endlesse union' with the 'incomprehensible bewtie which shineth in the countenance of Christ the sonne of the living God.' Human nature erotically yields, in the same way as angelic nature, to divine love through non-discursive union with Christ, again imaged as 'the intuitive vision of God' (1977a: 119.5-6).

Methexis, Metaxu, and Eros in Book Five

Hooker's second substantial use of participation (*methexis*), between (*metaxu*), and desire (*eros*) occurs in Book Five of the *Lawes* where he defends virtually every practice of the Elizabethan *Book of Common Prayer*. As with his account of law in Book One, Hooker's apology for the official Elizabethan liturgy enchants creation with divine agency and sees the final purpose of worship as union with God. Hooker argues that religious duties must possess a 'sensible excellencie, correspondent to the majestie of him whom we worship' (1977b: 34.1-3). Hooker again recalls Pseudo-Dionysius, whom he has proleptically quoted in Book Four: 'The sensible things which Religion hath hallowed, are resemblances framed according to things spiritually understood, whereunto they serve as a hand to lead and a way to direct' (1977a: 275.21-24). Here, the Dionysian *lex divinitatis* assumes a theurgic register in which material signs resemble, mediate, and lead creatures back to the divine. As Lake (1988: 165) comments of the passage immediately prior to the one quoted, 'this was little short of a reclamation of the whole realm of symbolic action and ritual practice from popish superstition to that of a necessary, indeed essential, means of communication and edification'. Hooker returns, then, in Book Five to the first Christian Platonism (Dionysian hierarchy), but also moves beyond it to a second Christian Platonism, namely Augustinian immediacy. Hooker sees liturgical participation either as hierarchically mediated through the Dionysian, hierarchical influence of angels, or as immediately present in Christ. In Hooker's discussion of prayer, human nature becomes the lower metaxological term of erotic angelic exchange and influence. In the First Book of the *Lawes*, the angels formed a foil to discuss human nature and desires. In the Fifth Book, the angels return and form a society with believers, casting worship as a mystical purgation of improper desire, illumination through sensible means, and an ascent of holy desires. On the

other hand, when Hooker discusses the sacraments, human nature (through Christ) resumes as the middle term through which immediate, procreative, and sensuous union with God becomes possible as a divine gift through the dominical sacraments. Here, the eucharist in particular instrumentally acts as a proleptic foretaste of union. This latter section considers in turn, then, each of Hooker's two Christian Platonisms (hierarchy and grace) as found in Book Five.

John Booty (1993: 193-194) notes that Book Five of the *Laws* 'is a circle whose circumference is the commonwealth and whose center is the concept of participation'. Hooker sees the commonwealth as saturated with angelic presence as the two rational communities coincide in the Church and participate in God as one through worship. Thus, within the commonwealth:

The Church being a supernaturall societie, doth differ from naturall societies in this, that the persons unto whom we associate our selves, in the one are men simplye considered as men, but they to whome wee be joyned in the other, are God, Angels, and holie men (1977a: 131.6-10).

Accordingly, angels also populate earthly worship as invisible intermediaries:

... the howse of prayer is a court bewtifed with the presence of coelestiall powers, that where we stand, we pray, we sound forth hymnes unto God, having his Angels intermingled as our associates...; how can we come to the house of prayer, and not be moved with the verie glorie of the place it selfe, so to frame our affections praying, as doth best besee me them, whose sutes thalmightie doth there sitt to heare, and his angels attend to furder? (1977b: 114.13-21).

With such angelic fellowship, the worshipper has, to use Kirby's phrase, 'a foot in both the natural and the supernatural orders of being' (2003b: 116). When Hooker turns to constitutional issues later in the *Laws*, the bishops and the monarch of the commonwealth assume an analogical likeness to the angels and become Dionysian hierarchs who mediate divinity; bishops in particular 'shine... as Angels of God in the midst of perverse men' (1981: 299.1-25). The whole realm of the Church extends and shares the Dionysian ministry of the angels in drawing believers to God. Yet, Hooker's apology for political stability in the Elizabethan Settlement through these heavenly appellations only forms a penultimate claim in the *Laws*. The ultimate aim remains, of course, no less than deification, the 'participation of divine nature' (1977b: 238.18), as Hooker paraphrases 2 Peter 1.4, a participation shared with the only other rational community, namely the angels and church triumphant as they stand in the unmediated vision of God.

In this participatory community across time and space, prayer (by which Hooker primarily means common prayer and so worship in general) takes on a metaxological character. Hooker describes prayers as a productive, transformative

exchange between heaven and earth in which the Church forms the lower term of angelic action, at least as a similitude:

Between the throne of God in heaven and his Church upon earth here militant if it be so that Angels have their continuall intercourse, where should we finde the same more verified then in these two ghostlie exercises, the one 'Doctrine,' and other 'Prayer'? For what is the assembling of the Church to learne, but the receivinge of Angels descended from above? What to pray, but the sendinge of Angels upwards? His heavenly inspirations and our holie desires are as so many Angels of intercourse and comerce betweene God and us (1977b: 110.7-14).

The descending and ascending angels recall, of course, the biblical story of Jacob's ladder (Genesis 28:10-19). Yet, Hooker's use of an angelic similitude to describe the twin 'ghostlie exercises' also structurally and implicitly alludes to Neoplatonic ideas about participation, *metaxu*, and desire. The structural and implicit allusions shed light on Hooker's understanding of the metaxological nature of liturgical formation and so deserve elaboration.

Structurally, the double angelic motion of the above passage immediately recalls the Neoplatonic procession and reversion (*exitus-reditus*) of participatory laws in the First Book, namely the hierarchical draw upwards towards union with God through the dispositive mediation of law. Doctrine, like the remedial divine law in Book One, forms right belief as a heavenly action to recreate believers in their 'imbecillite and weakness' (1977b: 113.19-26). Doctrine forms the outworking of divine law, which describes how 'man having utterly disabled his nature... hath received from heaven a lawe to teach him how that which is desired naturally [i.e. union with God] must now supernaturally be attained' (1977a: 121.29-122.5). The public reading of Scripture, catechesis, and preaching accordingly 'converteth, edifieth, and saveth soules' (1977b: 87.10-12), that is to say, they illuminate the mind with true doctrine, much as the sensible signs within sacraments reveal divine presence and gift. Within this formative context, common prayer ascends the believer, along with their purified 'holie desires', towards (re)union with God. The prayer remains common beyond the bounds of mere human fellowship: prayer is a 'worke common unto men and angels' and 'so much of our lives is coelestiall and divine' on account of this broad community (1977b: 111.16-18).

Yet, Hooker's allusion to Jacob's ladder also echoes late antique Neoplatonic uses of the passage which re-interpret Plato's account of *metaxu*, *eros*, and prayer in Judaeo-Christian terms. In the *Symposium*, Plato's Diotima concerns herself with the 'in-between' quality of reality, across which *daimones* shuttle back and forth the prayers of mortals and blessings of divinities. For Diotima, *Eros* acts as the most significant heavenly figure in such metaxological exchange, most often seen in theurgic activity:

[*Eros*] is in between [*metaxu*] mortal and immortal... Everything spiritual, you see, is in between god and mortal... [*Daimones* like *Eros*] are messengers who shuttle back and forth between the two, conveying prayer and sacrifice from men to gods, while to men they bring commands from the gods and gifts in return for sacrifices. Being in the middle of the two, they round out the whole and bind fast the all to all. Through them all divination passes, through them the art of priests in sacrifice and ritual, in enchantment, prophecy, and sorcery. Gods do not mix with men; they mingle and converse with us through spirits instead, whether we are awake or asleep (1997: 202e-203a; 485-486).

The antique Jewish Neoplatonist Philo of Alexandria reinterprets the Platonic *daimones* as angels and the figure of Jacob's ladder as a scriptural image for participatory action across the *metaxu* where earth and heaven interact. Concerning angels, Philo writes in *De Somniis*:

Now philosophers in general are wont to call these demons, but the sacred scripture calls them angels, using a name more in accordance with nature. For indeed they do report [*diangellousi*] the injunction of the father to his children, and the necessities of the children to the father. And it is in reference to this employment of theirs that the holy scripture has reported them as ascending and descending... (2013: I.141-142; 368-369).

For Philo, the 'ladder' becomes a protean image both for the metaxological dynamic which connects earth and heaven (2103: I.134; 377) and also for the soul where sense perception forms the earthly term and the purified mind the heavenly reality (2013: I.146; 378). The angels (described by Philo as 'the words of God') assist the mind's ascent of the ladder through the ascetic practice of virtue (2013: I.147-148; 378). As with the Platonic *metaxu*, the noetic ascent of the soul vacillates back and forth between opposing poles. Accordingly, Philo writes that 'the practicers of virtue, for they are on the boundary between two extremities, are frequently going upwards and downwards as if on a ladder, being either drawn upwards by a more powerful fate, or else being dragged down by that which is worse' (2013: I.152; 378).

In a similar way to this Philonic reinterpretation of Plato's *Eros*, Hooker gives to the descending and ascending angels an erotic role as a pattern and spur to right desire. In earlier parts of the *Laws* Hooker notes a Dionysian resemblance between celestial orders, angelic desire, and the heavenly vision of God with the solemn outward worship of the Church (1977a: 137.22-138.2, 275.21-24). In Book Five, then, worship extends the angelic ministration (at least in similitude) found in Book One, a ministry which forms a remedial, metaxological, theurgic gift drawing the earthly into the heavenly, often in erotic terms. The descent and ascent of angels in Hooker's passage about prayer images the purgation, illumination, and ascent of desire through common worship. In Book One, Hooker frames desire within the telic draw of God's transcendental goodness and being, and the angels act as a pattern and spur to participate erotically in God's plenitude. In

Book Five, Hooker similarly indexes the 'ghostlie exercises' of the double angelic motion against the convertible transcendentals of goodness, truth, and beauty, aspects co-identical with God's nature and which relate to human desire as cause to effect, as Kirby (2011) notes. Accordingly, 'as teaching bringeth us to know that God is our supreme truth; so prayer testifieth that we acknowledge him our soveraigne good' (1977b: 110.15-16). While doctrinal truth enlightens the intellect, then, 'holie desires' in prayer aim at the perfective goodness of God. Here, transcendental beauty (as it expresses the attractive character of being) draws desire out: desire aims at the veracity and plenitude of being (truth and goodness) and beauty elicits such desire. Churches visibly evoke a sense of God's attractive beauty, a 'sensible help to stirre up devotion' (1977b: 61.7-8), and reflect 'cherefull affection' for God (1977b: 58.13-20). They form a metaxological space which allows for 'mutuall conference and as it were commerce to be had betwene God and us' (1977b: 65.7-8). Manual acts such as kneeling (1977b: 346.23-28) or making the sign of the cross (1977b: 305.13-308.3) shape appropriate physical passions and engender, as silent teachers, right affections. Worship becomes a sensorium in which the human body and mind becomes oriented to God through the double angelic motion of doctrine and prayer. For example, visible signs deliver a 'strong impression' of eternal truths, while music expresses 'the turns and varieties of all passions' and can move and moderate the affections (1977b: 151.14-152.13). Sermons become 'keyes to the kingdom of heaven, as winges to the soule, as spurres to the good affections of man, unto the sound and healthie as food, as phisicke unto diseased minds' (1977b: 87.20-24). In turn, prayers represent 'most gracious and sweet odors; those rich presentes and guiftes which being carryed up into heaven doe best testifie our dutifull affection' (1977b: 110.27-31). *Contra* Mohamed (2008: 38), then, Hooker does not deny mystical ascent in the *Lawes*, deferring intellectual illumination completely to the afterlife. Rather, Hooker sees the growth of human nature by theurgic steps and degrees, with desires corrupted by sin but purged and redirected through liturgical participation. Hooker remains realistic, however, and notes that even after baptism 'wee are both subject to diminution and capable of augmentation in grace' (1977b: 330.24-25), that is, as liable to descend as to ascend, much like in Plotinian and Philonic accounts.

While Hooker does not use Genesis 28 in relation to immediate participation in Christ, there seems to be an implicit parallel between Hooker's turn to Augustinian immediacy in the later chapters of Book Five and the exegetical turn to Christ in late antiquity about the image of Jacob's ladder. Among other claims linking Jacob's ladder to prayer or Mary, patristic exegesis of Genesis 28 increasingly lent to the image a christological interpretation. Here, cosmic, hierarchical mediation gives way to mediated immediacy through Jesus Christ. Christ gives such an exegesis, of course, in John 1:51, identifying himself as the Ladder upon which angels ascend and descend from heaven. For Cyril of Alexandria, Christ alternatively forms the top of the ladder, the goal of mystical ascent, whereas thinkers such as

Didymus the Blind and Irenaeus see Christ (especially Christ's Cross) as the ladder through which believers pass on the way to heavenly worship (Pentiuć, 2014: 235-236). This latter link between the Cross and the ladder becomes the most common, both in theological texts and artistic depictions of the early Church (Grypeou & Spurling, 2013: 307-310). So too in Hooker's thought in Book Five of the *Laws* does the hierarchical mediation of angels descending and ascending soon give way to the immediacy of participation in Christ, whose hypostatic union forms the ultimate *metaxu*, 'that meane betwene both [God and humanity] which is both' and which mediates 'the union of the soule with God.' This final turn in Hooker's use of participation, between, and desire unfolds how the sacraments theurgically prefigure the beatific vision of and union with the Trinity through Christ, especially on the Cross. The turn represents the giving way of Dionysian hierarchy to Hooker's Reformed commitment to the immediate centrality of Christ.

In order to understand how worship (first shaped as the double mediatory angelic motion of prayer and doctrine) might properly be said to lead the soul into immediate participation of the divine nature, the 'union of the soule with God' (1977b: 208.20-23), Hooker turns to the dominical sacraments. He plans to explicate sacramental participation in three moments: 'how God is in Christ, then how Christ is in us, and how the sacramentes doe serve to make us partakers of Christ' (1977b: 208.25-209.2). The first moment ('how God is in Christ') balances the claims of transcendence and immanence in a similar manner to Hooker's legal ontology in Book One. Just as Hooker first establishes the radical ontological difference between the Creator and creatures in his account of eternal law, the first moment in Hooker's account of sacramental participation begins with the inner life of the Trinity. Indeed, Hooker begins in a manner reminiscent of the apophatic, henologic transcendence of the first eternal law in Book One: 'The Lord our God is but one God' and within this 'indivisible unitie... wee adore the father as beinge altogether of him selfe, we glorifie that consubstantiall worde which is the Sonne, wee blessed and magnifies that coessentiall Spirit eternallie proceeding from both which is the holie Ghost' (1977b: 209.8-12). Since the Trinity *in se* remains transcendently *sui generis*, Hooker has to establish how God is present in Christ's incarnation without violating divine transcendence. Hooker casts the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in Christ in metaxological terms: divinity remains transcendent but also works through immanent patterns of transformative causality. Writing of the Incarnation, Hooker notes an Augustinian variant of the exchange formula: while the divine nature in and of itself remains unchanged (1977b: 216.22-29; 218.30-219.3), '*in illo Divinitatis est unigeniti facta particeps mortalitatis nostrae, ut et nos participes ejus immortalitatis essemus*' [by our head (i.e. Christ) we are reconciled to God, for in Him the Godhead of the Only Begotten is made a partaker of our mortality in order that we also might be partakers of His immortality] (1977b: 210.q).

Hooker goes on to describe the hypostatic union of natures in erotic terms: while distinct, the divine and human remain united in Christ in a 'true personal copulation' which perfects human nature (1977b: 215.32). In 'so neere copulation with deitie' (1977b: 223.29), Christ receives 'the guift of union' and the 'the guift of unction'. On the one hand, 'his humane nature hath had the honor of union with deitie bestowed upon it'. On the other hand, 'sundrie eminent graces have flowed as effectes from deitie in to that nature which is coupled with it' (1977b: 215.32). Hooker enumerates the kinds of powers given to Christ's human nature: it is 'replenished with all such perfections' that the 'powers of the soule are illuminated', it is 'filled with all maner graces and vertues', and even the body is perfected (1977b: 225.1-226). Thus, the union of natures in Christ 'doth add perfection to the weaker, to the nobler no alteration at all' (1977b: 223.6-7) and 'these two natures are as causes and original groundes of all thinges which Christ hath done' (1977b: 218.17-18).

This first moment ('how God is in Christ') grounds the possibility for the second moment, namely 'the participation of divine nature' as believers participate in Christ. This second moment casts participation in metaxological terms as the 'union or mutuall participation which is betwene Christ and the Church of Christ in this present worlde'. Hooker again defines such ecclesial participation in erotic, immanent terms as 'that mutuall inward hold which Christ hath of us and wee of him, in such sort that ech possesseth other by waie of special interest propertie and inherent copulation' (1977b: 234.26-31). In what follows, Hooker continues the emphasis on erotic transaction and balances Dionysian mediation with Augustinian immediacy. While the gift of union properly pertains only to Christ, believers receive the gift of unction because, in Christ's hypostatic union, 'God hath deified our nature' (1977b: 223.14). Thus, believers participate Christ (and so are united with God) 'partelie by imputation' but also 'partelie by habituall and reall infusion' such that believers 'by steppes and degrees... receive the complete measure of all such divine grace', a spiritual growth only fully actualised in the *eschaton* (1977b: 243.4-244.25).

The gift of grace, received through erotic participation in Christ, gives birth to the Church and its worship, the dynamic, mediatory, double angelic motion discussed earlier in Book Five. Transcendence manifests itself through immanent causality: all things are naturally in God 'as effectes in their highest cause', and believers are supernaturally in God through Pauline adoption and filiation in their 'coherence with Jesus Christ' (1977b: 237.24, 239.19). The Church participates in the Trinity through direct union with Christ in loving, eternal election: 'wee are therefore in God eternallie accordinge to that intent and purpose whereby wee were chosen to be made his in this p[resent] world before the world it selfe was made, wee are in God through the knowledge which is had of us and the love which is borne from everlasting' (1977b: 238.18-24). Such immediacy, however, also grounds mediation, just as God's transcendence grounds immanence in Book

One: ‘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... Our beinge in Christ by eternall foreknoweldge saveth us not without our actuall and reall adoption into the fellowship of his Sainctes in this present world’ (1977b: 238.23-29). The erotic ‘mysticall copulation’ between Christ and the Church entails ‘a true actuall influence of grace whereby the life which wee live accordinge to godliness is his, and from him wee receive those perfections wherein our eternall happines consisteth’ (1977b: 242.30-243.4). The heavenly, angelic descent of doctrine and the heavenly ascent of prayer are the mediatory, metaxological actions of the Church which transform holy desires. Yet, the double angelic motion originates in (and eventually gives way to the immediacy of) Christ. Dionysian hierarchy yields to Augustinian immediacy, but with no tension between them.

It is indeed in the third moment—how the sacraments serve to make us partakers of Christ—that the proleptic elision of mediation into the immediacy of erotic union with Christ resurfaces. Baptism incorporates believers into Christ, a visible and effectual sign of imputed grace, and introduces the ‘infused divine vertue of the holie Ghost which giveth to the powers of the soule their first disposition towards future newnes of life’ (1977b: 255.5-13). The Church, then, becomes the visceral ‘verie mother of our new birth in whose bowels wee are all bred, at whose brestes wee receive nourishment’ (1977b: 207.13-15). Yet, Hooker recognises the metaxological difficulty of the soul even after baptism: ‘the state of our spirituall beinge is dailie so much hindered and impaired after baptism’ and so sanctification comes through recalcitrant steps and degrees. Here, eucharistic participation in Christ remains the primary way to augment grace. Indeed, Hooker sees in the eucharist a ‘true and real participation of Christ’ (1977b: 335.33-34) which leads to an ‘increase in holines and vertue’ (1977b: 331.10). As Booty notes (1993), Hooker employs two biblical words to describe sacramental participation: ‘communion’ or ‘inward fellowship’ (from *koinonia*, such as found in 1 Corinthians 10:16), and ‘abiding’ (from *meno*, such as found in John 6:56), each of which can also be translated as ‘participation’. On the one hand, Hooker argues that the consecrated eucharistic species are ‘such instrumentes as mysticallie yeat trulie, invisiblie yeat reallie worke our communion or fellowship [*koinonia*] with the person of Jesus Christ as well in that he is man as God’ (1977b: 339.3-6). On the other hand, the notion of ‘abiding’ shoots throughout Book Five as a way to image the asymmetrical quality of the incarnation through which ‘mysticall communion’ entails that human nature is God’s ‘owne inseparable habitation’ (1977b: 224.15).

In this biblical tradition of participation, the influence of grace in the sacraments takes on a physical, passionate, and affective character not unlike the erotic vision of God found in the angels: the eucharistic mysteries ‘doe as nailes fasten us to his verie crosse’ and ‘in the woundes of our redeemer wee there dip our tongues’ such that ‘our hunger is satisfied,’ ‘our thirst for ever quenched,’ and we experience consummate joy in Christ’s loving reformation of human nature at the

Cross (1977b: 343.7-31). Desire finds non-discursive satiation in Christ's Passion, viscerally imaged as gustatory delight, an affective, material *prolepsis* of the spiritual, heavenly vision of God shared with the angels. Eucharistic participation in the metaxological Cross erotically folds the believer into Christ such that Christ dwells therein and believers in turn dwell in God. Just as 'everie cause is in the effect which growth from it,' through receiving the eucharist believers witness a 'kind of transubstantiation in us, a true change both of soule and bodie, an alteration from death to life' (1977b: 339.7-340.1). Far from denying mystical ascent, the christological *metaxu* of sacramental participation forms the ordinary means to an extraordinary ascent to the divine. Hooker indeed writes of the dominical sacraments that 'wee may with consent of the whole Christian world conclude that they are necessarie, the one to initiate or begin, the other to consummate or make perfect our life in Christ' (1977b: 343.28-31).

Conclusion

The language of participation, between, and desire explains how Hooker establishes and relates hierarchy and grace as complementary ways through which God enchants creation. These two Christian Platonisms do not contradict one another for Hooker but rather signal the heightening of participation from what Tanner (2009: 1-57) calls a 'weak' form to a 'strong' form. On the one hand, the internal laws which govern creatures set them as diminished similitudes of God as eternal law, a kind of general or 'weak' participation (*methexis*) in God. The natural desire to participate in God sees Hooker's first Christian Platonism (the dispositive, Dionysian hierarchy of law) as the ordinary way to fulfil desire. Yet, sin intrudes and cataclysmically frustrates the natural human desire to see God. Hooker's second Christian Platonism affirms, however, that God acts as the guarantor for desire but also establishes through grace the ground for deification, a 'strong' version of participation, now seen in terms of community (*koinonia*) with God. Indeed, with a markedly Reformed emphasis, Jesus Christ forms the central Word of the divine law and Christ's incarnation not only restores but deifies human nature by uniting it to the divine communion of the Trinity. Deiform desire presupposes, however, natural desire. As Hooker writes in Book Six on repentance, 'what is love towards God, butt a desire of union with God? And shall wee imagine a sinner converting himselfe to God, in whome there is noe desire of union with God presupposed?' (1981: 9.21-22). While the union of divine and human natures pertains only to Christ, the grace of such union overflows as unction to all who participate (*koinonia*) Christ, immediately in faith and instrumentally through the sacraments and church. The grace of unction means that believers participate in God as far as their form permits, imaged ultimately as an eternal seeing of God's perfection, a non-discursive, asymmetrical union with the divine in which neither nature is abolished but in which the human nature is perfected. The penultimate life of the visible Church remains marked by a metaxological character: human beings con-

tinue to exist between the footstool and throne of God, but through Christ may ascend to a form of union. As believers learn and grow by theurgic steps and degrees until the full reality of heavenly union, they are saturated with the divine presence of angels, Christ, and God. The boundaries between natural and supernatural become blurred as Christ acts as the ultimate key who unlocks both the earthly and heavenly. Indeed, hierarchy and grace are seen to share a common origin in Christ who, as eternal Wisdom, works mediately as ‘that order which God before all ages hath set down with himself, for himselfe to do all things by’ (1977a: 61.1-3) and immediately as a ‘sweet compulsion’ (1977b: 356.1-8) for human transformation.

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