

Richard Hooker: Beyond Certainty.

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Abstract of Thesis

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For over four hundred years Richard Hooker has been firmly attached to the Church of England and his life and writings used to promote and preserve that institution's self-understanding. Consensus as to his theological beliefs and ecclesiastical loyalties has, however, never been reached – even though each generation of scholars has claimed to discover the 'real' Richard Hooker. In spite of the differing, and often conflicting interpretations, there have been several constants – beliefs about Hooker and his work that have remained virtually unchallenged throughout the centuries. The aim of this thesis has been to examine three of those aspects and in so doing ascertain whether their truth is more assumed than proven. The first of these assumptions is the fundamental belief that Hooker is attached securely to the English Church and that their identities are so interwoven that to speak of one is to speak of the other. The second is that Hooker's prose – his unique writing style and powerful rhetoric – can be ignored in the process of determining his theology. And thirdly, the widely-held belief that, as the 'champion of reason', Hooker's faith is essentially rational and that God is perceived and experienced primarily through the intellect. Challenging the truth of each of these statements leads to an uncertainty about Hooker that, rather than negating scholarship, allows research to be liberated from the dominance of categorisation. Such a change would acknowledge that Hooker's theology transcends Anglican studies and would allow his radical thinking to reach a wider audience.

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To my friends and family who have encouraged me in all manner of ways – generously and constantly – thankyou. I could not have done this without you.

In true Hooker style the dedication of this thesis will look to the past, the present and the future. It is, therefore, dedicated:

- to the memory of my mum. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.
- to my wonderful daughters, Megan and Bethany. Thanks, girls, for reminding me that God is good and life is fun.
- to Phil and to sharing our future ministries. An Anglican and a Presbyterian – Hooker would be amazed!

Abbreviations

- Answer:* *Master Hookers Answer to the Supplication that Master Travers made to the Counsell*, Folger V.227-257.
- Archbishops Judgment:* *The Archbishops Judgment of these Controversies*, Folger V.288.
- Certaintie:* *A Learned and Comfortable Sermon of the Certaintie and and Perpetuities of Faith in the Elect*, Folger V.69-82.
- Christian Letter:* *A Christian Letter of Certaine English Protestantes*, Folger IV. 1-79. The Folger edition of the *Christian Letter* includes both the letter, which was written anonymously and also Hooker's autograph notes upon the same.
- DF:* The Dublin Fragments, Folger IV.99-167.
- Folger:* *The Folger Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, W.S. Hill, (ed.), VII volumes, (I-V, Cambridge, Mass., 1977-90; VI, Binghamton, NY, 1993; VII, Tempe Az., 1998).
- Institutes:* John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* J.T.McNeill (ed.), (Philadelphia, 1960).
- Jude 1:* *The First Sermon Upon Part of St. Judes Epistle*, Folger V.13-35.
- Jude 2:* *The Second Sermon Upon Part of St. Judes Epistle*, Folger V.36-57.
- Justification:* *A Learned Discourse of Justification, Workes, and How the Foundation of Faith is Overthrowne*, Folger V.83-169.
- Lawes:* *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Folger I, II, III.
- Supplication:* 'A Supplication made to the Privy Counsel by Master Walter Travers', Folger V.189-210.

Notes on the text.

All quotations from the Folger edition are referenced firstly by the volume number and secondly the page number

Introduction.

In the grounds of Exeter Cathedral, in the north part of the Close, stands a statue of Richard Hooker. Carved from white marble, it depicts the Anglican divine regally seated, his legs crossed, with one foot resting upon a stool. On his lap lays a huge tome, (undoubtedly *The Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*) its pages open and the index finger of his right hand pointing to the words written there. At his feet lie two further volumes, nestled within the drapes of his gown. Hooker himself is not reading, but rather is looking outwards – as if addressing those around him – the confident teacher, engaging with those gathered to learn.

The fact that this statue was only erected in 1907, some three-hundred years after Hooker's death, is as much an accolade to the Oxford Movement's championing of Hooker as it is to the great man himself. By the turn of the twentieth century Hooker's identity as the quintessential Anglican was universally endorsed. Not only did he point back to Anglicanism's origins, but his iconic status provided the link with this distinctive ecclesiastical identity across the centuries, as well as providing a pattern for the future. Since the Reformation, this was how the English Church had been, still was and ever shall be, if it was to remain true to its origins.

This view of Hooker, as the champion of the *via media*, the articulator of the English Church's distinctive positioning of itself between Geneva and Rome, and the preserver of true sacramental worship and Episcopal authority, was creatively promoted by the Oxford Movement in the first half of the nineteenth century. Its leaders – John Keble, John Newman and Edward Pusey, sought to restore the High Church ideals of the seventeenth century against what they perceived to be the attack

of liberalism. They reiterated that the Church of England was a divine institution, and underlined the belief in Apostolic Succession and the importance of the Book of Common Prayer both doctrinally and ceremonially. They fostered a high esteem for the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, together with the ceremonial aspects of Church life. Their campaign was to restore a higher standard of worship, sacramentally focussed and built upon a High-Church understanding of the community's life and purpose.

Richard Hooker played a vital role in the Movement's life. Here was a man, poised at the very edge of the seventeenth century, as the English Church faced attacks from those who sought to reform it further and bring it into line with Continental doctrine and discipline. A forerunner of Laud, Hooker was portrayed as the man who stood against the assault and kept the Church on track. It was his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* that provided an anchor for those who would come after him.

Keble's edition of Hooker's works, first published in 1836, was a central feature in the promotion of the Oxford Movement's ideals.¹ Keble had been galvanised by the publication of an edition of Hooker's *Laws* in 1830 by Benjamin Hanbury.²

Hanbury, a low-Churchman, was not always sympathetic to Hooker's position and his interpretation of the *Laws* was problematic for Keble and his colleagues. This led Keble to correct Hanbury and restore Hooker to his rightful position. Thus he begins his Preface with the words, "The first object of the present publication is, to exhibit the remains of the great and venerable writer...in as correct a form as could be

¹ Richard Hooker, *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker with an Account of His Life and Death by Isaac Walton* 7th edn., John Keble (ed), revised by R.W. Church and F. Paget, (Oxford, 1888).

² Richard Hooker, *The Ecclesiastical Polity and other Works of Richard Hooker: With his Life by Isaak Walton and Strype's Interpolations* Benjamin Hanbury (ed.), (London, 1830).

attained”.³ In the closing pages Keble refers to those who “resort...to the books of Ecclesiastical Polity, for conclusions and maxims very different from these.”⁴ He laments the citing of the *Lawes* by James II in his “ill-starred conversion to Romanism”, which Keble says could have been avoided if James had understood Hooker correctly and points the finger at both liberals and the rationalists who have hijacked Hooker for their own purposes.⁵ But Keble asserts that the true Hooker “had his full share in training up for the next generation, Laud, Hammond, Sanderson, and a multitude more such divines; to which succession and series, humanly speaking, we owe it that the Anglican church continues at such a distance from that of Geneva, and so near to the primitive truth and apostolical order.”⁶

Keble’s edition of Hooker’s works was, in short, a rescue mission. The defender of Anglicanism was needed once again as the Church faced its attackers. Keble’s desire was that Anglican Christians would be awakened from their slumber by Hooker’s mighty words and galvanised into standing with him to defend the English Church.

It is hoped that this republication of his remains, by making them in certian respects more accessible, will cause them to become more generally read and known: and surely the better they are known, the more entirely will they be rescued from the unpleasant association, and discreditable praise, just now mentioned; the more they will appear in their true light, as a kind of warning voice from antiquity, a treasure of primitive, catholic maxims and sentiments, seasonably provided for this Church, at a time when she was, humanly speaking, in a fair way to fall as low towards rationalism, as the lowest of the protestant congregations are now fallen, Bold must be who should affirm, that great as was then her need of such a defender, it at all exceeded her peril from the same quarter at the present moment. Should these volumes prove at all instrumental in

³ John Keble, ‘Editor’s Preface’, in Richard Hooker, *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker with an Account of His Life and Death by Isaac Walton* 7th edn., John Keble (ed.), revised by R.W. Church and F. Paget, (Oxford, 1888), ix.

⁴ Ibid., cxv.

⁵ Ibid..

⁶ Ibid., cxiv.

awakening any of her children to a sense of that danger, and in directing their attention to the primitive, apostolical Church, as the ark of refuge divinely provided for the faithful, such an effect will amply repay the Editor.⁷

If the sales of Keble's edition are anything to go by, his wish was granted. Demand was such that it was reprinted six times during the ensuing years, culminating in a revised publication, edited by Church and Paget in 1888. By then the Oxford Movement's effect upon the Anglican Church was clearly evident and Keble's embracing of Hooker's orderly and ceremonially majestic faith led directly to the erection of his statue upon the green at Exeter Cathedral.

However, by the end of the twentieth century, Hooker's reputation was dramatically changed. The image of Hooker as the great Anglican divine, champion of the *via media* and defender of High-Church Anglicanism was declared anachronistic. The depiction of the Elizabethan Church as an Anglican fortress was effectively razed to the ground through the work of historians who revealed that the English Church was closer to its Continental counterparts than had first been envisaged. Therefore, the reading of Hooker's life and works as a defence of a distinctive Anglicanism was illusory. Through the work of Nigel Atkinson and Torrance Kirby the real Hooker was rescued from the mythology that had surrounded him, created so effectively by the protagonists of the Oxford Movement.⁸ Hooker was a supporter of the Reformed Church of England, an ally of Luther and Calvin, and his great work a correct interpretation rather than a criticism of Reformed theology and practice. Even the *Folger* editors, keen to promote an Anglican Hooker in line with their North

⁷ *Ibid.*, cxv.

⁸ See Nigel Atkinson, *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Tradition and Reason. Reformed Theologian of the Church of England?* (Carlisle, 1997) and W.J.T. Kirby, *Richard Hooker's Doctrine of the Royal Supremacy* (Leiden, 1990), 126.

American Episcopalian beliefs and values, were forced to concede that Keble's edition was "unduly narrow" and far too dependent on Isaac Walton's life of Hooker.⁹ Albeit there were questions raised as to Kirby and Atkinson's wide-reaching claims, there was effectively a sea-change in Hooker scholarship. Richard Hooker was, essentially, a Reformed theologian.¹⁰

This was not, however, the first time that Hooker's identity had been changed so dramatically. Brydon has eloquently outlined the (often contradictory) interpretations of Hooker's life and works during the seventeenth century.¹¹ Whilst certainly able to point to those who put forward a Laudian view of Hooker, there were other less dominant but nonetheless significant alternative interpretations throughout the century. Kirby and Atkinson were not without their seventeenth century supporters.

In 1664 Isaac Walton's *Life of Mr. Richard Hooker*, annexed to an edition of the *Lawes*, had itself sought to correct an interpretation of Hooker that was seen as dangerous by those in power.¹² In 1662 John Gauden had published his edition of the *Lawes* and castigated those whom he saw as responsible for suppressing the last three volumes – books that had been unpublished (and probably unfinished) at the time of Hooker's death and remained so for half a century.¹³ Gauden highlighted exactly where Hooker did not fit the bill for those who espoused the distinctive Anglican position regarding the episcopacy, amongst other things. Henry Jackson had done

⁹ W.S. Hill, *Studies in Richard Hooker. Essays Preliminary to an Edition of his Works* (London, 1972), ix.

¹⁰ As we shall see both Peter Lake and Nigel Voak have questioned Kirby and Atkinson's conclusions.

¹¹ M.A. Brydon, *The Evolving Reputation of Richard Hooker. An Examination of Responses 1600 – 1714* (Oxford, 2006).

¹² Isaac Walton, 'The Life of Mr. Richard Hooker' (1664), in John Keble (ed.), *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Richard Hooker* 7th edn., revised by R.W. Church and F. Paget (Oxford, 1888),

¹³ John Gauden, 'The Life and Death of Mr. Hooker', in Richard Hooker, *The Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*, John Gauden (ed.), (London, 1662).

something similar when, in 1612, he had published Hooker's sermons in an attempt to restore his Reformed credentials in the face of those who were intent on portraying him in quite the opposite light.

Gauden, like Jackson before him and Hanbury centuries later, were effectively silenced. Walton's life of Hooker, with its emphasis upon the judicious divine, the moderate, reasoned and reasonable face of the English Church, replaced Gauden's image. But as MacCulloch has shown, although Walton's depiction of Hooker was to remain the dominant one until the end of the twentieth century, his identity was constantly reinterpreted by those in power through the intervening years.¹⁴ Who Richard Hooker was and what he espoused changed with each generation, whilst astonishingly there remained the view that his identity was a constant – continually rescued by those who had discovered the 'true' Hooker beneath the accretions of illusion and myth.

Whilst Brydon and MacCulloch rightly highlight the differing and often contradictory interpretations of Hooker that have occurred over the centuries, there have nevertheless been at least three constants in this ever-changing landscape of Hooker scholarship. However Hooker has been interpreted these three factors have remained virtually unchanged and universally endorsed – even by those holding opposing views. The first of these is the view that Hooker's theological identity is attached to that of the English Church, to speak of one is to speak of the other. Those seeking the truth about Hooker's theology have therefore looked, initially, to the Elizabethan Church's beliefs as a means of discovering Hooker's beliefs. The converse has also

¹⁴ Diarmuid MacCulloch, 'Richard Hooker's Reputation', *English Historical Review*, 117 (2002), 773-812.

been true. It is this close relationship between Hooker and the English Church that will be the focus of the first chapter. As the Church's image and identity has changed over the centuries, Hooker has kept in step, his life and theology providing reassurance and encouragement for those who seek to express the Church's purpose and direction. Especially in times of conflict and uncertainty, Hooker's vision of the Church becomes a focal point for those who are seeking to restore Anglicanism, whatever that may mean for those involved. The increased interest in Hooker over the past three decades is therefore of no surprise. As the Anglican Church once again faces questions as to its identity, the role of the Scriptures, who should be in power and what those positions entail, Hooker reappears on the ecclesiastical stage. History tells a similar story at each crucial time in the English Church's life. As much in the work of Atkinson and Kirby as in Keble and Walton, Hooker's identity is resolutely connected to that of the Church, a rare constant in the flux of interpretations.

However, there is a subtler interpretation of this belief. It is not simply that Hooker and the English Church share a theological identity but that Hooker can only be understood in relation to that Church's identity. Initially this is the Elizabethan Church of Hooker's day but history shows that as Anglicanism has developed Hooker's theological contribution has always been understood and interpreted in relation to that Church's identity. This does not mean that Hooker necessarily replicates the Church's stance but, whether he is seen as in opposition to it or as in a synthesis of the prevailing views of his day, Hooker's life and work cannot stand alone. By necessity he must be examined alongside the identity of his Church – previously seen as *via media* and now reclassified as Reformed.

One point on which most recent writers are now agreed, it is clear, is that the significance of Hooker's theology. For both the Elizabethan and Jacobean Church, and

through that to the Church of England today, is undoubtedly to be assessed in relation to Reformed theology. Whether Hooker was a theologian of the Reformed tradition, or whether he constructed his theology in hostile reaction to Reformed theology, it is now accepted as essential that his views be related to what was the mainstream religious tradition in the England of his day.¹⁵

The aim of the first chapter of this thesis will be to consider this claim. Through a close examination of Hooker's life and works – particularly the *Lawes*, this initial relationship with the Elizabethan Church – so much taken for granted that it has effected all future interpretations of Hooker, tying him to Anglicanism until the present day – will be reconsidered. The chapter will examine this complex area, seeking to establish how certain we can be as to Hooker's loyalty to and relationship with the Elizabethan Church and whether the claim that to speak of one is to speak of the other is as convincing as it may first appear. It will also begin to address the subtler assumption that Hooker's theological contribution must be understood only in relation to the English Church's beliefs and practices.

To speak of Richard Hooker's *Lawes* is to allude to a magnificent, literary achievement. It is not only the sheer length (eight volumes) that produces such admiration but more particularly the grandiose prose and the intricately created arguments, both of which display the beauty of logic and the sheer strength of a reasoned approach to faith. Whether revelling in the labyrinths of winding sentences or savouring the short, sharp word, readers have praised Hooker's prose as *the* model of exquisite sixteenth century writing. As such Hooker has attracted attention from

¹⁵ N.F. Voak , *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology: A Study of Reason, Will and Grace* (Oxford, 2003).

those whose field is literary studies, with excerpts from the *Lawes* included in anthologies of English literature.¹⁶

But, it has to be said, it is often only the committed who progress beyond the initial books. There may well be many who are seduced by Hooker's writing but equally there are those who have been defeated by it, frustrated by the convoluted arguments and sentences that stretch to eternity. Hooker is not to everyone's taste.

But what is agreed is that although this discussion of Hooker's style and rhetoric may be interesting for those involved in literary studies, it is largely irrelevant when the focus is Hooker's theology. Whether Hooker is a writer *par excellence*, or simply a product of his classical education; whether he spends time on the choice of words or the way his arguments read, is of no real concern. When the question to be answered is Hooker's stance on the issue of justification, for example, it is the content of his work that is of paramount importance and not the expression of those beliefs.

Distilling Hooker's theology, freeing it from the words that surround and conceal his real meaning, has become the pursuit of those who seek to categorise and understand Hooker. His writing, whilst sometimes beautiful and other times frustrating, is simply immaterial. Hooker's literary style and techniques have not been seen as a necessary tool in the understanding of his theology and nor have his theological beliefs been seen as a crucial element in formation of his prose.

It is this assumption – that Hooker's writing style and rhetoric can be safely ignored in any theological research – that will be the focus of chapter two. By examining the

¹⁶ See for example, M.H. Abrams (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* 7th ed. (New York; London, 2000).

use of rhetoric in Hooker's day and considering how a different understanding of the written word was emerging, we will seek to clarify the possible ways in which Hooker approached the writing of the *Lawes* in order to establish whether there could be links between his style and purpose, his method of writing and his theology, that have yet to be fully explored.

The third constant upon which this thesis will focus is the description of Hooker as the 'champion of reason', which is perhaps the most popular and enduring of the accolades that have been bestowed upon him. Hooker's fight to establish the value of the intellect was as much by implication as by overt argument. It is universally acknowledged that he presented his defence of the Church in a reasoned, well-organised, methodical way. He sought to challenge those who derided reason and who described the use of the intellect in matters of faith as an assertion of human pride against God. For Hooker, the abilities of the mind were God-given gifts.

However, as recent research has shown, it is too blunt a tool to simply describe Hooker as a man who promoted reason – as if this can once again be divorced from his theological beliefs in a God who makes Himself known and is known through the laws of the world, the abilities of human kind and in the revelation of His Son. Hooker's belief in the powers of reason cannot be separated from his commitment to the God of revelation. Hillerdal used a similar critique to argue that in view of Hooker's belief in God-given and divinely aided reason, the latter in effect collapses into revelation. "Hooker only seemingly remains the philosopher who uses nothing but reason in his argument. Factually he has all the time presupposed that everything

must be understood in the light of revelation, i.e. as he understands revelation in accordance with his own Christian belief.”¹⁷

Hillerdal’s argument is far too sweeping, failing to understand the crucial, radical claims that Hooker was making with regard to the human ability to reason as a gift from God and allowing reason a role in the understanding of Scripture and the very discernment process of revelation itself.¹⁸ However, there is some truth in this line of thought, for no-one would argue that Hooker’s belief in reason stands outside of his belief in God and the way God communicates with humanity. As such, Hooker as the champion of reason is not a forerunner of Enlightenment autonomy. The accolade is much more subtle than this and points to Hooker as a believer in a rational faith – where God is primarily approached, discovered and understood through the intellect. Chapter three will seek to discover whether Hooker believed God could only (or even primarily) be known in this way. Through an examination of Hooker’s theology of certainty and assurance, which themselves rely on particular understandings of how God is known and experienced, we will seek to establish how certain we can be that reason was Hooker’s primary, if not sole, arbiter in the life of faith.

The examination of each of these three beliefs regarding Hooker will focus upon how certain they are and whether their truth is more assumed than proven. As Hooker scholarship enjoys a renaissance, there is a sense that, even though the recent

¹⁷ Gunner Hillerdal, *Reason and Revelation in Richard Hooker* (Lund, 1962),149.

¹⁸ Hooker declared that reason was “the naturall way, whereby rules have beene found out concerning that goodness wherewith the will of man ought to be moved in humaine actions” (*Lawes* I.82). He moved on to say that reason played a key role in the interpretation of Scripture, “we do not add reason as a supplement of any maim or defect therein, but as a necessary instrument, without which we could not reap by the scriptures perfection, that fruit and benefit which it yeeldeth.” (*Ibid.*, 227). When he declares that if reason has not led his opponents then they must all (men, women and children) be Prophets it is obvious that such a claim is open to being questioned. (*Ibid.*, 17-18).

interpretations of his work claim a fresh and innovative understanding of his purpose, theology and ecclesiastical loyalties, history reminds us that such claims have been made before. The question arises as to whether Hooker scholarship simply proceeds in a spiral, each generation repeating the mistakes of its predecessor as it builds upon these three unchanging assumptions. Rather than simply challenging the present day conclusions, the focus will be upon how certain the foundation stones are upon which those (often contradictory) conclusions are built and to what extent a change in understanding of each of these claims may effect future and current research.

Chapter One

Richard Hooker: defender, apologist and champion of the Church?

Introduction

Hooker has long been synonymous with the identity of the Church of England. His *Laws* has been seen as the classic statement of the Church's careful positioning of itself as a *via media* between Geneva and Rome. Or, more recently, he has been identified as a champion of Reformed Protestantism, translating the ideas of the continental reformers into English theology.

There is, however, a difficulty with both these approaches, which goes beyond the simple fact that they are contradictory. This difficulty lies in the disjuncture between his works and his reputation, between the complexity, subtlety, and flexibility of his ideas and his monolithic, even iconic status. In short, Hooker, when read carefully, never quite subscribes to the straitjackets, stereotypes and labels that interpreters and readers of his works have, over the centuries, pinned on him with such certainty.

When the Oxford Movement adopted Hooker as its champion, it affirmed a view of Hooker that has survived until the present day. This group of High-Church Anglicans sought a figure who would establish the veracity of their claims to a distinctive identity – an identity that was different from both Genevan and Roman Catholic doctrine and discipline and yet was a clear inheritor of the apostolic order. They found such a figure in Richard Hooker and “it was (their) approach that effectively defined Hooker's reputation as the epitomization of the Anglican tradition.”¹

¹ Brydon, *Evolving Reputation*, 15.

Keble famously enshrined this view of Hooker as the defender of *via media* Anglicanism in his edition of Hooker's works published in 1836². This has been a lasting legacy, remaining virtually unchallenged until the middle of the twentieth century and continues to have its supporters, most notably the editors of the *Folger* edition of Hooker's works who interpret Hooker in a more nuanced and yet still distinctively Anglican manner. "Although W. Speed Hill, the general editor, suggested that Keble's edition now seems 'unduly narrow in the focus of its commentary and unduly pious in its retention of Walton's *Life* as the gateway to the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*' most of the editors continued to treat Hooker as the quintessential Anglican divine."³

However, historians such as Tyacke, Collinson and Milton in the twentieth century have shown that the classical *via media* interpretation of the Elizabethan Church is anachronistic, reading into the sixteenth century later Anglican beliefs and positions. Far from being a *via media*, the Church was broadly Calvinist in doctrine, of one voice with her Continental counterparts even whilst differing in ceremony and hierarchy. The Church's identity was still being forged and formed, and Puritans, many of whom (but by no means all) were also Presbyterians, were not on the fringe of the Church but very much at its centre and involved in the decisions that were being taken.

Reformed theology is no longer identified squarely with Puritanism, as if it remained essentially the province of marginal groups, divorced from the mainstream of the English Church in this period. It now appears that most of the educated church men

² This was to be the definitive version of Hooker's works until the publication of the *Folger* edition at the end of the twentieth century.

³ Brydon, *Evolving Reputation*, 16.

who held positions of any significance under Elizabeth and James I were fundamentally Reformed in their theological outlook.⁴

One result of this fresh understanding of the sixteenth century was that Hooker's reputation as the defender of the *via media* was called into question. Crudely, if Hooker was defending the Elizabethan Church and this was not *via media*, then he could not be espousing that particular position. Through the work of Atkinson, Kirby and Simut a new image of Hooker emerged, still linking him with the identity of the Church but this time as a champion of the 'Magisterial Reformers' – a man in line with Luther and Calvin whose aim was to defend the Church against the misunderstandings of Reformed theology that lay at the heart of the calls for change. Kirby concludes that "(a)t all levels of the controversy, Hooker presents himself unequivocally as a proponent of both patristic orthodoxy and of the principles of the magisterial Reformation."⁵ Atkinson critiqued Hooker's views regarding the authority of Scripture, reason and tradition and concluded that Hooker is, as his book's title put it, a "Reformed Theologian of the Church of England".⁶ Simut has taken this conclusion a step forward through his study of Hooker's views regarding justification and soteriology, placing him squarely within a Reformed understanding of these doctrines.⁷

Whilst Kirby, Atkinson and Simut are certainly breaking with the prevailing view of Hooker, there is much in fact that binds them to their predecessors. Although they profess to have recovered the true Hooker from amidst the layers of purposeful and

⁴ Voak, *Reformed Theology*, 3.

⁵ Kirby, *Royal Supremacy*, 126.

⁶ Atkinson, *Richard Hooker*.

⁷ C.C. Simut, *The Doctrine of Salvation in the Sermons of Richard Hooker* (Berlin, 2005); *Richard Hooker and His Early Doctrine of Justification: A Study of His Discourse of Justification* (Aldershot, 2005).

accidental misinterpretation, they too attach him to the Church of his day, as apologist and defender. They are therefore the latest in a long-line of supporters and critics who have linked Hooker's theological identity with that of the Church. Brydon, in his study of Hooker's early reputation, points out that such a position had become so embedded that by the end of the seventeenth century Hooker was an abridged emblem for the Church.⁸ In fact, almost from the time of his death there were claims that to speak of Hooker was to speak of the Church – its theology, discipline, and identity. Indeed, over the years the two have become so interwoven that changes in understanding relating to one, has inevitably affected how we understand the other. So, for example, in the Preface to Atkinson's book McGrath could write that now Hooker had been reclaimed for Reformed theology he should be read by present-day Anglican evangelicals who are seeking to shape the Church in a time of conflict and change.

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 vision which Hooker encourages for modern evangelicalism is that of a movement which is deeply grounded in and nourished by Scripture, yet strengthened and sustained by a sense of solidarity within Christian orthodoxy down the ages. It is a deeply attractive and encouraging vision, which will unquestionably contribute to the growing maturity of evangelicalism within the Church of England.⁹

The irony is obvious but the call to heed Hooker, now he has 'changed sides', links this new wave of Hooker scholarship to what has gone before and retains Hooker as an icon for the Church – a flag waver for one's preferred 'orthodoxy'. Atkinson concludes his book by stating:

⁸ Brydon, *Evolving Reputation*, 2.

⁹ A.E. McGrath, 'Foreword', in Atkinson, *Richard Hooker*, vii.

It has been my intention in this book to argue that Hooker's debt to the Reformation was much greater and more profound than has been generally recognized. I have also argued that Hooker's celebrated use of reason, tradition and Scripture was not something unique either to Hooker in particular or to Anglicanism in general. If this is the case then both Hooker's theological position and the modern understanding of the Church of England's true theological position need to be re-examined. It is my hope that this book might act as a small catalyst to that end.¹⁰

When the identity of the Anglican Church is once again in question, Hooker steps back into the spotlight and his views are used to support those claiming an authentic return to "Anglican" values and beliefs.¹¹

But Hooker cannot be both *via media* and a mouthpiece for Calvinism; both High-Church Anglican and a close ally of Luther and a supporter of the two realms theory.

Voak comments,

Either one must accept that only one of these two views is basically correct, and the other a historical misconception, or one must somehow arrive at a compromise that incorporates both these uneasy polarities. It is not surprising therefore, that much recent Hooker criticism should have divided along just these lines. Unfortunately, works adopting a conciliatory approach have tended to agree uncritically with both these views of Hooker, so developing an unacknowledged paradox rather than a satisfactory synthesis.¹²

This difficulty is often addressed by focusing once again upon the nature of the Church Hooker was championing, either from the historical angle or from Hooker's writings, and scholarship then follows the familiar circle of allowing Hooker and the institution to shape each other. But there is an even more fundamental question to be

¹⁰ Atkinson, *Richard Hooker*, 132.

¹¹ For an example of how Hooker is creatively brought into contemporary debate see Stephen Sykes, 'Richard Hooker and the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood', in Janet Martin Soskice (ed.), *After Eve. Women, Theology and the Christian Tradition* (London, 1990), chapter 8.

¹² Voak, *Reformed Theology*, 4.

addressed here: is this reciprocal relationship between Hooker and the Church, espoused by opposing sides in this debate and lying at the crux of most Hooker scholarship, as firm as we are led to believe? Do either the events of his life and those occurring in the wake of his death or his written words, convincingly support this conclusion? The answers to these questions are crucial if we are to critique the present academic impasse.

Hooker's life.

If we consider Covell's defence of Hooker's work, published in 1603, as our primary evidence, then the answer to these questions would seem to be yes.¹³ In this text Covell sought to defend *The Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* against the criticisms levelled against it in the anonymously produced 'A Christian Letter', published in 1599.¹⁴ What is worth noting is that Covell wrote as if Hooker was the voice of the Church, a man defending the establishment against those who sought to claim power and change its identity. This publication suggests that Hooker's identity was, at the time of his death, already interwoven with that of the Church.

Hooker and the Temple.

And this conclusion appears to be further supported when we consider Hooker's career, and especially his term as Master of the Temple Church in London. In his altercations there with the Presbyterian Walter Travers, who was Reader at the Temple Church when Hooker took up office, Hooker appears to articulate the Church's position against those who sought further reformation. There are obvious parallels here with the wider political scene, where calls for reform were increasingly

¹³ William Covell, *A Just and Temperate Defence of the Five Books of Ecclesiastical Policie: written by M. Richard Hooker* (London, 1603).

¹⁴ *Christian Letter*.

being voiced and initial desires to change the Church from within were evolving for some into calls for separation. The clash between Hooker and Travers presents a microcosm of the problems facing a Church in which a whole spectrum of views was represented. In order to understand this dispute and the implications for Hooker, it is essential to appreciate the surrounding historical context.

In the last quarter of the sixteenth century the Church of England was attempting to establish a state of equilibrium after the tempestuous events of the previous decades in which Protestantism and Roman Catholicism had fought for primacy as the throne changed hands. The reinstatement of Protestantism under Elizabeth meant a return from exile for those who had fled to the Continent, but this was not a time of re-establishing Protestant norms but rather a period of flux as the theological and ecclesiastical implications of the English Reformation began to be felt in greater intensity. A third generation of reformers were now in power on the Continent and with them came fresh perspectives and an even more detailed theological system. In the midst of this the English Church, late to the reformation table, was seeking its own identity. Elizabeth's rise to power did not quell but rather fuelled the calls for further change, as the jostling for authority and influence began in earnest.

Classically the picture was painted of a *via media* Church holding out against extreme Puritan dissidents, themselves only on the fringes of the Church, who wished to purify the Church doctrinally and establish a Genevan style discipline. The truth we now know is somewhat less clear-cut. The Church had not already acquired any such status as *via media* and was in all probability doctrinally aligned with a broad Calvinist consensus. Puritanism came in various shades and it is certain that many Puritans

were moderate and very much part of the Church, and involved in its governance. Not all Puritans were Presbyterians – that is those who sought a different system of Church order and worship – but all Presbyterians were Puritans – seeing themselves as the godly within a fallen and sinful world and Church.

One of Elizabeth's first acts was to pass legislation securing her position as the Supreme Governor of the Church (The Act of Supremacy 1559) together with the Act of Uniformity (1559) which, amongst other things, made church attendance compulsory on Sundays and holy days, with the payment of a fine being levied against anyone failing to do so. A modified Prayer Book was to be used in all Churches; ministers were required to wear vestments and the use of wafer bread at Holy Communion was to be retained.

During the following decade the Presbyterian platform began to be more fully articulated, particularly in the ministry of Thomas Cartwright who voiced the desire and need for the Church, now doctrinally expunged of Roman Catholic superstition, to be further cleansed by the removal of all Roman Catholic forms of worship and hierarchy. As ministers rebelled against the Act of Uniformity and were removed from their parishes, the movement gathered momentum.

Cartwright had been forced to flee to the Continent but in 1572 matters came to a head in his absence, with the Admonition to Parliament. This document, the work of John Field and Thomas Wilcox, was an "attack on the very foundations of the

Elizabethan church so extreme as to make it a seditious libel; the work was presently denounced by royal proclamation and its authors imprisoned in Newgate.”¹⁵

If the Church had hoped that this was an end to the matter then they were very much mistaken. John Whitgift,¹⁶ who had had altercations with Cartwright whilst they were both in appointments at Cambridge, published a response to the Admonition and from his teaching post in Geneva Cartwright replied. Thus was launched a series of publications between the two men that exposed how great the gulf was within the Elizabethan Church. In the midst of this a second admonition was published (1574) and although many moderate Puritans were shocked and appalled by the viciousness of these challenges, Cartwright and men like him had many supporters and champions. The battle for the centre ground within the Church was well under-way.

And there at its hub was Walter Travers. A Presbyterian, Travers had been a senior fellow at Trinity College Cambridge but under Whitgift he had been forced to leave due to his non-conformist views. He spent most of the 1570s in Geneva, a close colleague of Beza and Cartwright, but towards the end of the decade he was ordained, Dutch-style, in Antwerp and led a congregation there that modelled the Presbyterian style of government and worship.

He returned to London in 1580 and with the support of Lord Burghley he attained the position of Reader at the Temple Church, hoping that upon the death of the then frail

15 Patrick Collinson, 'Cartwright, Thomas (1534/5–1603)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4820>, accessed 24 Feb 2009]

¹⁶ John Whitgift 1530-1604, appointed Archbishop of Canterbury 1583. Previously Master of Pembroke Hall (1567), Trinity College, (1570) Dean of Lincoln (1571) and Bishop of Worcester (1577). His public challenge of Cartwright brought him to the notice of Elizabeth I and ultimately led to his appointment as Archbishop.

Master, Richard Alvey, he would succeed to the appointment. Whitgift's rise to Archbishop of Canterbury in 1583 put a stop to that. In 1584 on the death of Alvey, Whitgift opposed Travers' appointment and instead proposed Nicholas Bond, who was a chaplain to the Queen.

Sisson describes Hooker's appointment at the Temple as "an announcement that battle was to be joined. Walter Travers and his kinsman by marriage Richard Hooker now stood forth in the lists, the Hector and the Achilles of the war of the Churches."¹⁷ He depicts the conflict as a "prelude to the launching of the main assault in the House of Commons and in Hooker's great treatise"¹⁸ and sees the selection of Hooker as a careful ploy on the part of Whitgift and Sandys.¹⁹ But the evidence does not support this view. There is nothing to suggest that Sandys played any part, even though Walton refers to him as putting Hooker's name forward at a dinner party,²⁰ but what is clear is that Hooker was not Whitgift's first choice; he appears to have been a compromise candidate, acceptable to both sides. Perhaps he was seen as a moderate who would keep the peace whilst the real business went on elsewhere. If so, then both sides were to have misjudged Hooker – a mistake that has been repeated many times since.

Hooker and Travers went to war almost immediately and over the next two years their disagreements were very much in the public eye as they fought each other both in the pulpit and in private. Hooker would preach in the morning, it was said, and Travers

¹⁷ C.J. Sisson, *The Judicious Marriage of Mr. Hooker and the Birth of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* (Cambridge, 1940), 5.

¹⁸ Sisson, *Judicious Marriage*, 6.

¹⁹ Edwin Sandys was firstly Bishop of Worcester and London and then Archbishop of York. He was the father of Hooker's close friend Edwin, who was an MP and a leading figure in the fight against Puritanism in the House of Commons.

²⁰ Walton, 'Life', 26.

would seek to challenge and readdress the issues in the afternoon. Some seventy years later Fuller would famously describe this exchange as Hooker preaching pure Canterbury and Travers pure Geneva.²¹ The eventual removal of Travers from his office of Reader by Whitgift would seem to support this view.

Travers did not leave the Temple without a fight. He made a supplication to the Privy Council and this, together with Hooker's reply and Whitgift's judgment, have survived.²² This iconic battle, in which Hooker and Whitgift fought together against Travers and Presbyterianism has set the scene for all subsequent interpretations of Hooker whether as a *via media* figure or as, more generally, a champion of the Church. However, a careful reading of these documents raises questions as to whether this episode can actually be used to support the notion of Hooker as a mouthpiece for the Church.

Hooker and Travers.

The sermons which gave rise to the arguments between the two men were not published at the time, but four of them were printed in 1612, and such was the memory of this controversy that the *Justification* sermon,²³ one of those which undoubtedly fuelled the fire, was in such demand that it was reprinted the following year. When the conflict between the two men showed no sign of being resolved or abating Whitgift stepped in and silenced Travers. Deprived of his right to preach and minister, Travers appealed to the Privy Council and Hooker replied to the allegations in a written statement addressed to the Archbishop.²⁴

²¹ Thomas Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England* J Freeman (ed.), (London, 1952), 133.

²² *Supplication, Answer, Archbishops Judgment.*

²³ *Justification.*

²⁴ *Supplication, Answer.*

What becomes immediately apparent when reading Travers' supplication is that the source of antagonism between the two men was not their differing views regarding discipline. It was to be expected that Hooker and Travers would not see eye to eye – here were two men who represented differing positions regarding the governance and ceremonies of the Church, of which they were both none the less full members. So it is surprising that what concerned Travers was not what Hooker wore or how he conducted services but rather his understanding of key doctrinal points. In his supplication Travers complained that he “discovered sondrie unsound matters in his doctrine (as many of his sermons tasted of some sower leaven or other)”²⁵ but these were of the most part small and could be overlooked. However, when Hooker spoke about his views on predestination Travers thought he was unscriptural, “he had taught certen things concerning predestination, otherwise than the word of god doeth, as it is understood by all the churches professing the gospel”²⁶. When he had challenged Hooker as to the source of his authority for his views, he states that Hooker answered, “his best auctor was his owne reason.”²⁷ Travers is clearly scandalised. Hooker's sermon, dealing with assurance,²⁸ left Travers in no doubt that Hooker's theology was dangerous. He heard Hooker referring to the assurance given by the senses as being greater than that provided for by faith. But what really alarmed Travers was Hooker's beliefs regarding Roman Catholics. He taught, “that the Church of Rome is a true Church of Christ, and a sanctified church” although not pure and perfect and that “he dowed not but that thowsands of the fathers which lyved and died in the superstitions

²⁵ *Supplication*, 198.

²⁶ *Ibid.*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*.

²⁸ *Certaintie*.

of that church, were saved because of their ignorance which excused them”.²⁹ Travers was outraged and gives a detailed account of the sermon and the offending doctrine.

It is perhaps important to note that in the text of the *Justification* sermon as we now have it, Hooker does not use the words “and died”, which caused Travers so much concern, but he does state quite clearly that God’s mercy was a result of their ignorance as to the popish superstitions they adhered to, rather than any actual acknowledgement and repentance of the same, “God I doubt not was mercifull to save thowsandes of them though they lyved in popish supersticions in asmuche as they synned ignorauntly.”³⁰ Whether Hooker added the words “and died” during the sermon is unknown, and MacCulloch comments that “(i)t is possible that Hooker did not in fact take this fatal step outside the bounds of Elizabethan orthodoxy, but that is certainly what Travers heard him as saying.”³¹

Hooker’s *Answer* addressed directly to Whitgift rather than the Privy Council, seeks to put the record straight.³² He begins, not by answering the doctrinal points, but by looking back at the way in which he and Travers began their professional relationship. Although Travers stated that he held no personal grudge against Hooker for his appointment, and Hooker does not challenge that, he does state that they disagreed almost immediately upon a procedural point (Travers had, in true Presbyterian fashion, wanted the congregation to accede to Hooker’s appointment before Hooker began to preach) and that he also criticised him for mentioning Bishops when he prayed and kneeling to receive communion, amongst other things. But this was surely

²⁹ *Supplication*, 200.

³⁰ *Justification*, 118.

³¹ MacCulloch, ‘Hooker’s Reputation’, 776.

³² *Answer*, 227-257.

to be expected and is not a point that Travers makes any use of. However, for Hooker this revealed that Travers was already set against him.

But what if in thend it be founde that he judgeth my wordes, as they do colours which looke upon them with greene spectacles and thinke that which they see is grene? When indeed that is greene whereby they see.³³

Hooker then moves onto the specific allegations. He begins with a reference to his sermon at St. Paul's Cross, in 1581 where he preached on the subject of predestination before his appointment as Master.³⁴ Hooker makes use of both the place and the audience as part of his defence. If he were preaching unsound doctrine, would he really do it in such a public place and in front of the Bishop of London? In fact, he comments, the Bishop (John Elmer) made no objection to what was said.³⁵ Later on he gives a more theological defence, again asserting his points and claiming their orthodoxy. On both assurance and his arguments about Roman Catholicism Hooker does not seem to waver from the sermons he preached, simply restating his points and challenging Travers' own understanding.

Regarding assurance, Hooker is not easy to follow without a detailed study but the thrust of his argument is that the promises of God are, in themselves, more certain than anything we can see or experience, but our inner assurance of those promises is a different matter and because of that God gives us arguments from "sensible experience".³⁶ We trust the evidence, he says, and challenges Travers to refute him.

³³ Ibid., 235.

³⁴ Travers does not mention this sermon directly but Hooker obviously thinks it is being referred to. Delivered in 1581, the text is lost to us but it is referred to by Walton and cited as evidence of Hooker's unreformed theology. Walton, 'Life', 23.

³⁵ *Answer*, 236.

³⁶ Ibid., 236. For a fuller discussion of the *Certainitie* sermon, see chapter three.

I taughte as he hym self I truste woulde not denye that the thinges which God doth promys in his worde are surer unto us then in any thinge we touch handle or see, but are we so sure and certeyne of them? ³⁷

Hooker is at pains to show that he and Travers are saying the same things whilst simultaneously holding to his original position, to which Travers took exception. Whilst Travers seeks to drive a wedge between his own doctrine and Hooker's, Hooker represents himself as misunderstood by Travers, claiming a doctrinal agreement between them that Travers fails to appreciate.

On the subject of Roman Catholics, Hooker scoffs at Travers' criticism and asserts that he merely set out the truth as to both the areas of agreement and disagreement – the latter of which is crucial. As regards the salvation of Roman Catholics, he asserts that once people realise they were “spoken in a sermon the greatest part of whereof was againste poperye, they will hardly be able to decerne howe christianitye should herewith be so grievously shaken.” ³⁸ He reaffirms his theology, “I doubt not but god was mercifull to save thowsandes of our fathers lyvinge heretofore in popishe supersticions in asmuche as they sinned ignorauntly”³⁹ and sees nothing in it that could lead to Travers' accusations. We note however that the words ‘dying in the faith’ do not occur, but neither does Hooker refute the point directly.

The *Folger* edition of Hooker's works brought together various manuscripts, both those drawn up by Whitgift's office (summarising the points of the argument) and also details of Whitgift's decision as to the points of doctrine, together with various

³⁷ Ibid..

³⁸ Ibid., 251.

³⁹ Ibid..

letters from the time.⁴⁰ What is of importance here is the summary of Whitgift's judgment, as used by Strype and later added to the 1705 edition of Walton's *Life*. The text begins by saying, "At length did the Archbishop of Canterbury discreetly and warily correct and moderate ... between them both."⁴¹ Whitgift answers the summarised points, and his comments throw doubt upon whether his support of Hooker is as fulsome as his removal of Travers suggests.

It is noticeable that although Hooker's patron the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, intervened against Travers on Hooker's behalf, he did not give decisive backing to Hooker's arguments. He might heartily dislike Puritans like Travers who did not give bishops the respect that they deserved, but he was not going to be led out of the doctrinal consensus that he shared with moderate Puritanism.⁴²

The summary of Whitgift's judgment is not easy to decipher and makes a definite conclusion difficult to reach. Maybe this is not accidental. It is true that nowhere does he straightforwardly say that Travers is wrong and Hooker is right, even though the removal of Travers may lead to that conclusion. What is noteworthy is that he appears to 'correct' Hooker's choice of words and adds 'clarification' to the points in Hooker's sermon that could lead to problems.

Not *Papists*, but our *Fathers*. Nor they *All*, but *Many* of them. Nor living and dying *Papists*, but living in *Popish Superstitions*. Nor simply *might*, but *might, by the Mercy of God*, be saved. Ignorance did not excuse the Fault, to make it no Fault; But the less their Fault was, in respect of Ignorance, the more Hope we have, that God was merciful to them.

And Papists overthrow the Foundation of Faith, both by their Doctrine of Merit, and otherwise many ways. So that if they have, as their Errors deserve, I do not see how they should be saved.⁴³

⁴⁰ See *Folger V*.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 288.

⁴² MacCulloch, 'Hooker's Reputation', 776.

⁴³ *Archbishops Judgment*, 288.

Whitgift makes a distinction between Papists and those who merely lived under popish superstition, with only the latter having the possibility of being ‘our Fathers’. He is quick to underline that ignorance could not save them but only resulted in a lessening of their fault, which meant that they had more reason to hope for mercy. Is Whitgift’s understanding entirely in line with Hooker’s more subtle, and possibly radical, views? Suffice to say here that Whitgift was at pains to set out exactly how Hooker’s sermon *should* be understood but the door is left open as to whether Hooker was in agreement or not with his Archbishop’s interpretation.

The real outcome of this incident is puzzling. How much did Hooker agree with Whitgift’s understanding? Had Travers misunderstood Hooker? Is this a political rather than a theological decision? For Travers, Hooker’s doctrine was unorthodox, if not downright heretical. For Whitgift, there was obviously the need to read Hooker’s words in a certain light and this interpretation actually brings Hooker in line with Travers’ own views, which leads us to wonder exactly why Travers was removed? Whitgift has to work hard at presenting Hooker’s arguments as the Church’s and on the face of it Hooker appears at times to be presenting a theology that is very much his own. Bauckham’s comments are pertinent,

(W)hen Hooker opposes Travers’ presbyterianising policy at the Temple he adopted an Anglican position over against Travers’ Presbyterian views, but when they also quarrelled...over Calvinist doctrine, they no longer represented the conflict of Anglican and Puritan. Here Travers’ position was simply Calvinist and Hooker’s simply his own.⁴⁴

This first public reaction to Hooker, both from Travers and Whitgift, does not easily lead to a categorisation of Hooker’s thought and neither does it provide irrefutable

⁴⁴ Richard Bauckham, ‘Hooker, Travers and the Church of Rome in the 1580s’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 29 (1978), 41.

evidence that Hooker was speaking for or on behalf of the Church. The episode is perplexing, raising more questions as to Hooker's theological position and his relationship with those in power.

Beyond the Temple: the *Lawes* and the Church.

If Hooker had hoped for high office as a result of his ministry at the Temple then he was disappointed. He left his position as Master in 1591, having been appointed as sub-dean at Salisbury and also granted a living at Boscombe, although the evidence is that he spent his time mainly at his father-in-law's house in London. Whether he left the Temple in order to begin or to continue his writing of the *Lawes* is unclear.

Collinson has him poetically embarking upon the *Lawes* in London, "(W)e shall now leave Hooker in peace to write Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity in the calm of the study in his father-in-law's London mansion".⁴⁵ In any event, the Preface and first four chapters were printed in 1593. Initially Hooker had been unable to find a willing publisher and so it was his close friend and former pupil Edwin Sandys who sponsored the printing by Hooker's cousin, John Windet.⁴⁶

Of The Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity has become the key text in the interpretation of Hooker as the defender of the Church. It is not only the content of the *Lawes* that has led to this conclusion but also its timing and the array of figures who have both supported and opposed it. In the next section the focus will be upon the publication of the text and the prominent figures involved.

⁴⁵ Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London, Cape, 1967), 161.

⁴⁶ Sir Edwin Sandys 1561-1629. The son of the Archbishop of York, a former pupil of Hooker's at Corpus Christi, Oxford and a member of Parliament- although there is some confusion as to whether it was Edwin or his cousin, Miles, who sat in the 1586 session it was almost certainly Edwin who sat in the Parliament of 1593. A conservative with regard to his religious leanings, he was a close ally of both Burghley and his son in the war against puritans and separatists.

Timing and support.

The timing of the *Lawes*, together with the identity of Hooker's supporters and friends, have led to the view that Hooker was acting as a defender of the Church either explicitly or implicitly at the behest of those in power, thus linking him irrevocably with it.

The publication of the first part of the *Lawes* coincided with a crucial period of debate and legislation within Parliament, as action was first proposed and then taken against those who sought to separate from the Church and challenge its authority. The outcome was not a foregone conclusion; many Puritans were concerned as to the breadth and effect of the proposed legislation, which they felt could hurt those calling for more moderate reforms as well as those who were intentionally causing schism. The early months of 1593 were a time of great political debate and lobbying and it was against this backdrop that Hooker's *Lawes* was published.

The timing of publication may well have been a coincidence, but in light of the speed of printing and the array of supporters and colleagues that surrounded it, that would seem unlikely. At the outset Hooker made it clear that the *Lawes* was to consist of eight books and yet it was only the first half of the text that was ready and released for publication in 1593. Again, it could be that Hooker had always planned to release the book in instalments but his note to the reader suggests that contemporary events had persuaded him to do so rather than any preconceived plan.

I have for some causes (gentle Reader) thought it at this time more fit to let goe these first foure bookes by themselves, then to stay both them and the rest, till the whole might together be published. Such generalities of the cause in question as here are

handles, it will perhaps not amisse to consider apart, as by way of introduction unto the bookes that are to followe concerning particulars.⁴⁷

Hooker does not elaborate as to the precise nature of “some causes” but the rising political temperature would have been all too evident as the calls for the reform of the Church reached new levels.

The initial crisis precipitated by the Admonition to Parliament was over but the question of reform was still very much on the ecclesiastical stage. The threat from Rome had sufficiently abated during the first decade of Elizabeth’s reign to allow both sides to consolidate their own, differing viewpoints and to push forward with their own agenda. Whereas the call had previously been for a thorough and complete reform of the Church in line with Genevan discipline, there was an increasing element who no longer saw the Church as reformable and who sought separation from the establishment, so as to ensure a complete purging of all that corrupted it. Separatists such as Henry Barrow had attracted a vocal following, not muted by his lengthy imprisonment for his refusal to abide by the Act of Uniformity (which he said was never intended to apply to such as him but was rather an anti-Roman measure). During his time in prison he was still able to address his supporters and critics alike. The threat to the Church was once again evident.

In response to this danger Members of Parliament proposed measures to deal with the situation. In March 1593 Miles Sandys, Edwin’s uncle, (or possibly Edwin himself, the evidence is unclear) proposed new legislation to Parliament.⁴⁸ The suggestion was

⁴⁷ *Lawes*, I.345. See also the introduction to the volume for a detailed discussion of the publication.

⁴⁸ There is some confusion as to whether it was Miles or Edwin who placed this proposal before Parliament. Collinson favours Miles but Rabb states that it was in the 1593 session that Edwin “made his first known interventions in debates, strongly supporting government efforts to repress the

that a proposed Act “against popish recusants should be extended to cover puritan sectaries, the Brownists and Barrowists”.⁴⁹ The proposal was not embraced with open arms, as many were uneasy about the possible effect of such legislation on non-separatist Puritans.

The publication of the first part of the *Lawes* coincided with the introduction of this legislation into Parliament. The printing was fast and furious, only six weeks from beginning to end, which must have meant the use of a third press at some point so that on the 13th of March Hooker was able to send a copy to Lord Burghley, a significant figure in the fight against separatism. In fact the 13th of March was “the very day that Miles Sandys took the initiative in the Commons”,⁵⁰ that led to the Elizabethan Conventicle Act. Whether or not the *Lawes* played any part in the events of the subsequent months is unknown but in April the public execution of Barrow and Greenwood took place, followed in May by John Penry, the Welsh preacher and one of the likely authors of the Marprelate tracts. “By then “An Act to retain the Queen’s subjects in obedience” had gained the royal assent. This was in one respect a more draconian law than those against Catholic recusants, since it provided, as the latter did not, for banishment from the realm.”⁵¹ The centre ground was slowly and gradually being grasped by those who resisted the call for reform – and amongst them stood Richard Hooker.

‘seditious sectaries’ known as Brownists and Barrowists.” T. K. Rabb, ‘Sandys, Sir Edwin (1561–1629)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24650, accessed 18 March 2009] Whichever man it was, there is evidence that Edwin fully supported the legislation.

⁴⁹ Patrick Collinson, ‘Hooker and the Elizabethan Establishment’, in A.S. McGrade (ed.), *Richard Hooker and the Construction of the Christian Community* (Tempe, Az., 1997), 163.

⁵⁰ Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 165.

⁵¹ Collinson, ‘Elizabethan Establishment’, 163.

Hooker's association with those behind the legislation, and not least with Whitgift, has played a crucial part in the image of him as defender of the Church. His close group of friends, with whom we know he discussed the *Lawes* and whose comments helped to shape the text, included Edwin Sandys, George Cranmer and John Spenser – all Corpus Christi men who shared Hooker's concern for the Church and who were involved to some extent in standing against the calls for reform. Whilst these men were certainly moving amongst those in power, through family or university connections, they were not themselves immensely influential. Their support of Hooker, whilst showing him as standing with those who favoured the *status quo*, does not confer upon him any official position of Church apologist. It could however imply that Hooker may have assumed that mantle for himself with the encouragement of his friends.

Whilst the linking of Hooker with these men begins to shape his image it pales into insignificance when placed alongside Hooker's attachment to Archbishop Whitgift, who became his patron. The question has often been posed as to how involved Whitgift was with the *Lawes*. Was Hooker articulating the Archbishop's own position, with his knowledge, blessing and direction? Book V, published in 1595, certainly seems to provide support for this. Not only was the edition dedicated to Whitgift but it also appears to continue the Archbishop's exchange with Cartwright. Hooker addresses Thomas Cartwright's points directly, even quoting him at length. But nowhere, either openly or by implication does Hooker state that he is acting on behalf of the Church in any official capacity. The dedication of the book to Whitgift does not of itself mean that the Archbishop had called for its publication.

This question as to how much Hooker was acting on Whitgift's behalf or at his request has been the subject of discussion for many years. What interests were actively involved in the publication can only be a matter of surmise. Many years later the Court of Chancery would be told about the "eminent persons whom the cause did most especially concern," who allegedly "hastened the enterprise."⁵² However, as we have noted and Collinson comments, Hooker had found it hard to engage a publisher and had needed Sandys to provide the financial backing required for printing the text. Such a fact does not easily lead to the conclusion that arguably the most powerful man in the Church had ordered its publication. And neither does the fact that Hooker did not, once again, receive any high office in recognition of his work despite the fact that Whitgift was indeed Hooker's patron and the dedicatee of the *Lawes*.

The facts are ambiguous, capable of being read in several ways. The timing of the *Lawes* and the array of supporters standing in the shadows do not, on closer scrutiny, provide evidence for Hooker being an official champion of the Church, even though the facts suggest that Hooker in some way wished to play a part in the debate.

Without further proof Hooker's relationship with the Church is still open to question.

The Christian Letter: a reactions to the Lawes.

It is not only Hooker's supporters who are important in this debate but also his opponents. If Hooker is the Church's champion and defender then his words will incur the wrath of those who are seeking to attack and change the institution. And it is here that the only written reaction to Hooker's *Lawes* becomes significant. *The Christian Letter*, published anonymously in 1599, attacked the *Lawes* and it is this

⁵² Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 165.

text that has been used to strengthen the image of Hooker as the man who protected the Church. Although published anonymously *The Christian Letter* states that it is from “certaine English Protestantes, unfayned favourers of the present state of religion, authorized and professed in England”⁵³ and classically the episode was described as the work of a Puritan zealot; someone on the fringe of the Church who was challenging the authority and *via media* stance of those in power, those for whom Hooker spoke. Affirming this position, the *Folger* editor, John Booty, in line with the Edition’s view that Hooker was a *via media* Anglican seeking to defend the Church from the excesses of Rome and Geneva alike, comments that the tract was published “without official permission by Richard Schilders....whom we assume to have been a Calvinist – he was reputedly a member of the “French Church” (and) was famed as a printer of Puritan tracts”.⁵⁴ The argument implies that such a man could not be printing anything that came from a supporter of the Church and so the claim of loyalty is feigned. However, this view is no longer supportable if we accept that there was a general Calvinist consensus, shared by Puritans and non-Puritans alike, and that the former were very much a part of the Church and not on its fringe. Schilders’ Calvinist sympathies would not have prevented him from supporting the Church nor printing tracts from those doctrinally loyal to the establishment.

This view is further compounded when we turn to the likely author of the *Christian Letter*. Various names have been put forward and although he denied it when asked, the most likely person responsible is Andrew Willet. Booty acknowledges that Willet is the name that is “most persistent and intriguing”.⁵⁵ Although Willet denied involvement “(m)any of the accusations of novelty made against Hooker by these

⁵³ *Christian Letter*, 6.

⁵⁴ John Booty, ‘Introduction’, *Folger* IV.xxv.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, xix.

authors were repeated by Willet in a series of tracts he published in the years 1603-5.⁵⁶ In Milton's view the authors "may well have included Willet himself."⁵⁷ Peter Lake merely accepts Willet's authorship⁵⁸ and MacCulloch writes that "we can be reasonably certain that it was either exclusively or mainly the work of Andrew Willet."⁵⁹

If Willet is the author, or at least one of the authors, then this episode becomes more complex. Far from being a radical, Willet was a man who genuinely supported the Church, and whilst desiring some changes, he was a loyal and moderate man who was very much part of the establishment. For him to criticise Hooker sheds quite a different light upon both the man and the *Lawes*. Booty describes Willet as "Calvinist in theology, strongly anti-Roman Catholic, and a loyal member of the Church of England."⁶⁰ Whether he was a Puritan is disputed, he says, but as we have noted neither his Calvinist nor Puritan stance separate him from the centre ground of the Church to which he was loyal. In fact Willet is described not as an opponent of the Church but as a moderate who genuinely saw a danger in Hooker's views. Brydon comments that Willet's attack is "an important landmark" since although he was Calvinist, anti-Roman and desired further reform, he "was also a loyal conformist. He remained committed to episcopacy and enthusiastically endorsed Whitgift's defence of the national Church against Presbyterians."⁶¹ He could never be described as a fringe-zealot whose doctrines separated him from the mainstream.

⁵⁶ Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought 1600-1640* (Cambridge, 1995), 17.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterians and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London, 1988), 187.

⁵⁹ MacCulloch, 'Hooker's Reputation', 782.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Brydon, *Evolving Reputation*, 23

Willet was a classic example of the ‘moderate Puritan’...(He) was no Presbyterian or nonconformist radical...A proponent of certain moderate forms of further reformation...all the while consistently presenting himself as the spokesman for a variously construed middle ground.⁶²

So what exactly did Willet find offensive about the *Lawes*? If he was looking for some reforms of the Church’s practice then it could be expected that his criticisms lay in that area. However, *A Christian Letter* challenges Hooker not on his ecclesiological preferences but rather his doctrinal stance. Willet sought to drive a wedge between Hooker’s beliefs and the canon of the Church as contained in the thirty-nine articles, the standard of orthodox belief. The basic premise was that the *Lawes* “seeme to overthrowe the foundation of Christian Religion”⁶³, an extremely serious allegation in the late sixteenth century. To cast doubt upon Hooker’s allegiance to the established faith of the Church represented a grave and potentially fatal challenge.

It is in the light of Willet’s support for Whitgift and his moderate Puritan stance that his doctrinal attack upon the *Lawes* is so significant. Willet challenges Hooker in almost every area: his understanding of the deity of Jesus, the relationship of reason and Scripture, predestination and free will, faith and works, the status of the Church of Rome as well as the sacraments. He is concerned about Hooker’s views regarding preaching, as well as his lack of reverence for Calvin, and he centres his attack upon Hooker’s purported deviance from the thirty-nine articles. Such a challenge was highly charged – even in the dispute between Whitgift and Cartwright both men used to their advantage their doctrinal consensus as shown by their allegiance to the thirty-nine articles.

⁶² Peter Lake, ‘Business as Usual? The Immediate Reception of Hooker’s Ecclesiastical Polity’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52(3) (2001) 457.

⁶³ *Christian Letter*, 6.

(B)oth Cartwright and Whitgift revealed a common view of the protestant middle ground for which they were fighting and showed...that they were seeking to conduct that struggle through the polemical manipulation of what remained a set of essentially shared assumptions. Indeed, that struggle was conducted within what amounted to a formal doctrinal consensus between the two sides.⁶⁴

Thus Willet's accusation is no trivial challenge. *A Christian Letter* points out that the *Lawes* is a subtle and therefore more dangerous attack, allowing Roman theology into the Church through devious means. It is Willet's contention that Hooker's support for the established Church is simply a smokescreen that allows him to introduce ideas that are, when read carefully, actually overthrowing the Church.

Howbeit sometimes goodlie promises are meere formal, and great offers serve onely to hoodwinke such as meane well...it seemed unto us that covertlie and underhand you did bend all your skill and force against the present state of our English Church: and by colour of defending the discipline and gouvernement thereof, to make questionable and bring in contempt the doctrine and faith it selfe...And may wee not trulie say, that under the shewe of inveighing against Puritanes, the chiefest pointes of popish blasphemie, are many times and in many places, by divers men not obscurlie broached.⁶⁵

The gauntlet was thus laid down: Hooker must explain himself in simple words and reassure all those who are concerned as to his orthodoxy.

We thought it therefore our parte, in regarde of our dutie to the Church, and most agreeing to charitie both for your credit and our ease, in all christian love to intreat you, that as you tender the good estate of Christes church among us, and of thousands converted to the gospel, you would in like publicke manner (but plainly and directlie) shew unto us and all English Protestantes, your owne true meaning, and how your wordes in divers things doe agree with the doctrine established among us.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans*, 24.

⁶⁵ *Christian Letter*, 6-7.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

Willet continued this attack upon Hooker's theology, as Brydon pointed out, even after Hooker's death and Willet's popularity as an author meant that his "works served to mould the public opinion that he (Hooker) was not a sincere proponent of the Reformation."⁶⁷ Nor, implicitly, of the Church in England.

Hooker did begin the job of defending himself and he did not for one moment accept the criticisms made against him. As far as he was concerned he had not deviated in any way from the theologically acceptable parameters of the Reformed Church. The defence is, however, in note form and his early death meant that it was never published. These notes are "as intimate and personal a view of Hooker as we shall ever obtain. So personal are they that Keble was reluctant to print them and omitted some of the most revealing."⁶⁸ The basis of Hooker's defence was twofold: firstly, that his own position had been misunderstood and misrepresented and secondly that the doctrinal understanding of the *Christian Letter's* author was defective.

Hooker understood the criticisms made against him perfectly:

(T)hey saw very great presumptions whereby <to suspect me> I might be taken for a close enemy to the faith and doctrine of this church, in shew a maintainer of the government of Gods house, indeed an incendiarie, one set to fier the house of God for other mens better opportunities to rifle it.⁶⁹

He questions the sincerity of their professed Christian love towards him, that they should "set abroad their suspitions" even though "it might be they mistooke my

⁶⁷ Brydon, *Evolving Reputationr*, 24.

⁶⁸ Booty, *Introduction, Folger IV*. xxviii.

⁶⁹ *Christian Letter*, 7.

meaning”⁷⁰ but even so he begins to make a case against the *Letter* and in defence of himself.

One of Hooker’s first points of response is in relation to the view that Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation, using Article 6 to bring home the point.

Hooker immediately begins to show the inherent contradictions of the argument,

They are matters of salvation I think which you handle in this booke. If therefore determinable only by scripture, why presse you <upon> me so often with humane authorities? Why alleage you the Articles of religion as the voice of the Church against me?⁷¹

As in the *Lawes*, Hooker is keen to show the internal inconsistency of his opponent’s argument, and he goes on to comment that it is Willet’s and not his own beliefs that are heretical,

A doctrine which would well have pleased Caligula Nero and such other monsters to heare. Had thapostles taught this it might have advanced them happily to honor. The contrary doctrine hath cost many saincts and martyrs their lives.⁷²

Whether Hooker is right or not is a different question, but it is obviously his view that he has been misunderstood and that Willet’s own theology is in error. It is this view that is echoed by present day scholars who seek to reclaim Hooker as a champion for the Church, but this time in line with the magisterial reformers. An attack from a moderate Puritan, obviously a follower of Calvin, on the face of it casts doubt upon Hooker’s position but Kirby argues that it is Hooker who interprets and understands Reformed theology correctly and not his opponents and that Hooker corrects their faulty theology and shows his own orthodox position in so doing. Such an

⁷⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁷¹ Ibid., 13.

⁷² Ibid..

interpretation of this event would once again place Hooker firmly in the position of Church apologist – both regarding doctrine and discipline. “At all levels of the controversy, Hooker presents himself unequivocally as a proponent of both patristic orthodoxy and of the principles of the magisterial reformation.”⁷³

This conclusion is, however, problematic, and Kirby’s certainty questionable. It is noticeable that, in the face of such a direct attack, there was no immediate support for Hooker from those in power. To accept this interpretation also means ignoring the fact that this is the second time Hooker has been challenged as to his doctrinal beliefs, and each time the accuser has been a stalwart member of the Church. Hooker’s notes show a lively and caustic mind, not at all in line with Walton’s quiet and judicial Hooker, but otherwise his defence in those notes adds little save for a reiteration of his original views.⁷⁴

However, if we accept Willet’s challenge as having validity, then suddenly Hooker is no longer a spokesman for the Church but rather a man who is seeking to undermine and challenge the Church’s theological positioning through clever rhetoric and deceptive argument. Such a view would seem at odds with all we have come to believe about Hooker and for him to be stepping so obviously outside of the doctrinal position of the Church and yet seeking to defend its practices would seem incongruous. This episode is certainly not straightforward and does not lead to an incontrovertible conclusion. In short, it raises more questions than it answers.

⁷³ See Kirby, *Royal Supremacy*, 126.

⁷⁴ Calling his opponent an “ignorant asse” *Christian Letter*, 22 and 42 and commenting, “What bedlam would ask such a question?” *Ibid.*, 30.

Beyond death.

Hooker's sudden death in November 1600 meant that he was never able publicly to defend himself against the allegations contained in the *Christian Letter*, but three years later William Covell wrote and published the defence Hooker had been unable to complete. Entitled '*A just and temperate defence of the five books of ecclesiastical policy written by M. Richard Hooker,*' he applauded Hooker's temperateness as well as defending his views but a close reading of the defence shows that Covell, like many who would champion Hooker in the years ahead, had his own agenda.

On the face of it Covell was very much an establishment figure. As chaplain to Richard Bancroft he was a close ally and confidante of the man who would succeed Whitgift as Archbishop of Canterbury only a year later. This powerful relationship gave credence to Covell's claim that the defence was published 'by authority.' But Bancroft is not the only influential figure hovering in the shadows: the defence was licensed for publication by no less a man than John Buckeridge, Whitgift's chaplain and was dedicated to the then Archbishop. At first glance Hooker's position as spokesman for the Church seems to be without question.

Covell was not, however, a man fighting to retain the *status quo*. Instead, he was part of a group who were seeking to distance themselves from the Reformed movement in Europe, both as regards discipline and also in some areas of doctrine. Buckeridge has been described "a prime representative of a new element in the establishment of the English Church."⁷⁵ Exactly how to describe this group has been a source of discussion, but to take the most popular suggestion we shall call them 'avant-garde

⁷⁵ MacCulloch, 'Richard Hooker's Reputation', 785.

conformists'. Whatever the terminology, the result is the same – this was a group who were looking to move the Church a step away from its continental counterparts. In effect these men were precursors of Laud, and the fact that they supported Hooker has obvious implications and makes this first public defence of his work significant.

Hooker was chosen as an ally for those who did not wish to be closely associated with Continental Calvinist theology and the fact that those who wished to separate themselves in this way claimed Hooker was to evolve into the classical interpretation.

Already, therefore, one party in the Church was reaching out to embrace Hooker: a party with a very definite agenda to move the Church on and refashion in its own mould England's worship, theology and general ecclesiastical style.⁷⁶

Such support would seem to give credence to both Travers' and Willet's concerns that Hooker was doctrinally out of step with Calvinist theology and it would seem likely that the identity of Hooker's opponents, as much as the content of his work, made him an attractive figurehead for Covell and his allies.

Such an interpretation of Covell suggests that far from being in line with the Church as it was, Hooker was instead a forerunner of what was to come. This reading was supported by Lake, who saw Hooker not as espousing a current position but as innovative, synthesising existing theologies in such a way that something new was created. His conclusion, that Hooker invented Anglicanism, sparked a wide-ranging discussion and although he later retreated to some extent, agreeing that Hooker was

⁷⁶ Ibid..

more Reformed than he had previously asserted, he nonetheless expounded the view that Hooker was much more than “business as usual.”⁷⁷

Perhaps Hooker was the champion of the emerging Church, the institution that would eventually be led by Laud, an identity that was already burgeoning during Hooker’s lifetime. Such a view would explain Covell’s defence, but if he was expecting to simply raise the *Lawes* as a rallying flag, he was much mistaken and a careful reading of the text shows how hard he had to work to shape Hooker’s *Lawes* into what was required.

Covell began by stressing Hooker’s moderate tone, an asset in the fiery debates that surrounded the issues and such a claim emphasised the sheer reasonableness of the ‘avant-garde’ position. However, as Lake remarks, “he did nothing to tone down his message” and instead “on almost every point raised by the *Christian Letter*, with the signal and very significant exception of predestination, Covell, if anything, turned up rather than modulated the volume of Hooker’s sallies,”⁷⁸ Hooker was too moderate at times, too able to see the other point of view and to discuss matters fully rather than to attack and devastate his opponent’s argument. “Ironically this has the effect of calling into question the very irenicism Covell was at pains to portray.”⁷⁹ Covell’s ‘sharpening’ of the points begs the question as to whether he took Hooker further than the author intended.

⁷⁷ See Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans*, Chapter 4 and especially the final paragraph on page 230. See also Lake, ‘Business as Usual’.

⁷⁸ Lake, ‘Business as Usual’, 464.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*.

Where Covell really came unstuck was when he attempted to defend Hooker's views on predestination. Ever since Hooker's sermon at St. Paul's Cross, before he took his position as Master of the Temple in 1585, there had been questions raised about Hooker's orthodoxy in this area. We know that Walter Travers was suspicious and this point was picked up by the author of the *Christian Letter*. Avant-garde Covell may have been, but to deviate from the Reformed position concerning predestination would have been, at the very least, professional suicide. There may have been movements away from Calvinism in other areas but proto-Arminian theology was still unacceptable at this point and, in any event, it is highly unlikely that Covell himself wavered from the orthodox view. He begins by dismissing the criticism, stating that he cannot see how anyone should have a problem with Hooker's views "and then, through his own rather confused and contradictory defence revealed precisely why they might."⁸⁰ As he ploughs on he almost attributes to Hooker "a hypothetically universalist position, of the sort later adopted by some of the English delegation to the Synod of Dort."⁸¹ Covell "seemed anything but comfortable with the result."⁸² In his conclusion he is therefore forced to assert that Hooker is well within the realms of acceptability, rather than to rely upon the conclusions of a cogent argument.⁸³

Covell created a Hooker that suited his own purposes, but not without a degree of effort. To say that Hooker was the champion of the emerging Church now seems less than certain. Was Hooker really in step with the avant-garde agenda? Or was Covell attracted to Hooker partly by the fact that those Covell opposed were critical of the *Lawes*? Was it Willet's and Travers concerns about Hooker's sympathy with

⁸⁰ Ibid., 478.

⁸¹ Ibid., 479.

⁸² Ibid., 479.

⁸³ Ibid., 480.

Reformed doctrine that made Hooker an attractive ally? And was there something in the very ambiguity of Hooker's text that allowed it to be 'shaped to fit'? Whatever the reasons, the truth is that Hooker didn't say exactly what Covell would have liked him to say.

This ambiguity continues when we consider the publication history of the last three books of the *Lawes*. Here we discover a complex picture where it is difficult to identify exactly who did embrace Hooker and whether he spoke for any particular group, let alone the Church in its entirety.

Keeping Hooker as 'Champion of the Church'.

At the time of his death the remaining three books of the *Lawes* were still unpublished. The history of their publication, together with the printing of Hooker's sermons, raises questions as to whether the image of Hooker as a spokesman for the Church was ever anything other than a carefully created illusion. The facts surrounding these publications reveal a complex picture where Hooker's supporters as well as his opponents struggled to categorise and interpret his writings.

The final three books of the *Lawes*, as we now have them, consider the issues of public and private confession (Book VI), the role of Bishops and the foundational authority for their office (Book VII), and the monarch as supreme head of the Church and the state (Book VIII). It has long been a source of interest and intrigue that Books VI and VIII were not published until nearly half a century after Hooker's death, in 1648, and Book VII did not appear in print until some fourteen years later, in 1662. This delay in publication has led to rumours of suppression and, when the texts were

eventually released into the public domain, their content was so surprising and shocking that Walton explained them away through tales of tampering and theft.

Theft, manipulation or suppression? The mystery of the final three books.

Although in the *Folger* edition of the *Laws* Books VI-VIII read as coherent texts, this belies their complex history and the stories and suspicions that have surrounded them. The content of these last three books cover areas that were constant sources of conflict as the seventeenth century unfolded: questions of authority – whether within the Church or over the Church, whether of the Monarch or Bishops, and the relationship of the Church and state, would lead to the Civil War and beyond.

Hooker's arguments are not easy to follow, but if they have been understood correctly they would seem to veer towards a view that both Bishops and Monarchs attract God's approval to rule but that essentially their position is one of agreement between the people and themselves.⁸⁴

Such a position was not one that Hooker's later allies would readily agree with.

Walton, in his *Life of Hooker*, gave voice to the opinion that would colour these books until the nineteenth century – namely that they could not have been from Hooker's pen and that his true work had been destroyed by those who sought to further their own agenda.⁸⁵ What was available was nothing less than heavily changed texts that did not represent Hooker's beliefs.

⁸⁴ For a full discussion see page 64ff. Hooker's views are much subtler than this bald description but there is certainly sufficient to make him at odds with those who would be seen as his natural allies in other areas.

⁸⁵ Walton, 'Life', 92.

Walton's version of events had been encouraged in order to replace the views of Gauden. In 1662 Gauden published the first complete edition of the *Lawes*, together with an account of Hooker's life, in which he stated that the texts were from Hooker's pen and that those in power had suppressed them.⁸⁶ In the nineteenth century Keble acknowledged that the texts were indeed from Hooker's pen (a view that has now been fully supported by the careful scholarship of the *Folger* editors) but he remained bemused by their content and also believed they had been suppressed.⁸⁷

If it is true that these last three books were suppressed then once again Hooker's attachment to the identity of the Church in the years following his death is again challenged. One important figure in this episode is Archbishop Laud. Covell and his avant-garde colleagues were forerunners of Laud, who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. A high-Churchman, opposed to Calvinism, Laud moved the national Church towards a distinctive ceremonial stance with a focus upon ritual and sacrament and with an established hierarchy, which supported the divine right of Kings and bishops. He was much more sympathetic to Roman Catholicism and his reverence for the sacraments, his love of ritual and ceremony, his understanding of authority and his views concerning Scripture made Hooker an attractive ally. He undoubtedly had the final books in his possession, but "(t)he fact that he never made any attempt to publish them strongly suggests that he recognised their contents to be

⁸⁶ Gauden, 'Life and Death', 26.

⁸⁷ Keble had queries regarding the content of Book VI, which does seem to relate to the title, but he was assured that what was available came from Hooker. John Keble, 'Editor's Preface', xxxivff. Regarding Book VII he stated that "the evidence for its genuineness, a very few words may suffice." (Ibid., xxxix) Although Book VIII raised certain questions he also believed in its authenticity. (see *ibid.*, xlii ff)

insufficiently supportive of his position and found it easier to forget quietly their existence.”⁸⁸

Suppression of course is not the only possibility and by the time Laud arrived at Canterbury, Hooker had been dead for some thirty years. What of the intervening decades and those who had been entrusted with Hooker’s work?

The history here is complex and interwoven with rumour, not least as to exactly how complete these texts were when Hooker died. In 1604, in a Preface to a new edition of Hooker’s *Lawes*, Spenser wrote that Hooker had completed the books before his death but that “some evill disposed mindes, whether of malice, or covetousnesse, or wicked blinde Zeale” had “smothered them, and by conveying away the perfect Copies, left unto us nothing but cerataine olde unperfect and mangled draughts.”⁸⁹ In 1603, Covell wrote in his defence of the *Lawes*, that Hooker had completed the texts, but whether this was the result of a conversation with Hooker or sourced from a third-party is unclear.⁹⁰ Book VI might well have been complete, in draft form at least, some years before Hooker’s death as a text was given to Hooker’s friends Cranmer and Sandys, who read the same and made comments, which have survived.⁹¹ We know that their reaction was not totally favourable and Brydon comments that they “were deeply critical of certain overly-papist tendencies”.⁹² This complete text has never been discovered and the surviving manuscript differs from that originally read by Hooker’s

⁸⁸ Brydon, *Evolving Reputation*, 47.

⁸⁹ John Spenser, ‘To the Reader’, in *Folger* I.348.

⁹⁰ See Stanwoods’ discussion of this in P.G. Stanwood, ‘Textual Introduction. The Three Last Books’, *Folger* III.xvii

⁹¹ It has been surmised that the date for this exchange is somewhere around 1593-6, as the men refer to certain factual events in their text, added to which they were both away from England for three years from 1596. See Stanwood, ‘Introduction’, *Folger* III.xxxi. Is this why Book VI wasn’t published with Book V? Their notes were first published by Keble.

⁹² Brydon, *Evolving Reputation*, 36.

friends.⁹³ There is no evidence that Book VII and VIII were fully completed, but Stanwood recounts that “Book VII was in near readiness for the press” and “Book VIII survives in pieces, but it is possible to fit most of them together and to reconstruct most of this last book.”⁹⁴ Complete manuscripts may not have been available but there was obviously sufficient material to allow them to be published some fifty years later. The question remains as to why such a delay occurred.

When Hooker died his papers were retrieved by his father-in-law and divided between Henry Parry, Lancelot Andrewes, Edwin Sandys and John Spenser.⁹⁵ According to Stanwood, drawing on Sisson,⁹⁶ Spenser was given the last three books, Andrewes the sermons and Parry the remainder of the fragments “with the understanding that each man was to make ready the material in his care for publication.”⁹⁷ At Hooker’s death Andrewes had been concerned with the safety of Hooker’s papers, as detailed in a letter to Parry and there is some evidence that some of the manuscripts may have been burnt or removed by Hooker’s opponents.⁹⁸ In litigation brought by Hooker’s daughters against Sandys in 1614 (with regard to a payment from the proceeds of sale of the *Lawes*) a London lawyer gave evidence that he had heard “that...the new husband of Hooker’s widow” together with two other men “had gained possession of various of Hooker’s manuscripts and had burned them.”⁹⁹ Years later Walton would tell the story of Hooker’s house being robbed before his death, although his papers

⁹³ See Stanwood, ‘Introduction’, *Folger* III.xxxiii for a full discussion as to the extent of the difference and the problems this creates. Although purporting to be about lay eldership the text that has survived deals with public and private confession, possibly as a way into the main topic.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, xiii.

⁹⁵ Exactly who was given what is disputed. See Laetitia Yeandle, ‘Textual Introduction. The Tractates and Sermons’, *Folger* V.xv-xvi, but it seems clear that Spenser held on to the last three books.

⁹⁶ Sisson’s research added greatly to the historical evidence surrounding Hooker’s surviving manuscripts and the litigation that was begun by his daughters against Sandys, claiming proceeds from the publication of the *Lawes*. Sisson, *Judicious Marriage*.

⁹⁷ Stanwood, ‘Introduction’, *Folger* III.xv.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁹⁹ Brydon, *Evolving Reputation*, 22.

were left intact. In the appendix however he states that Hooker's widow testified to them as being burnt by two Puritan ministers.¹⁰⁰ We know from *A Christian Letter* that Hooker had alarmed the Puritans and such a move may have been possible, but it was never proven. However, Hooker's opponents are not the only suspects. Cranmer and Sandys had been critical of Hooker's work, possibly on doctrinal grounds and at least one historian, Pamp, has suggested that the loss of the manuscript may have been deliberate.¹⁰¹

However, if we assume Spenser is telling the truth, then at Hooker's death this complete Book VI seems not to have been amongst his papers and only the shorter manuscript has survived, which fails to deal with the professed content in any detail but still reads coherently. Book VII was almost complete and Book VIII in fragments. Spenser, in the Preface, stated that he would publish what was available¹⁰² although some nine years later, in his deposition in the proceedings in Chancery, he still had not done so but stated, under oath, that Books VI and VII were nearly ready but Book VIII was still too fragmentary.¹⁰³ He died a year later, the books still unpublished.

Even if true, which is highly unlikely, the stories concerning theft and destruction do not explain why the documents that did survive were not published until some sixty years after Hooker's death. It could be, of course, that the litigation led to some delay and by then the impetus to publish and the financial backing had been lost. However, this view is challenged by the fact that between 1612 and 1614 Hooker's sermons

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 106.

¹⁰¹ F.E. Pamp, 'Walton's Redaction of Hooker', *Church History*, 17 (1948), 97-8. Sisson also makes particular note that there were doctrinal differences between the men and that this was a major factor in the delay in publication, and possibly the 'loss' of the manuscripts. Sisson, *Judicious Marriage*, 100-105.

¹⁰² Spenser, 'To the Reader', *Folger* I.348.

¹⁰³ Stanwood, 'Introduction', *Folger* III.xvii

were published and the sales of these texts indicate that there was certainly an appetite for Hooker's writings.

The publication of the sermons adds a further dimension to this already complex scenario. Whilst the high-Churchmen struggled with Hooker's lack of support for their position and his friends and colleagues found his words insufficiently robust against Rome, his sermons were published in order to strengthen Hooker's reputation as a stalwart supporter of Reformed doctrine.

In 1612, with a view to reinstating Hooker as a man in line with Reformed theology, several of Hooker's sermons were published. Although not embraced by the more radical Puritans, these sermons were certainly seen as placing Hooker firmly in the Calvinist theological spectrum and to rescue the *Lawes* from "the suspicions surrounding its Reformed credentials" that both avant-garde support and Roman Catholic approval had left in their wake.¹⁰⁴ It was Henry Jackson, fellow of Corpus, who wrote the Preface in both the 1612 edition and also for the reprint of the *Justification* sermon (together with two sermons on *Jude*)¹⁰⁵ in 1614 – required due to the popularity of the text. He saw the sermons, with their more obvious Reformed theology, as "a corrective against 'the superstition of some errors, which he hath thought to have favoured.'"¹⁰⁶

The reprinting of these sermons shows there was still an appetite for Hooker's work, and particularly for those texts that purported to re-establish Hooker as speaking on behalf of a thoroughly Reformed Church. It was not only Covell's support for Hooker

¹⁰⁴ Brydon, *Evolving Reputation*, 37.

¹⁰⁵ *Jude 1 and 2*.

¹⁰⁶ Brydon, *Evolving Reputation*, 37.

that had caused concern for Jackson and others like him, but also the Roman Catholic interest and comment that came in its wake. In areas where Hooker may have caused embarrassment and confusion for some, others were quick to use those same passages to support their own cause. The Puritans rejected Hooker for his support of Rome, leaving the door open for those same Roman Catholics to use Hooker, the great Protestant Divine, against his own people. Hooker gained unexpected, and for some very unwanted, support from Roman Catholic writers. The Jesuits, amongst others, exploited Hooker's *Lawes* for their own arguments, pointing out the agreements between him and Rome, particularly the need for the Church's role in the understanding of Scripture as well as "his veneration for writers such as Augustine, Aquinas and Bonaventura".¹⁰⁷ If Hooker was symbolic of the national Church, then that edged the national church closer to Rome. Hence for Catholics, "the establishment of Hooker's credentials was a weapon to be wielded against the Church of England."¹⁰⁸ Quite what they made of his critical views regarding the Pope is a mystery.

It was, therefore, a reaction to both Covell and the implications of his support that no doubt led Jackson to publish the sermons, and to write in the Preface the Latin proverb, 'he who lacks an enemy will be crushed by his friends.'¹⁰⁹ But this printing of the sermons does raise questions. Both Keble and more recent scholarship has followed Jackson and agreed that in these texts Hooker is at his most Reformed, with Voak advancing the argument of an early (Reformed) and mature (less Reformed) Hooker. But how does this view align with the fact that these very texts, preached

¹⁰⁷ Conal Condren, 'The Creation of Richard Hooker's Public Authority: Rhetoric, Reputation and Reassessment', *The Journal of Religious History*, 21(1) (1997), 42.

¹⁰⁸ Condren, 'Rhetoric', 42.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in MacCulloch, 'Hooker's Reputation', 789.

mainly at the Temple, were the cause of Hooker's conflict with Travers and led to Whitgift's ambiguous judgment? And if Hooker was indeed speaking out in these sermons for the Reformed Church of his day, is it possible that within a few years he was writing a book that would be rejected by Puritans and embraced by those who were seeking to move the Church away from the Calvinist position?

These questions call for a comprehensive study, not just of the history surrounding these texts but also of the texts themselves. Later on in this chapter the *Lawes* will be read in some detail, whilst in chapter three one of the sermons will be scrutinized. But for now it is sufficient to highlight how difficult it is to define Hooker's relationship with the Church simply by considering who embraced his work and how he was used.

The threads are loosened.

Was Hooker a champion of the Elizabethan Church, whatever its stance? The historical evidence, as we have seen, is ambiguous. Hooker's appointment at the Temple appears to be a compromise and his dispute with Travers raises questions as to Hooker's theology and the extent to which Whitgift supported him. The publication of the *Lawes*, whilst coinciding with ant-separatist legislation and supported by influential figures, does not lead to preferment for him and instead provokes serious criticism from committed members of the Church, again on doctrinal grounds. Though the establishment comes to his aid after his death, yet those supporters are seeking to change rather than preserve the Church's identity. In addition, Covell discovers that Hooker does not quite fit the bill and at times he is forced to strengthen his views and at other times explain them carefully. The last three books cause

problems, both because they are unfinished but also because what is available is not what was expected and the delay in publication, whilst potentially innocent, raises the possibility of suppression. Each one of the strands that has tied Hooker so tightly to the Church has been shown to be looser than expected.

In this first section we have focused upon the historical events and individuals that have surrounded Hooker, including his career, his supporters and opponents and the circumstances surrounding the publication of his works. How he was perceived by others and how his works were read and received have formed the basis for the discussion so far. We will now focus upon the *Lawes* to see if they shed light upon his relationship with the Church. Do these texts strengthen or weaken the bonds that have attached Hooker so tightly to the Church's identity?

The Lawes: a gift to the English Church?

The pertinent question is of course whether the content of the *Lawes* supports the view that Hooker was acting as a defender of the English Church and wanting to play a part in the fight against Presbyterianism and separatism? The answer to this must be yes. The *Lawes* addresses the same (if a somewhat broader) group than the proposed legislation focused upon, but the issues were essentially the same: Hooker's aim was, firstly, to show the dissenters that they had failed to prove their case and secondly, to establish the absolute "reasonableness of obedience to the English Christian Polity."¹¹⁰ He addressed the *Lawes* "To them that seeke (as they tearme it) the reformation of Lawes, and orders Ecclesiasticall, in the Church of England"¹¹¹ and on

¹¹⁰ Brydon, *Evolving Reputation*, 22.

¹¹¹ *Lawes*, I.1.

the face of it Hooker sought to preserve the *status quo* regarding the present form of government and ceremonies.

Surely the present forme of Church government which the lawes of this land have established, is such, as no lawe of God, nor reason of man hath hitherto bene alleaged of force sufficient to prove they do ill, who to the uttermost of their power withstand the alteration thereof. Contrariwise, the other which in stead of it we are required to accept, is only be error and misconcept named the ordinance of Jesus Christ, no one prooffe as yet brought forth whereby it may cleerely appeare to be so in very deede. The explication of which two things I have here thought good to offer into your owne handes.¹¹²

Hooker's *Lawes* was at the very least a reaction to the crisis that threatened the Church. He addresses the text to those who are seeking reform and it is their arguments to which he responds and replies. Such a view would seem to imply that the *Lawes* is concerned with discipline and not doctrine, with the way the Church worships and orders its affairs as well as the nature and power of its leaders.¹¹³ The *Folger* editors, committed to a view of Hooker much closer to the classical *via media* position and keen to keep the historical context of the *Lawes* in view, assert that this is very much the case and that matters of discipline and not doctrine are at the heart of the *Lawes*. Hill comments that Hooker is "careful not to frame his argument on explicitly doctrinal grounds, for fear of further provoking a destructive and intransigent sectarianism. As between "doctrine" and "discipline", Hooker's treatise on "politie" is, by definition, about the latter."¹¹⁴ In the introduction to Book V he had made a similar point,

The fifth book of Richard Hooker's magisterial treatise...is unique among the controversial literature of the Reformation, for it was written to defend an institution,

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹³ Which raises questions about Willet's criticisms being mainly doctrinal.

¹¹⁴ W. S. Hill, 'Richard Hooker in the Folger Edition: An Editorial Perspective', in A.S. McGrade (ed.), *Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community* (Tempe, Arizona., 1997), 19.

the Church of England, rather than a particular doctrinal code or set of beliefs. Within the spacious architecture of the *Lawes* as a whole, it occupies the central position as a defence of the ceremonial practice of the established Church.¹¹⁵

This interpretation lends strong support to the view that Hooker's purpose was first and foremost to support and defend the Church and to act as its spokesman in a time of great turbulence. Hooker is therefore the one who articulates the unique position of the English Church as regards discipline, whilst remaining a safe distance away from messy doctrinal arguments.¹¹⁶ But does a closer reading of the *Lawes* fully support this position?

An overview of the Preface and Books I-V.

It is probably true to say that of all the *Lawes* the Preface and Book I have become the most widely read. These two sections give a flavour of Hooker's thought and for those interested in his prose, they contain some of the most beautiful passages Hooker penned. For our purposes, what is of interest is that Hooker does not begin with the issues that provided the historical context and the personal impetus to his writing. Instead he uses the Preface to look more generally at the call for reform and in particular he is keen to trace the source of the present disquiet, "let it be lawfull for me to rip up to the verie bottome, how and by whome your Discipline was planted, at such time as this age we live in began to make first triall thereof."¹¹⁷ Here we see Hooker's desire not simply to read the surface, but to dig deeper to the source of this desire for a single, specific Church discipline. His explorations take him to Geneva, with Calvin, and Hooker outlines the history of Calvin's appearance in and

¹¹⁵ W. S.Hill, 'Textual Introduction, The Fifth Book', *Folger* II. xiii.

¹¹⁶ Such an argument would ironically support Atkinson and Kirby even though the *Folger* editors would not be too happy with such a parallel.

¹¹⁷ *Lawes*, I.3.

subsequent governing of Geneva, and critically appraises both the discipline and doctrine that ensued. Hooker's comments are not just historical but theological. He is far from complimentary at times, criticising both the people of Geneva and Calvin¹¹⁸ and the Preface has been described as "a strongly polemical attack on Presbyterians, and Puritans within the English Church more generally."¹¹⁹

What becomes clear from reading the Preface is that for Hooker the important question to be addressed here is *why* there is a call for reform. In asking and answering this question Hooker begins to reveal his concerns and also his own reasons for defending the present practices. It is not in effect the call for change that Hooker is concerned about, later on he makes it clear that change has occurred in the past and will in the future, it is the reason for change that needs to be addressed. Those seeking reform are not simply saying that there is a better way to order the Church's life but rather that theirs is the only way that a true Christian Church should organise itself.

The wonderfull zeale and fervour wherewith ye have withstood the recie orders of this Church was the first thing which caused me to enter into consideration, whether (as all your published bookes and writings peremptorie mainteine) everie Christian man fearing God stand bound to joyne with you, for the furtherance of that which ye tearme the Lords Discipline.¹²⁰

It is this claim to certainty that disquiets Hooker – the claim that, without doubt, this is the only way to proceed. He makes it clear at the outset that not only have they not

¹¹⁸ Perhaps the most famous criticism of Calvin comes in Chapter 2 of the Preface: "Nature worketh in us all a love to our owne counsels. The contradiction of others is a fanne to inflame that love. Our love set on fire to maintaine that which once we have done, sharpeneth the wit to dispute, to argue, and by all means to reason for it. Wherefore a marrvaile it were if a man of so great a capacitie, having such incitements to make him desirous of all kind of furtherances unto his cause, could espie in the whole Scripture of God nothing which might breed at the least a probable opinion of likelihood, that divine authoritie it selfe was the same way somewhat inclinable." *Lawes*, I.10.

¹¹⁹ Voak, *Reformed Theology*, 16.

¹²⁰ *Lawes*, I.2.

proved that the present state of affairs is in error, they have also failed to prove their own claim – it is in fact an illusion.¹²¹ They have based their argument on the early Church, stating that this example should be followed for all time, Hooker reads the same Scriptures and finds them far from clear regarding the exact details of community life and cannot find any convincing evidence that, in any case, such an example is for all people at all times. In fact, even the apostles changed the way things were done.

(W)hat was used in the Apostles times, the scripture fullie declareth not, so that making their times the rule and canon of Church politie, ye make a rule which being not possible to be fully knowne, is as impossible to be kept...Again, sith the later even of the Apostles owne times had that which in the former was not thought upon, in this generall proposing of the Aposticall times, there is no certaintie which should be followed.¹²²

Claiming a certainty that does not exist and then asserting that only those who are truly Christian will recognise this certainty and act upon it is, for Hooker, unsupportable. Calvin's error was to claim that his Church governance was God-given and unquestionable and the present calls for reform are repeating this.

But what argument are yee able to shoue, whereby it was ever proved by Calvin, that any one sentence of scripture doeth necessarily enforce these thinges, or the rest wherein your opinion concurreth with his against the orsers of your owne Church?¹²³

The argument then develops, for acceptance of this discipline becomes a test of true Christian faith and any challenges to it are to be ignored and rejected.

But be they women or be they men, if once they have tasted of that cup, let any man of contrarie opinion open his mouth to perswade them, they close up their eares, his reasons they waigh not, all is answered with rehearsal of the words of John, We are of

¹²¹ See page 45 above.

¹²² *Lawes*, I.23.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 10.

God, he that knoweth God heareth us, as for the rest, ye are of the world for this worlds pomp and vanitie it is that ye speake, and the world whose ye are heareth you.¹²⁴

The Preface closes with Hooker addressing his opponents, requesting them to sift their arguments and to be prepared to change their minds.¹²⁵ He then sets out his plan for the eight books that follow before he launches into Book One¹²⁶ Here Hooker seems to change tack completely and he is aware that his readers may be bemused by this, as shown by the final chapter's title: "*A conclusion, shewing how all this belongeth to the cause in question*"¹²⁷ The focus of this first book is law: its definition, source and outworking.

All things therefore do worke after a sort according to lawe; all other things according to a lawe, whereof some superiours, unto whome they are subject, is author; only the workes and operations of God have him both for their worker, and for the lawe whereby they are wrought. The being of God is kinde of lawe to his working: for that perfection which God is, geveth perfection to that he doth.¹²⁸

In the light of this the title begins to make sense, especially once Hooker introduces his understanding of the 'first law eternal', by which God works and then the 'second law eternal' – a variety of laws that govern all creation, including humanity, emanating from the Creator. This second law eternal includes reason and Scripture, as well as the law that angels obey, natural law and also positive human laws (a sub-category, as such, due to their source being from several other laws). Law is both the source of life and the sustaining of life and is not simply exhausted by the concept of rules and regulations.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Ibid., 19.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 51.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 54.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 134.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 58-59.

¹²⁹ Which perhaps gives us some clue as to how (if not why) Hooker arrived at his title. An aside, but nonetheless important, is that the second laws eternal are not a hierarchy as Lake argues. Lake,

It can be easy to overlook here the presence of angelic law, but to do so is a mistake as angels appear repeatedly throughout the *Lawes*. For Hooker, angels represent a form of being that is different from humanity and yet in some ways we shall become like them, “till they come at length to be even as the Angels themselves are” in that one day we too shall behold the face of God directly and dwell in his presence.¹³⁰

Angels are “the glorious inhabitants of those sacred places” and in mentioning the angels Hooker raises his reader’s eyes to throne room of heaven and reminds them that law is not simply earth-bound.¹³¹ “But now that we may lift up our eyes (as it were) from the footstool to the throne of God, and leaving these naturall, consider a little the state of heavenly and divine creatures.”¹³²

Book One is far more than simply a reflection of the Elizabethan view of an ordered world in which all have their place. It pulsates with a vision of God and humanity that centres upon the Divine being as concerned with making God’s-self known and available, both to and in creation. Hooker is concerned to stress God’s goodness and generosity and not simply His will, as the prime motivator – a theological point that reverberates throughout his writings.

The generall end of Gods externall working, is the exercise of his most glorious and most abundant vertue: Which abundance doth shew itself in varietie, and for that cause this varietie is oftentimes in scripture exprest by the name of *riches*. *The Lord hath made all things for his owne sake*. Not that anything is made to be beneficiall unto him, but all things for him to shew beneficence and grace in them. The particular gift of everie acte proceeding externally from God, we are not able to discern, and therefore cannot always give the proper and certaine reason of his works. Howbeit undoubtedly a proper and certaine reason there is of every finite worke of God, in as much as there is

Anglicans and Puritans, 147-148. Although they have different areas of influence and within that area they reign supreme, they are not in a hierarchy as between themselves.

¹³⁰ *Lawes*, I.74.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 69 and also see chapters 4 and 6 of Book I.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 69.

a law imposed upon it...They erre therefore who thinke that of the will of God to do this or that, there is no reason besides his will.¹³³

It is also in Book One that Hooker begins to focus upon Scripture, something that was at the heart of the current calls for reform. The Presbyterian belief was that that Scripture, and Scripture alone, should form the basis of the Church's worship and discipline and this argument was initially broached in the Preface where Hooker questioned whether Calvin was indeed basing his Genevan community on Scripture or rather simply his own understanding of the same.¹³⁴ Taking the argument a step further Hooker had declared that all the evidence he had seen so far did not persuade him that theirs was the only possible view of Scripture or that the Scriptures said quite what they were proposing.¹³⁵ In Book One Hooker does not return to this argument directly but rather sets out his own vision of Scripture.

For Hooker Scripture belongs to the 'second law eternal' and is thus one of the ways in which God communicates to humanity. In chapter 11 Hooker introduces his own understanding of Scripture. The title of the chapter is "Wherefore God hath by scripture further made knowne such supernaturall lawes as do serve for mens direction"¹³⁶ and this rather uninspiring description belies the theological depth and breathtaking conclusion of this section.

¹³³ Ibid., 61.

¹³⁴ See *Lawes*, I.10. "But what argument are yee able to shoue, whereby it was ever proved by Calvin, that any one sentence of scripture doeth necessarily enforce these thinges...?"

¹³⁵ "Surely the present forme of Churchgovernment which the lawes of this land have established, is such, as no lawe of God, nor reason of man hath hitherto bene alleaged of force sufficient to prove they do ill, who to the uttermost of their power withstand the alteration thereof. Contrariwise, The other...is only by error and misconcept named the ordinance of Jesus Christ, no one prooffe as yet brought forth wherby it may cleerly appeare to be so in very deede." Ibid., 2.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 110.

Scripture is not in fact mentioned until the closing sentences of the chapter and Hooker instead begins by rehearsing humanity's condition and plight. He outlines our natural desire for happiness and the good and especially the infinite good – God Himself – whom we desire simply for Himself. This desire for God, which because it is innate, cannot be utterly frustrated; “And is it probable that God should frame the hartes of all men so desirous of that which no man may obtaine? It is an axiome of nature that naturall desire cannot utterly be frustrate.”¹³⁷ But the satisfaction of this desire can never be through natural means, for example by following the law of nature, as we are sinful beings.

Our naturall meanes therefore unto blessednes are our workes...But examine the workes which we doe and since the foundation of the world what can one say, My ways are pure? Seeing then all flesh is guiltie of that for which God hath threatned eternallie to punish, what possibilitie is there this way to be saved?¹³⁸

Something from God was needed, something supernatural, or else humanity was lost.

(T)here resteth therefore eyther no way unto salvation, or if any, then surely a way which is supernaturall. A way which could never have entered into the heart of man as much as once to conceive or imagine, if God him selfe had not revealed it extraordinarily.¹³⁹

Hooker reveals his rhetorical gifts as he leads the reader on to the culmination of God's saving plan: Jesus.

From salvation therefore and life all flesh being excluded this way, beholde how the wisdom of God hath revealed a way mysticall and supernaturall, a way directing unto the same ende of life by a course which groundeth it selfe upon the gultines of sinne, and through sinne desert of condemnation and eath. For in this waye the first thing is the tender compassion of God respecting us drowned and swallowed up in myserie; the

¹³⁷ Ibid., 114.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 116.

¹³⁹ Ibid..

nest is redemption out of the same by the pretious death and merit of a mightie Saviour¹⁴⁰

The Christological focus of this closing section, detailing God's mysterious and awe-inspiring plan for salvation, borne out of his tenderness towards humanity, also draws out our own response as a participation in Jesus' life in the here and now as well as a pointing towards what will come. Only once he has lifted the reader's eyes to the very throne room of heaven does he mention Scripture as that which has been supernaturally received by us from God and which witnesses to the supernatural events he has referred to. Such a description elevates Scripture high above any code of conduct whilst retaining its vision of communicating to us the very ways of God and the means by which we participate in Him. In order to appreciate the full impact of Hooker's vision I include the section in full.

Not that God doth require nothing unto happines at the handes of men saving onely a naked beliefe (for hope and charitie we may not exclude) but that without beliefe all other thinges are as nothing...Concerning faith the principall object whereof is that eternall veritie which hath discovered the treasures of hidden wisdom in Christ; concerning hope the highest object whereof is that everlasting goodnes which in Christ doth quicken the dead; concerning charitie the finall object whereof is that incomprehensible bewtie which shineth in the countenance of Christ the sonne of the living God; concerning these virtues, the first of which beginning here with a weake apprehension of thinges not sene, endeth with the intuitive vision of God in the world to come; the second beginning here with a trembling expectation of thinges far removed and as yet but onely heard of, endeth with reall and actuall fruition of that which no tongue can expresse, the third beginning here with a weak inclination of heart towards him unto whome wee are not able to aproch, endeth with endlesse union, the misterie whereof is higher than the reach of the thoughts of men... Ther is not in the world a syllable muttered with certaine truth concerning any of these three, more than hath beene supernaturally recyved from the mouth of the eternall God. Lawes therefore concerning these thinges are supernaturall, both in respect of the maner of delivering

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 118.

them which is divine, and also in regard of those things delivered which are such as have not in nature any cause from which they flow, but were by the voluntarie appointment of God ordained besides the course to rectifie natures obliquitie withall.¹⁴¹

In this passage, Hooker links faith, hope and charity to the truth, goodness and beauty of God. In effect, these virtues do not exist outside of who God is, as seen in Jesus. The beatific vision of the angels is again referred to and Scripture becomes the place where a new world is glimpsed. This world, this reality, is seen by us now dimly, in and through Christ, whereas one day we will behold it fully, as do the angels. This has echoes of St. Paul's reference to seeing through a mirror darkly, in his first letter to the Corinthians – our human condition blurring our focus. Faith is not defined forensically but as a discovery of treasure; hope as that which brings life to the dead and charity as a reaching out to reflect God's beauty. Such a description transcends any mechanical understanding of salvation and Scripture.

Book Two builds upon this foundation and extends the discourse, specifically replying to the argument that Scripture is “the only rule of all things which in this life may be done by men.”¹⁴² For Hooker, Scripture is concerned with salvation and to enlarge it further is a serious error. He comments that there is “ a desire to enlarge the necessarie use of the word of God; which desire hath begotten an error enlarging it further then (as we are perswaded) soundness of truth will beare.”¹⁴³ Hooker discusses the role of tradition and reason in interpreting the Scriptures and refers back to the other ways in which God guides and communicates with humanity. He is keen to

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 118-119.

¹⁴² Ibid., 143.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 145.

point out the errors contained in extremes, either where Scripture is valued insufficiently or where it is abused by stretching its purpose too far.

Two opinions therefore there are concerning sufficiency of holy scripture, each extremely opposite unto the other, and both repugnant unto truth. The schooles of Rome teach scripture to be so insufficient, as if, except traditions were added, it did not containe all revealed and supernaturall truth, which absolutely is necessarie for the children of men in this life to knowe that they may in the next be saved. Others justly condemning this opinion growe likewise unto a dangerous extremitie, as if scripture did not only containe all thinges in that kind necessary, but al thinges simply, and in such sorte that to doe any thing according to any other lawe were not onely unnecessary, but even opposite unto salvation, unlawfull and sinfull.¹⁴⁴

In Book Three the question of Scripture is still to the fore as Hooker reflects on the assertion that “in Scripture there must be of necessitie contained a forme of Church-politie the laws whereof may in no wise be altered.”¹⁴⁵ However, he approaches this by first looking at the identity of the Church, and how this affects the laws that govern her. Unless the Church can be described and defined then to speak of the laws that will direct, shape and govern this body will be without reference and foundation. Purpose is always paramount for Hooker.

After a lengthy discussion of the difference between the invisible and visible Church and the inability of any human being to ascertain who is part of the former, Hooker declares that what is of concern here is the governance of the latter. The visible Church is made up of all those who are baptized and he refuses to lay any other conditions for membership.¹⁴⁶ As such the Church on earth is the visible society of

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 191.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 193.

¹⁴⁶ “(E)ntered we are not into the visible Church before our admittance but the doore of baptisme... But we speake now of the visible Church, whose children are signed with this marke, *One Lord, one faith, one baptisme*. In whomsoever these thinges are, the church doth acknowledge for hir children”. Ibid., 197-198.

men connected through baptism and it is this body that is to be kept in mind when discussions regarding law and governance are to the fore. But the term Church is used not just generally but for each and every distinct Christian society, “ a number of men belonging unto some Christian fellowship, the place and limites whereof are certaine.”¹⁴⁷ When such a group takes communion, for example, they exercise their public duties and these societies require ‘Ecclesiastical Polity’ (a wider term than mere governance) to regulate their affairs. Here Hooker has at last reached the conclusion that a certain type of law is necessary, “Nyther is any thing in this degree more necessarie then Church-politie, which is a forme of ordering the publique spirituall affayres of the Church of God.”¹⁴⁸

Having arrived at this point, Hooker begins to address the question as to the nature of the source of such polity, and here he is keen to make the distinction between matters of salvation and faith on the one hand and Church discipline on the other, “(t)he mixture of those things by speech which by nature are divided, is the mother of all error.”¹⁴⁹ This position, he argues, is also held by his opponents and yet they continue to assert that the latter should find its mandate in Scripture alone.¹⁵⁰ Hooker’s basic argument is that this position is untenable and even where there are examples in Scripture of God-given forms of governance this does not make them binding for all time, but merely shows that what is best at a certain time is not necessarily still the best many years later.¹⁵¹ Reason, part of the second-law eternal joins the argument

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 206.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid..

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 209.

¹⁵⁰ “For if matters of discipline be rightly by them distinguished from matters of doctrine, why not matters of government by us as reasonably set against matters of faith? When they blame that in us, which themselves followe, they give men great cause to doubt that some other thing then judgment doth guide their speech.” Ibid., 210.

¹⁵¹ See chapter 10 of Book III for for Hooker’s full argument. “God never ordeyned any thing that could be bettered. Yet many things he hath that have bene changed, and that for the better. That which

again here as Hooker weaves his earlier assertions into his refutation of the particular challenges being made. “A number there are, who thinke they cannot admire the word of God, if in things divine they should attribute any force to mans reason. For which cause they never use reason so willinglie as to disgrace reason.”¹⁵²

In Book Four Hooker moves away from Scripture and begins to focus upon the allegation that the Church’s ceremonies and rites are so similar, if not identical, to those of Rome that they are corrupt by association. In a way that is now becoming familiar, Hooker examines the reasons behind the ceremonies – their purpose and whether they achieve it, as well as challenging the concept of infection merely by resemblance, “the end which is aimed at in setting downe the outwarde forme of all religious actions is the edification of the Church.”¹⁵³ Having revealed the purpose, Hooker then states that although “one ende ought always to bee the same, our waies and meanes thereunto not so.”¹⁵⁴ In reply to the challenge that the Church’s current worship lacks the simplicity of the Apostles’ he states, “The glorie of God and the good of the Church was the thing which the Apostles aymed at, and therefore ought to bee the marke whereat we also levell.”¹⁵⁵

His conclusion is that, just because the Church’s ceremonies and rituals resemble those of the Roman Catholics, this does not necessarily mean that they are to be rejected. Such a conclusion may seem innocuous to modern readers but would not have been so to many of Hooker’s audience. His argument is that as long as what is

succeedeth as better now when change is requisite, had bene worse when that which now is changed was instituted.” Ibid., 243.

¹⁵² Ibid., 221.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 273.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 278.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid..

done is fit for purpose, then the mere fact that it has been abused by some and invested with superstition by others, does not affect the ritual itself. It cannot do so as it is merely an object and the Church is simply “using harmless things unto that good end for which they were first instituted.”¹⁵⁶ This initial good use and purpose is accepted by all sides, “But concerning those our Ceremonies, which they reckon for most Popish, they are not able to avouch, that any of them was otherwise instituted, then unto good, yea so used at the first. It followeth then that they all are such, as having served to good purpose, were afterward converted unto the contrary.”¹⁵⁷ Therefore Hooker points out that what is of concern now is how and why they are retained and used and where such rituals and ceremonies cause problems for an individual then the remedy is the healing of the individual and not the rejection of the ceremony. “In the meane while sorie we are that any good and godly mind should be grieved with that which is done. But to remedie their grieffe, lyeth not so much in us as in themselves.”¹⁵⁸

The preface and Books I-IV were the first part of the *Lawes* to be published and, as we noted earlier, their timing suggests Hooker wished, at the very least, for his work to play a part in the conflicts of his day. The initial addressing of the book suggests something similar and throughout the text the historic context hovers in the background and shapes Hooker’s arguments. And yet, there is obviously much more here than simply a defence of the Church’s practice. This was not the usual polemical, stinging, vicious attack that had become such a part of Elizabethan ecclesiastical wrangling. Neither was this a straightforward defence of the Church’s ceremonies and discipline. Instead, this appears to be a much more theological and philosophical work

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 323.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid..

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 305.

that calls for careful study and thought. Hooker repeatedly looks behind arguments, seeks out hidden purposes and draws the reader into a world where angels hover and God's greatest desire appears to be to make Himself known to humanity. As such the text requires time, patience and an open mind. It does not seem to be a quick-fire shot within a heated debate that would gain support from the waverers and reassure the committed. If that were what Hooker's colleagues had hoped for, then they would have been severely disappointed.

Book V

The initial evidence is ambiguous. Hooker and the *Lawes* do not, as yet, quite fit the bill as champion of the Church and in fact there is no evidence as to whether the *Lawes* had any effect at all in the events that ensued. However, in 1595 Hooker published Book V, and dedicated it to Whitgift. This book, twice as long as that already published, began to deal with the specific challenges made by Cartwright and his supporters and as such has been seen as further confirmation of Hooker's status and purpose, adding another strand to the bonds that attach him to the Church. As we noted, it is this book to which Hill specifically refers, citing it as evidence that Hooker was not concerned to challenge doctrine but to defend discipline. As this book is the longest of all those included in the *Lawes*, it may indeed hold the key to Hooker's purpose and could affect how we read all that precedes and follows it.

In this Book Hooker focuses upon the criticisms directed at preaching, common prayer, the length and type of services used, the decoration of Church buildings and the celebration of the sacraments amongst other things. This indeed looks like a straightforward defence of the Church's practices and would seem to place Hooker

squarely in the front line of the resistance to reform. Here is a man who is articulating the Church's position on the Church's behalf. This is the Church's stand to retain its discipline and to preserve the status quo.

However, when we begin to read this book more closely it is again difficult to simply describe it as an apology for the Church's practices. Hooker's deep theological discussions are as evident here as they were in the earlier part of the *Lawes*. Perhaps this is to be expected when he was tackling issues such as the sacraments, but when we look at how he deals with subjects that are much less controversial and overtly theological, questions as to his overall purpose and aims become more difficult to answer. An example from the Book will illustrate this point more clearly.

The question of festival days.

In chapter 69 of Book V Hooker concentrates upon the issue of festival days and entitles the chapter "Of festival dayes and the naturall causes of their convenient institution".¹⁵⁹ He is confronting the claim that festival days should be abolished, encouraging as they do a continuation of the superstitions inculcated by Roman Catholic approaches to these celebrations. In addition, such days are not supported by the Scriptures and the Church exceeds its power in instituting them. In honouring certain days and festivals Christians neglect the truth that each and every day should be lived as holy days.

Hooker begins his reply with the words "As the substance of God alone is infinite and hath no kinde of limitation, so likewise his continuance is from everlasting to

¹⁵⁹ *Lawes*, II.359.

everlasting and knoweth neither beginning nor end”¹⁶⁰ and readers could be forgiven for thinking that Hooker had lost his way or that the printers had inserted text in the wrong place. But as the passage unfolds it becomes clear that Hooker indeed has festival days in his mind as he travels through a philosophical landscape of eternity, immortality and time. The latter is a gift to humanity from God, which underlines our identity as ‘not as God’ and yet which allows us to participate in Him and experience His presence. And to explain this Hooker cannot resist the temptation to refer to the angels.

Out of this wee gather that only God hath true immortalitie or eternitie, that is to saie continuance wherein there groweth no difference by addition or hereafter unto now...God’s own eternitie is the hand which leadeth the angels in the course of their perpetuities; their perpetuities the hand that draweth out celestiall motion, the line which motion and the thread of time are spoon together. Now as nature bringeth forth time with motion, so wee by motion have learned how to divide time.¹⁶¹

Having explained how time comes into being, with direct reference to God and the angels, Hooker moves on to explain that although time is in a sense powerless and neutral yet we refer to it, popularly, as being active – saying such things as “time doth eat or fret out all things” or that time is “the wisest thing in the world because it bringeth forth all knowledge”.¹⁶² We are in fact, in these words, says Hooker, referring to things which happen “in time and doe by meanes of so neere conjunction either lay their burthen upon the back or sette their crowne upon the head of time.”¹⁶³ Time does not cause things to happen nor provides opportunities and yet “it comprise and containe both.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Ibid..

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 360.

¹⁶² Ibid., 361.

¹⁶³ Ibid..

¹⁶⁴ Ibid..

At this juncture Hooker refers to God, the God who acts in time and who chooses the best time to act. “All thinges whatsoever having their time, the workes of God have allwayes that time which is seasonablest and fittest for them.”¹⁶⁵ God’s actions are sometimes ordinary and sometimes special, “all worthe of observation, but not all of like necessitie to be often remembered”.¹⁶⁶ God is everywhere, agrees Hooker, and yet not all places are equally holy and he refers to Moses and David to illustrate his point. And then Hooker reaches his destination,

No doubt as Gods extraordinarie presence hath hallowed and sanctified certaine places, so they are his extraordinarie workes that have trulie and worthily advanced certaine times, for which cause they ought to be with all men that honor God more holie than other daies.¹⁶⁷

In the next four chapters Hooker continues to explain and defend certain elements of the festival days, in much the same way, referring to the theology that underpins the action and thus vouches for their retention.

What is important here is that Hooker begins with the identity of God. It is only in relation to God’s infiniteness, his actions in creation and history and his presence amongst us that Hooker finds the evidence he needs to defend the practice. Whilst he does not believe that the present ways of acting are the only ways that could flow from the particular beliefs of God he has espoused, they are certainly one of the ways in which those beliefs can be expressed. As such the implication is that it is not the particular changes that are being demanded that are necessarily wrong but rather the claim that these are the only way that God can be worshipped and the Church go about her business.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid..

¹⁶⁶ Ibid..

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 362.

But, even more than this, Hooker actually challenges the view of God that gives rise to this belief. His opponents are not simply mistaken, they are deluded – blind to the fact that it is not God who inspires their beliefs but rather the enemy and their own imaginations, a point he has already made clear earlier:

It is not therefore the fervent earnestnes of their perswasion, but the soundness of those reasons whereupon the same is built, which must declare their opinions in these things to have bene wrought by the holie Ghost, and not by the fraud of that evill Spirit which is even in his illusions strong.¹⁶⁸

But be they women or be they men, if once they have tasted of that cup, let any man of contrairie opinion open his mouth to perswade them, they close up their eares, his reasons they waigh not, all is answered with rehearsal of the words of John, We are of God, he that knoweth God, heareth us, as for the rest, ye are of the world.¹⁶⁹

With regard to festival days Hooker's challenge is to look again at God – at Who He is in His own being, in His relationship with the angels and his workings amongst and within creation. In a passage reminiscent of the early chapters of Book One Hooker is referring to who God is, how he communicates Himself, and how we participate in Him. It is this view of God that pervades Book V and implicitly challenges Cartwright's vision of God as well as explicitly challenging his views regarding festival days.

This example does not stand-alone but is indicative of how Hooker journeys through Book V and is reminiscent of his earlier books. To say that the *Lawes* is about discipline is true, and yet at the same time this fails to convey the complexity and theological depth of the work. The text indeed relates to and has something to say

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., I.18.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 19.

about the Church's position and dealings and yet it transcends those very issues. It fails to fit neatly into a simple apology for the Church's practice whilst retaining something of that identity and yet there is a sense that Hooker has lifted the issues above and beyond the usual and expected boundaries.

Book VI

Book VI of the *Lawes* purports to address the challenge:

that our Lawes are corrupt and repugnant to the Lawes of God in matter belonging to the power of Ecclesiasticall Jursidiction, in that wee have not throughout all Churches certayne Lay-elders established for the exercise of that power. The question betweene us, whether all Congregations or Parishes ought to have laie Elders invested with power of jurisdiction in Spirituall causes.¹⁷⁰

Hooker begins the book with an examination of spiritual jurisdiction, stressing that such power is for the good of the people of God – to guide, sustain and rescue and that this end should be kept in mind when considering the issue.

He gave it for the benefitt and good of soules, as a meane to keepe them in the path, which leadeth unto endles felicitie, a bridle to hold them within their due and convenient bounds, and if they do go astray, a forcible help to reclaime them...I therefore conclude, that spirituall authoritie, is a power, which Christ hath given to bee used over them, which are subject unto it, for the eternall good of their soules...(and) the first stepp towards sound and perfect understanding, is the knowledge of the end, because thereby, both use doth frame, and contemplation judge all thinges.¹⁷¹

Hooker then moves on to examine what he sees as the “chiefest end propounded by spirituall jurisdiction” namely the issue of penitence – both private and public.¹⁷²

That Hooker sees this as the central part of his understanding of the Church's spiritual

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., III.1.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 5-6.

¹⁷² Ibid., 6.

authority shows the unique way in which he approached this issue, and is in keeping with his overall vision of the Church and of God. Hooker approaches subjects from unexpected angles and in so doing opens up a wider dialogue and vista than that which is usually available in the debates of this time. chapter four considers the question of repentance and confession, examining how this emerged as a sacrament and how it was practised by those who have gone before. Hooker's conclusion is that private repentance is necessary but that confession to a minister is only required when, after confessing before God and repenting of our sins, peace does not follow.

Contrarwyse, if peace with God doe not follow, the paines wee have taken in seeking after it, if wee continue disquited and not delivred from anguish, mistrusting whether that wee doe bee sufficient, it argueth that our sore doth exceede the power of our owne skill: and that the wisdome of the Pastor must bind up those parts, which being bruised are not able to be recured of themselves.¹⁷³

In chapter five Hooker tackles the question of satisfaction, in the sense used by the Church Fathers namely, "whatsoever a poenitent should doe, in the humbling himselfe unto God, and testifying by deedes of contirition, the same which Confession in words pretendeth."¹⁷⁴ Hooker stresses that any satisfaction required by God for sin has been provided by Jesus but this does not mean that any acts of penitence by us are "needles, or fruitless" but instead they are part of our participation in God's act of forgiveness.¹⁷⁵

The final chapter deals with absolution. Hooker questions whether there is "warrant" for the belief that a sentence pronounced by a man can absolve us from sin when the act of pardon is God's alone. He looks to Scripture and Jesus' authorisation of the

¹⁷³ Ibid., 52.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid..

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 55.

apostles, and also includes Christ's ministers in this, that through faith and experience they have been given the power to speak God's forgiveness to those who are penitent. He stresses the different understanding of repentance between the Reformed Church and the Church of Rome, where the latter concentrates upon "workes of externall shew" and the former upon "true inward conversion of the heart."¹⁷⁶ Roman Catholics stress the sacramental nature of penance "of their own devising and shaping" whereas "wee labour to instruct men in such sort, that everie soule which is wounded with sinne, may learne the way how to cure itselfe; they cleane contrarie, would make all soares seeme incurable, unless the Priest have a hand in them."¹⁷⁷

At the same time as reserving power for Ministers to act and speak on God's behalf in the realm of forgiveness, Hooker sees the absolution as an empowering of the people of God to discover and receive their own forgiveness rather than a form of controlling the flock. Absolution does not take away sin but "ascertaines us of Gods most gracious and mercifull pardon".¹⁷⁸ However, just in case this in some way diminishes absolution, Hooker makes it clear that this sentence, so spoken, is not merely a form of words but holds within it two effects: the first is the declaration of freedom from guilt and a restoration of a relationship with God; the second "it truly restoreth our libertie, looseth the chaines wherewith wee were tyed, remitteth all whatsoever is past, and accepteth us no lesse, returned, then if wee never had gone astray."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 70.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid..

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 72-73.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 75. Two things are immediately evident from this short overview: firstly, that Hooker is not simply challenging those who are seeking further reforms but he is also still concerned with setting out the differences between the Church in England and that of Rome and secondly, there is no treatment of the question of eldership. The book reads coherently, with some textual problems highlighted, but it does not address the point addressed in the title. We know from other texts available that Hooker wrote a much longer Book VI that did deal with the role of lay-elders and that this draft was read by his friends Cranmer and Sandys. See earlier for full discussion

Book VII

The role of Bishops, a particularly controversial subject in the sixteenth century, is dealt with in Book VII. Their role and office in the Church, so reflective of their Roman Catholic counterparts, was a source of anger and ridicule.¹⁸⁰ The call for their removal and a continental model of governance to be introduced lay at the heart of the Presbyterian call for reform. On the face of it Hooker supports the office of Bishop, but his response takes the form of an examination of their role in the tradition of the Church, their purpose (in much the same way as he looked at the purpose of spiritual jurisdiction), the authority they bear and the honour that is due to them.

For Hooker, taking into account the traditions of the Church is of utmost importance. What has always been should never be set aside lightly and he underlines the fact that as Bishops have always been part of the Church community, this reality must form part of the current debate.

Neither for so long hath Christianity been ever planted in any Kingdom throughout the world but with this kind of government alone, which to have been ordained of God, I am for my own part even as resolutely perswaded, as that any other kind of Government in the world is of God. In this Realm of *England*, before *Normans*, yea before *Saxons*, there being Christians, the chief Pastors of their souls were Bishops.¹⁸¹

But this does not settle or end the matter. Indeed, it opens the question as to what a Bishop is and what is the purpose of the office. The challenge to tradition has been that the current Bishops differ from those of former times and so Hooker must show that this is groundless if he is to support their retention.¹⁸² There may be differences,

¹⁸⁰ For example, The Marprelate Tracts, published in 1588 and 1599 violently and satirically attacked the Episcopacy.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., III.147.

¹⁸² Ibid., 149.

that would be expected,¹⁸³ but if their essence is the same then their office should be kept and safeguarded.¹⁸⁴ A Bishop is an overseer, one “with principal charge to guide...others”.¹⁸⁵ This charge grew and emerged, originally resting with a larger group of Church-governors but it was soon limited to the chief of that group. The role of the Bishop became extended beyond that of other ministers, to include the same “power of administering Word and sacraments...but also a further power to ordain Ecclesiastical persons, and a power of Cheifty in Government over Presbyters as well as Lay men, a power to be by way of jurisdiction a Pastor even to the Pastors themselves.”¹⁸⁶

For Hooker, the honour due to Bishops is not based upon any personal worth they may or may not have but upon their office, “(w)herefore this honour we are to do them, without presuming our selves to examine how worthy they are; and withdrawing it if by us they be thought unworthy.”¹⁸⁷

What is of real interest in this Book is whether Hooker agreed that Bishops ruled by divine right or by the agreement of the Church with divine approval, a key issue between Laudians and Calvinists in the early seventeenth century. There seems to be evidence of both within the text and Hooker states that this is an area in which he has changed his mind. His original position was that Bishops trace their office back only to the Church’s practice after the death of the Apostles rather than the Apostles themselves but he has changed his opinion.

¹⁸³ Hooker mentions the size of the house and the level of wealth, which he seems to think are incidental changes, *ibid.*, 150.

¹⁸⁴ Hooker mentions the size of the house and the level of wealth, which he seems to think are incidental changes, *ibid.*, 150.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 264.

Now, although we should leave the general received persuasion held from the first beginning, that the Apostles themselves left Bishops invested with power above other Pastors; although I say, we should give over this opinion, and embrace that other conjecture which so many have thought good to follow, and which myself did sometimes judge a great deal more probable then now I do, merely that after the Apostles were decease, Churches did agree amongst themselves for preservation of peace and order, to make one Presbyter in each City chief over the rest. ¹⁸⁸

However, much of the argument of Book VII is based upon the premise that even if the Church has instituted the office it attracts divine approval and is thus good, “Offices may be truly derived from God, and approved of him, although they be not always of him in such sort as those things are which are in Scripture”, but obviously such approval rather than divine command suggests that change is possible. ¹⁸⁹ In fact, Lake argues that these apparent contradictions in the text show that whilst Hooker had come to accept the *jure divino* position of episcopacy “several rather odd asides... show up the potential contradiction between too strong an emphasis on that case and the basic orientation of his position” namely “the relative autonomy of politic societies and the mutability of church government.”¹⁹⁰ Through a consideration of Jerome’s position Hooker is able to state that whilst the episcopacy has “apostolic foundations” this does not lead to it enjoying a “divinely enjoined perpetuity and might therefore be said ‘to stand in force rather by the custom of the church choosing to continue in it’ than by ‘any commandment from the word.’”¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 208.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 211. “These things standing as they do, we may conclude that albeit the Offices which Bishops execute, has been committed unto them onely by the Church, and that the superiority that they have over other Pastors, were not first by Christ himself given to the Apostles, and from them descended to others, but afterwards in such consideration brought in and agreed upon as is pretended; yet could not this be a just and lawful exception against it.” Ibid., 212.

¹⁹⁰ Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans*, 221.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 222.

Whilst supporting the *jure divino* argument it does not lead Hooker to the usual and expected conclusions but rather to a much more subtle argument that “(i)n spite of an impressive apostolic precedent for episcopacy, Hooker was loath to insist upon its claims to be the only legitimate form of government and with confusing subtlety viewed it as only enjoying divine approbation.”¹⁹²

Book VIII

Book VIII deals with “the relationship between ecclesiastical and secular power in a confessional state” and particularly addresses the question of whether a civil monarch can be given ecclesial power.¹⁹³ In Hooker’s opinion both sets of powers are to be viewed separately but they can both be invested in the monarch. This issue of Royal headship, viewed in this way, may seem outdated to modern readers, but this book has been widely used over the centuries and has drawn as much criticism as it has acclaim. In defending royal supremacy, Hooker discusses by what right and in what measure the monarch holds ecclesiastical power and in so doing expands his understanding of a society and how power is held and used. His belief is that for both the monarch’s authority is not based upon divine right but rather the consent of the people, which led to many seeing Hooker as having “an essential contractarian” outlook.¹⁹⁴ Such authority is approved by God whilst not resting in any divine command.

That the *Christian* world should be ordered by kingly regiment the law of *God* doth not anywhere command. And yet the law of God doth give them right which once are exalted to that estate, to exact at the handes of their Subjectes generall obedience in

¹⁹² Brydon, *Evolving Reputation*, 3.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

whatsoever affayres their power may serve to command. So God doth ratifie the worke of that Sovereigne authoritie which Kings have received by men.¹⁹⁵

The matters dealt with by Hooker in these final three books are much less general than his earlier books and yet they follow a very similar method and appear to retain the same theological vision. It is not enough for Hooker to simply point to tradition or Scripture or reason, he seeks out the purpose of what is questioned and examines it in the light of what he knows about God and what he believes God desires for his people.

What becomes apparent when reading the *Lawes* is that there is much more to Hooker's argument than simply a defence of Church practice and a case for retaining the *status – quo*. Hooker does indeed support the present system of governance and worship but to simply say this and to walk away, as if the issue has been resolved, is to ignore the rich theological depths of the *Lawes*. Hooker does not in fact think that change should never occur – he makes it clear that change has happened in the past and will in the future. It is the reasons for change that are so important, and it is the arguments of those who are seeking further reforms that really concern him, not simply their call for reform. What emerges is Hooker's vision of God and the need for the Church to keep that vision alive, both in discipline and worship.

In the light of this account of the *Lawes* it is difficult to agree with the *Folger* editors that Hooker was indeed only concerned with discipline and not doctrine. Not only does such a view seem at odds with Willet's concerns that Hooker was focussed upon doctrine but it seems to ignore all he has to say about Christology and salvation,

¹⁹⁵ *Lawes*, III.336.

for example. And yet to describe this as a work of doctrine is also misleading and inadequate. This is not a direct doctrinal attack upon the thirty-nine articles, it does not explicitly refute certain doctrines and nor does it set out a systematic theology detached from the historical context of Hooker's life. There is a deeply theological and philosophical foundation to Hooker's argument that impacts both doctrine and discipline – challenging the view of God and the world that lies at the heart of certain approaches to both the ceremonies and governance of the Church and how the doctrines of the Church are understood and lived. The implications of this preliminary conclusion will be built upon in later chapters. For now, it is apparent that there are difficulties in asserting that the *Lawes* is simply an apology for Elizabethan Church practices and whilst Hooker's own theological identity begins to emerge in these pages, whether it is so tightly bound with that of the Church of England is less than clear.

Conclusion.

We began this chapter with the image of Hooker as the champion of the Church – their identities so interwoven that to speak of one is often to speak of the other. Even the change in understanding of the theological identity of the Elizabethan Church has not severed the tie, and Hooker has now been reborn as a thoroughly Reformed theologian who supported and corrected the Church's beliefs. Even though that view has not been fully accepted by all Hooker scholars, the link with the Church's identity has been preserved.

And yet, as we have seen, the historical events surrounding Hooker during his lifetime and the fifty years after his death, provide insufficient evidence to support fully the

iconic emblem of him as champion of the Church. In a similar way the *Lawes* do not provide an unequivocal conclusion. Whilst concerned with the disputes of his day, Hooker's writing seems to transcend the categories and the usual arguments. His relationship with the Church is ambiguous: he is a stalwart supporter of the ceremonies and of the hierarchy and yet his reasons for that support seem to separate him from, rather than unite him with, his fellow members. His theology uses Reformed terminology and yet his conclusions seem to transcend that category whilst not standing outside of it or against it. The strands that have attached Hooker so tightly to the Church are not as secure as they may have seemed. This truth, with all the implications for Hooker scholarship, needs to be acknowledged.

We have seen in this chapter that Hooker's life and particularly his texts are capable of being read in several ways. Is this problem in reading Hooker one of purposely misreading and misunderstanding? Sometimes, yes. Is it one of a dominance of historical theology with its obsession upon categorisation? Sometimes, yes. But it is also something more. It is because of Hooker himself – the depth and complexity of his writing does not lead easily to a categorisation of his thought. This may have been deliberate, intentional and if so to what end? It may have been that he was attempting to hide his meaning and thus protect himself whilst allowing those with ears to hear the challenge. Lake has argued this.¹⁹⁶ However, there is another possible explanation – that Hooker's writing style and rhetoric are, in some way, part of his theology and that as such they may provide a key to understanding both Hooker's theology and overall purpose. The following chapter explores that possibility.

¹⁹⁶ “Hooker's whole project had represented had represented a sort of sleight of hand whereby what amounted to a full-scale attack on Calvinist piety was passed off as a simple exercise in anti-presbyterianism.” Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans*, 239.

Chapter Two

Hooker's Style and Rhetoric.

In the Oxford Companion to Shakespeare, Hooker's "eloquent passage on the necessity of Order" is cited as a source for Ulysses' speech in *Troilus and Cressida*.¹

And as it cometh to passe in a kingdom rightly ordered, that after a law is once published, it presently takes effect far and wide, all states framing themselves therunto; even so let us thinke it fareth in the naturall course of the world: since the time that God did first proclaime the edicts of his law upon it, heaven and earth have hearkened unto his voice, and their labour hath bene to do his wil: He *made a law for the raine*, He gave his *decree unto the sea, that the waters should not passe his commandment*. Now if nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether, though it were but for a while, the observation of her own lawes: if those principall and mother elements of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should loose the qualities which now they have, if the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads should loosen and dissolve itself ; if celestiaall spheres should forget their wonted motions and by irregular volubilitie, turne themselves any way as it might happen: if the prince of the lightes of heaven which now as a Giant doth runne his unwearied course, should as it were through a languishing faintnes begin to stand and to rest himselfe: if the Moone should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the yeare blend themselves by disordered and confused mixture, the winds breath out their last gaspe, the cloudes yeeld no rayne. The earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruites of the earth pine away as children of the withered breasts of their mother no longer able to yeeld them reliefe, what would become of man himselfe, whom these things now do all serve?²

After such a passage it is easy to see why Hooker's writing is acclaimed as a model of balanced, harmonious prose and yet, although critics have revered his style, they have

¹ Cathy Shrank, "Hooker, Richard", *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*. ed. Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells. (Oxford, 2001), *Oxford Reference Online*. www.oxfordreferenceonline.com. University of Nottingham, 12 May 2009.

² *Lawes*, I.65.

generally passed quickly on to the content and argument of his work. As a result, detailed analyses of the relationship between his intentions and his techniques are strangely lacking. As Brian Vickers points out, although “Hooker enjoys a high reputation as a prose stylist there are surprisingly few studies of his writing, and it is difficult not to feel that his currency is usually endorsed rather than tested.”³

However, Hooker’s reputation as an exceptional writer has not been universally endorsed. Both contemporaries and modern readers have struggled with his prose: the density of his language, the long and often tortuous arguments and the sentences that seem to stretch until eternity. For some, Hooker is egotistically verbose or simply hiding his true theology underneath a swathe of rhetoric.

But Hooker cannot surely be both a classical writer and a long-winded, frustratingly complex rhetorician? That these opinions are contradictory should at least make us look again at his prose. When we do, it is evident that both opinions can indeed be supported, which leads either to a more detailed consideration of the text in order to prove which one is correct, or to simply say that, for those seeking Hooker’s theology, the answer to such a question is irrelevant. This latter statement has been the dominant response – that as fascinating as Hooker’s style may be it is of no real interest, nor indeed any help, to theologians. It is this assumption, that Hooker’s style is accidental, or irrelevant, or indeed both, that is the focus of this chapter.

³ Brian Vickers, ‘Introduction 2. Hooker’s Prose Style.’, in A.S. McGrade and Brian Vickers (eds.), *Richard Hooker. Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity. An Abridged Edition* (London, 1975), 41. Davis comments, “Richard Hooker’s eight-book opus is one of the most admired yet least studied – certainly least taught – of the masterworks of English thought and prose.” J.C.Davis, ‘Backing into Modernity: The Dilemma of Richard Hooker’, in Miles Fairburn & W.H. Oliver (eds.), *The Certainty of Doubt: tributes to Peter Munz* (Wellington, 1996), 157.

Is Hooker's rhetoric simply accidental? It could well be that, as a classically educated man, he wrote in the style of his age and that those who have been educated similarly can both understand and appreciate his writing whereas those who are not so familiar with such a style find it complex and frustrating. If this is the case then what matters is Hooker's message and therefore theological scholarship should concentrate upon distilling the meaning whilst leaving the style and rhetoric to be enjoyed and studied by literary scholars. But is this disjuncture between Hooker's rhetoric and his content as certain as we are led to believe? If we approach Hooker's writing style as an essential part of his message, intended to shape and reveal his theology, rather than as accidental to it, then a different picture emerges, which sheds a different light upon Hooker's theological purposes.

Linking rhetoric with purpose.

Hooker's classical education, both at school and university, imparted to him the full armoury of linguistic tools. Like all medieval and early modern university students he studied grammar, logic and rhetoric as part of the curriculum.⁴ Hooker's tutor, John Rainolds, was famous for his lectures on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and Hooker would have also read Cicero and Quintilian together with collections such as *Antiqui rhetores* and works by Erasmus.⁵ During his grammar school education he would have learnt of tropes and schemes, of the difference between simple narrative and arguments for and against a proposition. This foundation would have been built upon, no less in the

⁴ The trivium was still a part of sixteenth century renaissance education, but with the advent of the printing press there was an increase in the availability of texts and so it would have been more than just a diet of Cicero and Quintilian for Hooker. Being a humanist foundation, Corpus Christi Oxford, no doubt promoted the reading of Erasmus and the influence of Peter Ramus would have been increasingly felt as the century progressed. See L.A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth Century Rhetoric* (London, 1968). See below, where the importance of Hooker living and writing in a time of 'overlap' between medieval and renaissance use and understanding of rhetoric is discussed more fully.

⁵ See P.E. Forte, 'Richard Hooker as Preacher', *Folger* V.674 and Sonnino, *Rhetoric*, for a fuller discussion

study of theology and sermon preparation than in ‘secular’ writing. The structure of sentences, the use of repetition and the framing of arguments would have been second nature to him.

And of course Hooker was fluent in both the speaking and writing of Latin. He was so comfortable with the language that he often wrote in Latin, as we see from some of his notes and also in a private letter to John Rainolds.⁶ To think and write in Latin was as easy for him as English and this classical training doubtless had a crucial effect upon his English prose style. “He belonged to that transitional generation of educated men whose English and Latin were virtually in balance.”⁷ Hooker’s prose is well known for its use of long sentences and detailed, complex argument. Although writing in English, Hooker’s sentence structure and length suggests the Latin. Hill writes of the “latinate inversions and convolutions, in the suspended meanings and mannered symmetry”.⁸ Hooker’s method of writing is a product of his education, a putting into practice of all he has learnt. But this is not merely about the use of certain word orders and style, for rhetoric was about much more than simple language. What was written could not be divorced from purpose: the pertinent question being what the writing was seeking to achieve? The choice of words, of sentence structure and overall style differed depending on what needed to be accomplished. And in the case of a piece of writing that was seeking to persuade, to argue a point, rhetoric was vital.

In modern usage rhetoric is often preceded by the word ‘mere’, as if it is froth; a means of hiding the weakness of an argument or a way of manipulating an audience,

⁶ See *Folger* V.421.

⁷ Georges Edelen, ‘Hooker’s Style,’ in W.S. Hill (ed.), *Studies in Richard Hooker: Essays Preliminary to an Edition of His Works* (Cleveland and London, 1972), 251.

⁸ W. S. Hill, ‘The Authority of Hooker’s Style’, *Studies in Philology*, 67 (1970), 338.

convincing them through the power of persuasive words alone. For Hooker and many of his generation, it was the science of communication; the use of grammar, logic and rhetoric were not just a display of peacock feathers but a measured and disciplined method of presenting and communicating information with the objective of persuading the hearer/reader, not in spite of the content but because of it.

So here we must ask the question about the purpose of the *Lawes*. What was Hooker hoping to achieve through this text? This question is of course allied to the discussion in chapter one. For many years it was believed that Hooker's task in the *Lawes* was simply descriptive: he was describing the *status-quo* of the Elizabethan Church and such an account was itself powerful enough to defeat the critics. Although it was eventually conceded that, "setting aside Book 1, the *Lawes* is in some sense a polemic" Hooker was seen as a "reluctant controversialist" and for many there "seemed to be no controversy at all about the merits of his cause as against those who opposed the Elizabethan order."⁹ Hooker's rationale, put simply, was to 'tell it as it is'. He was not "so much making an advocate's case as offering straight-forward description of an establishment needing only to be described in order to elicit loyalty from any right-thinking person. Hooker's description was singularly eloquent but it was nonetheless a description, not a makeover."¹⁰

We have seen previously that such a view is far too simplistic once the *Lawes* is read in detail. The question of purpose is no longer a straightforward one, but there is some agreement that Hooker was, at the very least, responding to a crisis in the Elizabethan

⁹ A.S. McGrade, 'Foreword', in A. S. McGrade (ed.), *Richard Hooker and the Construction of the Christian Community* (Tempe, Arizona, 1997), xii.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xii

Church. “*The Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity* is a work produced by a controversy.”¹¹ Hooker “argues the rationality of the Church of England position by appealing to first principles, to Reason and Revelation, to Natural Law, and to a whole structure of beliefs. It is a work, then, which belongs to the category of oratory known as deliberative, which was traditionally divided into the two opposed categories of praise and blame”.¹²

But is there a sense in which the *Lawes* is polemical? Hooker is no doubt both refuting and defending but he is also making a case for his own position. However, the very word polemic can be misleading and may need to be reconsidered. For modern readers the concept is often connected with that of ridicule and abuse and the sixteenth century is certainly littered with such texts. Pithy pamphlets would be written to heap scorn upon opponents and this method of argument and challenge gained in popularity as the Reformation took hold and further reforms were called for. Violent assaults upon papal abuses of power and clerical immorality were commonplace. What had begun as a means to stir opponents and allow all sides of an argument to be heard, soon deteriorated into personal attack. These arguments were not just between Reformed and Catholic but also between factions from the same side. “Polemic soon became personal; groups and individuals were held up to ridicule and abuse. In turn, of course, those who were attacked...retorted with counter-abuse, both sides often moving swiftly from vindication to vindictiveness. A growing number of disputes within the Reforming camp soon developed as well.”¹³

¹¹ Vickers, ‘Hooker’s Prose Style’, 42. Vickers goes on to describe the opponents as “Reformers”, which would now be widely contested in the light of the work of Tyacke, Milton, Collinson et al who, as we have noted, described the Elizabethan church as much more ‘reformed’ in nature than previously believed. However, the main thrust of his argument is left intact even with this change.

¹² Vickers, ‘Hooker’s Prose Style’, 42.

¹³ Peter Matheson, *The Rhetoric of the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1998), 3.

It is this understanding of polemic that has misled readers of Hooker in the past. Having in mind such pamphlets as the Marprelate tracts, with their vitriolic outpourings, Hooker's writings were not viewed as polemic but rather moderate and judicious in tone, with their balanced language and detailed argument.¹⁴ This remained the view even though Hooker is far from moderate at times, as anyone reading his detailed account of Calvin's time in Geneva (in the Preface to the *Lawes*) soon discovers, but such an example is still a far cry from the sort of personal abuse that was so often encountered.¹⁵ However, for authors such as Hooker, with their classical training, polemic does not mean the hurling of abuse but evokes the concept of battle, the warring of words.¹⁶ Polemic is a challenge to a duel, not a one-sided attack.

The positive features of polemic are evident. By laying bare the 'realities', however unpalatable of a situation, it provides diagnostic tools by which problems can be honestly faced and remedies attempted. By asking the right questions, and asking them in a way which cannot be swept aside, the first steps have been taken to undermining false certainties and clearing the way for alternative solutions.¹⁷

Defining polemic in this way makes it easier to categorise the *Lawes* as part of that genre and explains why Hooker would consider the use of rhetoric, grammar and

¹⁴ The Marprelate Tracts were a series of Puritan pamphlets attacking the Episcopacy and published under the pseudonym Martin Marprelate during the late 1580s.

¹⁵ McCabe compares Hooker's discourse in the Preface with the Marprelate tracts, showing how Hooker transcended the petty method of insults and abuse and instead presents a seemingly objective view of Calvin's methods in such a way that his "astonishingly urbane insult(s)" are woven into a carefully crafted argument. "The 'Preface' to the *Ecclesiastical Polity* is one of the most brilliant examples of polemic argumentation in the literature of the period. Here the pettiness of the Marprelate pamphlets is avowedly rejected in favour of an allegedly detached process of historical analysis. Yet what the work actually attempts is a systematic debunking of the Puritan experience by the gradual reduction of Calvin's New *Jerusalem* (Geneva) to the more manageable proportions of an embattled city-state adopting (and retrospectively defending) a new form of church government politically and socially determined by the canons of expediency." R. A. McCabe, 'Richard Hooker's polemic rhetoric', *Long Room*, 31(1986), 9.

¹⁶ In greek 'polemeo': to make war, to wage war with. Similar to the Latin pello: the war of words.

¹⁷ Matheson, *Rhetoric of the Reformation*, 8.

logic as invaluable tools in the conflict. His aim is to persuade and his method will be one of praise and blame: his arguments are right and his opponents are to be derided.¹⁸

Hooker is establishing a case (whether or not he was creating something new or simply defending what was in place) and his prose, as we shall see, reveals that he looked not just to the content of his argument to sway his readers, but he harnessed the power of the words themselves. In short, he put into practice all he had learnt of the art of rhetoric in order to bolster and support his assertions.

Analysing Hooker's style.

In order to see the depth and richness of Hooker's style, and the conscious harnessing of rhetoric, grammar and logic to aid his argument, we will consider five prominent features of his writing. Firstly, his use of long sentences; secondly his method of intermingling the particular and the general and how this is a crucial part of the construction of his argument; thirdly his use of constantly referring back to previous threads; fourthly, the skill of balancing arguments, information and ideas; and lastly his use of suspended conclusions and the periodic sentence – a salient feature of his work.

Long sentences.

Long sentences are a well-known feature of Hooker's prose, and are often the first thing that new readers notice. Edelen comments that, just taking Book 1 as an example, the range of sentence length is from 2 to 267 words and that of the 723 sentences 302 are long (40 words and over) and 71 are very long (80 words and

¹⁸ There is surely more than one opponent for Hooker. Initially those seeking further reforms but also Roman Catholic theology and practices and in fact Hooker shows no favourites – whoever holds to a view he sees as wrong, whatever their label, will feel the lash of his critique.

over).¹⁹ As if announcing this as his dominant feature, Hooker opens the *Lawes* with a sentence of 58 words:

Though for no other cause, yet for this; that posteritie may know we have not loosely through silence permitted thinges to pass away as in a dreame, there shall be for mens information extant thus much concerning the present state of the Church of God established amongst us, and their carefull endeavour which woulde have upheld the same.²⁰

It is this use of long sentences that often remind scholars of Hooker's fluency in Latin, and it may seem that Hooker is thinking in Latin and translating into English as he writes. But the flow of his prose and the building of his arguments suggest that this is more than just an accidental feature. Hooker uses long sentences for specific purposes.

One such purpose is to act as a contrast and to draw attention to the short sentences that follow. Here he may have had in mind that "Cicero had recommended diversifying one's style with these "little daggers""²¹ and although Cicero may have "had only the rhetorical virtue of variety in mind...Hooker uses the technique with a firm sense of the expressive inherent in syntactical form."²² Examples of this can be found in the Preface where Hooker is describing Calvin's rise to power in Geneva, in chapter 2. The prose is seemingly descriptive and as such the narrative is dominated by long, flowing sentences as, over several pages, Hooker details Calvin's comings and goings and the reaction of the Genevan people to him. He then moves into a different gear and a series of shorter sentences appear that attract more attention precisely because they punctuate the lengthy narrative that precedes and follows them.

¹⁹ Edelen, 'Hooker's Style', 241.

²⁰ *Lawes*, I.1.

²¹ Edelen, 'Hooker's Style', 242.

²² *Ibid.*, 242.

Within this block even shorter, pithy sentences are embedded (see words in italics below) with the result of focussing the reader's attention even further.

That which by wisdom he saw to be requisite for that people, was by as great wisdom compassed. *But wise men are men, and the truth is the truth.* That which Calvin did for the establishment of his discipline, seemeth more commendable then that which he taught for the countenancing of it established. *Nature worketh in us all a love to our owne counsels.* The contradiction of others is a flame to inflame that love. Our love is set on fire to maintaine that which once we have done, sharpneth the wit to dispute, to argue, and by all meanes to reason for it.²³

But it is not only for contrast that Hooker utilises long sentences – length is required if Hooker is to use the construction of the sentence to optimum effect. “Structure, after all, is a question of word order, of the arrangement of phrases and clauses, and of syntactical ligatures, all of which in English at least, admit of diverse shaping in direct proportion to the copiousness of the sentence.”²⁴ Edelen goes on to comment that in English plain style the organisation of the individual sentence often seems more a question of grammatical inevitability than of individual pattern. “Generally speaking, in English, the longer the sentence, the greater the possibilities of expressive structure.”²⁵

²³ *Lawes*, I.10. Such use is of course commonplace although it is still evidence of Hooker's employment of linguistic tools as part and parcel of his method. What becomes more interesting and which I will focus upon later in the chapter is Edelen's comment that “what distinguishes Hooker from lesser stylists is the superb sense of decorum with which he uses these contrasts...not simply for emphasis, but with acute sensitivity to the expressive values implicit in the form itself. ...Hooker's sentences grow organically out of the thought processes they embody. Whatever typical patterns can be discerned are the results not of preconceived or inherited syntactical moulds into which thought is poured, but rather of the recurrent patterns of Hooker's own cognitive processes.” Edelen, ‘Hooker's Style’, 244.

²⁴ Edelen, ‘Hooker's Style’, 244.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 244.

This will be looked at in more detail below, as we focus upon Hooker's use of, *inter alia*, the period sentence and his balancing of ideas through the sentence structure.

Long sentences allow for the complex arguments that are a distinguishing mark of Hooker's work and which rely upon his use of rhetoric, grammar and logic. This complexity is the product of several features. Firstly there is the practice of moving from the particular problem or fact to a much more general discussion, before the particular is again revisited; secondly the slow building of an argument, piece by piece; thirdly, the balancing of ideas and fourthly the withholding of a conclusion until the argument has been sufficiently proven.

Hooker's intermingling of the particular and the general.

Hooker's method is not always straightforward. His focus upon a particular question often leads to a breadth and depth of discussion that can at first seem unwarranted and confusing. An example of this can be found in Hooker's examination of the source and manifestation of law. One of his professed aims in the *Lawes* is to show that "the present forme of Church government which the lawes of this land have established, is such, as no lawe of god, nor reason of man hath hitherto bene alleaged of force sufficient to prove they do ill, who to the uttermost of their power withstand the alteration thereof."²⁶ But in order to do this Hooker dives headlong into a discussion of the nature of law itself, its source and the different types of law and how they are established and changed. This includes the nature of God, how the Divine acts and communicates, humanity's abilities and limitations, as well as revelation and reason.

And because the point about which wee strive is the qualitie of our lawes, our first entrance hereunto cannot better be made, then with consideration of the nature of lawe in generall, and of that lawe which giveth life unto all the rest, which are commendable

²⁶ *Lawes*, I.2.

just and good, namely the law whereby the Eternal himself doth worke. Proceeding from hence to the lawe first of nature, then of scripture, we shall have the easier accesse unto those things which come after to be debated, concerning the particular cause and question which wee have in hand.²⁷

It becomes evident that such a widening and deepening of the topic is not mere padding but is a necessary step, from Hooker's point of view, in the process of arriving at an answer to his original question. There is a sense in which Hooker is laying bare the foundations that underpin the issue and this information is vital to ensure a full understanding and critique. "Is there any thing which can eyther be thoroughly understoode, or soundly judged of, till the very first causes and principles from which originally it springeth bee made manifest?"²⁸ So, as above, if the discussion centres on law then the term must be defined, its source illuminated, its purpose discussed, before any specific law can be examined. "And because the point about which wee strive is the quality of our lawes, our first entrance hereinto cannot better be made, then with consideration of lawe in generall, and of that lawe which giveth life unto all the rest, which are commendable just and good, namely the lawe whereby the Eternall himselve doth worke"²⁹ Once our vision is widened and deepened then the discussion can really become focussed and pertinent questions can be posed and answered.

This method is not just an essential part of Hooker's own argument but is used to facilitate and critique his opponents' assertions. It is simply not enough for Hooker to take their contentions at face value: at first glance their call for reform is based upon the Scriptures, but to simply say this is insufficient for Hooker. He asks the question

²⁷ Ibid., 58.

²⁸ Ibid., 135.

²⁹ Ibid., 58.

as to who led them to this understanding of discipline, and by implication, who taught them to read the Scriptures in this way. “For the plainer accesse whereunto, let it be lawfull for me to rip up to the verie bottome, how and by whome your Disipline was planted, at such time as this age we live in began to make first triall thereof.”³⁰ This ‘ripping up’ and digging down leads to Hooker making a full appraisal of John Calvin’s ministry, and what led to his particular mode of Church discipline. Only once he has assembled the facts, as he sees them, does he move on to challenge their understanding and interpretation of the situation, their view of Calvin and the universal application of what he sees as a strictly local development of Church Discipline.³¹

Beneath the claim of Scriptural adherence, Hooker believes he has uncloaked an almost unquestioning hero-worship of Calvin, (“his bookes almost the very canon to judge both doctrine and discipline by”³²) that has led to a position of simply accepting what they believe he said, without ever considering the evidence for themselves. The possibility that Calvin could have been in error never crosses their minds and Hooker sees this as a great danger. He suggests the possibility, not as an attempt to besmirch Calvin, but as a reminder of the lack of perfection in all human beings. “But wise men are men. And the truth is truth.”³³ Hooker moves on to a more general discussion of how this particular understanding of the nature and interpretation of Scripture takes root in an individual’s life and how it becomes universally acknowledged and yet never fully considered.³⁴ It is this final point that he focuses upon in the rest of the *Lawes*: the need to look carefully at both the challenges being made and at what is

³⁰ Ibid., 3.

³¹ Ibid., 3-12.

³² Ibid., 11.

³³ Ibid., 10.

³⁴ Ibid., 12-27. (Preface, Chapters 3 and 4)

being challenged, and to do this he will repeatedly make use of this method of looking beneath the particular and considering a much-wider vision of the points raised.

Building upon what has gone before.

It is already obvious that Hooker's method relies heavily upon building on what has gone before. He makes this explicit, stating that he has "endeavoured throughout the bodie of this whole discourse, that every former part might give strength unto all that followe, and every later bring some light unto all before."³⁵ Hooker resembles an architect in his thoroughness. Each section is securely finished before the next is moved onto, and at times it almost seems we are going backwards rather than forwards as, upon completing one part, Hooker begins building the next section from the ground level once again.

It is here that we can see the care that Hooker takes in the very construction of his arguments as he arranges his material with precision. He is not content with simply forming an argument that leads logically from A to B to C, but rather he separates and develops each strand of the argument, allowing each completed section to hover above the text until, eventually, it is rejoined to the whole, often chapters later.

In the example we looked at previously, namely that of law, Hooker begins his discussion by defining it as "(t)hat 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".³⁶ The next step is to divide laws into two categories: the first and second laws eternal. The first law eternal "doth first take place in the workes even

³⁵ Ibid., 57.

³⁶ Ibid., 59.

of God himselfe.”³⁷ Here law is to be thought of in a unique way, as it refers to the divine, “the workes and operations of God have him both for their worker, and for the lawe whereby they are wrought. The being of God is a kinde of lawe to his working”.³⁸

The ‘second laws eternall’ refers to that which we more commonly understand as law, although Hooker broadens it a little. Here God is the source of law and thus the laws are such as He has set down for his creatures to follow. Such a definition encompasses the “rule of working which superior authority imposeth” but he enlarges it to cover “any kinde of rule or canon whereby actions are framed”.³⁹

But the divisions are not over. Hooker goes on to separate out the different types of laws: of nature, of angels, of reason and finally divine law, which is his definition of Scripture. And still he continues. Human law is a sub category, “that which out of the law either of reason or of God, men probabilie gathering to be expedient”.⁴⁰ As Book One ends Hooker reunites the categories under and with their source, “of lawe there can be no less acknowledged, then that her seate is the bosome of God”, but in Books Two and Three Hooker returns to Scripture and further defines it in response to the views of his opponents. These various categories form a unified foundation for all that Hooker will say in the last four books where he asserts his views concerning the life and worship of the Church. His words at the beginning of Book One show how clearly he has planned this, “(p)roceeding from hence to the lawe first of nature, then

³⁷ Ibid., 58.

³⁸ Ibid., 59.

³⁹ Ibid..

⁴⁰ Ibid..

of scripture, we shall have the easier access unto those things which come after to be debated, concerning the particular cause and question which we have in hand.”⁴¹

This use of language and argument adds to the coherence of Hooker’s text and creates the impression of a huge Cathedral, being carefully created piece by piece. Although beautiful in its parts it can only really be fully judged once it has been completed and the reader can take a step back and view it in its towering magnificence. And yet, as we have seen, each section also resembles this: each part creating in itself a miniature of the final version, much like the separate chapels in a Cathedral. Hooker indeed resembles an architect: planned and methodical and led by a passionate vision of the whole, whilst committed to each and every part for its own sake.

A balancing act.

Hooker’s use of balancing ideas, facts and arguments is another component of his complex arguments. This is not just the division of material, which we looked at above, but also the ability to consider both sides of an argument or to assemble all the relevant facts before beginning the process of arriving at a conclusion. This is evidence of Hooker’s “logical method, with its suspension of opposing ideas in a steadying equilibrium of confident poise.”⁴² There is a sense in which the whole of the *Lawes* is an example of this as Hooker balances the two halves upon the foundation of the Preface: Books 1-4 consider the general aspect of the work and Books 5-8 the particular areas of contention. We can see here the interweaving of Hooker’s style; the aspects already discussed above are combined with Hooker’s desire to balance and weigh, resulting in a much fuller picture of the issues. Stanwood

⁴¹ Ibid., 58.

⁴² P.G. Stanwood, ‘Richard Hooker’s Discourse and the Deception of Posterity’, in Neil Rhodes (ed.), *History, Language and Politics* (Arizona, 1997), 84.

notes that other authors used a similar system, for example, More in *Utopia* and Bacon in *Advancement of Learning*. “These partitions may seem fortuitous or inevitable, yet they enable their authors to arrange material that is evidently hemispherical so that we have two views of a single object.”⁴³ He goes on to stress that for Hooker this is a conscious, planned decision, “Hooker means to do this, but his conception must be sustained over an enormous length, like a colossal and far more coherent *Religio Medici*.”⁴⁴

This concept of balancing is also apparent in the very way Hooker approaches his opponents’ views. When he is tackling head on the criticisms levied at the Church there is an air of the courtroom as Hooker allows the defence space to state their case, before being rigorously cross-examined.

Sometimes...Hooker writes as if his opponents were present – in a dispute in the law-courts or in parliament...the dispute is conducted at a direct intimate level, which permits him to get closer, to cross-examine.....If it is a trial, the judge allows counsel for the defence considerable freedom of expression (no more though than that claimed by the prosecution).⁴⁵

This displaying of his opponent’s case and the conversational aspect of Hooker’s style is obvious in Book V where Hooker provides excerpts from Thomas Cartwright at the beginning of many of the chapters and replies to his points directly.⁴⁶ But it is also evident earlier on in the *Lawes*. In chapter five of Book II Hooker is discussing the assertion that Scripture is the only rule of life. He has concluded chapter four by citing Augustine as support for his view that not only a verse from Scripture but also “by

⁴³ Stanwood, ‘Discourse’, 84.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 84

⁴⁵ Vickers, ‘Hooker’s Prose Style’, 44.

⁴⁶ For example, see Chapter 28 of Book V, *Lawes* II.123, where a relatively short quotation from Cartwright is used whereas Chapter 34 begins with a much longer citation.

some reason not contrairie to them” is sufficient basis for a decision.⁴⁷ However, he begins chapter five saying, “But against this it may be objected, and is...” and continues by addressing the objection directly.⁴⁸ Firstly, Hooker sets out the challenge to his views, “that the Fathers doe nothing more usually in their bookes, then drawe arguments from the scripture negatively in reproofe of that which is evil, *Scriptures teach it not, avoid it therefore.*”⁴⁹ Far from ignoring or satirizing his opponent’s position Hooker takes the challenge seriously and meticulously examines the argument, and in so doing reveals it to be weak and indefensible.

But before we get carried away with Hooker’s judicious qualities and the fair-minded way in which he appraises his opponent’s case, we must remember that Hooker is not an impartial observer. He is partisan and his arguments display a controlled purpose; the prose is carefully constructed according to the rules of logic and grammar but always with the purpose of persuasion in mind.

In effect, we are “invited to witness a debate – as Hooker is forever quoting or paraphrasing his opponents – in which a serious imbalance of ‘rational inducements’ will appear on the radical side”.⁵⁰ But “Hooker orders his appeal in such a way as to predetermine conclusions of the discussion by carefully limiting its term of references in advance...His conception of his own work is of an argument so self-confined and self-defining as to preclude the possibility of refutation within its own frame of reference.”⁵¹

⁴⁷ *Lawes*, I.157.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁵⁰ McCabe, ‘Richard Hooker’s polemic rhetoric’, 12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

This tightly controlled style in which the balancing of ideas and arguments carves a pathway to the eventual resolution, is not just seen in the *Lawes* as a whole, nor in specific arguments but also in single sentences. Here we behold Hooker's style in all its glory as, in a single sentence, the methodology of the *Lawes* is seen in microcosm. When viewed in this way we will see the connection with Hooker's well-known and admired use of the periodic sentence, which we will take a closer look at in the next section.

The example used here is cited by Stanwood as evidence of Hooker's use of an independent clause as a temporary conclusion, an example of a periodic sentence, "but it also provides the pivot upon which rests a further succession of dependent clauses. Hooker intends to balance the earlier part of the sentence with the later part, and to reflect grammatically the weighing of the sides".⁵² As to be expected, the sentence is a long one, but it is an excellent example of Hooker's style.

That which plaine or necessarie reason bindeth men unto may be in sundry considerations expedient to be ratified by humane law: for example,
if confusion of blood in marriage,
the libertie of having many wives at once,
or any other the like corrupt and unreasonable custome
doth happen to have prevailed far
and to have gotten the upper hand of right reason
with the greatest part, so that no way is
left to rectifie such foul disorder without
prescribing by lawe the same thinges
which reason necessarily *doth* enforce
but is not *perceived* that so
it doeth

⁵² Stanwood, 'Discourse', 83.

or if many be grown unto that, which thapostle did lament in some,
concerning whom he wryteth saying, that

*Even what things they naturally know, in
those very thinges as beasts void of
reason they corrupted them selves;*

or if there be no such speciall accident,
yet for as much as the common sort are led by the
swaye of their sensuall desires,

and therefore do more shunne sinne for the
sensible evils which follow it amongst
men, then for any kind of sentence
which reason doth pronounce against it:

this verie thinge is cause sufficient

why duties belonging unto ech kind of vertue,
albeit the law of reason teach them,
shoulde notwithstanding be prescribed even by humane law.

Which lawe in this case wee terme *mixt*,

because the matter whereunto it bindeth, is the same
which reason necessarily doth require at our handes,
and from the law of reason
it differeth in the maner of binding onely.⁵³

Suspended conclusions and Hooker's use of the periodic sentence.

Periodic sentences are commonplace in Hooker's prose and whilst adding to both the depth and richness of the text they can be difficult to follow. Such sentences are, of course, not grammatically complete until the end and the verb is held until the final moments, often after a series of parallel phrases and clauses.⁵⁴ It is a distinctive feature of Latin prose and as such their use could just be further evidence of Hooker's

⁵³ *Lawes*, I.105-106. The arrangement of the clauses is Stanwood's, used to highlight the rhetorical tools Hooker has employed.

⁵⁴ In contrast to a nuclear sentence.

educational formation, “merely a case of linguistic influence”.⁵⁵ But as Vickers goes on to point out, “these ‘habits’ are used purposefully, to evaluate.”⁵⁶

The example that follows shows how this grammatical suspension works hand-in-hand with Hooker’s careful building of an argument and the balancing of ideas.

Edelen quotes the following passage as an example, where he points out that there is “but one independent clause, conveying the heart of the thought, and the other members are arranged to point either ahead or back to the core of the sentence”.⁵⁷ He notes that the conclusion, the main clause (which he puts in italics), comes late in the sentence and so reflects much of the attention away from itself and back to what has gone before as well as signalling the phrase to follow.

1 Now whether it be that through an earnest longing desire
2 to see things brought to a peaceable end,
3 I do but imagin the matters, wherof we contend,
4 to be fewer than indeed they are
5 or els for that in truth they are fewer
6 when they come to be discust by reason,
7 then otherwise they seeme, when by heat of contention
8 they are devided into many slipps,
9 and of every branch an heape is made:
10 surely, as now we have drawne them together,
11 choosing out those thinges which are requisite
12 to be severally all discust,
13 and omitting such meane specialities as are likely
14 (without any great labour)
15 to fall afterwards of themselves;
16 *I know no cause why either the number or the length of these controversies
should diminish our hope*
17 Of seeing them end with concord and love on all sides;
18 Which of his infinit love and goodness the father of all peace and unitie
graunt.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Vickers, ‘Hooker’s Prose Style’, 47.

⁵⁶ Ibid..

⁵⁷ Edelen, ‘Hooker’s Style’, 248.

⁵⁸ *Lawes*, I.144 quoted in Edelen, ‘Hooker’s Style’, 247.

This use of an “extended grammatical suspension” is a product of “Hooker’s insistence on an exploration of all the relevant arguments before adopting a controversial position.”⁵⁹ Edelen contrasts this approach to that of Bacon, where the main clause would appear much earlier and the remainder of the sentence used to explain and support the stance taken. “The investigative process comes after, not before the fact.”⁶⁰ Hooker’s method is to lessen the dogmatic tone and, in effect, “he invites us, syntactically, to think along with him and, hopefully, to reach the same conclusion.”⁶¹

When reading Hooker we also become aware that suspending the conclusion is not just evident in the structure of a sentence but is part and parcel of Hooker’s overall method and style. “Not only the syntax of individual sentences but the plan of the entire work is periodic. Hooker “suspends” to the last four books the specific questions of ecclesiastical polity at issue with the Puritans”.⁶² At the beginning of Book 1 Hooker discusses his writing of the *Lawes*, which I will focus on in more detail below, but it is important to note that at the outset he provides “rules for reading” and a central feature is the need to suspend judgment until the end of the work. We have already noted his comment that he has written the *Lawes* in the manner “that very former part might give strength unto all that followe, and every later bring some light unto all before” but Hooker continues, “(s)o that if the judgments of men doe but holde themselves in suspence as touching these first more

⁵⁹ *Lawes* I.248.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 250.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 250. Before we one again get carried away and think of Hooker as totally objective, we must remember that he did have a conclusion in mind and his desire is to persuade. Note McCabe, commenting on Hooker’s use of first principles as an important rhetorical tool: “Hooker orders his appeal in such a way as to predetermine the conclusions of the discussion by carefully limiting its terms of reference in advance.” McCabe, *Richard Hooker’s polemic rhetoric*, 13.

⁶² Edelen, ‘Hooker’s Style’, 257.

generall mediations, till in order they have perused the rest that ensue: what may seeme darke at first will afterwards be founde more plaine”.⁶³

This brief look at Hooker’s style – the controlled, carefully constructed arguments and sentences, has revealed something of the use of the rhetorical, grammatical and logical devices that Hooker employs in order to persuade the reader of the rightness of his position. It is already apparent that Hooker’s rhetoric can be seen as closely linked to his purpose but there is evidence that rather than advancing his aim, Hooker’s writing style actually confused and frustrated his readers.

Hooker’s critics.

In chapter one we discussed the very public disagreement that took place between Hooker and Walter Travers, and in that controversy we saw how Travers’ criticisms were refuted by Hooker’s claim that he had been misunderstood and Whitgift’s response was to provide a ‘right-reading’ of the text. This propensity for Hooker’s words to be difficult to interpret continued with the *Lawes*, and the first published criticism of the text included a direct challenge for Hooker to make his meaning plain.

Of course, this challenge came in the *Christian Letter*, penned by just the sort of man Hooker was hoping to address and persuade, Andrew Willet, a moderate Puritan. Far from changing his mind, Willet defended his position and took Hooker to task on almost every point, and not least as to the style of his writing. The *Christian Letter* describes Hooker as unnecessarily verbose, hiding his true meaning beneath layers of rhetoric in order to lead the faithful astray. It speaks of his “cunning framed method,

⁶³ *Lawes* I.57.

by excellencie of wordes, and intising speches of man's wisdom, to beguile and bewitch the verie Church of God."⁶⁴ Willet declares himself perplexed, continually asking Hooker to "shew plainlie and by good demonstration"⁶⁵ exactly what he means. There are complaints about "tedious and laborious writings"⁶⁶ and the level of concern is such that there is an entire section dedicated to "The stile and maner of writing." Alongside questions about Hooker's theology of predestination, transubstantiation and baptism, his method and rhetoric are called to account. He is "long and tedious" and the implication is that vanity and deceit are at the heart of his writing. In a sentence designed to imitate and thus ridicule Hooker's own style, the author makes his point:

Our last scruple and demaund is this, seeing your bookes bee so long and tedious, in a stile not usuall, and (as wee verelie thinke) the like harde to be found, farre differing from the simplicitie of holie Scripture, and nothing after the frame of the writings of the Reverend and learned Fathers, of our church, as of *Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Jewell, Whitgift, Fox, Fulke, etc.* and that your Prefaces and discourses before you come to the question are so longe, and mingled with all kinde of matters and sutes of learning and doctrine: whether your meaning bee to shewe your self to be some rare *Demosthenes*, or extraordinarie Rabbi, or some great *Pythagoras*, that enjoyne your scholars or your adversaries to five years silence, before they can be perfect in your meaning or able to reple; or that these men you write against, bee not sound in matters of fayth, and therefore you handle all thinges, or else you had no better way to make doubtfull the chief groundes of our faith and religion, and that you would have men better seene in Philosophie and schoolmens divinitie, and namelie in *Aristotle*; or that you were feared, that if you had not handled it with so grave, heroicall and loftie a majestie, you should have bene reputed like some other man, and so your fame should have bene but small; or that you would wearie your adversarie with such thicke and continuall falling strokes, that hee should not bee able to stande before you to strike one blow against you; or that you would beare downe the cause with swelling wordes of vanitie, and

⁶⁴ *Christian Letter*, 6.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

cunningly framed sentences to blinde and intangle the simple; or that you would shew your selfe another *Aristotle* by a certaine metaphisicall and crupticall method to bring men into a maze, that they should rather wonder at your learning, then be able to understand what you teach in your writinge.⁶⁷

This extensive quotation embodies the main criticisms against Hooker that many would still echo.⁶⁸ But is this just the voice of those who were bent on misunderstanding and opposing Hooker? Is this just an example of the insults that were traded everyday in the theological debates of Elizabethan England? It could well be, except that his critics are not always his opponents. George Cranmer, a close friend of Hooker, wrote in his notes on a preliminary manuscript of Book VI that Hooker should abbreviate his sentences. And Fuller admitted that Hooker's sermons could be lost on many, although he loyally put this down to the audience's lack of ability rather than any failure on the part of Hooker. It seems that even those who support Hooker can find him difficult to read and understand.

Hooker's method can be defended, most obviously on the basis that many of the passages are simply beautiful to read. The prose reveals a man who took care with what he said; who was intent upon covering all bases and providing as much evidence as he could for his own views. He attempts to be judicious in the balancing of ideas and the withholding of conclusions, in contrast to Bacon's more judicial approach. The advantage is of course that the reader can see exactly where she may disagree and can enter into dialogue much easier than with a generalised argument – it is possible to agree with sections whilst still rejecting the conclusion, which is often what has occurred and is a strength rather than a weakness.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁶⁸ Modern readers, unused to sixteenth century English and a prose so affected by Latin and rhetoric, often find Hooker difficult to follow. See page 106 below.

But as we have seen there is much that can be said to its detriment. Reading Hooker can be hard work. The long sentences and complex arguments can leave a reader disorientated. His prose can seem like a labyrinth in which the reader's bearings are lost to such an extent that not only is the point of departure forgotten but the conclusion, when reached, is overshadowed by the sheer sense of relief at having arrived at the end.

The problem is often one of attention; trying to keep hold of what has gone before whilst tackling a fresh, complex argument is no simple task and there is a high degree of work expected by the reader. Previous conclusions are checked and held, ready to be modified or allied with what comes later. The whole almost needs to be seen before the particular can be properly understood and yet without the particular, the whole is not easily espied. Edelen delightfully describes with great insight the problems his students encountered when reading Hooker for the first time. He explains that when reading modern prose styles the absorption of meaning is “analogous to the manner in which they would count the cars of a train entering a tunnel.”⁶⁹ The cars move along the same track, head tail, forming a link of meaning, each one moving into the darkness of the tunnel (the memory) in order to make space for the one following. Not so with Hooker. “Reading Hooker for the first time, these students seem to find that, because of his complicated construction...they are constantly losing count. The train has to be backed up, the passages reread.”⁷⁰ They have to learn, he says, not to count the cars just before they enter the tunnel, in fact they have to stop counting altogether “but remove themselves to a nearby hilltop from which they can simultaneously see the whole

⁶⁹ Edelen, ‘Hooker’s Style’, 273.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 273

train and estimate its length, the nature of its freight, and its true direction, even when some cars are still rounding a curve.”⁷¹ He admits that some excitement is lost but there is a “corresponding gain” of a more “comprehensive outlook”⁷² After a period of “vocal suffering” his students settle into the new format.⁷³ Edelen may see this as a problem for the modern reader but the experience of the author of *The Christian Letter* experience was similar, and it seems he never got beyond the period of “vocal suffering.”

What is interesting is that Hooker was aware of this potential criticism, even before the publication of the *Christian Letter*, and anticipates it in the *Lawes*, addressing the point directly (in a sentence of 91 words):

Albeit therefore much of that we are to speake in this present cause, may seeme to a number perhaps tedious, perhaps obscure, darke, and intricate, (for many talke of the truth, which never sounded the depth from whence it springeth, and therefore when they are led thereunto they are soone wearie, as men drawne from those beaten pathes wherewith they have been inured) yet this may not so farre prevaile as to cut off that which matter it selfe requireth, howsoever the nice humour of some be therewith pleased or no.⁷⁴

He believes that some will fail through laziness; some will be unable to grasp his meaning through lack of ability and will have to follow the understanding of others. Such comments raise further questions, not least as to why, if he was aware of these problems, did he not just simplify his writing? Why give his opponents a stick to beat him with? And, more importantly, if his purpose was to simply to persuade his

⁷¹ Ibid..

⁷² Ibid..

⁷³ Ibid..

⁷⁴ *Lawes*, I.56.

opponents that they were wrong and that his own views were right did his complex rhetoric actually defeat rather than achieve his objective?

Hooker knew that his style was intricate and could be difficult to follow, and this leads to questions as to why he continued to write and preach as he did, if his method jeopardised his aim. Such a decision seems perplexing, to say the least, when he believed strongly that the end result guided and shaped the means by which that destination was reached. Is this evidence of a stubborn, egotistical streak in Hooker who was looking to impress those in power, rather than his professed aim of persuading his opponents? Was he looking for future posterity based upon the elegance of his language? Was his prose actually designed to hide his true views, as Willet in the sixteenth century and Lake in the twentieth would argue? Some or all of these statements could be true but they are not the only possibilities. If we approach the text with the view that Hooker's style is itself theological, an embodiment of his belief in who God is and how He communicates rather than simply a vehicle for his message, then a different path appears, that goes beyond the usual categories. In short, if Hooker's language does not just convey the message but *is* the message, then where does that lead us? The next section will consider this possibility in more detail.

Participation in the text; participation in God.

One of the most striking aspects of Hooker's prose is the extent to which he expects the reader to take an active, even onerous, part in the process of reading. He "invites us syntactically to think along with him and, hopefully, to reach the same conclusion."⁷⁵ Participation is, arguably, built into the very structure of Hooker's

⁷⁵ Edelen, 'Hooker's Style', 250.

prose.⁷⁶ Earlier in this chapter I argued that the *Lawes* could be categorised as polemical, not because Hooker was abusive but rather because he wished to enter into a debate, a ‘war of words’, where the desire is not to silence his opponent but to question and challenge. His style is geared to just that approach, where his reader is invited into the text to participate in its journey and outcome. The examples of Hooker’s style all expect a degree of commitment and attention from the reader that ensures she is active rather than passive.

Hooker, in fact, makes this expectation clear. He expects his readers not to receive his message passively, and then either accept or reject it, but rather to journey with him. This voyage is not simply about navigating Hooker’s own argument but as the reader progresses through the text her own views and beliefs are gathered in, and, to change the metaphor, are woven into the very fabric of the discourse. The reader is then asked to sift those opinions and to allow them to be challenged by Hooker’s own vision and perspective. This active participation of the reader, alongside Hooker, is integral to how the *Lawes* is written. The reader is called not simply to view the argument from the outside, as an external exercise, but rather as an intensely internal voyage where her own views are called into question.

The best and safest waie for you therefore my deere brethren is, to call your deedes past to a newe reckoning, to reexamine the cause yee have taken in hand, and to trie it even point by point, argument by argument, with all the diligent exactness yee can; to lay aside the gall of that bitterness wherein your mindes have hitherto abounded, and with meekness to search the truth.⁷⁷

That this mirrors Hooker’s own method in the *Lawes* cannot be a coincidence. They are to imitate him; what he expects of them he no less expects of himself. He too

⁷⁶ Stanwood, ‘Discourse’.

⁷⁷ *Lawes*, I.51.

examines in detail his own views, the reasons and purposes behind them and allows them to be challenged by his opponent's. That he writes the text already aware of his own destination does not negate this; he has simply made the journey earlier and now invites others to join him. At the beginning of the *Lawes* Hooker states that he was drawn into this debate by the passion and identity of those who were calling for reform. Having been so challenged, he examined their arguments and found them wanting and now he asks them to retrace this journey with him, to imitate his own method, in an attempt to discover the truth.

*The wonderfull zeale and fervour wherewith ye have withstood the received order of this Church was the first thing which caused me to eneter into consideration...I must plainlie confesse unto you, that before I examined your sundrie declarations in that behalfe, it could not settle in my head to thinke but that undoubtedly such numbers of otherwise right well affected and most religiouslie enclined mindes, had some marvellous reasonable inducments which led them with so great earnestness that way. But when once, as neere as my slender abilitie woulde serve, I had with travaile and care performed that part of the Apostles advise and counsell in such cases whereby he willetth to try all things.*⁷⁸

Having done so, Hooker declares that he cannot agree with their argument and in fact believes it to be based upon a grave error and then proceeds to ask them to make this journey with him:

(R)egard not who it is which speaketh, but waigh only what is spoken. Thinke ye not that ye reade the wordes of one, who bendeth him selfe as an adversairie against the truth which ye have already embraced; but the words of one, who desireth even to embrace together with you the selfe same truth, if it be the truth, and for that cause (for no other God he knoweth) hath undertaken the burthensome labour of this painfull kinde of conference. For the plainer access whereunto, let it be lawfull for me to rip up to the verie bottome, how and by whome your Discipline was planted, at such time as this age we live in began to make first triall thereof.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 2-3.

As we saw earlier, Hooker knew that much of what he wrote would be difficult to read. In the opening chapter of Book One he explains that it will be necessary to dig deep, so that the roots and foundations of the matters in question can be seen and understood. He compares the task to the digging up of tree roots or the searching out of foundations to a building, “such labour is more necessary than pleasant both to them which undertake it, and for the lookers on.”⁸⁰ We aren’t used to such work, he says, and “when we doe it the paines wee take are more needfull a great deale, then acceptable, and the matters which we handle seeme by reason of newnesse (till the minde grow better acquainted with them) darke, intricate and unfamiliar.”⁸¹ Hooker goes on to say that he will help all he can by building his arguments slowly and carefully, “For as much helpe whereof as may be in this case, I have endeavoured throughout the bodie of this whole discourse, that every former part might give strength unto all that followe, and every later bring some light unto all before.”⁸² However, he is clear that the task ahead will still be arduous. It is the use of the word “we” here that is important. Hooker sees the reader as working alongside him and with him. He may be the leader, the teacher, but this is a joint venture in which both parties are engaged.

Behold therefore we offer the lawes whereby we live unto the generall triall and judgement of the whole world, hartely beseeching Almightye God, whom we desire to serve according to his owne will, that both we and others (all kind of partial affection being cleane laide aside) may have eyes to see, and harts to embrace the thinges most acceptable.⁸³

The reader participates in Hooker’s prose in two complementary but distinct ways: in becoming personally involved with the building of his arguments, and also in arriving

⁸⁰ Ibid., 57.

⁸¹ Ibid..

⁸² Ibid..

⁸³ Ibid., 58

at what Hooker sees as the logical conclusion and destination. Such a journey in effect both challenges and, Hooker hopes, changes the reader's own views along the way. The sheer complexity of the arguments adds to the sense of achievement when the conclusion is reached and there is therefore a sense not just of co-operation but also of sharing in the outcome. Truth is discovered rather than simply stated and received. Such truth is more than just the propositional correctness but rather an acknowledgment of the complexity of the issues; the search for truth being in some way included in the journey towards a conclusion as well as in (but not exhausted by) the conclusion itself. McCabe points out that Hooker's use of

elaborately suspended syntax...and complex subordinate clauses...suggest the twisted complexity of the issues facing the man who struggles against popular opinion for the truth. His road is full of obstacles and frustrations, and his approach to men's hearts is of necessity circuitous and winding. If (Hooker) were interested *only* in persuasion, in persuasion without reference to truth, he would save himself a great deal of trouble. As it is, the difficulty of his task argues his sincerity since it is the mark of the demagogue to choose the path of least resistance.⁸⁴

Hooker himself says something similar:

It might peradventure have bene more popular and more plausible to vulgar eares, if this first discourse had bene spent in extolling the force of lawes, in shewing the great necessitie of them when they are good, and in aggravating their offence by whom publique lawes are injuriously traduced. But for as much as with such kind of matter the passions of men are rather stirred one way or other, then their knowledge any way set forwarde unto the tryall of that whereof there is doubt made; I have therefore turned aside from that beaten path and chosen though a lesse easie, yet a more profitable way in regard of the end we propose.⁸⁵

Hooker's own words and McCabe's comments raise doubts as to whether we can say Hooker's main aim in the *Lawes* was to persuade his readers as to the rightness of his

⁸⁴ McCabe, 'Polemic and rhetoric', 16.

⁸⁵ *Lawes*, I.135ff.

own argument. That he believes he is right and his opponents are wrong is clear, but simply to persuade them at any price does not seem to tally with his style. All I have said in the preceding section suggests that Hooker was very aware of the persuasive tools of language that were available to him but he was also aware that his own particular use of those tools ran the risk of alienating his readers. In short, his style might actually defeat his purpose of persuading his readers. So why did he continue to write as he did?

One possible answer is that persuasion was not the primary purpose of the *Lawes* at all, but rather that participation is key. Firstly, and most obviously, this is participation in the text but although this is necessary, it is not an end in itself. Instead, it is the means by which participation *in God* is made possible. Such a purpose seems a far-cry from the *Lawes* as a simple defence of the Elizabethan *status-quo* but however breathtaking and surprising it may seem at first glance, this conclusion does begin to make sense of Hooker's writing. The remainder of this chapter will show how this vision of participation could be vital to understanding Hooker's style, not just as a rhetorical tool of persuasion, nor merely as a theme in reflecting and fleshing out his arguments, but as an embodiment of his theology. What this means we shall discuss more fully later, but, as we shall see, that texts could be seen in this way is not unique to Hooker. In the next section we will consider how Hooker's approach could stand within, and draw upon, a tradition that was being rapidly overshadowed by a different theological understanding of how truth was discovered and received, and how the written word (and thus particularly the Scriptures) was approached.

Grammar and participation.

The grammar of representation.

Peter Candler in his examination of 'Theology, Rhetoric and Manuduction', argues that, from the sixteenth century, the writing of texts underwent a seismic shift.

Alongside, and affected by, the development of the printing press and the theological emphasis upon *sola scriptura*, a new understanding of written texts emerged. Under the influence of Ramus, texts were created using what Candler refers to as the grammar of representation rather than the grammar of participation.

The grammar of representation sees the written text as a container for truth and the emphasis is upon the argument proposed.⁸⁶ Candler argues that, in direct contrast to what has gone before, the reader is not expected to have been trained in any way in order to make sense of the text, save for the basic technicalities of reading itself and the presumption is that "any reasonable agent would understand based upon the incontrovertibility of the evidence"⁸⁷ As such, the text resembles a monologue, in which knowledge is structured and organized, and "under the aegis of "reason", "hermeneutics" becomes a universalised technique for making sense of any book, a general method of reading which can be applied to any text whatsoever."⁸⁸ Candler emphasises that the relationship between form and presentation, and the argument itself, broke down and the latter became the focal point. Such a shift leaves the text as ahistorical and truth becomes propositional in nature. The effect of this is that God is

⁸⁶ P.M. Candler Jr., *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction, or Reading Scripture Together on the Path to God* (London, 2006). Candler argues that in the sixteenth century both Scripture and tradition became 'books' in just this way, as containers of truth. Both were separated from the community to which, together, they had given birth and which sustained and nourished them and instead were treated as systems of doctrinal truth. Thus, what Candler sees as primarily a product of the reformation became true for both Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

treated as a kind of object, and the apprehension of God appears to be immediately possible. In such a text the reader is passive, receiving from the writer the knowledge he has provided.

All that matters is the argument, and the validity of this argument is...supported by the references to prior textual authorities. Making sense of the argument, then, requires little more than an ability to read a language in the most rudimentary sense. And this reading is ahistorical, as it moves temporality from both the composition and the act of interpretation.⁸⁹

Candler's emphasis is upon the separation of form from content, which plays a part in the "ghettoization of theology as a discrete realm...In other words it (representation) is the result of a theology that does not understand the way it presents itself to be a theological matter, but as subject to prior, established and universally accepted rules of "method".⁹⁰

The grammar of participation.

In contrast, Candler describes the grammar of participation and uses examples from Augustine and Aquinas to illustrate his point. This way of understanding texts emerges from the concept of theosis, the doctrine of deification. This is a well-known strand of thought in the works of the Church fathers. Here the belief is that, as Athanasius puts it, "God was made man, that we might be made God." It is not that each person is called to lose their humanity, but precisely the opposite. Full humanity is only to be found within a complete relationship with the divine. Such teaching is also found in Augustine and developed by Aquinas.

⁸⁹ Ibid..

⁹⁰ Ibid., 22.

This idea of participation as the goal of the Christian life is developed in the concept of the beatific vision. Here the idea is that the *telos* is the apprehension of God, a gazing upon God, for no other reason than a desire for God's self. God as truth, beauty and goodness fills the sight and life of the believer. We desire this, although sometimes subconsciously, and it is at the heart of all our desires for the good, the beautiful and the true. The full satisfaction of this desire will not be achieved until after death but it remains the source and goal of all human life. It is the absolute participation in the divine, which is, in this life, always partial.

Candler argues that the doctrine of participation cannot be separated from the way it was taught, whether orally or in writing. He introduces the concept of *manuduction*, literally translated as 'leading by the hand', which he claims is an essential element in the nature of texts before the sixteenth century.

The argument is shaped as follows. Participation in God is, for the angels, unmediated and instant but for humanity it is "historical and contingent."⁹¹ Our participation takes the form of reading but this does simply mean the process of reading words, but instead it describes how creatures relate to and know God, as the product "not of immediate apprehension but of time-bound transient learning."⁹² Such reading is not just of the Scriptures, but also of the world, and the only true way to read is in Christ. The Christian is called to a life-long learning in reading – reading the Scriptures, nature and ourselves so as to read God and be read by him, that is to participate in His being. "Insofar as God's knowledge is one with his being, to participate in God's self-knowledge is at the same time to participate in his being. Thus to grow in knowledge

⁹¹ Candler, *Theology*, 3.

⁹² *Ibid.*.

is to grow in being, to come *to be* more truly.”⁹³ Here Candler moves the concept on, for if our knowledge of God is never something added to Him but is rather a sharing in His knowledge, which cannot be separated from His being, then participation in the very life of the divine once again becomes the focus.

This concept of course relies upon knowledge as being much more than the accumulation of facts and such a belief affects the teacher, whose vocation is centred upon instruction. Candler relies heavily upon Aquinas here, and his understanding of the role of the teacher and the nature of knowledge. God alone teaches, in that only God can cause knowledge and as such the human teacher is called to imitate God. Such imitation takes the shape of learning by instruction, causing knowledge in another and instructing the learner in what they didn't know before. Both these ways activate the knowledge that exists in potential in the mind. “In both these ways the teacher “imitates” God, whose prerogative alone it is to cause knowledge.”⁹⁴

Such learning by instruction is not only oral but also written. Texts are used to teach in this way, but if they do then “this notion of participation is embodied in a grammar, in the way in which texts are organized as structures for the manuduction ...of readers along an itinerary of exit and return from creation to eschatological beatitude.”⁹⁵ The text will have been written and organised in such a way as to mimic how God works in and with his creatures, and this is where manuduction is vital. God, in teaching his creatures, leads them by the hand, by degrees and over time. This is the nature of the way we as human beings learn. It is also concerned with the community within which the reader journeys, and the belief that as God leads by the hand so the Christian

⁹³ Ibid., 4.

⁹⁴ Ibid..

⁹⁵ Ibid..

hands himself over to God, to be led. The teacher must speak and write similarly, inviting the reader to hand herself over, to be led by the hand, yet not in a passive way but actively co-operating in the journey.⁹⁶

This does not mean that the text does not impart facts nor that it is not seeking to persuade, but these are not the central purpose, which is the transformation of the reader. Such an aim is not one that can be achieved quickly, (or fully in this life) and so the text itself must encourage this process of careful, time-consuming reading that stretches and challenges the reader, invites the reader to journey along with the teacher and through participation in the text to participate in some way in God. “To read well...one must take time, one must learn to remember and one must make a certain progression through a text – a progress which is one of gaining knowledge, but also one of drawing nearer to wisdom.”⁹⁷ In such a text the reader finds herself “situated in an ongoing process of agreement and disagreement, qualification and rebuttal, stopping here and starting again there, all of which is never finally resolved nor fully realised.”⁹⁸

Whilst Candler’s theory makes some sweeping and generalised statements, and it has attracted criticism, the main thrust of his argument is persuasive.⁹⁹ In short, there has, since the Reformation, been a shift in the way theological texts are presented and there has been a severing in the relationship between form and content. Such a conclusion is necessarily general and there will be exceptions on both sides of

⁹⁶ Ibid.. This is a paraphrase of the introduction.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 31.

⁹⁹ See Mike Higton, ‘Review of Peter Candler Jr. *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction or Reading Scripture Together on the Path to God*’, *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10(1) (2008), 111-114.

Candler's temporal divide, and yet the evidence he provides is broadly supportive of this position. Candler suggests that the purpose of theological texts has changed, in that before the Reformation the desire of the author was to see the transformation of the reader, through a participation in the text which was also in some way a participation in God, whereas after the middle of the sixteenth century the emphasis was upon the transfer of information and the text became a container for the truth that was to be imparted. I suggest that this is too blunt and that the desire for the transformation of the reader is present in all the authors, but as Candler makes clear, the manner of that transformation is what divides them. For those committed to the 'grammar of participation', the expectation is that such a transformation happens through historical, time-consuming, labour intensive methods in contrast with those who hold to a passive, almost revelatory method that sees truth as static and capable of being simply received rather than discovered. Behind each approach is a vision of God, and the way God communicates and works with creation, that is at odds with each other. The identity of the God in whom the reader is to participate is distinctively different.

When Candler's theory is applied to Hooker, the effects are revealing.

Hooker and participation.

Initially, Hooker's writing seems an unlikely example of the "grammar of participation." His commitment to reason, his careful arguments and the emphasis upon the sheer reasonableness of his conclusions would seem to place his writing quite clearly within the representation model. He is, after all, writing at just the time that Candler perceives there to have been a shift in approach and as a member of the

reformed church he fits within the personal and theological profile of this group. But to simply exclude Hooker on these grounds would seem far too peremptory. Although Candler is at pains to stress the role of reason within the grammar of representation it is obvious from his description of participatory grammar that this too relies heavily upon a reasoned approach. The carefully structured prose, the sheer organization of the material, and the intellectual path that is planned and constructed is far from an unreasoned approach to the text. Instead, the difference is surely to be located in the distinctive ways in which reason is understood and perceived: either as a logical method of presenting truth or as a means of participating in the divine reason. The latter sees reason as mimicry of God's way of being: reflected in humanity and used by us as a gateway to the divine life. Once explained this way, we can begin to see that Hooker's dedication to reason does not in the first instance preclude his writing from being an example of participative grammar.

Edmund Newey argues that Hooker, alongside Whichcote, Cudworth and Jeremy Taylor, sees reason in just this way. His argument is that "scholarly attention in this area has tended to focus on the increasingly secular rationalistic tradition that leads, by the end of the century, to Locke....and Toland."¹⁰⁰ But, he contends, reason was not so envisioned by Hooker. Instead "human reason shares in the divine wisdom or logos, through the mediation of Christ."¹⁰¹ Human reason is itself participative: a sharing in God's wisdom and at its centre it is Christological – echoing Candler's idea that participative grammar emerges from a desire to read the world, the Scriptures and ourselves through the lens of Christ. Hooker sees "participative union with the Creator God as the origin and the end of all created human beings. If read in this light,

¹⁰⁰ Edmund Newey, 'The Form of Reason: Participation in the Work of Richard Hooker, Benjamin Whichcote, Ralph Cudworth and Jeremy Taylor', *Modern Theology* 18 (1) (2002), 1.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

“reason” in (his) work cannot be separated from God’s loving disposition towards us in his Son, the incarnate Logos, who is both the form of reason, and the only means of its true realisation in us through the Spirit.”¹⁰²

Reason as such does not therefore exclude Hooker from a participative vision or style of writing. But does he portray the other characteristics that would bring him within this genre? The first question is whether participative theology is in fact crucial to Hooker? Participation is of course central to his understanding of the sacraments, but outside of this obvious context, can it be said to be a vital element in the remainder of his theology?¹⁰³ If it were then we would expect to find evidence of the beatific vision as a fundamental concept for him.

The Beatific Vision.

In a book entitled “*The Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*” one would not expect a theological treatise of the beatific vision to be a central feature and yet if we read only a few pages into the *Lawes* this is, in effect, exactly what we encounter. It is this vision of God, at the centre of the doctrine of theosis, as truth, beauty and goodness, as the source and goal of all that is, that permeates the *Lawes*, and it is apparent even at its outset.¹⁰⁴ In Book One Hooker focuses his attention upon the laws that govern creation and even God Himself. Such a study is necessary, he says, in order to discuss any specific church laws. This description of the first and second ‘lawes eternal’ has

¹⁰² Ibid., 4.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 5. Newey states that some scholars doubt if this is the case but proceeds to argue that whilst not immediately apparent participation is essentially fundamental to Hooker’s theology and he considers this in the context of Hooker’s use of reason. See also A.M. Allchin, *Participation in God. A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* (London, 1988), for a brief discussion of Hooker and participation in the context of Anglicanism.

¹⁰⁴ See P.D.M. Patterson, ‘Hooker’s Apprentice: God, Entelechy, Beauty, and desire in Book One of Richard Hooker’s *Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie*.’, *Anglican Theological Review*, 84(4) (2002), 961-988, for a critically perceptive reading of Book One of the *Lawes* that harnesses this line of thinking.

been praised as a classical picture of Elizabethan world-order, and as such seems to set the stage for a plea for the *status-quo*, a keeping things in line and disciplined. But it is far more than this. If we read these passages and notice the language and the flow as well as that which they describe, then a different perspective is gained. The placing of this description at the very entrance to the *Lawes* may not be to display order and control, as is usually presumed, but rather to lift the readers' eyes above and beyond the world before them, from the particular and pressing questions that are filling their vision, and to reorient their gaze to its true source and end – the very being of God.

If this is the case then at the very outset Hooker is inviting his readers to enter a different sphere; to walk through this door is to inhabit a world in which everything is seen in and through the divine life. There are not two kingdoms; there is no outside and inside of God; there is simply God. But this is not something we can arrive at in an instant. Hooker leads the reader step by step, beginning with the human experience and leading on from it to the deep truths and mysteries of God's own inner life. There is a series of movements, of exits and returns that gradually bring the reader to God's very throne.

Hooker begins with a simple discussion of cause and effect. He examines the concept of purpose, and fitness for purpose, thus introducing his understanding of law as “(t)hat 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”.¹⁰⁵ But he moves on quickly to apply this to God Himself, “which thing doth first take place

¹⁰⁵*Lawes*, I.58.

in the workes of God himselfe.”¹⁰⁶ Except of course, that for God there is no other cause or law working upon Him. “Only the workes and operations of God have him both for their worker, and for the lawe whereby they are wrought.”¹⁰⁷ Here Hooker has swiftly brought the reader to God’s inner life, where we can only speak in hushed tones about the movements of the Trinity.

Dangerous it were for the feeble braine of man to wade farre into the doings of the most High, whome although to knowe be life, and joy to make mention of his name; yet our soundest knowledge is to know that we know him not as in deed he is, neither can know him: and our safest eloquence concerning him is our silence, when we confesse without confession that his glory is inexplicable, his greatnes above our capacitie and our reach...therefore it behoveth our wordes to be warie an fewe.¹⁰⁸

It is as if the reader has been brought to the very edge of the holy of holies, has been allowed to catch a reflection, a glimpse, of God, but through necessity has to turn away. We cannot, as fallen human beings here on earth, apprehend God directly but there are beings who can: the angels. In a study of law and Church discipline we may be surprised to find just how much the angelic host appear and their inclusion is highly significant. In describing the second laws eternal, Hooker includes angelic law and it is in this context that Hooker’s understanding of the beatific vision is laid bare, as he writes with wistful passion:

But now that we may lift up our eyes (as it were) from the footstoole to the throne of God, and leaving these naturall, consider a little the state of heavenly and divine creatures, touching Angels ...the glorious inhabitants of those sacred palaces, where nothing but light and blessed immortalitie.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid..

¹⁰⁷ Ibid..

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 59.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 69.

Hooker describes them as “all joy, tranquillitie and peace” and that they are “in perfection of obedience unto the lawe, which the Highest, whom they adore, love, and imitate, hath imposed upon them”.¹¹⁰ He comments that Jesus, when he taught us to pray, could say nothing higher than that we should ask for it to be here on earth as it is for them in heaven. For the angels are those whom “beholding the face of God, in admiration of so great excellencie they all adore him; and being rapt with the love of his beautie, they cleave inseparably for ever unto him.”¹¹¹

This is Hooker writing at his most fervent as he attempts to imagine and describe the angels gazing upon the face of God and the love, adoration and joy that pours from them as they do.¹¹² And we desire nothing less.

In the chapter that follows Hooker turns once again to humanity. We desire perfection, which Hooker calls goodness, and as all goodness proceeds from God alone, then this desire is itself a yearning for God, a longing to participate in the divine.

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

¹¹⁰ Ibid..

¹¹¹ Ibid., 70

¹¹² Patterson comments that Hooker describes the angels response to God “in erotic terms” such is the intensity of feeling. “In their passionate contemplation of God and of humanity they see above and beneath them their own image. Or rather, in God they see that original of which they are the image; and in humanity they see that, alone of all of creation, which also resembles God.” Patterson, ‘Hooker’s Apprentice’, 977.

participation of God himselfe yet this does no where so much appeare as it doth in man.¹¹³

Moreover desire tendeth unto union with that it desireth. If then in him we be blessed, it is by force or participation and conjunction with him....Then we are happie therefore when fully we injoy God...so that although we be men, yet by being unto God united we live as it were the life of God.¹¹⁴

Here is Hooker's belief in theosis, the truth that humanity is called to nothing less than a participation in the divine life: a gazing upon the beauty, goodness and truth of God that is transformative. In this life it will never be direct and unmediated but it is still no less real and our ultimate purpose and destiny. Hooker continually reminds his readers of this throughout the laws by his frequent reference to the angels. The *Laws* is littered with references to them, not least in Book 5 where Hooker begins to enter into the details of the controversies regarding Church practice. When he describes prayer, the angels are present; when he turns to Scripture they are there and when the Church gathers they are in the midst of the people.

Betweene 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 find the same more verified then in these two ghostlie exercises, the one Doctrine, the other Prayer For what is the assemblinge of the Church to learne, but the receivinge of Angels descended from above? What to pray, but the sendinge of Angels upward?¹¹⁵

Having introduced them at the outset as the ones who gaze upon God I suggest that their continued appearance is to remind us of this. They are, in some way, who we will be – beings who gaze upon the face of God, who participate in Him directly and

¹¹³ *Laws*, I.73. "Moreover desire tendeth unto union with that it desireth. If then in him we be blessed, it is by force or participation and conjunction with him....Then we are happie therefore when fully we injoy God...so that although we be men, yet by being unto God united we live as it were the life of God."

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, II.110.

Hooker will not let his readers forget this. His purpose is to constantly lift our gaze and keep this vision of God as our purpose and call and to see participation as that for which we should strive.

Participation may be crucial to Hooker but is this reflected in the very way he structures his writing? We have seen from our previous study that Hooker's method can be interpreted as intensely participative, in the very way he shapes and conducts his arguments and much of Candler's description of participative grammar immediately brings Hooker's *Laws* to mind. However, of itself this does not become a theological process. This would only occur if he believes that in some way he is, by his use of language and rhetoric, emulating the way that God Himself teaches and leads humanity and that through that very imitation participation in the divine life can be facilitated for his readers, if the grace of God so allows. The next question is, therefore, whether there is any suggestion in the *Laws* that this is indeed Hooker's belief.

Teaching: knowledge and imitation. Hooker and manuduction.

As we noted earlier, Hooker's use of reasoned arguments does not preclude him from seeing his writing as participative and in fact it is in his understanding of reason that we first catch a glimpse of how Hooker believes God leads and teaches humanity: how God shares his life with us.

There are but two waies whereby the spirit leadeth men into all truth.: the one extraordinarie, the other common; the one belonging but unto some few, the other extending it selfe unto all that are of God; the one that which we call by speciall divine excellency Revelation, the other Reason. If the Spirite by such revelation have discovered unto them the secrets of that discipline out of Scripture, they must professe

themselves to be all (even men, women, and children) Prophets. Or if reason be the hand which the Spirite hath led them by, for as much as perswasions grounded upon reason are either weaker or stronger according to the force of those reason whereupon the same are grounded, they must every of thembe able to shoue some speciall reason as strong as their perswasion therin is earnest.¹¹⁶

When the Spirit leads us by the hand through reason, careful checking takes place and opinions and claims are weighed and balanced. It would seem that for Hooker the exercise of reason, with the elements of checking and discerning, are all part of being led by the hand, by God. Here we see a reflection of Candler's manuduction. But this understanding of how God works cannot be looked at in isolation, for it corresponds directly with how we learn from God and share in His being. Once again, Hooker's thoughts seem to echo much of Candler's description.

For Hooker, knowledge of God in this world is not usually through immediate apprehension but through reading the world aright, reading ourselves aright and thus reading God. These readings are interlinked; so for example, when Hooker described the way a law works in the world, in effect reading the world, that led him to God and in turn his gaze upon God then led him back to the world. Law, in all its guises, is nothing less than God's communication with the world, drawing it to Himself.

(Lawes) seat is the bosome of God, her voice the harmony of the world, all thinges in heaven and earth doe her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power, but Angels and men and creatures of what condition so ever, though ech in different sort and maner, yet all with uniforme consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ *Lawes*, I.17.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*,.142.

Knowledge is a way of participating in God but such knowledge is about far more than learning facts. It is much closer to wisdom and the process of discernment, and embraces the concept of growing in goodness. Describing how this is accomplished, Hooker reveals his views about how we learn in this way: within and over time, slowly and carefully. Writing about our growth in goodness (and thus in God)

Hooker says:

Concerning perfections in this kind, that by proceeding in the knowledge of truth and by growing in the exercise of vertue, man amongst the creatures of this inferiour world, aspireth to the greatest conformity with God.¹¹⁸

If we pay attention to Hooker's choice of words, they are revealing. We *proceed* in the knowledge of truth and we *grow* in virtue. Here is the temporal work of participation in God. Citing Plato, Hooker speaks of how "wise men are....exalted above men; how knowledge doth rayse them up into heaven; how it maketh them not Gods, yet as gods".¹¹⁹

In one respect the whole of the *Lawes* is concerned with epistemology. The central question is how, "how can we know?" How can we know what is right in matters of Church practice and discipline? How can we know who is right and who is wrong when Church leaders disagree? How can we know whether our own deeply held views should be followed or ignored when we disagree with those who lead us? How can we know what the Scriptures are saying? How can we know if something is from God or not?

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 74.

¹¹⁹ Ibid..

Therefore, if God ordinarily leads us by the hand, slowly, by degrees – through reason, through reading the world and ourselves and thus reading Him and being read by Him – if this is Hooker’s theological foundation, then does he believe that he should imitate God in this way when he, as teacher, is seeking to answer those questions? If so, then imitation and mimicry are indeed part of Hooker’s theological understanding.

As we noted earlier Hooker certainly expected his readers to imitate his own methodology and to sift and check their arguments, but of itself this is not a theological statement merely a valuable teaching tool. However, when we turn once again to the angels we see how central imitation is in Hooker’s thought. The angels in heaven apprehend God in all His goodness, truth and beauty and this leads them not only to love and adore Him but also to “imitate” him – and one of the ways they do this is by doing good to humanity.

For beholding the face of God, in admiration of so great excellencie they all adore him; and being rapt with the love of his beautie, they cleave inseparably for ever unto him. Desire to resemble him in goodness maketh them unwearable, and even unsatiable in their longing to doe by all meanes all maner of good unto all the creatures of God, but especially unto the children of men.¹²⁰

Desire for God leads to a beholding of Him and that in turn leads to mimicry. And if this is the joy of the angels, it is surely no less so for us? The chapter that follows is entitled “The law whereby man is in his actions directed to the imitation of God.” Here Hooker speaks of the desire for goodness and participation in the divine, linking imitation, participation and wisdom as we saw above. After speaking of the first

¹²⁰ Ibid., 70.

degree of desire as shown in our seeking to continue ourselves, through the bearing of children, he moves on to describe the higher ways:

The next degree of goodnesse is that which each thing coveteth by affecting resemblance with God, in the constancie and excellencie of those operations which belong unto their kinde...his absolute exactness they imitate, by tending unto that which is most exquisite in every particular.¹²¹

Two chapters later Hooker directs his thought to man's will as a guide and he begins to discuss how knowledge is attained. Here he is concerned with free will and the workings of desire, appetite and choice and so his comment comes within this context, but would seem to have a wider application. "Man in perfection of nature being made according to the likenes of his maker resembleth him also in the maner of working".¹²²

What has emerged is that participation can be discerned in the *Lawes*, not just as a theological theme but also in its very structure, the latter embodying Hooker's vision of participation in the Divine life through wisdom and knowledge. There is a detectable desire to offer his work as a means by and through which that participation may be enabled in the life of the reader. Such a vision lifts the text out of a mere defence of Church policy and allows Hooker's reasoned discussions, flowing sentences and complex arguments to be seen in a different light. The purpose of the prose, the destination Hooker has in mind, is now not as certain as we first presumed. Rather than Hooker simply leading his readers to the right conclusion he seems to have a greater vision that goes beyond the certainty offered by right answers and looks to nothing less than the possibility of sharing in God's life and wisdom.

¹²¹ Ibid., 73.

¹²² Ibid., 77.

This way of approaching Hooker is an alternative to seeing his writing as either accidental to the content or simply a product of his classical education. Whilst it is not incontrovertible it is sufficiently persuasive to challenge the assumption that those who are interested in Hooker's theology can safely ignore his writing style and method. In fact, this approach not only challenges that assumption but opens up a new pathway where Hooker's theology and writing are viewed holistically and in themselves lead to a place beyond the certainty of correct answers and water-tight arguments. It is this possibility, that his prose is carefully and purposefully constructed to allow the formation and transformation of the reader to take place, in some way, in and through the act of reading, that this chapter has sought to establish. If Hooker's writing is as much 'the message' as the content then to separate the two would not just be a change in style but a refutation of Hooker's belief in the way God communicates and draws humanity to Himself. Hooker not only writes about participation he also invites his reader to do so – a participation not just in the text but also, God willing, in God.

Even though Hooker saw knowledge as transcending facts and wisdom as the ultimate goal; even though the description of his writing as 'the grammar of participation' shows that his method and purpose was not just about the exercise of an intellectual argument and defence, there is still a sense in which Hooker appears to be supporting the idea that God primarily works through the exercise of reason. The ability to 'read', whether the Scriptures, the world or ourselves, seems to have its foundation in humanity's ability to reason. This is subtly different to the often-used description of Hooker as the champion of reason, with all the undertones of later Enlightenment

beliefs in the supremacy of man's intellect. However, it does raise some difficult questions. What does this say about God's availability to those whose reason is not as sharp as Hooker's or those for whom the ability to follow the labyrinthine paths of his text is just too much? Are they unable to participate in God? It would seem that at the very least their participation is in some way on a lower level. Reason, even though subtly reinterpreted and applied, is still, in effect, the pinnacle of human gifts and reigns alone and supreme in the Christian's life and as such Hooker's God is essentially and supremely rational. But is this widely-held belief as certain as it appears to be?

Some of the answers to these questions will emerge in the following chapter as we consider Hooker's understanding of assurance and certainty in the life of the Christian. At the end of chapter one we highlighted the fact that Hooker's texts are capable of being read in several ways, and that this can partly be due to the complexity of his writing, which we have focussed upon in this chapter. However, we acknowledged that these diverse interpretations also arise because, for a variety of reasons, Hooker's words are often mis-read. Hermeneutical issues raised by the various readings of Hooker will be the focus of the next chapter and, using the guidelines that have emerged so far in this study, a fresh approach to Hooker's work will be offered which reveals a complex and holistic theology that defies simple categorisation.

Chapter 3

Hooker and Certainty

In this chapter I will focus upon yet another area of Hooker's theology that has been interpreted in differing ways – the doctrine of assurance and certainty. This is not an example of diametrically opposed interpretations fighting for supremacy but rather more nuanced differences producing diverse understandings. But it will again illustrate how Hooker can be and is mis-read, especially by those who approach him with specific categories in mind. It will also demonstrate both how essential it is to understand Hooker's methods in order to interpret his writings, and the crucial need to respect the text, even at the cost of surrendering certainty.

Assurance and certainty.

The question of assurance was a highly charged one in sixteenth century Europe. The focus upon the individual's certainty, as regards both her own salvation and the doctrines of the faith, were an integral part of the Reformed theological identity, standing as it did against what was seen as Roman Catholic hesitancy. Although this belief was articulated clearly, and seemingly straightforwardly, it had far-reaching pastoral implications and as such was the subject of many sermons – including ones preached by Richard Hooker.

In order to critique the various interpretations of Hooker's theology of certainty and assurance we shall first consider how the doctrine was understood and presented by his contemporaries and the effects, both theologically and pastorally of this teaching.

The doctrine of assurance: the problem.

It is poignant that a doctrine that was supposed to give comfort and reassurance to individual Christians in reality led to acute anxiety for many and for others a sense of superiority and judgmentalism. The original intention was one of focusing upon God's gracious action and not upon the individual's own righteousness, so as to free the Christian from constant unease about her position before God. The concept that an individual Christian could be certain as to her faith, certain as to her salvation and thus one of the elect is not a doctrine that stands alone. Its roots are to be found in a reaction to the doubt-filled hope that was, in the eyes of the Reformers, the result of Roman Catholic beliefs in works and merit as the path of salvation. "For Melancthon, the certainty of faith stands over and against the Roman church's teaching that our acceptance by God is contingent upon works and therefore inescapably uncertain".¹

However, the idea of complete assurance was not something simply plucked from the air as a challenge to Roman Catholic belief, but rather was seen as the necessary outcome of a theology that is grounded upon the gracious act of God in unconditionally electing (in Christ) those who are to enjoy salvation, in spite of their sins. This election is revealed by the effective calling of the individual who is then justified by the gift of faith, through which the righteousness of Christ is imputed to her, sanctified by the inherent working of the Holy Spirit and eventually glorified through the gift of perseverance. This so called 'Golden Chain', the *ordo salutis*, was expressed in diverse ways by different preachers and writers, with extras included (and sometimes sanctification omitted), but the overall result was the same: salvation was from first to last the gracious act of God, and as such once that chain had made

¹ D.K. Shuger, 'Faith and Assurance', in W.J.T. Kirby (ed.), *A Companion to Richard Hooker* (Leiden, 2008), 224. See also Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge, 1982) 166.

itself known in the life of the individual there was no need for doubt or despair.² The assurance was that what God had begun He would bring to completion and worries about not being good enough could be removed forever.

Based upon Romans 8:30, “And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified,” this distinctively Reformed doctrine delivered, it was thought, assurance to the believer at each and every stage for as the entire soteriological narrative begins and ends with God, the individual is released from the burden of proving herself as either deserving of salvation or indeed able to be saved.³ Each stage in the process is evidence of God’s desire and ability to save and the depth of his gracious mercy.

It is clearly obvious that a link exists between the doctrines of election and assurance. This is especially the case when predestination, rather than being viewed as the fickle choice of a vindictive God, was presented as evidence of His gracious mercy, its unconditionality providing comfort, assurance and certainty.

(F)or Anthony Maxey, predestination was comfortable because it showed that salvation depended upon God’s infallible purposes; for Samuel Gardiner it made the faithful “thoroughly [sic] perswaded that we shall one day come to Heaven”. Veron had argued at the beginning of the Elizabethan period that to take away the right understanding of predestination was to take away all comforting assurance. Clearly, the teaching of unconditional election was a means of providing comfort.⁴

² See R.T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford, 1979). For Perkins double predestination lay at its heart but this was not so for all of his contemporaries. Interestingly the title page of Perkins’ work states that it is adjoined to the order used by Beza “in comforting afflicted consciences.” *Ibid.*, 55.

³ John Bradford, a close pupil of Bucer, had given elements of that order – election, vocation, justification, sanctification, and glorification – a very warm and personal tone as he employed them as instruments of conversion, comfort, and assurance, a use to which it was the declared intention of the reformed theologians.” D.D. Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination in English Protestant Theology* (Eugene, Oregon, 2004), 44.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

However, it wasn't simply predestination alone that provided comfort, but each link gave strength to the other, being so "coupled and knit together, that if you hold fast one lincke, you draw unto you the whole chaine; if you let goe one, you loose all."⁵ Assurance was the product of participation in this golden chain of salvation and thus a precious gift in the life of the believer.

To wrongly think that one could not attain assurance of salvation was a great hindrance to the Christian life, and therefore, the spiritual writers agreed, the doctrine of assurance must be taught to all, so that they might know themselves to be "beloved of God".⁶

The doctrine of assurance was the outcome of a theology based upon God's unconditional mercy towards those He had chosen. Such a description showed the inevitability of assurance but however logical and objective this doctrine appears to be, it fails in its entirety if the believer has any doubts as to her particular status. Once certain that she is one of the elect, the mechanism rolls into action and assurance flows. However, if the question is, "how can I know (be certain, be assured) that *I am* one of the elect?" then simply citing the 'Golden Chain' and God's graciousness fails to provide an answer. There had to be ways of knowing, and this became the greatest pastoral question of the century.⁷

One of the answers given was, in effect, to begin in the middle of the chain and work backwards. Individuals were encouraged to sift their lives and look for evidence of the Spirit's work that is the process of sanctification. "To an extent external conduct

⁵ Anthony Maxey, *The Golden Chaine of Mans Salvation* (London, 1610), sig.A₃^r.

⁶ Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, 46.

⁷ Lake points out that although predestination provided "objective roots for the divide between the godly and the wicked" it was also inherently ambiguous as "only God knew the identity of his elect". It would be presumptuous to second-guess God and yet there was the need to internalise the doctrinal truths and be confident as part of faith. It is this link between the objective and subjective that became the pressing task of the preacher (see below for a detailed discussion of this point). Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans*, 151-155.

could be a guide.”⁸ The fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace and so on, as well as acts of kindness and a pure life, were themselves signs that the Holy Spirit was at work in the individual’s life. This in turn was evidence of justification, which revealed an effective call and election. ““And therefore if we would have any true assurance of our election, we must examine our selves whether we be sanctified” by looking for fruits of such sanctification – holiness of life. If the fruits of holiness are present, “we may undoubtedly conclude that we are justified, called elected””.⁹

It is not difficult to see that such a sifting is fraught with problems. Sensitive souls would find it difficult to decide if their life was changed enough or holy enough to lead to the conclusion of election and at the other extreme the possibility of pride and a severe judgment of others became a distinct possibility. Coolidge eloquently describes the practice of self-scrutiny as “like straining every nerve in an effort to relax.”¹⁰ John Stachniewski has examined the psychological and social effects of predestination and the doctrine of assurance in detail, on the basis that the crucial question of how people lived with these ideas is worthy of study. He quotes Blair Worden, that “we err if we neglect the darkness of Puritanism, at least in its seventeenth century form. The volume of despair engendered by Puritan teaching on predestination is incalculable.”¹¹

As the doctrine developed the concept of assurance became interwoven with that of faith, to such a degree that the two terms became interchangeable. To have faith was

⁸ Ibid., 134.

⁹ John Downname, *The Christian Warfare* (London, 1604), 231-232 quoted in Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination* 51.

¹⁰ John Coolidge, *The Pauline Renaissance in England* (Oxford, 1970) 132.

¹¹ John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination. English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford, 1991), 1.

to be assured. The presence of faith meant that the individual could not only gain confidence and assurance from its existence but that it brought with it the certainty that was sought. Having faith meant being certain as to your own salvation.

In their discussion of faith, the spiritual writers often repeated that faith was evidence of election and therefore brought assurance and certainty of salvation. The reason why faith can bring such assurance and certainty is that this is precisely what faith is: the confidence of the believer in the promises of God's mercy and the application of those promises to oneself as a word of grace.¹²

But what was this certainty? For Tyndale, this amounted to "feeling faith" where the believer did not just trust another's word but also, as with any other sense perception, experienced directly the assurance of being God's elect through the conviction given by the Holy Spirit.¹³ "Faith is not a matter of trusting a historical report but of felt experience, with all the clarity of direct physical sensation."¹⁴ This was not everyone's view and many writers stressed not conviction but knowledge, "less a matter of feeling certain than *being* certain".¹⁵ This knowledge was gained not through the workings of reason but, as Calvin asserts, by "the enlightening of the holy Ghost".¹⁶ The Lambeth articles described it as "(t)he true believer, i.e. one who possesses justifying faith, is certain by the full assurance of faith of the forgiveness of his sins and of eternal salvation through Christ."¹⁷ This was not a feeling but rather, as Bucer said, a certain knowledge, engraved upon the believer's heart.¹⁸

¹² Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, 50.

¹³ See Shuger, 'Faith and Assurance', 224.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*. But note that although Shuger highlights Tyndale's emphasis upon felt faith, as Wallace points out he also thought there was other evidence- namely the holiness of life of the believer. Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, 11.

¹⁵ Shuger, 'Faith and Assurance', 224.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 226.

¹⁸ Quite how, in practice, this differed from Tyndale's 'feeling faith', is difficult to see. Certainty implies a conviction that manifests itself in a feeling even if the source of the confidence is not the emotion itself.

Faith was, in the words of Calvin, “sure and firm” in order to express a more solid constancy of persuasion.

For, as faith is not content with a doubtful and changeable opinion, so it is not content with an obscure and confused conception; but requires full and fixed certainty such as men are wont to have from things experienced and proved.¹⁹

Whereas it had once been said that assurance followed faith, the two were now so entwined that faith became in itself a certainty and assurance, not just concerning the articles of faith but of the believer’s own status before God. Such a doctrine was a minefield. How certain did faith have to be? Did the believer have to be without doubt either as to the specific doctrines taught, the promises of God and their own election? The problem became even more acute when the possibility of temporary faith was introduced into the discussion.

The illusion of faith.

The question of whether faith could be lost, or whether there was in fact the possibility of faith appearing to be true but in reality being a sham, was one that caused significant problems and engendered complex discussions. How did the falling away of some believers square with the promise that what God had begun he would bring to completion: that is, the gift of perseverance to the elect? In one way the answer was simple: by falling away those individuals showed themselves not to be one of the elect and thus not recipients of the gift of perseverance. But what about the fact that, until then, their lives had seemed no different to the Christians around them?

¹⁹ *Institutes*, I.560.

As Lake points out, there was a real tension here, as both the reprobate and the elect, from the outside at least, often looked alike.²⁰

Calvin was aware of the problem, realising that the doctrine of assurance may, if applied in a certain way, simply give the believer confidence for today but barely beneath the surface was a constant anxiety about tomorrow.²¹

Thus, they say that even though according to our present state of righteousness we can judge concerning our possession of the grace of God, the knowledge of final perseverance remains in suspense. A fine confidence of salvation is left to us, if by moral conjecture we judge that at the present moment we are in grace, but we know not what will become of us tomorrow.²²

His answer to the problem is to quote Romans 8:38-39, namely that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ and that this assurance was not a special one given to the apostle, but is for all believers. Such an assertion, however, seems to beg the question, especially when Calvin's views regarding temporary faith are taken into account.

Calvin denied that temporary faith was true faith, rather it resembled it from the outside.

I know that to attribute faith to the reprobate seems hard to some, when Paul declares it the result of election... Yet this difficulty is easily solved. For though only those predestined to salvation receive the light of faith and truly feel the power of the gospel,

²⁰ Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans*, 135. Lake enlarges this point in chapter seven, outlining the contradictions and tensions implicit in a view that tried to incorporate the division between the godly and the ungodly, the potentially temporary nature of that division (perseverance may not be given, whilst death bed repentance was always a possibility), the possibility of similar if not identical outward actions and lives and the difficulty of judging inner motivation. Add to this the differing interpretation of suffering as either a test of the elect or the punishment of the damned and likewise prosperity as a blessing of the elect or a false assurance to the damned and the tension is palpable.

²¹ Kendall believes that the doctrine of temporary faith "poses the chief pastoral problem in Calvin's theology" Kendall, *Calvin*, 22.

²² *Institutes*, I.587.

yet experience shows that the reprobate are sometimes affected by almost the same feeling as the elect, so that even in their own judgment they do not in any way differ from the elect...Therefore it is not at all absurd that the apostle should attribute to them a taste of the heavenly gifts – and Christ, faith for a time...not because they firmly grasp the force of spiritual grace and the sure light of faith, but because the Lord to render them more convicted and inexcusable, steals into their minds to the extent that his goodness may be tasted without the Spirit of adoption.²³

The passage is fraught with theological problems, for at times it seems that Calvin agrees that the faith held by the non-elect may well be true faith – “faith for a time” and yet he also stresses that such a faith only resembles true faith, with his stress upon “almost”. It is this resemblance that Calvin takes forward, showing that a more detailed consideration will reveal the differences between the reprobate and the elect. The former will only ever exhibit “a confused awareness of grace” whereas in the elect “the Spirit, strictly speaking, seals forgiveness of sins in the elect alone, so that they apply it by special faith to their own use.” But Calvin’s confusion continues. He asserts that those who are reprobate appear to begin the faith journey, even to the extent of “receiving the gift of reconciliation, although confusedly” and their minds are illumined by God “enough for them to recognise his grace”.²⁴ However, they never “attain the full effect and fruition thereof”.²⁵ This is surely no more than simply stating that time will tell, perhaps confirmed by Calvin’s closing line in the section, “Only his elect does he account worthy of receiving the living root of faith so that he may endure to the end.”²⁶

²³ Ibid.,555.

²⁴ Ibid..

²⁵ Ibid..

²⁶ Ibid..

As Shuger comments,

(t)his distinction between temporary and saving faith took deep root in English Calvinism. William Perkins, the pre-eminent Calvinist theologian of Hooker's generation, thus divided reprobates into those not-called and those granted the temporary faith of an ineffectual calling.²⁷

The quality of one's faith was a decisive factor in ascertaining whether one was of the elect or not, and here the element of assurance was crucial. "For only the elect 'in God's good time are sure of [their] election in Christ to eternal life.'"²⁸

Such a conclusion illustrates the circular nature of the assurance doctrine as the question of its nature and quality once again becomes the focus. Was there, in this "full persuasion of election", any room for doubt?²⁹

Doubt: an enemy of assurance?

On the face of it, full assurance implies an absence of doubt in the believer. For faith to be true faith there will be a certainty present that dispels doubt and anxiety. Calvin focused upon doubtfulness and lack of assurance as an indicator of whether faith was a true faith or simply temporary and other writers and preachers echoed this.³⁰ For if assurance was less than full and complete, it simply mirrored the hesitant doubt-filled hope of the Roman Church that had caused such concern to both the original and subsequent reformers.

²⁷ Shuger, 'Faith and Assurance', 227.

²⁸ Ibid..

²⁹ Ibid..

³⁰ See Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, 50 who quotes from a variety of contemporary preachers who emphasised the confidence and certainty of the true believer.

However, it was perfectly evident that doubt was a real presence in the life of many, if not all, Christians and this tension between assurance and doubt became of pastoral and theological concern. The very same writers who pronounced the absolute certainty of true faith also acknowledged the presence of doubt and insisted that it was not, of itself, able to extinguish faith or was an indicator of temporary faith. As Shuger points out, “the same Reformed theologians who define faith as a ‘full and fixed assuredness’ also (and often on the same page) grapple with the spiritual cost of this definition”.³¹

Calvin entitles a section of the *Institutes*, “Doubt cannot smother faith” and states that “faith is tossed about by various doubts, so that the minds of the godly are rarely at peace – at least they do not enjoy a peaceful state.”³² He goes on, however, to reintroduce assurance into doubt, as something that is still present and able to defeat the waverings of a doubting mind, “But whatever siege engines may shake them, they either rise up out of the very gulf of temptations, or stand fast upon their watch. Indeed, this assurance alone nourishes and protects faith”.³³ Calvin “does not explain how such distrust and confidence can be simultaneously present, although aware of the apparent contradiction” thus posing the question as to whether “(f)aieth standeth not in a certaine and cleare knowledge, but in a darke and doubtfully entangled knowledge of God’s will towards us?” His answer “is of course ‘no’ since ‘(f)aieth doth at length with wrastling overcome those hard troubles’, but this seems to gloss over his earlier claim that faith is ‘alway’ mingled with unbelief in this life.”³⁴

³¹ Shuger, ‘Faith and Assurance’, 232.

³² *Institutes*, I.584.

³³ *Ibid.*.

³⁴ Shuger, ‘Faith and Assurance’, 232.

This understanding of doubt as present in the elect but unable to defeat faith was further complicated by the extent of doubt. For some doubt may be a fleeting period of uncertainty, for others it was more severe and long-lasting. The degree of faith in each person was evidently not the same.

Alexander Gee saw faith as “our certificate and comfort of this election” Such faith, however, admitted of degrees: the greater the faith, the greater the assurance of salvation. Even the least degree of faith brought some assurance with it. Still even with the most devout, “skirmishes with doubt”, declared Samuel Gardiner, continuing, “Hee that never doubted of this election, never yet believed it”³⁵

Doubt was an integral part of faith but assurance, in some way and to some extent, would always be present and although faith may sometimes be strong and sometimes be weak, among the elect “it is never a final eclipse, for God’s grace will restore them to surer faith.”³⁶ As Shuger comments, “(t)he tension between these claims characterizes sixteenth century Protestantism.”³⁷ On paper the tension was a balancing act between Protestant concerns, Scriptural promises and the reality of life and some writers and preachers dealt with it better than others, at least acknowledging if not resolving the implicit problems. In practice the fallout was much more serious. Men and women despaired of their fate and were unable to live with the constant worry that, although for some doubt was simply the wrestling of faith, for them it was a sign that they were indeed one of the reprobate and from this slough of despondency there would be no rescue.

³⁵ Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, 50.

³⁶ *Ibid.*.

³⁷ Shuger, ‘Faith and Assurance’, 232.

Pastoral reactions

The fact that the doctrine of assurance resulted in anxiety amongst Christians is supported by the emergence of a pastoral ministry dedicated to “the cure of afflicted consciences”.³⁸ The emphasis in the lives of these men was the practical, experimental divinity that sought to meet with people who despaired of their own position before God and reassure them of their election. One such example is Richard Greenham, a contemporary of Hooker’s, who died in 1594 but whose ministry made a lasting impression on clergy and laity alike.

Richard Greenham became the parish priest of Dry Drayton, near Cambridge, in 1570 and ministered there for twenty years. Both his contemporaries and those who have written about him since, comment upon “his exceptional work as a parish minister, teacher and comforter of afflicted consciences. Contemporaries believed that ““for practicall divinity ... he was inferiour to few or none in his time.””³⁹

Greenham’s main work, for which he attracted a huge following and a great deal of praise, was one-to-one guidance. He was particularly caring for those whose consciences were afflicted by doubt and fear, especially as a result of the preaching of

³⁸ Parker and Carlson comment that Henry Holland spoke of this ministry as “a previously ‘unknowne facultie’” when he commended the works of Richard Greenham to his readers. K.L. Parker and E.J. Carlson, *Practical Divinity: The Works and Life of Revd Richard Greenham* (Aldershot, 1998), 97. Kendall refers to this ministry as ‘experimental predestinarianism’ and gives other examples, such as Richard Rogers, Miles Mosse and George Webbe. Their emphasis was upon encouraging ‘experimental knowledge’ through the living of a good and holy life, a tranquil conscience and a commitment to godliness. Such a life provided its own assurance. As we shall see, however, it was Greenham who had real success in the pastoral application of this. Kendall, *Calvin*, 67ff. Coolidge points out that trying to reassure parishioners was not the only pastoral outcome of this anxiety. “Thus while the sense in which the Covenant of Grace is absolute allows the preacher to reassure the souls under his tutelage, the sense in which it is conditional allows him still to use the good old anxieties for all they are worth.” Coolidge, *Pauline Renaissance*, 125. Greenham, the example used in this chapter, was not above using the same method, inducing despair when necessary in order to bring home his gospel of hope.

³⁹ Parker and Carlson *Practical Divinity*, 5. The quotation they use is from Stephen Egerton, a non-conformist, writing the dedicatory letter in the fourth edition of Greenham’s posthumous collected works.

the doctrine of predestination and the resulting signs of assurance in the life of the elect. Greenham ran an informal seminary at his rectory, as young, newly qualified ministers came to assist in the parish. Although well-grounded in academic theology they lacked a practical and pastoral awareness of the parish situation and Greenham's own ministry expanded so as to provide them with all they needed to become well-rounded pastors.⁴⁰ It was these students who noted that "(f)rom 1581 to 1584....many instances of troubled people – distressed in mind, body or spirit...sought out the pastor of dry Drayton for words of comfort, assurance and admonition."⁴¹ The seriousness of this problem was highlighted, reportedly, by Greenham himself in the example of a man who, so afflicted by despair as to his calling, took a hatchet to his leg and cut it off. His reasoning had been that, having been tempted by the devil as to his call, and wavering from one belief to the next and back again, he focused upon a pain in his leg and, remembering the Scripture that urges the sinner to cut off his foot if it offends, he did just that. The result was that he bled to death, although Greenham points out at least something of a happy ending, namely that "Howbeit he died very repentantly" but not so that he minimised the enormity of the problem, "(s)o dangerous a pollicy and so pleasant a temptation is it to an afflicted mind to leav our callings as things unlawful."⁴²

Greenham was, in many ways, a man before his time. His method could almost be described, to use a modern day term, as 'person-centred counselling' as he sought to provide healing for his supplicant, not just in the sense of correcting and rebalancing

⁴⁰ Ibid., 21-22 for a description of this household seminary and its evolvment. Many of these students recorded Greenham's sermons and sayings that were subsequently collected together and printed, sometimes after much editing and reconstruction.

⁴¹ Ibid., 87.

⁴² Ibid., 89.

their theology but in that the whole of their life was seen to be important.⁴³ For example, he stressed the importance of eating properly as part and parcel of a healthy spiritual life.⁴⁴ But for the purposes of this thesis it his particular theological take upon assurance that is of interest, and how he counteracted the implicit tension between the certainty of faith and the existence of doubt and especially the possibility of temporary faith.

And in many ways the tension is not at all resolved. Greenham, like all the clergy of his day, adhered to the *ordo salutis* and in particular to the election of God that meant that some, by His grace, would be saved and others, due entirely to their own sin and rejection of God, would be damned. The reality of elected saints and reprobates was one in which he lived and ministered. Assurance was not a stand-alone doctrine; it was part and parcel of the ‘Golden Chain’ and as such took its strength from that theological framework. “Greenham, like other Reformed theologians, did not treat assurance as a separate theological issue, but considered it as it came up in counselling with reference to faith, election and perseverance.”⁴⁵

So the question is posed as to how Greenham provided comfort for those who sought it from him? How did he decide whether those in front of him were the elect or not? In many ways he continued to use exactly the same tools that had caused the anxiety in the first place: the sifting of lives to detect faith and the fruits of sanctification. Faith transformed an individual in many ways but especially in the case of the conscience.

⁴³ “Greenham achieved his cures by observation of ‘cases of conscience’ and personal identification with the spiritual affliction of those who suffered.” *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

In this state of grace, the conscience of the believer became a supernatural faculty, superior to reason, and a reliable guide to living and acting in accordance with the will of God. Greenham gave the conscience great power in the self-examination he urged on all who came to him.⁴⁶

Greenham's method was to strengthen the conscience of those who despaired so that they could, in turn, use that divinely transformed faculty to examine their lives and find evidence of God's presence. Add to this regular meetings with the brethren, the habit of daily bible reading and hearing the word of God preached, then "those chosen by God could recognize in their actions and their affections the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives."⁴⁷

The truth he wished to establish in particular was that of repentance. For Greenham the presence of sorrow for sins committed was "the key to identifying the elect...the godly experienced sorrow for their sins, a desire for God's forgiveness, and a longing to do God's will."⁴⁸ Sifting lives did not just mean finding evidence of godly action and right belief, but also a sense of sorrow for the failures that were still a part of the Christian's life. Doubt, sin and suffering were not removed from an individual's life, even though they were one of the elect. In fact suffering and tribulation were themselves signs of election. Satan tempted and taunted the children of God and this was to be wrestled with and striven against. God used these very temptations and other sufferings to test and strengthen his children.

Greenham grounded his counsel on the premise that the godly do not escape affliction and trials. Indeed, these were defining moments, when the godly could be distinguished from the rest of humanity. In 1584 Greenham reportedly said:

⁴⁶ Ibid., 115.

⁴⁷ Ibid..

⁴⁸ Ibid..

As when two Gentlemen ryde together in hunting, it is hard to discern each others hounds because they bee mingled together, which afterward is more easily done when the hunters are severed even so, so long as god and the world walk as it were together, it is hard to distinguish between the heires of the one and of the other, but when they are severed by persecution, it wil surely bee seen the children of god and who bee the heyres of the world.⁴⁹

Greenham did believe, however, that faith could be temporary – that in some way individuals could exhibit what seemed like true faith but which in time was shown not to be so when they eventually fell away from the faith. “In 1582 he stated that ‘if hee had once seen any effectual marks of gods child in any man, hee would never, but hope wel of him, until hee had blotted them out.’”⁵⁰ His reaction to this possibility was to stress even further that “the search for signs of election (was) an essential task for the godly. No one could rest secure or become complacent, for constant vigilance over thoughts and actions proved the only way to maintain assurance of election.”⁵¹

Which is ironic, as it was just this theological imperative that had caused the anxiety in the first place and had led to the individual seeking out Greenham. It is perplexing then, given that Greenham’s theology and advice differed so little from that which was mainstream, that his counsel proved such a consolation and encouragement. The answer lies in what Parker and Carlson refer to as the “shared assumptions” between Greenham and his supplicants.

As Parker and Carlson point out, Greenham and his ‘patients’ shared a view of the world that shaped their understanding and beliefs. It was Greenham’s ability to use

⁴⁹ Ibid., 88.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 115.

⁵¹ Ibid..

this in such a way that those who sought his counsel left with a fresh understanding of their anxiety and the sufferings they bore. But this of itself doesn't answer the question. They may well share the same views concerning each element of the *ordo salutis*, but that did not reassure them that they were one of the elect. Nor, in effect, could sanctification for, even in Greenham's theology, these elements could be temporary and counterfeit. Perseverance could not be assumed. So how was this resolved?

It was resolved by Greenham's own belief that whoever sought him out were, by their very presence in front of him, one of the godly elect. It was his confidence in this fact and the individual's trust in Greenham's discernment that allowed assurance to flow from his words and advice – advice that differed little from that readily available elsewhere.⁵² Parker and Carlson seek to understand Greenham's ministry through a detailed analysis of this shared metaphysical viewpoint but, as shown, this alone fails to provide the answer. Instead, the truth is revealed when they comment that

(i)n case after case his student reported that Greenham began with a reminder that the very fact they sought spiritual counsel was a sign of the Holy Spirit working in their life and evidence of grace.⁵³

Greenham's ministry was a practical response to a “deeply felt need of the period. The world-view that resulted from Reformed Elizabethan religion had unexpected consequences and produced extreme and troubling cases of personal anxiety”.⁵⁴ His method no doubt saved many from personal despair and enriched lives stricken by anxiety and uncertainty, but in effect the same tensions existed in his own theology.

⁵² Bishop Corbett noted that whilst “Perkins approach often induced despair, Greenham's works proved a comfort and cure for afflicted consciences.” *Ibid.*, 97.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

His strength was to apply his own formula, namely that only the elect would, in their misery, seek his counsel and this opened the gate of assurance that the ‘Golden Chain’ provided. Once included, comfort followed and flowed even amidst the most serious doubts and suffering. His success lay in his ability to convince his supplicants of this. But did this really answer the questions that lay at the heart of the anxiety? What did it mean to be sure and certain? Was doubt always a sin? What was the difference between remorse for sin and simply a terrible feeling of despair about one’s own election? And where was God in all this – was He simply wielding a stick of discipline and trial? What was God really like? For at the heart of the *ordo salutis* was a question not about God’s ways but about His very nature.

Hooker’s response

The question of certainty and assurance were evidently of concern to Hooker and two of his surviving sermons engage with some of the questions and problems raised by this strand of belief. In the first sermon “*Upon Part of St. Jude.*”⁵⁵ (1582/3) and “*A Learned and Comfortable Sermon of the Certaintie and Perpetuitie of Faith in the Elect*”⁵⁶ (1585) we have a glimpse of Hooker’s particular pastoral and theological response to the doctrine of assurance and certainty. The latter address was originally part of a series, but unfortunately this is the only one to have survived. However, it was not only in sermons that Hooker engaged with the area of knowledge and assurance, there are passages in the *Lawes* that address this same issue. In the ‘Dublin Fragments’, an uncompleted text recovered after Hooker’s death, in which he had

⁵⁵ *Jude 1*. The dating of the sermons are from internal evidence only and there was some support for a much later date, (1594). The latter is now thought highly unlikely. See *Folger V.I*. As we shall see, Hooker’s first sermon on *St. Jude* has caused many concerns for his supporters and has led to the opinion that Hooker changed his mind about the doctrine of assurance.

⁵⁶ *Certaintie*. This sermon was originally part of a series, but unfortunately this is the only sermon to have survived.

begun to prepare a reply to his critics, the topic is again addressed.⁵⁷ These texts will form the basis of our discussion, with the emphasis being upon the *Certainitie* sermon.

St Jude

If the dating of this sermon is correct, 1582/3, this is the earliest example we have of Hooker's theology, although it is important to note that it is only two years before his appointment at the Temple. The place and context of the sermon is unknown and it seems that it came to light after Hooker's death when his friends gathered up his papers. The sermon (and the one that followed) focuses upon five verses from the book of Jude (17-21)

17. But yee, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ,

18. How that they told you, that there should be mockers in the last time, who should walke after their own ungodly lusts.

19. These are makers of sects, fleshly, having not the spirit.

20. But yee, beloved, edifie your selves in your most holie faith, praying in the holy Ghost,

21. And keepe your selves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternall life.⁵⁸

The thrust of the sermon appears to be in line with orthodox Calvinist theology, with a belief in temporary faith, the careful scrutinizing of life in order to ascertain whether one is a member of the elect, the possibility of infallible evidence as to one's own salvation and the emphasis upon the gift of perseverance to those who have been saved.

⁵⁷ DF.

⁵⁸ *Jude 1*, 13.

In this sermon Hooker addressed the thorny question of those who appeared to be full members of the Church but who in fact were “evill and wickedly disposed persons, not of the mysticall body.”⁵⁹ Hooker focuses initially upon these people and then latterly upon Christians and how “they are taught...to rest their hearts on Gods eternall and everlasting truth.”⁶⁰ With regard to reprobates, Hooker emphasises that the Scriptures speak of such people and so their presence should not cause alarm. Hooker’s message is that Christians should not be concerned by those who have no faith nor by those who fall away, as this has always been a reality. The fact that those who fall away from faith appeared to be full members of the Christian family should not cause consternation either, as it is clear that such people never had a true faith; if they had then they would never have fallen away.

What if they seemed to bee pillars and principall upholders of our faith? What is that to us, which know that Angels have fallen from heaven? Although if these men had beene of us indeed, (O the blessedness of a Christian man’s estate!) they had stood surere then the Angels, they had never departed from their place. Whereas now we mervaile not at their departure at all, neither are we prejudiced by their falling away; because they were not of us, sith they are fleshly and have not the spirit. Children abide in the house for ever; they are bondmen and bondwomen which are cast out.⁶¹

In the midst of this teaching Hooker deliberates upon how the Scriptures prophesy these events and explains that prophecy is a gift of God, “God, which lightened thus the eies of their understanding giving them knowledge by unusuall and extraordinarie meanes” whereas we are instructed “by the ministry of men, which leads us along like

⁵⁹ Ibid..

⁶⁰ Ibid., 14.

⁶¹ Ibid., 27.

children fro a letter to a syllable, from a word to a line, from a line to a sentence, from a sentence to a side, and so turne over.”⁶²

Hooker has addressed the question of how we know about matters of faith and has pointed to the usual manner of learning and also the extraordinary – the supernatural revelation from God. He appears to limit revelation to the prophets of old, with whom God had a direct and intimate relationship in which He taught them directly through dreams and revelations. This division of knowledge is echoed in the *Lawes* where Hooker says,

*There are but two waies wherby the spirit leadeth men into all truth: the one extraordinarie, the other common; the one belonging but unto some few, the other extending it selfe unto all that are of God; the one that which we call by a speciall divine excellency Revelation, the other Reason.*⁶³

As Hooker continues to explain the role of Scriptural prophecies as crucial for understanding present events, he spells out how God leads and reassures his people. It is when the Scriptures are fulfilled in our lives that our confidence in them is built and developed, linking experience and faith in a way that views God as active in the world as well as in the texts.

For when many things spoken of before in scripture, whereof we see first one thing accomplished, and then another, and so a third, perceive wee not plainly, that God doeth nothing else but lead us along by the hand, til he have settled us upon the rocke of an assured hope, that *no one jote or tittle of his word shall passe till all be fulfilled.*⁶⁴

⁶² Here we see Hooker’s method, as described in the previous chapter, described in the text – the building of arguments, the development of thought, the responsibility of the teacher and the role of the learner.

⁶³ *Lawes* I.17. Hooker seems to have extended the possibility of revelation beyond Scriptural prophets but it is still a rare occurrence.

⁶⁴ *Jude* 1 18. Here we see again Hooker’s insistence that God leads by the hand, step by step.

But Hooker's main thrust is that the presence of mockers and reprobates should not disquiet the faithful, but rather their presence has been foretold and is expected. They in fact support rather than refute the Scriptures. But then Hooker moves on to the really difficult subject of how we are to know who is reprobate and who is elect. His answer is that only God knows, and therefore our first action should be to treat "all men as brethren" until such time as they fall away.⁶⁵ Such a separation must be solely their own decision and must not be forced by the judgment of others. In a forerunner of Hooker's teaching in his *Justification* sermon, Hooker sets out the various and differing ways in which separation and severance occurs and he makes it clear that only apostasy is a full falling away. This apostasy is full and voluntary – not caused by the force of others, the individual's own weakness or fears, nor torments that they could no longer endure. *Jude* refers to those who "voluntarily did separate themselves with a fully settled, and altogether determined purpose never to name the Lord Jesus any more nor to have any fellowship with his saints"⁶⁶

This full apostasy is therefore how the reprobate are known, but the question still looms as to why these people could fall away after having been apparently full members of the Church. Here Hooker seems to be referring to temporary faith, as he states they may have been amongst the Church but not of it, although his view would seem closer to the concept that such people never had a faith rather than Calvin's belief in a true, counterfeit faith being possible. In effect their true position is revealed by their withdrawal.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 26

⁶⁶ Ibid., 27.

Hooker has however raised the spectre of anxiety – the very real possibility that this could happen to anyone. The question hovers, ‘How can we know that we will not fall away and show ourselves reprobates?’ To which he appears to give a classic answer: by sifting our lives for signs of election. It is this way that infallible evidence is to be gained.

Hooker says that it “behoveth” Christians to do this “greatly” for they must know “whether you be bond or free, children or no children.”⁶⁷ He develops this further, “God hath left us infallible evidence, whereby we may at any time give true and righteous sentence upon ourselves. We cannot examine the hearts of other men, we may our owne.” We know we are not reprobates, he says, “because our spirit doth bear us record, that the faith of our lord Jesus Christ is in us.”⁶⁸

In the paragraph that follows Hooker looks to the Scriptures for guidance as to what the individual is looking for and he lists the changes in life that will be used as evidence: where there was once pride, headiness, fierceness and a greed for all the world had to offer there is now a hatred of such things and a delight in God shown in the way life is lived and God is worshipped. “It is as easie a matter for the spirit within you to tell whose yee are, as for the eies of your body to judge where you sit, or in what place you stand.”⁶⁹

The Certaintie Sermon

Hooker’s sermon on certainty is not the most widely read or known of his works, as scholarship bears out, and as such it may be helpful to provide an overview of the

⁶⁷ Ibid., 28.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 28.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 28.

salient points before we consider the reactions to it. Such a complex and creative sermon is difficult to summarise and inevitably, as the discussion progresses, the limitations of this synopsis will become increasingly apparent. On the face of it the sermon is in line with the orthodox reformed teaching – alluding to the *ordo salutis* and the comfort that is available to the elect from the certainty present in their lives and the promise of perseverance. As we shall see, this is not quite what is delivered.⁷⁰ His aim appears to be to provide reassurance and comfort by demonstrating that faith has not failed simply because of the existence of doubts nor even where there is despair. He points to the strengths and limits of reason within faith and introduces and establishes the experience of God’s goodness as an essential element in the life of faith. He does not believe that infallible certainty regarding matters of faith, either in intellectual belief or in the experience of God, is either possible *or desirable* but he is confident that enough certainty is available to the believer to provide assurance and peace. He challenges passivity and exhorts his hearers to wake-up their memories and strengthen themselves in times of despair and anxiety by remembering what God has already done for them. Perseverance is a gift from God and will be given, because of who God is. It is this fact, that God is good as well as true, that provides the real comfort to believers. Certainty is not about ticking boxes, checking what is or is not present (although such evidence is not without value) but rather flows from catching a glimpse of God in and through his participation in the world and in the individual and holding on to it.

⁷⁰ Hooker obviously had a penchant for ‘misleading’ titles.

Initial reactions

As far as we know Hooker's sermon on *Jude* created no particular problems for him and was certainly not mentioned either by Travers or Willet in their conflicts with Hooker. The *Certaintie* sermon, however, does feature in the quarrel between Travers and Hooker and was cited by Travers in his supplication. Travers disagreed vehemently with Hooker's understanding of certainty and was disturbed by his use of reason, elevating human logic above the message of the Scriptures and the reality of faith. The fact that he even mentions this area shows the depth of his concern as he implied that many other smaller issues he had set to one side. Hooker was "unsound" in many areas of doctrine although some matters were of "smaller weight, and so covertly delivered, that no greate offence to the church was to be feared in them".⁷¹ Other subjects, however, could not simply be left unchallenged, and certainty was one such issue. Travers baulked at Hooker's understanding of certainty, namely "that the assurance of that we believe by the word, is not so certeyne as of that we perceive by sense, I both taught the doctrine otherwise, namely, the assurance of faith to be greater, which assureth of thinges above and contrary to all sense and humane understanding". Hooker was out of step with orthodox theology, at least in Travers opinion, to such an extent that he felt he must be privately and publicly challenged.⁷²

Shuger points out that there was much in the sermon that Travers would have agreed with wholeheartedly,⁷³ for even though "the Reformed position turns out to be fairly

⁷¹ *Certaintie*, 198.

⁷² This wasn't Travers only or most serious concern, he was particularly affronted by Hooker's views concerning Roman Catholicism and the faith of those who had gone before, but it was of sufficient concern for him to specifically refer to it.

⁷³ Such as imputed righteousness for example

complex, ...if Hooker repudiated certain elements, he affirmed others.”⁷⁴ But in this one assertion, that assurance of the senses was greater than that provided by the word, Travers detected a serious doctrinal error that coloured the entire message of the sermon.

So what did Hooker actually say that gave rise to such criticism? The statement to which Travers refers comes within the context of Hooker raising questions as to why our faith is often so weak and why we have so many doubts. “But they in whose hearts the light of grace doth shine, they that are taught of god, why are they so weake in fayth?”⁷⁵ Hooker seeks to alleviate the problem by looking at the source of concern. As Christians we believe that we are taught by God’s light of grace and as such there is an expectation that our assent to Christian teaching should be full and unwavering. It therefore seems strange that our experience is not of such complete certainty. What is the reason for such a lack of assurance? Here Hooker must have been aware of all the many answers that had been given: that such wavering was evidence of a temporary faith or a counterfeit faith; that it is because of sin or else it is a test from God and his comment that the uncertainty may not be strange once we understand why could easily stand within that sphere of belief. But that is not where Hooker proceeds. Instead, he moves on to the concepts of knowledge and what level of certainty is available to humanity with regard to different areas of knowledge and the objects of that knowledge. What is crucial is that we define what we mean by certainty, and how certainty is obtained. This is Hooker’s epistemology – how do we

⁷⁴ Shuger, ‘Faith and Assurance’, 224, although Shuger later points out “the understanding of faith that Hooker rejected in *The Certaintie* was not simply a view espoused by Travers or by Puritans (however one chooses to define this that term) but part of the doctrinal core of Reformation Protestantism. Travers was quite right to find the sermon alarming.” *Ibid.*, 228.

⁷⁵ *Certaintie*, 69.

know things? And specifically, how do we know the things of God and how certain can we be about such knowledge?

And this is where Travers began to feel concerned, for Hooker's understanding of certainty is complex and does seem to fly in the face of what Travers sees as 'sound doctrine'. Hooker does not mention false or temporary faith, sin or divine testing, but instead he turns the spotlight upon the things we believe in matters of faith. If we consider such things "in themselves" then they are "more certain than in any science".⁷⁶ Here Hooker is focusing upon the 'object' itself – the thing being considered. Totally separate from how certain we believe it to be, is its intrinsic certainty. Hooker is drawing on Aquinas here and an understanding of "a metaphysical distinction concerning perfection and mutability."⁷⁷ So, for example, "Spirits, being higher in the celestial hierarchy of perfection than humans, may be said to be more 'certain', which logically leaves God as the most certain thing of all. As Aquinas, for instance, observes, the less something is prone to change the more intrinsically certain it is."⁷⁸ The things of God are therefore more certain in themselves than anything we can see and so faith "is more certain than any science" for this reason, because faith is directly to do with the "things of god".⁷⁹ So far, so good. Travers would be adding his "Amen" to this.

But Hooker does not leave it there. He proceeds in seemingly orthodox form but the seeds of concern are sown:

⁷⁶ Ibid..

⁷⁷ Voak, *Reformed Theology*, 74.

⁷⁸ Ibid..

⁷⁹ *Certainie*, 69.

That which wee know ether by sense or by most in fallible demonstration is not so certain as the principles articles and conclusions of Christian fayth concerning which wee must note there is a certaintie of evidence and a certaintie of adherence.⁸⁰

As we saw in chapter two Hooker is fond of divisions and here again he asks the reader to hold on to various strands of thought, which he will eventually, bring together. His challenge to current theological thinking lies in this crucial division between two types of certainty: that which is the result of evidence and that which comes from “adherence”.⁸¹ His contention is that the usual understanding of certainty with regard to faith confuses these two categories and it is this confusion that produces the “strangeness” and the resultant anxiety, where, as we shall see, Hooker believes there need not be any.

Hooker’s method is to unravel the two senses in which the word certainty is used and explain how each one relates to faith. He begins with evidential certainty.

Certaintie of evidence we call that, when the mind doth assent unto this or that; not because it is true in itself, but because the truth thereof is cleelre, because it is manifest unto us. Of thinges in themselves most certain, except they be also most evident, our persuasion is not so assured as it is of thinges more evident although in themselves they be less certain. It is as sure if not surer that there be sprites than there be men; but wee are more assured of these then of them because these are more evident.⁸²

It is this development that is a source of concern for Travers.

⁸⁰ Ibid..

⁸¹ As we saw in chapter three, this is typical of Hooker’s style. The question is about comfort and assurance but there will be no easy, straightforward answer. Hooker will lead his listeners through a theological and philosophical labyrinth, step by step. Each part builds on what has been already stated, and there is a sense, again, of having to hold on to each section until the end when they are brought together and Hooker reveals how they complement, strengthen and check each other. As we shall see, Hooker’s aim is explicitly to describe and make possible a participation in the divine presence.

⁸² *Certaintie*, 70.

Hooker's theology of faith and assurance has its roots in the reformed tradition...(i)t evolves ...in a different direction. Hooker's sharpest divergence from reformed doctrine, the one Travers seizes upon, has to do with his adoption of Aquinas' distinction between the certainties of evidence and adherence.⁸³

The fact that the content of faith is certain in itself, separate from any knowledge of it held by us, does not affect the reality that we have to *know* those things rather than just know that they are certain in themselves. All that Hooker is really doing here is showing how the human mind works, how it assents to information and the type of evidence it requires in order to deliver different levels of certainty.

Even reading this part of the sermon requires a high degree of concentration and the ability to hold on to the various strands that have been introduced, as Hooker compares and contrasts the meanings. Simply hearing it in the pew must have been even more of a challenge and may explain some of the problems that ensued. But essentially Hooker is affirming his belief that there is a role for reason within faith and that reason is neither bypassed nor supernaturally overwhelmed. Reason will consider matters of faith in the same way as it considers all other matters.⁸⁴

The mind, the faculty of reason, bases its conclusions upon evidence: the stronger the evidence the greater the certainty. Such evidence is either from the senses or from logical deduction and in some cases truth is easily and undoubtedly discerned. "The truth of some things is so evident, that no man which heareth them can doubt of them: As when wee heare, that *a part of anything is lesse then the whole*, the mind is constrained to say this is true."⁸⁵ If matters of faith, "things of God" could be fully

⁸³ Shuger, 'Faith and Assurance' 236.

⁸⁴ One could say, the same God-given way.

⁸⁵ *Certainitie*, 70.

and undeniably proved in this way, then it would be expected that our certainty about those matters would be of the highest level, so when doubt is present it would seem strange and a reason would be required. The question would be that, when the evidence was so clear and full certainty available, why did some people doubt? “If it were so in matters of fayth then as all men have equall certaintie of this, so no believer should be more scrupulous and doubtfull then another.”⁸⁶ But the truth is that matters of faith do not have such degrees of evidence and therefore we cannot expect absolute (based upon the evidence, reasoned) certainty.

Such a conclusion does not cast doubt upon the *intrinsic* certainty of what is believed but merely affirms the way the mind works and the availability of evidence (by sense or by reasoned logic) that is available in matters of faith. “That which wee see by the light of grace thought it be in deede more certain yeat it is not to us so evidentially certain as that in which sense or the light of nature will not suffer a man to doubt of.”⁸⁷

The thrust of this argument is that doubt is a natural phenomenon when we regard certainty from an evidential understanding, as matters of faith cannot be proved, infallibly, in this way. Does this mean then that there is no role for reason in matters

⁸⁶ Ibid..

⁸⁷ Voak misunderstands Hooker here. He states that Hooker “ascribes the religious doubts of Christians to the difficulties that imperfect humans have in evaluating the evidence for Christian doctrine.” Voak, *Reformed Theology*, 77. This is true as far as it goes, Hooker does say that due to the “foggie damp of original corruption” (*Certainite*, 71) we can never “be so enlightened in the knowledge or so established in the love of that wherein his salvation standeth as to be perfect” (ibid. 71). However, Hooker’s message in the sermon is surely that even if we were able to fully reason about revealed truth (either because we are sinless or because we are gifted) it is not enough – for such truth is by its nature to be known differently – we do not have full evidential certainty solely because of sin but because of the nature of the thing itself. See Shuger who draws out the Thomist and Aristotelian roots of this, “Briefly put, the ancient dilemma states that there exists an inverse proportion between the excellence of an object and its knowability: the more excellent an object, the less knowable to us.” Shuger, ‘Faith and Assurance’, 236. Hooker disarms the power of doubt by simply pulling the rug – expect doubt, but it is not important. It is only debilitating if you think evidential certainty is all there is.

of faith? Such a conclusion would indeed sit sharply against the view of Hooker as the champion of reason. But this is not Hooker's stance at all. He does not believe that evidential certainties, and the workings of reason, are of no worth in spiritual matters. On the contrary, Hooker is keen to point out "how the spirit every where in the scripture proveth matters of fayth, laboureth to confirme us in that which wee believe by things whereof wee have sensible knowledge".⁸⁸ There is a level of certainty to be obtained but it will not be full and complete, free of doubt. To Hooker this is simply a sensible conclusion, borne out by experience.

I conclud therefore that wee have lesse certaintie of evidence concerning things beleevd then concerning things sensibly or naturally perceived. Of these who doth doubt at any time, of them at some tyme who doth not?⁸⁹

Travers was outraged. For him, the assurance of faith is greater than that given by the senses even when such assurance is contrary to all sense and human understanding. As we shall see, Hooker does acknowledge (perhaps surprisingly) that the believer can and should hope against all reason at times, and he also contemplates the possibility that God could override the doubts we suffer due to the evidential weakness of faith. As to this latter point, Hooker states that although this is a possibility, based upon who God is and how He may choose to act in the world, the truth is that he has decided not to do so.

Some show, although no soundness of ground, ther is which maie be alleaged for defence of this supposed perfection in certaintie touching matters of our fayth....that the spirit which god hath geven us to no other end but only to assure us that wee are the sonnes of god to enbolden us to call upon him as our father, to open our eyes and to make the trueth of things believed evident unto our mindes, is much mightier in operation then the common light of nature whereby we discern sensible

⁸⁸ *Certaintie*, 70.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*. Note that Hooker uses the word less rather than none – again affirming the role that reason has a role in matters of faith.

things.....The reason which is taken from the power of the spirit were effectuall, yf god did worke like a naturall agent as fier doth enflame and the sonne inlighten according to the uttermost of that abilitie which they have to bring forth there effectes, but the incomprehensible wisdom of god doth limit the effectes of his power to such a measure as seemeth best unto himself.⁹⁰

Travers has either ducked Hooker's challenge to him, refusing to reconsider what he means by certainty and where that certainty finds its source, or else he is affirming the position that reason is overwhelmed or of no value in the sphere of faith and the assurance of faith. The latter stance is not one that Hooker would assent to, and the inherent aim in his position is to shatter the false expectations of assurance that flow from a faulty understanding and application of the word.

Hooker's Answer.

Hooker's reaction to Travers' objection shows no sign of a change in his belief. He asserts that the sermon was delivered at the request of friends and read by many others, all of whom found nothing in it to condemn. His position is that Travers is speaking solely for himself and not on behalf of 'orthodox theology'. "My case were very hard if as ofte as any thinge I speake displeaseth one mans taaste, my doctrine upon his onely word should be taken for *sower leaven*."⁹¹ By way of answer to the challenge, Hooker repeats Travers allegation, "*That the assurance of thinges which we believe by the word is not so certeyne as of that we perceive by sense*."⁹² He immediately follows this with a question. "And is it as certeyne?" The challenge is explicit. Experience tells us that that level of certainty is not there, and if we say otherwise we deceive ourselves and thus the illusion of certainty is born, forever

⁹⁰ *Certaintie*, 72.

⁹¹ *Answer*, 232..

⁹² *Ibid.*, 236.

haunted by the foundation of doubts, which it seeks to smother. He goes on to assert that he stands shoulder to shoulder with Travers when certainty means the certainty of the things themselves, “I taughte as he hym self I truste woulde not denye that the thinges which God doth promys in his worde are surer unto us then anythinge we touce or handle or see”.⁹³ But, he continues, “are we so sure and certeyne of them” and here he changes certainty to refer to the assent of the mind, evidential certainty. Hooker finds comfort here in the fact that God often proves his promises to us “by arguments taken from our sensible experience”, a point he made in the sermon itself.⁹⁴ If full certainty of our minds were possible in some supernatural way, and if reason were irrelevant in faith, why would God work in this way? He looks to experience, of how God works with and in us and of our experience of the world to bolster his argument:

Howe is it that tenne men do all looke uppon the moone, every one of them knoweth it as certenly to be the moone as another: But many beleevinge one and the same promys all have not the same fullnesse of perswasion? Howe falleth it out that men being assured of any thinge by sense can be no surer of it then they are, whereas the strongest in faith that lyveth uppon the earth hath always neede to labor and stryve, and praie that his assuraunce concerninge heavenly and spirituall thinges maie growe increase and be augmented?⁹⁵

Hooker rests his case. Assurance at the cost of pretending things are not as they are, is foolish.⁹⁶

⁹³ Ibid..

⁹⁴ Ibid., 237.

⁹⁵ *Answer*, 236.

⁹⁶ Especially, as we shall see, when a richer, even though less certain, assurance is available to us.

Later readings and interpretations.

Interestingly, neither Willet in the Christian letter nor Covell in his defence of Hooker mentions the doctrine of assurance. Willet did attack Hooker's views on the related topics of predestination and free will and Covell, as we saw earlier, supported Hooker (with some difficulty) as regards the former.⁹⁷ In addition, in 1614 the sermons were published by Henry Jackson in an attempt to re-establish Hooker's reformed credentials.⁹⁸ As the years passed, and the doctrine of predestination developed and changed, questions about assurance and certainty became less important. As such, Hooker's sermon was little used in the works of those who supported and criticised him as more pressing matters came to the fore.

However, in the nineteenth century Hooker's sermon once again came into the public eye as Keble's scholarly edition of his complete works was published. It is well-known that Keble's championing of Hooker as the true Father of Anglicanism and of High Church ecclesiology, was to be a turning point for Hooker. Attributing to him (and to the Elizabethan Church as a whole) a *via media* theology and Anglo-Catholic style worship endured unchallenged for over a century. But a close reading of Keble's introduction shows that he struggled with Hooker and not least in the area of assurance. In this example we see a man honestly approaching Hooker's works,

⁹⁷ Articles regarding Hooker's views on predestination show that his theology in this area is also difficult to categorise. See D.W. Neelands, 'The Theology of Grace of Richard Hooker', D. Th thesis, Trinity College and the University of Toronto, 1988). Voak's most recent article describes Hooker as holding to God's middle knowledge as a means of understanding God's will that all should be saved and His election of only some of the human race, and allowing free will to be compatible with predestination. Voak sees Hooker as radically anticipating Molinism. Nigel Voak, 'English Molinism in the late 1590s: Richard Hooker on Free Will, Predestination and Divine Foreknowledge.' *Journal of Theological Studies* 60(1), (2009), 133-177. This would indeed place him outside of the Reformed orthodoxy of the time.

⁹⁸ See chapter 1 for full details. The manuscripts had been in the possession of John Spenser, Hooker's literary executor and President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Spenser oversaw the publication, which was printed by the University printer Joseph Barnes. The copied manuscript had evidence of Hooker's alterations. See *Folger V* for full details, especially 64-67.

expecting to find a theology and practice that isn't always there and at times Keble is frankly perplexed.

Keble.

For Keble, Hooker's brilliance lay in his articulation of a distinctively Anglican position regarding both doctrinal beliefs and Church discipline and worship. He attributes to Hooker the

training up for the next generation, Laud, Hammond, Sanderson, and a multitude more such divines: to which succession and series, humanly speaking, we owe it, that the Anglican church continues at such a distance from that of Geneva, and so near to primitive truth and apostolical order.⁹⁹

This distinctly unreformed *via media* Hooker was at the very centre of Keble's historical understanding of the Church and so it comes as no surprise that, when he was faced with Hooker's sermons on *St. Jude*, his first reaction was to follow Walton and raise the possibility that these sermons could not be from the great man's pen.

That Keble struggled with the content of this sermon is not surprising, but he was at pains to point out that it was not only the theology of the text but also the style that had caused him to be concerned. He lamented the fact that he had failed to procure the original edition and so had worked from the reprinted copies of 1662. "This failure he the more regrets, as there may appear on the minute examination more internal reason for questioning the genuineness of these two sermons".¹⁰⁰ His concerns lay in the "style of writing and tone of argument".¹⁰¹ If this was Hooker then it was "far

⁹⁹ Keble, 'Editor's Preface', cxv.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., lv.

¹⁰¹ Ibid..

removed from the sedate majesty” for which he had long been admired.¹⁰² There was in fact a “whole vein of heightened rhetorical expression, quite opposite to his usual guarded way of dealing with all delicate points of doctrine”.¹⁰³ But equally importantly

the appeal made here to men’s consciousness on their own spiritual condition cannot easily be reconciled with the doctrine of the Sermon on the Certainty of faith, or with the jealousy expressed in the fifth book of Ecclesiastical Polity regarding the rule of men’s private spirits.¹⁰⁴

The only way Keble could understand this sermon was to see it as evidence of an earlier theological position, when Hooker was still under the influence of Puritan men such as John Rainolds (Hooker’s patron). “On the whole, if the sermons be Hooker’s, which the Editor is far from positively denying, they must be referred to a date in his life earlier than any other of his remains; to a time when he may have hardly ceased to affect the tone of others, both in composition and in doctrine, instead of writing and thinking for himself”.¹⁰⁵ As such, “we should not be safe in referring to these two sermons, for the matured and deliberate judgment of the Author of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical polity.”¹⁰⁶

Keble had been reassured by the *Certainitie* sermon that Hooker did not believe in the possibility of infallible certainty with regard to faith, and Hooker even went a step further and saw such certainty as undesirable. The lack of evidential certainty and the effects of sin in the individual’s life (“the foggie damp of originall corruption”¹⁰⁷)

¹⁰² Ibid..

¹⁰³ Ibid..

¹⁰⁴ Ibid..

¹⁰⁵ Ibid..

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., lvi.

¹⁰⁷ *Certainitie*, 71.

make infallible certainty an illusion but Hooker expands the point when he states that such a position would not, in case, be good for us.

(I)t cannot be that any mans hart living should be ether so enlightened in the knowledge or so established in the love of that wherein his salvation standeth as to be perfect, neither doubting or shrinking at all.....But let them beware who challeng to them selves a strength which they have not least they loose the comfortable support of that weaknes which in deed they have.¹⁰⁸

Such a view seems straightforward: Hooker had changed his mind in the intervening years (no more than two or three) and that accounted for the difference between the sermons. *St. Jude* was the earlier, more Reformed Hooker whereas *Certainitie* represented the Hooker who was now forging ahead with a differing theology.¹⁰⁹

Keble found support for this view in a later document, the ‘Dublin Fragments’. In this text, in which Hooker had begun to reply to his critics, the movement away from Calvinist doctrine is further highlighted.¹¹⁰ In this unfinished, fragmentary document Hooker sets down his views on predestination, grace and free will and the sacraments. What was of interest for Keble was Hooker’s version of the Lambeth Articles.¹¹¹ Hooker in fact does not refer to them as such and neither does he directly contrast them to his own version, but the link is obvious.

It was in Hooker’s version of Lambeth that Keble believed he saw Hooker’s unquestionable divergence from Calvinist theology. Whereas Lambeth explicitly

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 71-2.

¹⁰⁹ Quite how this argument fits in with the fact that Jackson published these sermons with the particular objective of re-establishing Hooker’s Reformed orthodoxy is unclear.

¹¹⁰ And yet, once again, there are those who see Hooker’s Reformed theology at the fore in this document.

¹¹¹ The Lambeth Articles were drawn up in 1595 under Archbishop Whitgift but never formally authorized. They sought to articulate the Church’s position regarding predestination. Rumour had it that Elizabeth I was not a supporter. All quotations given here are from <http://www.cprf.co.uk/articles/lambeth.htm> For Hooker’s version see DF, 167.

affirms double predestination – God’s election of both the saved and the reprobate, Hooker refers solely to the predestination “of certain men, not all men”.¹¹² Lambeth and Hooker both agreed that God’s election of those to be saved was not based upon any foresight of good within the individual but Lambeth continues, saying that the only ground is God’s good pleasure – a point Hooker omits. Article three, regarding the number of the elect, has a softer tone in Hooker even though the thrust of the message is the same – namely that the number of the elect is certain. Both Hooker and Lambeth agree that for those who are damned the only reason is their own sin. In the area of certainty and assurance Hooker’s distinctiveness is particularly obvious. Lambeth’s article six, stating that “The truly faithful man—that is, one endowed with justifying faith—is sure by full assurance of faith (*plerophoria fidei*) of the remission of sins and his eternal salvation through Christ” is entirely omitted. Such a fact assured Keble that the first sermon on *Jude* was indeed Hooker’s earlier position and that the *Certainty* sermon revealed the Hooker who was now ‘thinking for himself’ and forging the Anglican way.

(T)his article is totally omitted by Hooker; no doubt for the same kind of reasons as induced him, writing on the *Certainty and Perpetuity of Faith*, to make so large allowance for the little understanding men have of their spiritual condition.¹¹³

We shall see later on that even in the *Certainty* sermon itself there are signs that this view is not entirely tenable but Keble also began to have concerns about his own theory.¹¹⁴ He may have been assured that Hooker’s understanding of certainty had moved away from the Reformed consensus but he was perplexed as to Hooker’s

¹¹² Ibid.. As did the 39 Articles.

¹¹³ Keble, ‘Editor’s Preface’, .cxiii.

¹¹⁴ Especially when we remember that the sermon was published to reinstate Hooker as an orthodox Reformed theologian.

views in the related area of indefectibility of faith and grace. As we have noted, assurance stood within the 'Golden Chain' of salvation, where each link was forged as a result of the preceding one – almost automatically, so to speak. Here was Calvin's indefectible faith. Saving grace, when given, cannot be defeated nor lost. Lambeth's article five spoke of this as "(a) true, lively and justifying faith, and the sanctifying Spirit of God, is not lost nor does it pass away either totally or finally in the elect." Hooker's version states, "That to God's foreknowne elect, final continuance of grace is given" but he does not continue, as Lambeth does, with any reference to the indefectibility of justifying and sanctifying grace.¹¹⁵ Keble sees this as a distinct movement away from Calvinism, but when he looks back at the *Certaintie* sermon – the sermon which he has used to illustrate Hooker's change in theology away from Reformed orthodoxy, he finds that Hooker actually *holds* to the indefectibility of justification and sanctification, "(i)n this wee know wee are not deceyved, nether can wee decyve you, when wee teach that the fayth whereby ye are sanctified cannot fail; it did not in the prophet it shall not in you."¹¹⁶ Between the sermon on *Jude* and the *Certaintie* sermon Hooker may have changed his mind about certainty and moved away from the Calvinist consensus but he remained a believer in the indefectibility of true faith.

The problem is heightened for Keble when he turns to the *Lawes* and finds that Hooker holds the same position there as regards the indefectibility of faith. In relation to Baptism, Keble believes that Hooker holds to the position that "no less than justifying or pardoning grace, together with the first infusion of that which

¹¹⁵ D.F. 167.

¹¹⁶ *Certaintie*, 73.

sanctifies”¹¹⁷ is bestowed when the sacrament is not received unworthily, “and therefore in all cases of infant baptism”.¹¹⁸ And yet “how could he or can any person, beholding what numbers fall away after Baptism, hold consistently, on the one hand, that real sanctifying grace can never be finally forfeited; on the other, that it is given at Baptism?”¹¹⁹ However, in Book V Hooker is saying just that.

The first thing of his so infused into our hartes in this life is the Spirit of Christ, whereupon the rest of what kinde so ever doe all both necessarilie depende and infallible also ensue.¹²⁰

“It is not clear why a person holding such an opinion as this should scruple to receive the fifth Lambeth Article: yet Hooker held such a scruple”, writes Keble, with characteristic honesty.¹²¹ All he can think of is that “when he came to weigh more exactly his own doctrine of the Sacraments, he felt it could not well stand with the supposed indefectibility of grace.”¹²² Keble is left with an inconsistency that ranges over several years of Hooker’s life and is evident in Hooker’s sermons, *Lawes* and further writings.

The texts have not quite delivered what Keble had hoped for. Where there seems to be evidence of a change, from an earlier position in the early 1580’s to a more independent position in the middle of the decade, Hooker’s sermons and even the *Lawes* do not offer clear support. Even the ‘Dublin Fragments’ are far from clear in places. Regarding predestination the text seems to help Keble, but earlier on in his introduction he had commented that the text may have formed part of Hooker’s earlier

¹¹⁷ Keble, ‘Editor’s Preface’, cxiii.

¹¹⁸ Ibid..

¹¹⁹ Ibid., cxii.

¹²⁰ *Lawes*, II.243.

¹²¹ Keble, ‘Editor’s Preface’, cxii.

¹²² Ibid..

promise to answer the points raised by Travers' *Supplication* and as such "we cannot certainly reckon upon these fragments as exhibiting Hooker's latest and most matured judgment on all the mysterious topics."¹²³ However, he still wants to underline Hooker's version of the Lambeth Articles as "undoubtedly ... a deliberate summary of the general conclusions".¹²⁴ There is a hint here that not even in this area does Hooker quite deliver all Keble had hoped for, although he does not develop the point. With regard to Hooker's writings on the sacraments he is extremely disturbed, and although he accepts their genuineness he is forced to say that, as they are so obviously anti-Roman Catholic, "it might be intended as introductory to a view of the question from the other side."¹²⁵

Later readings.

Until the beginning of this century the *Certainitie* sermon had not attracted a great deal of scholarly interest, but since the publication of Nigel Voak's work in 2003, where the issue of certainty, assurance and epistemology were carefully examined, there have been two other authors who also use the sermon in detail: Cornelius Simut and Debra Shuger. All three take a different approach and draw diverse conclusions, reflecting again the theological and hermeneutical problems that Hooker poses. In this section we will look at the contribution made by each one in turn and this will lead on to the concluding section where we will be in a position to evaluate Hooker's theological creativity in this area.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, xxvi.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*.

Reading through the lens of reformed theology: Cornelius Simut.

It may not come as a surprise that the *Certaintie* sermon has been read as evidence of Hooker's reformed theological positioning. Both for Simut and Voak this sermon reveals Hooker's commitment to Reformed belief in the area of assurance and certainty and the related doctrines. The two writers do, however, differ in their approach and conclusions.

Simut dedicates an entire chapter to the *Certaintie* sermon in a larger work that deals with Hooker's theology of salvation.¹²⁶ Building upon the work of Torrance Kirby and particularly Nigel Atkinson, Simut's purpose is to show that Hooker's soteriology is in line with that of the Magisterial Reformers and in this chapter, in which he considers Hooker's epistemology of faith as the second aspect of the doctrine of salvation, he is keen to draw parallels between Hooker's position and that of Tyndale as well as others such as Barnes and Cranmer.

Simut believes that this sermon is a further example of Hooker's acceptance of Luther's 'two realms theory' – the concept that the Christian lives simultaneously in both the natural and spiritual realm and that there is an epistemological gap between these two spheres.¹²⁷ In this sermon, Simut asserts that Hooker is making a distinction between the way faith and law apprehend salvation on the one hand and faith and science on the other, where faith is of the spiritual realm and law and science are not, and as such the distinction accentuates their opposition rather than just their differences.

¹²⁶ Simut, *Salvation*.

¹²⁷ As well as ontological one

Regarding the former categories, only faith can apprehend salvation and any Christian who attempts to do so through the law will find their faith weakened. Similarly, faith trumps science as the latter can only affirm the truth of spiritual things rather than fathom them. The dual aspects of faith are in fact evidence of Hooker's reliance upon revelation as an essential aspect of faith and salvation- both nature and grace (where reason, evidential certainty, is the light of nature and adherence, the trusting of the heart, is from the light of grace) are revelations from God and external to humanity.¹²⁸

Regarding the degree of certainty within faith, Simut believes Hooker treads a similar path to many in the sixteenth century who believed in a full, infallible assurance as essential to faith whilst admitting that sin, the effect of living in the natural realm even as a spiritual person, produces doubt. Such doubt cannot remove faith – justification is external, Christological and fully under the sovereignty of God and as such it cannot fail.

This general summary of Simut's position belies the rather confused argument of the chapter and a more detailed consideration of the main points will show that there are serious hermeneutical and methodological issues that call into question almost all of these conclusions. As such, Simut's work becomes a classic example of the consequences of approaching and reading Hooker's work through the lens of a preconceived position (here, reformed theology), failing to listen to the text carefully and not being sufficiently familiar with it and with Hooker's style and rhetoric.

¹²⁸ The objectivity of salvation is key for Simut, and as such it is essential that soteriological knowledge is external to the individual.

The chapter is concerned with Hooker's "epistemology of faith" as revealed particularly in the *Certainie* sermon: that is, Simut wishes to understand how Hooker sees "faith as a means of knowledge".¹²⁹ He takes as his starting point Hooker's sentence that "mere naturall men do not nether know nor acknowledge the thinges of god"¹³⁰ This, he says, is evidence that "Hooker's epistemology begins from the delineation of two realms: the spiritual realm, and the natural realm"¹³¹ There is "an epistemological gap"¹³² for Hooker between these two realms and thus Simut believes Hooker "infers" that there are two kinds of people: spiritual and natural, although he admits that "Hooker's actual statement only consists of the inference that natural men cannot acknowledge the things of God which obviously belong to the spiritual realm."¹³³

Here we see the beginning of the problem. From Hooker's simple phrase that mere natural men cannot know the things of God, Simut has leapt into the language of two realms, with all its theological foundations and implications.¹³⁴ Hooker does not say that the things of God belong to the *spiritual realm*, but that they are to be *spiritually discerned*. The distinction may be subtle but it is there and quite what this means is still to be developed and should not be presumptuously filled with an existing ideology without further evidence. There is a hint that, to some extent, Simut is aware

¹²⁹ Simut, *Salvation*, 129.

¹³⁰ Simut does not actually quote the text, but rather merely infers that this is the text he is referring to.

¹³¹ Simut, *Salvation*, 130.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 129.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹³⁴ In the *Lawes*, Hooker makes a similar point to the one he makes here: there are things about God we can know through the light of nature, and things we can't; there are things we can do as (fallen) human beings and things we can't. We cannot make things right with God and without the Scriptures we would never be able to grasp just how God has done this for us in Jesus. Hooker believes there are different sources of knowledge (although only one true source – God) and where salvation is concerned the Scriptures contain all we need to know. But this is a far cry from a description of the two realms as understood by Luther.

that his argument is flawed when he concedes that Hooker only infers this position rather than explicitly acknowledges it. But even the inference is itself questionable.

Based upon this idea of the two realms, Simut moves on to say that for Hooker spiritual men have “three characteristics” namely, they “have the illumination of the grace of God...they are directly led by God and...they have faith”¹³⁵ and that Hooker is concerned here with the quality of that faith. “Based on his observation regarding the daily existence of spiritual men in the natural realm Hooker notices that the quality of their faith is faulty.”¹³⁶ But Hooker has not said this. He has not referred or implied anything about the particular problems that a spiritual man has in living in the natural realm and neither has he referred to faith as being faulty. Instead, he says it is weak. Once again, this may be a subtle difference but it is still highly significant, as the importance of this distinction is not yet known. What Hooker actually says, is

That mere naturall men do not nether know or acknowledge the thinges of god, wee do not mervail, bevause they are spirituallly to be discerned. But they in whose harts the light of grace doth shine, they that are taught of god, why are they so *weake in fayth*?¹³⁷

A straightforward reading of this sentence suggests that Hooker is trying to make a simple point: we know that those who don't have the light of grace don't believe in the things of God and this is understandable because they can only be seen when illuminated by grace. But what about those of us who do have that light? Why, when God himself teaches us, is our faith so weak? The question posed is *whether* this is a problem, whether it shows a “fault” in the life of the believer that needs to be

¹³⁵ Simut, *Salvation*, 130. I suggest that these are not three characteristics but rather they are three ways of describing the same thing – if you have faith you have the light of grace and God leads you and if you have the light of grace then God leads you and you have faith and so on. They are not a mutually exclusive checklist.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*.

¹³⁷ *Certainie*, 69.

remedied or in fact reveals them as an unbeliever, as the introduction states.¹³⁸ The answer to the question “why” is imperative for Hooker, for this answer will illuminate how that weakness is to be viewed and treated. But as yet he hasn’t given an answer. Once again, Simut has presumed a response.

Habbakuk 1:4 is the text upon which this sermon is based and reads “So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous - therefore judgment comes forth perverted.” Simut comments that

for Hooker, this particular text is important because it reveals the weakness of faith in relation to the law. This is in line with Tyndale, who writes that the faith of justification is separate from the law. Apparently, spiritual men who have faith grow increasingly weaker in faith as they get gradually closer to the law. This is vital to Hooker’s soteriology, because he understands that faith and the law as a means of apprehending salvation are utterly exclusive.¹³⁹

This paragraph moves on at a great speed, each theological conclusion assuming the veracity of the preceding one but Simut does not refer to any specific part of Hooker’s text to support his view, beyond the use of the verse from Habbakuk. As yet, Hooker has not referred to the scripture beyond the initial quotation and comment and he nowhere states that this text reveals “the weakness of faith in relation to the law” with all the implications that may flow from that. Simut has, in effect, collapsed the ‘natural man’ into the law and then driven a wedge between faith and law that is not at all present in this text but is of course vital to the two-realms theory.

¹³⁸ “Whether the prophet Abacuk by admitting this cogitation into his mind, the law doth fail did therbie shew himself an unbelever.” *Certainitie*, 69.

¹³⁹ Simut, *Salvation*, 130.

Hooker does pose the question, “(w)hy is their assenting to the law so scrupulous, so much mingled with feare and wavering?”¹⁴⁰ but interestingly the word law seems to be used as an equivalent to “the thinges of god” rather than its antithesis, following as it does as an example of the things taught by God and yet where belief in the same is weak.¹⁴¹ At no point in the sermon does Hooker place law and faith as polar opposites, and this section of the text is not dealing with this. Hooker never states that the law is a source of knowledge in this way and so Simut’s next section, which builds on this, is also flawed. Here he states “Hooker gently changes his terminology, in such a way that the law, which so obviously fails as a means of knowledge, is suddenly replaced by the concept of science.”¹⁴² But there is no evidence here that science is a parallel for law and neither is this section concerned with proving how faith and science are at odds, with the former holding the trump card for Christians. Rather, it is concerned with spheres of knowledge and perceptions of reality and is a complex argument that seeks to define different types of knowledge and certainty, and their relevance and role when the ‘object’ to be known is “the thinges of god”. Hooker introduces science in his argument concerning the certainty of things in themselves and the ways and levels of certainty available to human beings. As such, we have noted Hooker’s comment that “(i)f the thinges which wee beleve be considered in them selves it may truly be sayd that fayth is more certain then any science” but of course goes on to say that “Of thinges in them selves most certain, except they be also most evident, our persuasion is not so assured as it is of thinges more evident although in themselves they be lesse certayn.”¹⁴³ Simut’s comment that “Hooker displays his

¹⁴⁰ *Certaintie*, 69.

¹⁴¹ Infact, a careful reading of the *Lawes* would suggest that law for Hooker is not about rules and regulation but is the very source of life. Law in its fullest sense is about being. Whilst this is obviously referring to the first and second laws eternal, this easily embraces the law given to Moses.

¹⁴² *Certaintie*, 131.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 70

confidence in faith to the detriment of science” seems, at the very least, perplexing as a conclusion in this argument.

When Simut changes the focus to deal with Hooker’s dual concepts of faith – evidence and adherence – we see once again the desire to place Hooker squarely in the centre of reformed theology. He is keen to stress Hooker’s belief in the external, objective nature of salvation and his dependence upon revelation as a means to salvation. Thus both nature (the law of reason) is as much revelation as is grace – that which turns the heart to God in an attitude of trust. “In this respect, Hooker’s analysis of the certainty of evidence is important, because he introduces his concept of revelation. ...the light of grace and secondly the light of nature. It is clear for Hooker that human epistemology is directly conditioned by an external factor, such as revelation, which consists of the light of grace and the light of nature. But what is important to notice is that both grace and nature are external to man.”¹⁴⁴

There is obviously an agenda here but, if this is what the text is saying, that may not be important. What is significant is the use of language and terminology. We have seen that Hooker’s choice of words, structure of argument and general rhetoric were carefully chosen and formed part of his overall message. Just as he never mentions the two realms, or even the word realm or regiment at all in this text, neither does he use the word revelation. Instead he speaks of the ways in which we know – the lights by which we see: nature, grace and glory. God is certainly the source of these lights (and that does raise questions as to those who do not have the light of grace) but the light of nature does not seem to be only a ‘spiritual’ ability and nor does it operate differently in the Christian, it is just that its sphere of operation has boundaries and it

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 133.

is not the only (or perhaps even the most important/effective) way in which we know the things of God. That salvation was the work of God, an external gift so to speak, is not refuted in this text but to suggest that the purpose of Hooker's 'lights of knowledge' is to stress their revelatory qualities and externality is seriously questionable.

We have not as yet looked in detail at Hooker's understanding of the certainty of adherence and it will make more sense to do so in relation to the work of Voak and Shuger. For now we will note that Hooker described this certainty as when "the hart doth cleave and stick unto that which it doth believe. "This certaintie is greater in us then the other."(meaning evidential certainty).¹⁴⁵ Adherence comes from an experience of the promises of God not just as true but as good and Simut would seem to be right when he speaks of adherence as something which "directly affects (the) human heart".¹⁴⁶ He develops this by referring back to the two realms: lack of evidence is no problem because such a concept belongs to the natural realm and here we are speaking of spiritual matters, "The logical reality is that there are no natural proofs that might contradict spiritual things, because there is both an ontological and an epistemological gap between the natural and spiritual realm."¹⁴⁷ However, he then goes on to say that intellectual assent is need as to the "earthly existence of Christ given by the certainty of evidence"¹⁴⁸ and although this is the first component of faith the most important part is "the firm trust in the law and promises of God revealed in Christ, given by the certainty of adherence."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ *Certaintie*, 71.

¹⁴⁶ Simut, *Salvation*, 136

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*.

This is an intriguing reading of this section. Simut returns to this narrow field of competence for reason, namely the earthly existence of Christ, in other sections of his book but this is something that is not mentioned in this text nor borne out by Hooker's other writings.

Finally we turn to Simut's conclusion that Hooker believed in a full and certain assurance. "In spite of the lack of sensible proofs, which offer the certainty of evidence, true faith totally and wholeheartedly attaches itself to and scrutinizes the true spiritual things by the certainty of adherence."¹⁵⁰ He says that Hooker believed in "firm and full confidence"¹⁵¹ and that Christ's righteousness "offers firmness and certainty to faith".¹⁵² This assurance is "granted by the Holy Spirit" and such "faith should be firm, steadfast, and without doubt".¹⁵³ I suggest that Simut has totally misunderstood Hooker here. Building upon his earlier failure to grasp the importance of the difference between the certainty of things in themselves and the certainty available to human beings, he assigns to the believer a full, felt assurance regarding Christ's death. Similarly, he rushes through Hooker's concept of adherence and misses the point that Hooker makes that even such adherence is never full and doubt-free. Certainty is never infallible. Finally, he disregards Hooker's point that God could, by His Spirit bypass our natural faculties but he doesn't.

When Simut turns to the reality of doubt he reveals his unfamiliarity with Hooker's method, as well as with the text itself. To illustrate this fully I have quoted the passage from Hooker in full.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 138.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 139.

¹⁵² Ibid., 140.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 141.

Some show, although no soundness of ground ther is which maie be alleaged for defence of this supposed perfection in certaintie touching matters of our fayth. As first that *Abraham did beleve* and doubted not, secondly that the spirit which god hath geven us to no other end but only to assure us that wee are the sonnes of god to embolden us to call upon him as our father, to open our eyes and to make trueth of things believed evident unto our mindes, is much mightier in operation then the common light of nature wherby we discern of sensible thinges. Wherefore wee must needed be much more sure of that wee beleev then of that wee see, we must needs be more certain of the mercies of god in Christ Jesus then wee are of the light of the sonne when it shineth upon our faces. To that of Abraham, *He did not doubt*, I answere that this negation doth not exclude all fear of doubting, but only that which cannot stand with true fayth; it freeth Abraham from doubting through infidelity, not from doubting through infirmity; from the doubting of unbelievers, not of weak beleevers; from such a doubting as that whereof the Prince of samaria is attained, wqho hearing the promise of sodain plenty in the midst of dearth, answered though the lord would make windows in heaven were it possible so to some to passe? But that Abraham was not voyd of all doubting, what need we other prooffe then the plaine evidence of his owne wordes *Gen 17 ver 17*? The reason which is taken from the power of the spirit were effectually, yf god did worke like a naturall agent as the fier doth enflame and the sonne inlighten according to the uttermost of that abilitie which they have to bring forth there effectes, but the incomprehensible wisdom of god doth limit the effectes of his power to such a measure as seemeth best unto him selfe.¹⁵⁴

As we saw in chapter two, this is typical Hooker. First of all he presents the opponent's argument, with all the passion as if it is his own, but the opening words-asserting that there is no solid basis for the view, show his disdain for all that follows. Only after he has presented their argument does he refute it, using the same scriptures regarding Abraham and then turning to the real experience of God regarding the work of the Spirit.

¹⁵⁴ *Certaintie*, 72.

In spite of the fact that Simut quotes the beginning of this passage in full, he reveals either a lack of close attention to the text or else a serious misunderstanding of Hooker's method and purpose. He confuses Hooker's opponent's argument and Hooker's own beliefs and asserts that Hooker believes faith is without doubt and that the Spirit provides the mind with a certainty of faith. Hooker looks to the story of Abraham to show that doubt is and always has been a reality in the life of the believer and does not show unbelief but merely a weakness of faith. But his opponents argue that Abraham did not doubt and that the Spirit assures us of our relation to God and makes this truth evident to our minds, overwhelming the power of nature. Simut presents this as Hooker's argument:

Hooker's conviction that faith is basically sure and certain reveals his exegesis of genesis 15:6, where it is plainly stated that Abraham believed God, and this was reckoned to him as righteousness....Hooker contends firstly that the very fact that Abraham believed is an indication that he did not doubt. Hooker then smoothly changes perspective, and focuses his discussion on us and the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁵

Following Tyndale, the pneumatology that Hooker displays is obviously characterized by the assurance granted by the Holy Spirit. Should faith be firm, steadfast, and without doubt, it is only because of the Holy Spirit, who assures us of our new existential status.....We consequently understand spiritual things because we actually and essentially comprehend their truth with our minds, which are illuminated by the Holy Spirit in justification...Hooker immediately underlines the fact that this spiritual understanding is more powerful than a natural understanding of the things that exist in the created order. It is very important to note that Hooker promotes a view of faith which entails recognizing that the certainty of faith is given by the human mind being illuminated by the Holy Spirit so that it can fathom the truth of spiritual things¹⁵⁶ (To support this Simut immediately quotes the beginning of the passage above, from "Some show" to "sensible things".)

¹⁵⁵ Simut, *Salvation*, 140.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid..

Once again we are faced with a confused argument and the passage quoted by Simut does not support his own contention, in fact Hooker is at times saying quite the opposite. This overview of Simut's theory shows the dangers of approaching Hooker with a fixed notion as to his theological position. Such an approach leads Simut to read into the text theological systems and beliefs that are not explicitly present and that are not borne out by the evidence. There are indications that Hooker's style has not been sufficiently examined and so his careful choice of words are simply exchanged for others that fit the category more fully. Whether or not Hooker was, on this issue or more generally, a theologian in full agreement with the Reformers is not established as the conclusions reached are marred by the hermeneutical errors. Simut has failed to grasp the subtlety of the message.

Voak: a step in the right direction.

Nigel Voak's book would appear at first sight to be in the same vein as Torrance Kirby and Nigel Atkinson. Entitled "Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology. A study of Reason, Will, and Grace" the reader could assume that once again this was part of the movement, begun in earnest in the latter quarter of the twentieth century, to reposition Hooker within the Reformed sphere and release him from the Anglo-Catholic tower in which the *via media* image had imprisoned him. But Voak's thesis is much more subtle than this, and his careful reading of Hooker seeks for, rather than presumes, Hooker's theology, whilst acknowledging the historical truth of the Reformed theological and ecclesiastical climate in which Hooker not only lived and worshipped but to which he gave his allegiance. Rather than following Kirby and Atkinson, Voak continues Lake's work – extending and building upon the revised *via*

media concept that acknowledges Hooker's balanced and yet radical theology whilst not reading into it a High Church position.

Certainty and knowledge: the work of the mind.

Voak's dealings with certainty do not follow the classical pattern of tracing Hooker's views regarding salvation and the 'Golden Chain'. Instead, he is interested initially in Hooker's beliefs regarding the mind – how it works and how it is convinced. This of course relates to the understanding of certainty we looked at earlier – how does the mind know, how can it be certain about matters – whether of faith or otherwise. This is evidential certainty. In fact, Voak deals with Hooker's understanding of certainty in two separate sections of his book. In the chapter entitled 'Philosophy of Action: Defective Action and Belief Formation.' Voak is concerned with Hooker's distinction between probable and infallible knowledge and his investigations draws on both the sermons and the *Lawes*.

“Although Hooker argues that humans can through reason gain knowledge of the truth, he does observe that they cannot always do so with the same degree of certainty.”¹⁵⁷ According to Voak Hooker believes there are four levels of certainty that humans can attain, and these range from the most to the least certain. The first level (and most certain) is found in detail in the *Certainitie* sermon, and “concerns Christian doctrine”;¹⁵⁸ the second is “plaine aspect and intuitive beholding”¹⁵⁹ and refers to sense-data and the first principles of reasoning; the third is “strong and invincible demonstration” which “is concerned with the processes of reasoning, and is

¹⁵⁷ Voak, *Reformed Theology*, 71.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁵⁹ Voak uses Hooker's own terminology for all the categories. *Ibid.*, 72.

a conclusion logically and necessarily deduced from first principles”¹⁶⁰ and the fourth, and least certain, is “greatest probability.”¹⁶¹ With regard to the latter such conclusions “may be forceful but the reason does not assent to them necessarily”.¹⁶² As regards the first and most certain level, Voak states that Hooker divides this further in his *Certaintie* sermon, where he makes a “scholastic threefold distinction between different classes of certainty, quite different from the ones we have considered so far”¹⁶³ (that is, numbers two to four above). In this new list, the first two classes are evidential certainty and intrinsic certainty, (and Voak notes that numbers 2-4 above would all be found as “subtypes of certainty of evidence”).¹⁶⁴ He moves on to comment upon the exchange with Travers and concludes that Hooker’s response reveals that “(n)o matter how intrinsically certain any aspect of Christian doctrine may be, he finds it is only as evidentially certain as the proofs adduced in its favour allow.”¹⁶⁵ Such a position is, Voak notes, also present in the *Lawes* where Hooker refers to Scripture and the doctrines necessary for salvation and those that can simply be rationally deduced.¹⁶⁶

Turning again to the sermon, Voak points out that “(i)t is perhaps in part because of this reliance on demonstrative reasoning that Hooker ascribes the religious doubts of Christians to the difficulties that imperfect humans have in evaluating the evidence for Christian doctrine.”¹⁶⁷ Not all Christians have the theological ability to reason about

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 73.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 74.

¹⁶² Ibid., 73.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 74.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid..

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 75.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 76; *Lawes* I:125-127.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 77.

such matters and “as a consequence have less evidential certainty for their (intrinsically certain) religious beliefs.”¹⁶⁸

Voak’s description of Hooker’s categories seems quite straightforward but whilst they appear to outline Hooker’s beliefs they are in fact subtly flawed. It is here that a detailed appreciation of how Hooker writes is the key to a fuller understanding of his beliefs. Voak stated, in his list of Hooker’s categories of certainty, that the concept of Christian doctrine is the most certain. When he referred to this in more detail he further divided it into evidential and intrinsic certainty, as per Hooker’s sermon. However, Voak has confused the objects of knowledge and how those objects are known. The concept of intrinsic certainty does not sit along side other methods of knowledge but rather floats above it. The (degrees of) intrinsic certainty of an ‘object’ is separate from how it is known by humans and this is not affected by whether it is known by us, fully or at all. As such, Hooker introduces this as a concept that must be kept in mind, held on to, as the question of how we know and the levels of knowledge are considered. Our belief in something does not affect its reality but how ‘real’ it is to us *is* affected by how it can be known to us. This is Hooker’s point. There are of course questions about why we believe this at all (that is, intrinsic certainty and especially in the sense that the closer something is to God the more certain it is), but for Hooker it is a given. This sermon is not an apologetic but rather is meant to lead those who already believe into a place of assurance and comfort.

So, intrinsic certainty is not a category of knowing but rather a given about anything we consider. When considering ‘things’ we can say that the most intrinsically certain

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 77.

is Christian doctrine: the things, the promises of God. In this way then Voak's approach to the sermon is confused, as Hooker is not just categorising but is describing a series of truths that must be held together and the vital point is that to confuse intrinsic certainty and human knowing produces anxiety through a false expectation of full assurance.

Similarly, Voak misses Hooker's subtle point regarding doubt. Voak refers to human imperfection as the cause of doubt. This would seem to infer that an individual's lack of ability to reason fully, to the point of certainty, is due to a defect in us – and by implication this would be as a result of sin.¹⁶⁹ Hooker does believe that sin, “the foggie dampe of originall corruption”¹⁷⁰ as he describes it, causes us to doubt, as it means we can never be full in our knowledge of God. However, his point is also that even if we were perfect, evidential certainty would still be less than complete by the very nature of how the world works. When Hooker discusses the relationship between our knowledge of an object and its inherent certainty he does not mention sin or imperfection, but rather he describes how reason works and how and to what extent, the mind assents to things, “of things in them selves most certain, except they be also most evident, our persuasion is not so assured as it is of thinges more evident although in themselves they be lesse certain.”¹⁷¹ This is why Hooker believes doubt is not strange and it is here we see him unpicking the strands, tracing the source of doubt and, in this instance, robbing it of its power to cause anxiety because it is to be expected. Doubt here is not solely a product of sin but a true reaction to a lack of evidence *and it could be no other way.*

¹⁶⁹ With the implication that if we were all sinless we would all be theologians!

¹⁷⁰ *Certainitie*, 71.

¹⁷¹ *Certainitie*, 70.

The Certainty of Adherence.

We noted earlier, that as well as evidential certainty, Hooker believed that human beings also know through the certainty of adherence. We have not looked at this point in any detail, although as we shall see it lies at the heart of Hooker's theology of assurance. Voak does deal with this in a separate section of his book. In the chapter we have been looking at previously Voak said Hooker divided the certainty regarding Christian doctrine into three categories: evidential certainty, intrinsic certainty and the certainty of adherence. Voak severs the latter from the list, stating that "the third class of certainty, certainty of adherence, will be examined in the proper context of the divinely infused habits of faith and love, in chapter 4".¹⁷²

To summarise, Voak has dealt in part with the *Certainie* sermon in relation to the question of probable and infallible knowledge. His argument, broader than in this thesis, centred upon the question of how certain reason must be about truth in order to fulfil its responsibilities. Voak has been concerned with the relationship between the will and reason, and as he turns to Hooker's concept of the certainty of adherence he has a similar focus.

The certainty of adherence is examined in the context of justification and sanctification and more specifically the operation of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. Voak hones in on the question that we have seen was of utmost importance in sixteenth century Europe, namely "whether a person can know that he or she is elect, and will with certainty avoid damnation"?¹⁷³ Voak remarks that in the *Lawes* Hooker's main argument is that "the Holy Spirit only ever ordinarily manifests

¹⁷² Voak, *Reformed Theology*, 74, footnote 25.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 241.

himself through the human reason”¹⁷⁴, thus leading him to condemn the Presbyterians and their reliance upon affection and “phancie”.¹⁷⁵ “Thus one might conclude that, in Hooker’s opinion, no-one can truly know that they are elect, unless the Holy Spirit can somehow work purely through human reason to convince them of this fact.”¹⁷⁶

However, as Voak goes on to point out, this has not always been Hooker’s position. He looks to the sermon on *Jude*, as Keble did, to show that Hooker’s earlier position was in startling contrast to that presented in the *Certainty* sermon. In the *Jude* sermon Hooker “expresses his views with penetrating clarity”,¹⁷⁷ and says that “(t)he Spirit works to convince people that they are elect, beyond any possible doubt” not through emotion or sensory awareness but through their virtuous behaviour.¹⁷⁸ On first sight this may seem different from the Presbyterian position he has denounced but Voak’s argument is that they are in fact “in substantially the same category as those of the presbyterians he condemns” because such a method looks for the work of the Spirit *outside* of the work of reason.¹⁷⁹ Reason may be used to analyse behaviour, much as it may be used to analyse emotions, but this is not the same as looking to reason itself. Such a method, Voak argues, goes against Hooker’s “previously stated principles” and “risk(s) defective belief-formation.”¹⁸⁰ So here is the change, for Voak. It does not lie directly in the question of the availability of complete certainty (although that is also present) but rather in the different understanding of the way the Spirit works.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid..

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.. Voak’s has arrived at this conclusion a few pages earlier – namely that “reason is the prime instrument of the Holy Spirit” 238, thus creating a barrier/filter between the Spirit and the Christian – so as to withdraw from the concept of the Spirit working directly through intense emotion or feeling but rather through discerning the “qualitie of things beleeved or done.” Ibid..

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 241.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 242.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 243.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid..

¹⁸⁰ Ibid..

Turning to the *Certaintie* sermon in more detail, Voak states that Hooker's beliefs have become more scholastic, with his "triple distinction between intrinsic certainty, certainty of evidence, and certainty of adherence, which by implication denies that people can infallibly know of their election in this life."¹⁸¹ This time, Voak's focus is upon the certainty of adherence, which he will argue is also concerned with the relationship of the will to the mind. Voak quotes the relevant passage in full, including the section regarding evidential certainty as set out above. The latter part of that passage reads:

(t)he faith of a Christian man doth apprehend the wordes of the law, the promises of god, not only as true but also as good, and therefore even when the evidence which he hath of the trueth is so small that it greaveth him to feele such a sure adherence unto that which he doth but faintly and fearfully believe that his spirit *having once truly tasted the heavenly sweetnes* thereof all the world is not able quite and cleane to remove him from it but he striveth with him selfe to hope even against hope to believe even against all reason of beleeving, being settled with Job upon this unmoveable resolution, thought god shall kill me I will not geve over trusting in him. For why? This lesson remayneth for ever imprinted in his hart, *it is good for me to cleave unto god.*¹⁸²

If Voak is to show that there has been a change in Hooker's beliefs, not just regarding the level of certainty available but also the way the Spirit works in the believer in order to attain any measure of assurance, then it will be imperative that he does not interpret this passage in a way that relies upon a sensory perception of God. He is aware that such an interpretation is not only possible but has already been made, by Shuger, and he deals with this in a footnote – rejecting the position. "Shuger makes much of the fact that Hooker speaks about the 'hart' rather than the 'will', cleaving to God, arguing that it is evidence of a 'traditional mystic epistemology'."¹⁸³ Voak agrees that such a meaning could be possible, especially as this is a sermon and as

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 244.

¹⁸² *Certaintie*, 71.

¹⁸³ Voak, *Reformed Theology*, 244, note 226.

such would be leaning towards a less ‘abstract’ theology but such an interpretation would go against Hooker’s “well-documented” theory of habits and theological virtues.”¹⁸⁴ He admits that Hooker’s use of the word “hart” rather than will “does give a certain emotive force to the argument”¹⁸⁵ but still goes on to exchange the word for “will”, saying that it falls in line with Hooker’s obvious scholastic foundation for his argument and is synonymous “as regards the explanation that Hooker gives for a believer’s adherence to faith.”¹⁸⁶

The use of the word heart instead of will has been a problem for Voak before, when he was considering the question of malice and the heart becoming obdurate.

‘Hart’ here is presumably a synonym for the will, since it connotes a form of desire, and Hooker tends to associate custom/habits with the faculty of intellectual desire, the will.¹⁸⁷

As such, Voak changes the word, as he believes that Hooker cannot be referring to any sensuous perception, even though the word heart may infer just that. Having changed it once he does so again. He is, however, faced by another problem. Just what does Hooker mean by apprehension in this context? How the Christian man apprehends the words of God not just as true but also as good; what does that mean?

For Voak, in line with his belief that Hooker is expounding a scholastic conception of faith, apprehension is an intellectual exercise and he changes the word apprehend to assent to fit in with his views. The will not only regards the evidence but also the goodness of God, and the will comes to love God and desires to assent to Christian

¹⁸⁴ Ibid..

¹⁸⁵ Ibid..

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 226.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 70.

doctrine. The intellect does not assent purely on the basis of this act of desire, but rather evidence and love work together to induce assent.¹⁸⁸ Hooker, he says, believed “true faith apprehends (or rather assents to) Christian doctrine ‘not only as true but also as good’” which separates a believer’s faith from that of the demons. Faith is formed, in this way, by love and the intellectual act of assent is partly motivated by this love for God, which is present in the will.¹⁸⁹ He thinks Hooker is putting forward a rather confused but still “traditional scholastic formulation” of faith.¹⁹⁰

Although Voak speaks of love and desire his understanding of those terms is purely in the arena of the will and reason and he speaks of the “habit of love(as) inherent in the will” and this “ensures the ‘certaintie of adherence.’”¹⁹¹ The difference, he believes, between Hooker and Aquinas is in his belief that “(a)ny person who has once experienced true faith...will never entirely lose it”.¹⁹²

Voak has now changed two words – heart for will and apprehend for assent, thus locating Hooker’s argument firmly within the intellectual arena and within scholastic theology. “Underlying this theory of certainty is Hooker’s scholastic conception of faith.... The will desires God as something perfectly good, and persuades the reason to assent to Christian doctrine”. He links the desire of the will to the habit of love and the assent of reason to the habit of faith and then comments “(c)learly Hooker believes that this intellectual act of assent (*or apprehension as he sometimes mistakenly calls it*) is imperfect”.¹⁹³ Voak not only changes Hooker’s word but asserts

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 199.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid..

¹⁹⁰ Ibid..

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 246

¹⁹² Ibid..

¹⁹³ Ibid.. (Italics mine).

that he was mistaken in using it at all. He is surely admitting here that apprehend has a different meaning to assent, and that the concept does not fit in with the scholastic framework that he believes Hooker has erected. Voak has hit one of the knotty areas, so well documented in Hooker studies, and rather than wrestle with the text he has ducked the issue.

Voak completes his argument, showing how Hooker has changed his mind about the certainty available to the believer,

(t)he implications of this passage for Hooker's views on election should, though, now be clear. If faith is defined by the fact that that it is a form of imperfect knowledge, not based upon complete evidential certainty, then it is hard to see how the evidence for election, from a person's study of his or her own behaviour, can be sufficiently demonstrative as to result in an infallible proof.¹⁹⁴

But Voak still has a problem. He may have illustrated the change in Hooker's views regarding infallible certainty of election, supported by parts of the *Lawes* and the 'Dublin Fragments', but he is left with other passages that seem to argue the contrary position and in these same texts Voak's assertion that Hooker believed the Spirit works only through reason is by implication challenged. The part of the text that has caused the confusion refers to the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist.

Whereas therefore in oure infancie we are incorporated into Christ, and by baptisme recyve the grace of his sprite without any sense or feelinge of the guift whiche God bestowethe, in the Eucharist, we so recyve the guifte of God, that wee knowe by grace what the grace is which God givethe us, the degrees of oure owne increase in holiness and vertue wee see and can judge of them, wee undertande that the strengthe of oure life begun in Christe is Christe, that his fleshe is meate, and his blood drinke, not by surmised imagination but trulye, even so trulie that throughe faithe wee perceive in the

¹⁹⁴ Ibid..

bodie and bloode sacramentallye presented the very taste of eternall life, the grace of the sacramente is here as the foode which wee eate and drinke.¹⁹⁵

Voak says that the “argument in this passage is perhaps rather unclear” and that “much of the problem stems from Hooker’s use of the words ‘sense’ and ‘feeling’...which might be taken as meaning that grace/the Spirit can actually be felt in the reception of the elements.”¹⁹⁶ But he rejects this as at all possible, as, “except with regard to miracles”¹⁹⁷ Hooker never accepts that “the operations of the Spirit can be sensed tangibly.”¹⁹⁸ Instead, “Hooker’s remarks on Holy Communion are most probably concerned with the process of rational understanding rather than sense perception.”¹⁹⁹ Voak looks to the words “knowe” and “understande” to support his view and interprets “perceive” as “a similar process of rational understanding.”²⁰⁰ To do otherwise, he argues, would be to introduce a sensory perception that would “alter this emphasis upon understanding, and to produce a reading of Hooker widely at variance from anything else in his work.”²⁰¹

Except, of course, in the *Certainitie* sermon, where a straight-forward reading of the passage on adherence indeed leans towards a sensuousness that Voak has argued away. The basis of Voak’s argument was that he could find no echo of such sensuousness attached to the concept of adherence elsewhere in Hooker’s writings, and that such a position would in fact refute Hooker’s argument against the Presbyterians. But Voak does not make this link, rather the focus is upon Hooker’s

¹⁹⁵ *Lawes*, II.256.

¹⁹⁶ Voak, *Reformed Theology*, 247.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 248.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*.

surprising allusion to the elect being able to discern their status, “Hooker thus argues in this passage that those who receive grace in Holy Communion are able to understand that they have done so, through the aid of this grace within them They are, as a result of this, presumably able to conclude that they are elect, metaphorically tasting ‘eternall life’ in the elements of bread and wine.”²⁰² In addition, Hooker appears to hearken back to the sermon on *Jude*, and says that by looking at their lives people can see their growth in virtue, and by this “know that the Spirit works within them, and presumably therefore they are elect.”²⁰³

Voak confirms that even though Hooker’s theology “underwent considerable changes” from his early writings (as illustrated in *Jude*) and the writing of the *Lawes* and “despite the fact that he had already implicitly rejected the notion that infallible knowledge of election is possible, he still implicitly argues in this passage that there is a recognizable link for the individual between the Holy Spirit and certain types of human behaviour.”²⁰⁴ He notes that this also seems to refute Hooker’s belief in the Spirit “only ‘ordinarily’” manifesting himself through reason. Such a belief contradicts, says Voak, all that Hooker has argued against the Presbyterians. And the only explanation he can give is that “the notion of the elect being sure of their salvation was of great personal importance to him, and that he was reluctant to dispense with” it.²⁰⁵ As such, “it still lingered on in his thought, especially as regards the personal communion found with God in Holy Communion.”²⁰⁶

²⁰² Ibid..

²⁰³ Ibid..

²⁰⁴ Ibid..

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 249.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.. This is a similar argument to Keble’s with regard to the indefectibility of faith and the sacraments.

It is of course possible that such a psychological reason may provide an explanation for Hooker's confused and contradictory position, but such an argument would be difficult to prove either way, and other possibilities should be explored first. There is of course, the explanation that Hooker may well have used certain elements of scholasticism, as well as Reformed theology, but that in the event his own particular theology fits neither. Such a conclusion does not necessarily lead to a confused position, but rather one that cannot be categorised using any existing classifications.

Ultimately, Voak's desire to place Hooker into an existing category wins through. Voak's conclusion both in this example, and more generally, shows the powerful need to place Hooker somewhere. Rather than allowing Hooker's views to merely stand, sometimes affirming Reformed theology, sometimes criticising, almost always transcending, he places Hooker into a category that even his own arguments challenge. Thus, he begins his conclusion stating,

Theologians of Hooker's eclectic nature are not simple to categorize: they do not fit easily into classificatory straitjackets. Was he, or was he not, a theologian of the reformed tradition? Hooker does not explicitly answer this question: at most he describes the Church of England as one of the 'reformed Churches' in the *Laws*, which says nothing about the precise orientation of his own theology, and he seldom quotes from or cites Continental Reformed writers²⁰⁷

And yet Voak goes on to say, "Hooker, right through his life, can be identified more or less clearly with certain Reformed positions."²⁰⁸ This urge to label Hooker in some way was apparent in the way he approached the texts regarding certainty and assurance. Voak has struggled to follow where Hooker has led and has instead resorted to changing words so as to generate a more easily categorised meaning to

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 318.

²⁰⁸ Ibid..

Hooker's argument, although he was still forced to admit that even then there were problems of interpretation that simply refused to go away.

Shuger: a different perspective.

Debora Shuger merely touched upon Hooker's understanding of certainty in her book "Habits of thought in English Renaissance." The chapter dealt with both Hooker and Lancelot Andrewes and focused upon "the boundaries of reason." There she makes the point, already noted above, that "(u)nlike Thomas...Hooker does not speak of the will commanding the intellect to believe; rather he alters "will" to "heart", giving the process of adherence an emotional and also sensuous dimension absent in his source."²⁰⁹ Shuger expands this by commenting that Hooker "traces the subjective contradiction, the simultaneous experience of doubt and intense, illogical desire, characterizing religious belief...He trusts in God despite the evidence and believes "against all reason", because he "tastes" God's goodness and falls in love."²¹⁰ Shuger then points to the connection between "desire and assent" which "presupposes a participatory rather than a rational and objective link between the self and reality".²¹¹

It is this concept of believing against all reason that Shuger develops in the chapter she contributes to "The Companion to Richard Hooker", entitled "Faith and Assurance." The text begins by looking at the dispute between Hooker and Travers although she rightly comments that it would "be a mistake to approach these issues only through the lens of" this disagreement.²¹² Shuger too believes that Hooker changed his mind between the writing of the sermon on *Jude* and *Certaintie*. In the

²⁰⁹ D.K. Shuger, *Habits of Thought in English Renaissance. Religion, Politics and the Dominant Culture* (Berkeley, 1990), 43.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

²¹² Shuger, 'Faith and Assurance', 221.

former, Hooker asserted that the “internal witness of the Spirit speaks with the clarity of sense experience” and that both sermons on *Jude* “are unremarkable affirmations of the reformed theology of blessed assurance”.²¹³ In the *Certaintie* sermon the same questions are posed “but with different answers...Sometime between 1582 and 1585...his position changed.”²¹⁴ Whilst holding to perseverance Hooker jettisons the doctrine of assurance as a full and infallible certainty. “Hooker’s *Certaintie* seems to be the first serious attempt to resolve the contradictions entailed by holding that justifying faith cannot be and yet always is mingled with doubt”²¹⁵ and he does so by discarding the first part of this statement and declaring that justification can, in fact, be interwoven with qualms.

His evolvment of this theology is, says Shuger, from the soil of Reformed belief but takes a quite different direction and arrives at a different destination. All of this is very similar to the scholarly work carried out by Simut and Voak, albeit that Shuger interprets the texts differently. What becomes interesting is when she turns her attention to the question of evil and Hooker’s response to it, which lifts this sermon out of the usual Reformed scenario and shows just how shallow it is to simply view this text as evidence for or against Hooker’s Reformed credentials. “For Hooker, the overriding question is not whether I am saved but whether God is good.”²¹⁶ Hooker’s starting point is that however deep and full faith is, it can be “excruciatingly difficult to believe in the face of suffering – both their own and the world’s.”²¹⁷

²¹³ Ibid., 228. See above for my argument that this is far too broad a comment. There are other parts of the sermon that do not fit so easily and Hooker’s unique ability to use Reformed doctrines in a creative way that whilst on the surface there may seem no difference in reality the effect is distinctive.

²¹⁴ Ibid..

²¹⁵ Ibid., 232.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 241.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 242.

As Hooker considers this he is not as much concerned with insufficiency of evidence but rather the times when the evidence available contradicts the belief in God's goodness. "The questions that haunt these sermons concern not merely the insufficiency of evidence for the promise but the apparent *contradiction* between evidence and promise; they seek to respond to the fear that reality belies God's word, God's justice, and God's love."²¹⁸ As such, Hooker presents the certainty of adherence as that which causes the heart to cleave to God in spite of the evidence and even against all reason.

As Hooker lays down...faith involves striving to believe 'against all reason of believing' - against the insinuations of Satan who 'laboreth continually to pervert...the minde with vane imaginations of repugnancie between the promise of god and those things which sense or experience...haith imprinted.' This is a tricky passage: the voice of the devil and reason seem disconcertingly alike. Moreover, it is hard to see how believing against the evidence of the senses and experience could result in anything other than delusion.²¹⁹

This is in effect an echo of Voak's concerns, for it would seem that Hooker is taking the same position as those he challenges and criticises in the *Laws*. If Hooker were concerned to confront and shatter illusions then to argue for faith to assert itself over and against reason and experience would seem to encourage rather than avoid such fantasies. Shuger creatively answers this difficulty by comparing Hooker's Satan to characters in Shakespeare and notably to those in *Othello* and *Much Ado About Nothing*,

Where evidence discredits faith, and faith crumbles in the face of ocular proof to the contrary, and yet in the end it was the proof, not the promise that turns out to have been the cheat...The Shakespearian analogy clarifies why, for Hooker, believing against the

²¹⁸ Ibid..

²¹⁹ Ibid., 243.

evidence need not be self-deception, but also why belief is so terribly difficult to sustain.²²⁰

This forceful argument does go some way to answering the concerns raised by Voak and yet it does not go far enough. Shuger is raising the possibility of evidential certainty as being itself flawed, thus allowing the Christian to believe in the face of evidence to the contrary. But what is crucial here, for Hooker, is that alongside the evidence of reason and experience is that of adherence itself. To simply decide that, in spite of all the proof to the contrary, I will believe in God's goodness *is* an act of self-delusion. But, as we shall see, this is not what Hooker is arguing for.

A fresh reading?

As we have seen, Simut reads Hooker with a distinct agenda and fails to approach the text with the 'listening ear' required if exegesis rather than eisegesis is the intent.

Voak does approach Hooker with much less certainty as to his true theological beliefs and yet he is constrained by the need to categorise Hooker's theology, as shown by his arduous efforts to place Hooker within scholastic theory. Shuger takes a much more creative approach, illuminating the underlying questions that reverberate within the *Certainty* sermon and yet there is a sense in which her critique seems to peter out at the last.

So what happens if we read the *Certainty* sermon with a respect for Hooker's choice of words, paying attention to the crucial nature of his style and resisting the urge to categorise his theology?

²²⁰ Ibid., 243.

As we have noted, Hooker's sermon appears to be part of a series of addresses and the title of the sermon, *A Learned and Comfortable Sermon of the Certaintie and Perpetuitie of Faith in the Elect*" suggests that this will be a fairly straightforward address, detailing the points that we have already covered – namely the *ordo salutis* and how assurance is to be gained from the links in the chain. It would seem reasonable to suppose that this is a sermon to give comfort, to reassure his hearers that certainty is obtainable, that perseverance is a gift that is available and that the elect can rest assured in their standing with God and their eventual glorification. But this is not quite what is delivered.

The first sign that this is not to be a sermon on the 'usual' lines is in the choice of the text. Habbakuk 1:4, "So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous - therefore judgment comes forth perverted." Arriving at church on Sunday morning and hearing this text read would not immediately bring to mind the question of certainty and assurance. But for Hooker, Habbakuk's musings are of paramount importance. Habbakuk has cried out to God, asking how long his plea will be ignored. He has pointed out violence, wrongdoing, trouble and destruction and God has not responded in word or action. Instead, the wicked prosper and surround the righteous. The law becomes ineffective, and justice fails. That is how Habbakuk sees it. Evil is overcoming good and God is silent and inactive in the face of it all.

The situation that brings this about is not, at least initially, Hooker's concern. What is, is Habbakuk's challenging of God, through his questioning of the law. This is the crucial question here for Hooker, "Whether the prophet Abacuk by admitting this

cogitation into his mind, the law doth fail did thereby shew himself an unbeliever”.²²¹

And here we see the seed of the sermon title beginning to flourish: is all doubt evidence of unbelief? When is faith not faith? How can I know I am one of the elect when my life is so full of doubt and uncertainty? When I look around me at the world and I despair of God, I despair of my faith – is that a sign that I am not really a Christian?

What follows is truly a “learned” sermon but one where Hooker’s aim is clearly pastoral – it is not intellectual, learned for the sake of it, but rather so that it can provide true comfort, built upon firm foundations. Hooker is especially concerned about only teaching what can be supported, especially when peace of mind and heart are at stake.

For as much therefore as the matter is waighti deare and precious which wee have in hand, it behoveth us with so much the greatere charines to wade through it taking speciall heed both what wee build and wheron wee build that if our building be perle our foundation be not stubble, if the doctrine wee teach be full of comfort and consolation the ground whereupon wee geather it be sure. Otherwyse wee shall not save but deceive both our selves and others.²²²

In typical manner, Hooker begins his sermon not with a generalised statement, summary or exhortation, but by setting the stage. Firstly, he describes the points that have been covered in the previous (and lost to us) sermon.²²³ These consist of three questions, all of which Hooker believes must be answered if this final and most important question is to be responded to. The points covered were: what do true believers believe; why don’t all people believe these things and why are those who do

²²¹ *Certaintie*, 69.

²²² *Ibid.*, 73. It is not enough to say comforting things if reality – be it theological doctrine or life experience, will not support it. Such comfort is false and deceiving.

²²³ Or perhaps there were a series of sermons. Only the last of the four points was to be covered in this sermon, so it is conceivable that there were three other sermons preceding it.

believe often uncertain? From Hooker's comments it seems there have already been murmurings of disquiet (more than likely from Travers), so Hooker has decided to further elucidate his understanding of the role of certainty in the life of the believer, in effect the response he gave to question three.

Now because nothing can be so truly spoken but through misunderstanding it maie be depraved, therefore to prevent if it be possible all misconstruction in this cause wher a small error cannot ryse but with great daunger, it is perhaps need full er wee come to the fourth point that some thing be added to that which hath been alredie spoken concerning the third.²²⁴

The first part of this sermon is a recap with the purpose of eradicating any misunderstandings that may have ensued with regard to the third question. The focus is why, regarding those particular things "whereunto the fayth of sound believers doth assent...they ...do it manie times with small assurance."²²⁵ In other words, why are we not always very sure about the things we believe? Beneath this statement is surely the implied question as to whether such uncertainty is a problem, and if so to what extent as well as the consideration of the effect of uncertainty in the life of an individual.

Hooker's method is to consider *why* the assent may be so weak. In a manner that will be replicated in the *Lawes*, Hooker immediately looks beneath the surface. Why doubt is present is the important question here: the source of doubt must be traced and understood before a conclusion can be reached. But even as Hooker raises this question of cause he immediately supplies a reassuring comment.

But they in whose harts the light of grace doth shine, they that are taught of god, why are they so weake in fayth? Why is their assenting to the law so scrupulous, so much

²²⁴ *Certaintie*, 69.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*.

mingled with feare and wavering? It seemeth atrange that ever they should imagine the law to fail. It cannot seeme strange if wee should waigh the reason.²²⁶

We looked at this section of Hooker's sermon in detail with reference to his conflict with Travers. We noted that rather than tracing doubt to a temporary faith or sin, Hooker reveals doubt to have its roots in evidential certainty: matters of faith just do not produce the required level of evidential certainty (even if sin were not an issue) to convince the mind fully.

Hooker has introduced a fresh perspective on one aspect of certainty (evidential) that does not banish doubt but regards it as an expected element in the believer's life, thus robbing it of its strangeness. It is expected, and is reasonable and as such much of its power to cause distress and anxiety evaporates.²²⁷ But Hooker does not stop here. He has stated that there are two types of certainty – one evidential the other the “certaintie of adherence”.²²⁸ And now he turns his attention to the latter.

Hooker and the certainty of adherence.

As Hooker defines his understanding of the certainty of adherence we are struck not only by the choice of words but also by the sense of climax as he drives home the importance of this means of knowledge in the life of the Christian. He begins however by simply defining the term. “The other which we call the certaintie of adherence is when the hart doth cleave and stick unto that which it doth beleeve”.²²⁹ Hooker's

²²⁶ Ibid..

²²⁷ Although, at this stage Hooker does not say this explicitly. However, it is implied from the concept that such doubt is not strange, but he doesn't spell out whether there are any 'consequences' for the believer's relationship with God. It would seem reasonable to assume that there is none: if the evidence is not there the individual cannot be expected to have full certainty.

²²⁸ *Certaintie*, 70.

²²⁹ Ibid., 71.

choice of words here are surely crucial. We noted Voak's method of changing words and also Shuger's comment that Hooker himself had changed will to heart in his own interpretation of this doctrine. The words cleave and stick are obviously related to adhere, with their sense of bonding and attachment. Cleaving of course brings with it echoes of marriage, the intensely intimate and ecstatic union between a man and a woman that can only be dissolved by death. Calling to mind this allusion, there is at once the image of the heart as somehow wedded to God through this knowledge. It is important to note that Hooker says the heart cleaves to that which it believes – there is a sense that he has not made a false dichotomy between the heart and head, the mind and emotion but rather places them together. The heart is not divorced from belief, but it does more than that – it cleaves and sticks to that which it believes and, says Hooker, this “certaintie is greater in us then the other”. Hooker has arrived at the greatest source of assurance in our lives: the certainty of adherence. Whatever causes us to cleave to God is greater than the evidential certainty we have about God and his promises. But what causes this adherence and why is it so strong?

The cause of this certainty is the apprehension not just of truth but also of goodness.

“The fayth of a Christian man doth apprehend the wordes of the law, the promises of god, not only as true but also as good.”²³⁰ Voak's argument that apprehension is the same as assent, an intellectual exercise, is cast into doubt by the text itself.

(E)ven when the evidence which he hath of the trueth is so small that it greaveth him to feele his weaknes in *assenting* thereunto, yeat is there in him such a sure *adharence* unto that which he doth but faintly and fearfully beleieve .²³¹

²³⁰ Ibid., 71.

²³¹ Ibid.. Italics mine

Here Hooker specifically uses the word assent in the first part of the sentence and apprehension in the latter part, contrasting the two types of knowing. To simply collapse apprehension into assent is to miss the subtlety of Hooker's argument. It would seem that truth has two ways of being known – by assent (through evidential certainty) and by apprehension. But goodness, it seems, must be apprehended. So, if there is a contrast between these two types of knowing, just what is it?

Once again it is worth noting Hooker's choice of the word apprehend. To apprehend carries with it a physical undertone – a sense of grasping or being grasped, an almost violent, bodily expression. But Hooker has still not said what it means to apprehend goodness and the passage builds to its climax as he does so. Here we see Hooker's rhetorical skill, holding on to the concept of the certainty of adherence and sprinkling clues as to its strength, its relationship with reason, the almost physical qualities that result from it and yet he withholds its source. Instead, he continues to paint the picture of the believer who knows the weakness of his faith, evidentially, and the grief he experiences because of this (“it greaveth him to feele his weaknes”) and then, in the middle of the paragraph Hooker inserts the word “yeat”. Here is the pivot: balanced against this expected and justifiable wavering, which cannot be any other way if we are to be honest, there is “such a sure adharence unto that which he doth but faintly and fearfully beleeve”. And why? Here Hooker reaches the climax, “his spirit *having once truly tasted the heavenly sweetnes thereof all the world is not able quite and cleane to remove him from it*”.²³²

²³² Ibid..

Hooker has declared the source of apprehension: tasting. We taste that which we only “faintly and fearfully believe” and now the bodily, physical implications of the word apprehend become even more obvious. What we taste of God is so powerfully sweet, that it lingers and cannot ever, quite, be removed. Hooker’s language here is beautiful. He does not claim that this tasting overwhelms all reason or blots out all doubts and anxiety – instead he talks of the world “not able to quite remove” the taste. Something happens that can’t quite be extinguished and that seemingly small, lingering remnant has a power far beyond its size, which Hooker illustrates as he brings the paragraph to a startling second crescendo. The effect of adherence is to cause the believer to strive with him selfe to hope even against hope to believe even against all reason of believing, being settled with Job upon this unmoveable resolution, thought god shall kill me I will not geve over trusting in him. For why? This lesson remayneth for ever imprinted in his hart, *it is good for me to cleave unto god.*²³³

What we taste is the sheer goodness of God, a truth that transcends evidential certainty and imprints itself in the heart of the believer. The final pinnacle of this paragraph brings with it a prevailing and surprising message – this certainty of adherence works to hope even *against reason* not simply beyond reason and allows the believer to stand even in the face of God’s seeming violence against him, sure somewhere in his heart that God is good.

This is Shuger’s point, but we shall need to look at it in a little more detail. Initially however, we can see that it is difficult to support Voak’s exchange of words. The emotion and physicality of this passage means that it is hard to interpret it simply in an intellectual way. But neither is Hooker simply expounding an emotional experience of God, in contrast to a reasoned faith. It is in the separating of the two

²³³ Ibid..

that the problems arise, both for Hooker's opponents and for Voak. There is a clear belief that a reasoned faith is part and parcel of life for the Christian but there is a need to know and understand its boundaries, its strengths and weaknesses.²³⁴ In the same way, Hooker does not seem to be telling his hearers to seek an emotional experience of God, but instead he is simply describing what happens to the Christian and Shuger is surely right in saying that there is a deep sensuousness to this passage – reinforced by words such as cleaving and tasting. This makes the meaning of the passage difficult to grasp, especially if the categories available are simply reason or emotion. Hooker seems to transcend such a crude differentiation.

This relationship with, rather than overwhelming of, the natural faculties, already contrasts with those whom Hooker criticises in the *Lawes* and as such resolves at least some of the conflict Voak outlined as to the possibility of Hooker taking the same position as them. But there would still seem to be a problem in that Hooker does indeed state that the Christian should believe against reason. Is this simply contradictory? Perhaps, by the time Hooker wrote the *Lawes* he had simply changed his mind. But there is more to be explored here, for this phrase does not stand alone but is connected with the reference to tasting. It is tasting that sets the context of believing against reason and may well give shape to its meaning.

'Tasting the heavenly sweetnes' is, according to Hooker, the source of the certainty of adherence. It is in this way that not only the truth of God's promises are apprehended but, arguably more importantly, their goodness. This is a sensual experience; there is no emotional description here but simply the physical one of tasting and sweetness.

²³⁴ In the same way that Hooker is keen in the *Lawes* to show the boundaries of Scripture – the area of its competence and when those boundaries are breached error creeps in.

But of course, tasting carries with it, in Christian theology, an implicit connection with the Eucharist where through bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ are taken, tasted and eaten. Is Hooker alluding here to a sacramental knowledge that goes beyond all reason *and* emotion and effects the ‘heart’ of the believer – echoing the words of the prayer book where the congregation are bid ‘to feed on him in their hearts, by faith with thanksgiving’? It is at least possible that Hooker is speaking here of the participation in God that occurs sacramentally and that, it seems, leaves an irremovable imprint in the heart.

If the sacraments, and particularly the Eucharist, play a part in the assurance and certainty available to the Christian, then implicitly included here is the dimension of communal worship and formation that prevents this ‘knowledge’ from being an isolated, individual experience that claims a ‘special relationship’ with God. This is one of the criticisms Hooker has of the Puritans – they are alone with their Bibles and whatever comes to mind is taken to be the work of the Spirit.²³⁵ Looking for like-minded believers then becomes the focus and the experience becomes one of judgment and superiority as the godly separate themselves from the ungodly. But for Hooker, there is no special revelation, no supernatural interpretation, and no judgment of others – but simply the heart-felt belief in God’s goodness. Such an experience, if centred upon the gathering of the Church for Holy Communion would be personal but not individual,

This is why it is particularly important to note that Voak found a problem for his theory in one other place, namely Hooker’s description of the sacraments and

²³⁵ “When they and their Bibles wer alone together, what strange phantasticall opinion soever at any time entered into their heads, their use was to thinke the Spirit taught it them.” *Lawes*, I.44.

particularly the Eucharist. For Hooker, whereas in baptism there is no knowledge of what is received, the opposite seems to be true in the case of the Eucharist. Hooker states that in the Eucharist, “we so recyve the guifte of God, that wee knowe by grace what the grace is which God givethe us”.²³⁶ Voak may be right and knowledge here may mean intellectual understanding, but it could equally refer to the ‘sacramental knowledge’ we have encountered in the *Certaintie* sermon. This knowledge is by grace and what is given is grace, and the clue must lie in the words ‘sense and feeling’. Whereas in baptism there is no sense or feeling, “in oure infancie we are incorporated into Christ, and by baptisme recyve the grace of his sprite without any sense or feelinge”, in the Eucharist there is and this surely fills out the word ‘knowledge’ as much more than an intellectual exercise.²³⁷ For Hooker, the Spirit does not *only* work through reason and it is this point that Voak misunderstands.

Knowing, apprehending God through the Eucharist is both a personal and a congregational event and is available to all. Once again, the passage is alive with physical, sensuous description and asserts that believers can know – not only through imagination, but truly know, the taste of eternal life. Here we meet again the tasting of God that imparts knowledge and understanding, which if read in the light of the *Certaintie* sermon could well allude to the certainty of adherence.

And here we come to the difficult part, for Hooker says that one of the ways to see the effect of this is in our lives is that we will grow in virtue and holiness and that this affirms our status. Is this ‘the old Hooker’ reappearing?

²³⁶ *Lawes*, II.256.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*.

St. Jude, Certainie and the Lawes. Did Hooker change his mind?

Perhaps the real question is, did this Hooker ever really go away? We must note that although Keble, Voak and Shuger all agree that Hooker dramatically changed his beliefs between the two sermons, only two years separates them. Such a fact itself should make us wary of this argument. But *is* there evidence that his beliefs have changed? On the face of it the answer is yes, as Hooker refers to the possibility of infallible certainty in *Jude* but states that such assurance is neither possible nor desirable in *Certainie*. A closer reading, however, leaves this seemingly clear conclusion less convincing.

That our behaviour can provide evidence for the presence of God's Spirit in our lives is always present in Hooker's writings. The first sermon on *Jude* indeed puts this forward, but so does the *Certainie* sermon. There is not the same focus nor intensity, but Hooker still refers to the changes in life that a Christian should expect and sees that as evidence of his status as a child of God. "In this wee know wee are not decyved nether can wee decyve you when wee teach that the fayth wherby ye are sanctified cannot faile. It did not in the prophet, it shall not in you."²³⁸

Hooker does not list the changes that should occur and neither does he speak of degrees of change nor use the phrase "infallible certainty", but the implication is there and obvious. The faith that sanctifies us – the faith that grows in us the fruits of the Spirit and enables us to act in love and holiness, this is the faith that will not, cannot, fail. This is surely the same as Hooker's reference in the *Lawes* to seeing holiness and virtue grow in our lives as a result of participating in God. There is no change here.

²³⁸ *Certainie*, 73.

But has Hooker changed his mind about the evidence provided by our lives? In the *Certaintie* sermon Hooker quite categorically states that neither evidential certainty nor the certainty of adherence are ever so perfect that they provide infallible, doubt-free assurance. “Now the minds of all men being so darkened as they are with the foggie dampe of originall corruption, it cannot be that any mans hart living should be ether so enlightened in the knowledg or so established in the love of that wherein his salvation standeth as to be perfect, neither doubting or shrinking at all.”²³⁹ There is no call to the Christian to sift and examine their lives, merely to notice what is occurring and to be, in some measure, reassured by it – however doubt-riddled. In the same way, the passage from the *Lawes* does not demand critical scrutiny but simply states that Christians will, over time and by degrees, see their lives change for the better.

This would seem to be a quite different approach to the one Hooker takes in *Jude*. On the face of it Hooker is preaching a classical Calvinist sermon, where he tells his hearers that those who have fallen away – even if they were once pillars of the Church – were never true Christians and that if they had been, they would never have lost their faith. Immediately following this he writes, “It behoveth you therefore greatly every man to examine his owne estate, and to try whether you be bond or free, children or no children.”²⁴⁰ But what is interesting here is *why* Hooker exhorts them to do this. This is not so as to be secure in their own standing, to assure themselves that they are elect whilst others are perishing. Rather, it is to prevent that very superiority. Hooker tells his congregation to sift their lives to see if they are God’s

²³⁹ Ibid., 71.

²⁴⁰ *Jude 1*, 28.

precisely so they will not sit in judgment on those around them. Earlier on he has warned his hearers to

leave the secret judgement of every servant to his owne Lord, accounting and using all men as brethren both neere and deare unto us, supposing Christ to love them tenderly, so as they keep the profession of the Gospell and joyne in the outward communion of Saints.²⁴¹

He now makes the same point again.

I have told you already, that we must beware we presume not to sit as Gods in judgment upon others, and rashlie, as our conceipt and fancie doth lead us, so to determine of this man, he is sincere, or of that man, he is an hypocrit, except by their falling away they make it manifest and knowne what they are. For who art thou that takest upon thee to judge another before the time? Judge thyselfe.²⁴²

The point of sifting is not to unearth a secret certainty that will defend the individual against those he does not like but rather to bring humility; to see oneself as loved tenderly and to see our brothers and sisters in the same light. This is not an exercise in self-interest but an acknowledgment of God's love for his Church. Hooker is not asking for people to doubt their status but to truly live it. So, when he goes on to speak about infallible certainty the purpose seems to differ from that of other preachers we have encountered. Hooker does state quite clearly that there is infallible evidence in our lives as to our salvation, but this lies not in a sense of assurance or certainty nor is there a checklist of virtues and degrees of goodness but rather he points to the presence of love for our fellow Christians. This is the infallible evidence of our salvation: that we love one another. "We cannot examine the harts of other

²⁴¹ Ibid., 26.

²⁴² Ibid., 28.

men, we may our owne. That we have passed from death to life, we knowe it, saith St. John, because we love our brethren.”²⁴³

Had Hooker seen the fruits of the teaching regarding election? Perhaps it was not anxiety and uncertainty he had encountered but superiority, judgmentalism and a lack of love for those who professed the faith and yet were judged to be reprobates by those who claimed a special status and knowledge. This is surely the same stance he takes in the *Lawes*. He has used the word infallible, but it is linked only to love for the brethren – surely a challenge to those who used their virtues as weapons to belittle those around them. The only sure sign of election was a deep love and respect for fellow Christians. By the time Hooker delivers his sermon on *Certaintie* he has stopped using the word infallible at all – perhaps by then the connotations and implications were far too dangerous. His omission of the sixth Lambeth article from the ‘Dublin Fragments’ shows the depth of his concern for this theological teaching that had caused such damage both in the sense of anxiety and heightened judgmentalism. But Hooker does not lose sight of the real changes that God seeks to make in His children. Sanctification is crucial for Hooker and that thread continues throughout his writings, deepening into the theology of sacramental knowledge, that gradually transforms and sustains the believer, which we encountered in the *Certaintie* sermon and the *Lawes*. Having said this, Hooker does include a long paragraph in the *Jude* sermon detailing the changes in his life, which he introduces with the assertion “It is as easie a matter for the spirit within you to tell whose yee are, as for the eies of your body to judge where you sit, or in what place you stand.”²⁴⁴ As we shall see, the more sensitive and nuanced theology of the *Certaintie* sermon does

²⁴³ Ibid..

²⁴⁴ *Jude* 1, 28.

stand in contrast to this but as to whether there has been an abrupt change in Hooker is another question. There has certainly been a development – Hooker’s focus and emphasis between the two sermons is different, as we shall see, but there is much that is the same and the *Lawes* and the ‘Dublin Fragments’ seem to build on this development rather than signify an about-turn.

One other matter that deserves notice is Hooker’s reference in *Jude* to how assurance is produced in the life of the believer. There is no sudden, supernatural overwhelming but rather a step-by-step building of confidence in the goodness of God as the Scriptures and experience work together to show God’s presence in the world.

For when many things spoken of before in scripture, whereof we see first one thing accomplished, and then another, and so a third, perceive wee not plainly, that God doeth nothing else but lead us along by the hand, til he have settled us upon the rocke of an assured hope, that *no one jote or title of his word shall passe till all be fulfilled.*²⁴⁵

In this text we see much of Hooker’s theology shining out: the God who leads us by the hand, who uses our senses and life-experience to help us to journey into and with Him. Assured hope brings with it a different sense than that of certainty and its growth is gradual. This is surely the same Hooker we encounter in the *Certaintie* sermon.

Running through all of Hooker’s writings is a clear message about the dangers of presumption – a message that is underlined by the glaring omission of Lambeth’s article six in the ‘Dublin Fragments’. As we noted this is present as much in the sermon on *Jude* as it is in the *Certaintie* sermon. In the latter Hooker tells his congregation to beware of claiming a certainty that in fact overthrows the very

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 18.

essence of their relationship with God. To claim perfect faith is to imply that all other virtues – such as righteousness, could also be perfect,

And then what need wee the righteousness of Christ...But let them beware who challeng to them selves a strength which they have not least they loose the comfortable support of that weaknes which in deed they have.²⁴⁶

Hooker's theology of assurance and certainty does develop and such a statement should be true of all Christians, but I suggest that it is only when we try to read Hooker's sermons and texts through the lens of certain categories that the idea of a complete change emerges. When read in that way the presence of certain words and phrases suggest Hooker's loyalty towards a particular theological stream, but as we have seen there are other parts of the same text that suggest the contrary. If we read the texts without the categories in mind then Hooker's own theology emerges, not as a confused synthesis of existing categories but as a dynamic whole in which certain elements appear and evolve as his ministry and faith deepen and develop.

This is particularly true of Hooker's understanding as to how the believer can detect the presence of God in his life. In *Jude*, the positive changes in behaviour and desire for God seem at the forefront, but with an emphasis upon love and humility. Several years later Hooker offers a much deeper and sophisticated understanding, particularly of desire, that encompasses the darker side of life, not as a place where God is absent but where He is deeply present.

²⁴⁶ *Certainitie*, 71.

Finding God in the darkness.

We need to remind ourselves where we have arrived in regard to Hooker's *Certainitie* sermon. Hooker begins his address by reiterating the points regarding why Christians often have a weak faith and he has set out his understanding of how a person knows things. He has referred to evidential certainty, which is a part of faith and also the certainty of adherence – the goodness of God experienced by the Christian that results in love and trust and makes her hold on to God even when the evidence is weak.

The main thrust of this section has been to disarm doubt – neither form of knowledge is full and complete and such doubt is a natural part of life, because of the way reason works as well as a result of sin and imperfection. As we noted above, the idea that faith could be perfect is actually to imply that all virtues could be faultless, and then “what need wee the righteousness of Christ?”²⁴⁷ Such a belief is actually against the life of faith, rather than a part of it, and robs the Christian of “the comfortable support of that weaknes which in deed they have.”²⁴⁸

Hooker has stressed that doubt is no match for God. In fact, it not only proves our need for him but it also assures us of his action and presence. Doubt reveals our need for God and allows Him to work in and through us. Already we begin to see the skill of Hooker's argument – doubt itself, as showing our weakness, becomes an assurance of God's strength. But Hooker goes further than this. He will develop this idea of God as present in the places and experiences that at first sight we consider Godless and as he does so he offers a concept of assurance that transcends the usual categories and

²⁴⁷ Ibid..

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 71-2.

understandings. The presence of God who is truth and goodness is present where we assume He is absent, and it is this truth that will light the remainder of the sermon.

Hooker now moves on to the fourth question. For him this is of the utmost importance and through his response we see the link between Hooker's pastoral and academic theology spelt out. It is not enough to have the right answers, and rush in to explain. Truth is linked with goodness in the very way he approaches the problem. He has underlined why we doubt and has shown God's light shining in that particular darkness before he turns to the main focus of this sermon. This has been imperative for him as he states his aim is to "prevent if it be possible all misconstruction in this cause wher a small error cannot ryse but with great daunger."²⁴⁹ If we are to believe the presence of doubt is always a sign of reprobation, then we will either despair or pretend to a certainty that we have not got. Either way is needless and dangerous.

Having set the scene, the final question is faced: did Habakkuk, by the very thought that the law had failed, lose his salvation or show himself to be an unbeliever? This is not an academic, textual question. Hooker believes that "the repose and tranquility of infinit soules doth depend upon it".²⁵⁰ He has shown that doubt and weakness of faith are to be expected in the life of a Christian, but he knows he has begged the question. How do we differentiate between doubts that are evidence of a weak faith and doubts that reveal infidelity? Hooker believes in both possibilities and he faces the question squarely, and in doing so implicitly criticises Calvin.²⁵¹ We tread carefully here, he

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 69.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 73.

²⁵¹ See *Institutes*, II.973. where Calvin speaks of call. Those who are elect have certainty of faith, even though they doubt, but will persevere to the end because of who God is. But the elect are called by a special call—but some are even granted this special call, illumined for a while then God "justly forsakes

says: it is no good giving comfort and assurance if it is built upon an illusion; if it can't be supported by the foundations upon which we build,

taking special heed both what wee build and whereon wee build that if our building be perle our foundation be not stubble, if the doctrine wee teach be full of comfort and consolation the ground upon whereupon we geather it be sure.²⁵²

Hooker seems to be saying that it is not enough just to baldly state the facts – saying that weak faith is fine but unbelief is not. We need to look at the source and learn how to tell the difference.

Hooker begins his answer by alluding to sanctification and the changes in life, in the arresting statement we considered earlier, declaring to his congregation that sanctifying faith cannot fail. “It did not in the prophet, it shall not in you.”²⁵³ But from this he moves on and develops the concept by locating the difference between the two types of doubt not through conduct, or feelings, but in desire. This desire is not the same as the one Hooker described in *Jude* where desire is shown through delight in God and his ways but rather this desire hides amongst despair and unbelief, in the very darkest corners of an individual's life – a seemingly Godless place.²⁵⁴ He asks the question that is central to the discussion: how do we know we are born of God? How do we know that we are true believers? *We know because we desire to believe.* Hooker does not produce a checklist of doctrinal affirmations, such as the thirty-nine articles and nor does he point to conduct. Instead he points to desire, again a sensuous word that suggests more than mere emotion and more than an intellectual yearning. This desire is not a joyous longing but is shown in gut-wrenching grief. It is

them.” (Ibid., 974) How comfort can be drawn from this is questionable and Hooker obviously thought this too.

²⁵² *Certaintie*, 73.

²⁵³ Ibid., 25.

²⁵⁴ *Jude 1*, 29.

this desire that reveals a secret love for that which we desire, and desire in turn proves belief.²⁵⁵

But we need to look further at this argument and see exactly how Hooker locates this desire. Firstly, he outlines the scenario. When people wish to be sure of their standing before God, which is often through a sense of anxiety, they search their hearts for faith and then despair because they fail to discover it there. Hooker's phrase is that they "find not themselves in themselves"²⁵⁶. But, he says, the truth is that they fail to find that which is there. "For that which dweleth in their hartes they seeke, they make very diligent search and inquire, it abideth it speaketh it worketh in them, yeat still they aske where, still they lament as for a thing which is past finding."²⁵⁷ As a result of their inner searching they conclude that they do not have faith and as such they despair. He imagines them saying, "I have thorowly considered and exquisitely sifted all the corners of my hart, and I see what there is, never seek to perswade me against my knowledge, I know I do not beleeve."²⁵⁸

And what leads them here? It may be they are ill, and that will pass, "(w)hich in some I graunt is but a melingholie passion proceeding only from that dejection of minde the cause whereof is in the body and by bodily meanes maie be taken away."²⁵⁹ But it may be more serious than that and then we must look for why and how this conclusion is reached. "But where there is no such bodily cause the mind is not lightly

²⁵⁵ And here Hooker is surely referring back to the earlier passage. How do we acquire this knowledge, this secret love? Because we have apprehended the goodness of God. Desire is the proof of this apprehension.

²⁵⁶ *Certaintie*, 74. This is an interesting text – does Hooker understand salvation as the place where we find who we truly are? To be truly human is to participate in God.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

in this moode” and Hooker gives three explanations as to why this is. Firstly, they consider the lives of others and find themselves wanting or else they look back at their lives and see that they have not grown in faith but rather are weaker and more unsure than they were. “(J)udging by comparison ether with other men or with them selves at some other time more strong they thinke imperfection to be a plain deprivation, weaknes to be utter want of faith.”²⁶⁰

The second reason for concluding a lack of faith is because the individual does not feel joyful. Here Hooker sets out his beliefs about emotions and it is clear that he does believe that feelings have a place in the life of the Christian but their presence or absence does not indicate the existence of faith. The mistake is to collapse joy into faith. “(A)n error groweth when men in heaviness of spirit suppose they lack fayth because they find not the sugred joy and delight which in deed doth accompany fayth but as a separable accident, a thing that may be removed from it”.²⁶¹ The expectation of constant joy is not just unreal but such a state would, in fact, prevent the believer from ever appreciating the beauty of joy and delight. Hooker believes that times of darkness and difficulty can, in fact, deepen and nourish the Christian journey, acting as a contrast to the good times so that the latter are appreciated but also preventing presumption and shallowness and growing humility. Hooker does not just tell his hearers to battle through the difficult times, he actually urges them to discover and experience God in the darkness. “No, god wyll have thee that shall walke in light to feel now and then what is to sit in shadow of death. A greeved spirit therefore is no argument of a faithles mind”²⁶²

²⁶⁰ Ibid..

²⁶¹ Ibid., 75.

²⁶² Ibid..

Thirdly, the Christian considers his inner life, the temptations he feels and entertains, and believes that this is evidence of faithlessness. “(T)hey fasten their cogitations upon the distrustful suggestions of the flesh whereof finding great abundance in themselves they gather thereby, Surely unbeliefe hath full dominion”.²⁶³ But Hooker says that the life of faith is not overwhelmed by such things and that God hears the spirit groaning in the midst of it all. “(O)ur *spirit groneth* and that god heareth it when wee do not”.²⁶⁴

However, Hooker knows that such arguments do not always reassure people. He gives reasons as to why all of this is not enough but he also knows that to just push their decision aside is insufficient. So, he accepts them at their word, “favour them a little in their weaknes, let the thing be graunted which they do imagine.”²⁶⁵ He accepts that they do not believe and one could assume that this is the end of the argument but far from it. Hooker focuses upon the grief of those who assert their unbelief; he notes their lamenting. Here is a place of loss and nothingness, but for Hooker it is the very place where God’s presence is revealed. “Do they not wish it might and also strive that it may be otherwise?”²⁶⁶ The mourning, the grief, shows their desire to believe, the desire for the situation to be other than it is and Hooker sees this desire as the very place of life and hope, for that desire for belief reveals its existence, “by desiring to beleeve they prove them selves to be true beleevers.”²⁶⁷

How does this make sense? Because desire is born from a secret love.

²⁶³ Ibid..

²⁶⁴ Ibid..

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 76.

²⁶⁶ Ibid..

²⁶⁷ Ibid..

Whenc cometh this but from a secret love and liking which they have of those things that are believed? No man can love the things which in his own opinion are not. And if they thinke those things to be, which they show that they love when they desire to beleeve they prove them selves to be true believers. For without faith no man thinketh that things believed are.²⁶⁸

Hooker's logic is that we wouldn't desire that which we did not love or like. And we would not love that which we knew for a fact did not exist. Belief in existence is a prerequisite of love. This leads then to the conclusion that belief is shown by the desire to believe, and this desire is in turn shown in true grief for the loss of belief.

This is more than just a clever argument. Hooker is dispelling the illusion that covers certainty and doubt. Earlier on in the sermon he has pointed to our love for God, our cleaving to him, as a response to His imprint within us. Desire then, born of love, not only points to evidence of our belief in the existence of God as an intellectual assent, but as evidence of our apprehension of God. Simut misunderstands Hooker here. He believes Hooker is arguing that "lack of faith proves the non-existence of spiritual things."²⁶⁹ This is not the thrust of Hooker's argument. Firstly, he is showing that desire reveals a belief in the existence of God. Hooker is not saying that we can ever be certain that God does exist, or that an intellectual belief in existence is the proof thereof. That is clearly unsupportable. But he is saying that despair is not a sign of unbelief.

He then takes a step further and reveals the interweaving of intellect and affections as he speaks of desire as flowing from a "secret love" and love for God is always for

²⁶⁸ Ibid..

²⁶⁹ Simut, *Salvation*, 148.

Hooker a response to God's love, apprehended by and in the heart.²⁷⁰ This is not an apologetic work, proving the existence of God from human understanding or affection, in a sense God's existence is a given. This is a sermon to bring hope to Christians whose love for God, a response to God's love for them, is right there before their eyes. This is not about faith proving God's existence but about desire revealing faith, even when it is clothed in unbelief. And faith is the presence of God in the life of the individual.

We see here that at the very foundation of Hooker's argument is the belief in the goodness and love of God that hides amongst the darkness of doubt and despair. Such a belief does not deliver certainty, but it does deliver hope and trust based upon God's character and actions. There is little wonder that Hooker ends his sermon with the words of Romans 8, exclaiming that nothing can separate us from the love of God.²⁷¹ Hooker has shown that to be the truth – for not even doubt and despair part us from God's love.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ It is worth a moment here to reflect again upon Simut who makes distinctions and creates polarities that Hooker does not. He distinguishes between faith and love, saying that Hooker's argument here is faulty, "(t)he flaw of Hooker's argument is the connection between the supposed love for spiritual things, and the actual or real existence of spiritual things." (Ibid. 149.) He thinks there is a "faulty connection" here as faith "should necessarily be manifested by love, but there is not an actual guarantee that love necessarily be manifested by faith." (Ibid.) Simut somehow moves on from this to say that Hooker was a forerunner of Rahner and believed in "anonymous Christians", as from his argument it is possible for an individual to have faith and be a Christian without being aware of it. How Simut arrives at this startling conclusion is unclear and outside the parameters of this dissertation but what is relevant is that he is again using the two realms theory and finding that Hooker does not fit. Hooker, he says, tries to link intellectual assent and trust through love, "as an inherent element of human nature, which is obviously part of the natural realm." (Ibid. 151.) If he had used the Holy Spirit "as part of the spiritual realm" (Ibid.) that would have been better and "would have kept the consistency of Hooker's argument." (Ibid.) In a telling phrase Simut writes "If love were actually worked out by the Holy Spirit, Hooker's conclusion regarding the subsequent existence of faith would have been *theologically sound* because he would have considered an element of the spiritual realm such as faith as being from the Spirit". (Ibid. 150, italics mine). Like many before him Simut has discovered that Hooker, at the last hurdle, simply refuses to toe the line. The truth is that Hooker did not divide the world, or love and faith, into these categories and that is why the theory will not work.

²⁷¹ *Ceraintie*, 82.

²⁷² It could be said that Hooker is using a similar method to Greenham, who decided that the very fact anyone came to him for help meant that they were one of the elect. However, it is obvious that Hooker's assurance went far beyond such a subjective decision. Shuger makes the point that for

But there is still something left to say, for Hooker does not think that the Christian is merely passive in all this. If doubt and despair are like a sickness, then Hooker has a remedy and that is to engage the memory. The devil makes us forget, “taketh all remembrance from them” and we must not let this happen²⁷³ “Sir yow must learne to strengthen youre faith by that experience which heretofore yow have had of goddess greate goodness towards yow”.²⁷⁴ In passages reminiscent of Augustine, Hooker sees the memory as the treasure house – able to sustain and strengthen us through times of poverty and famine. But this is purely because God is constant. His truth and goodness yesterday are promises of his truth and goodness today and in the future.

Sir, yow must learn to strengthen youre faith by that experience which heretofore yow have had of goddess greate goodness towards yow....When yow doubt what yow shall have, search what yow have had at godes handes, make this reckninge that the benefites which he hath bestowed are bills obligatory and sufficient surties for that which he will bestow further, his present mercy is still a warrant for his future love.²⁷⁵

If we believe God is love then He is constant love – this is what we can be assured of. And even though we forget and doubt, due to sin, the devil and weakness,²⁷⁶ God is greater than all these things and his presence in our lives through faith, however weak, is still strong because it is the very love and goodness of God.

So Hooker urges his hearers to participate in this great action of God through remembering and once again there are echoes here of Eucharistic theology and liturgy. As the story of Jesus’ last supper is retold in the Communion service the

Greenham “spiritual anguish functions primarily as a sign – an hysterical symptom as it were- of repressed guilt.” Whereas Hooker seeks to “reassure the ‘grieved spirit’ by urging the essential goodness of the divine nature.” Shuger, ‘Faith and Assurance’, 244. Whilst agreeing with this I would want to take this further.

²⁷³ *Certainie*, 78.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁷⁵ There is no hint here of God calling, illuming and then withdrawing – as in Calvin.

²⁷⁶ *Certainie*, 80.

communicants are caught up in the act of remembering his life, death and resurrection in a way that makes the 'story' present *in* the present. In the same way Hooker urges his hearers to remember God's great acts of love and goodness to them in the past so that his presence will be made present to them now. The remembrances are an assurance of God's future goodness and in so being they make God present at this moment. In the same way, the Eucharist is the place where we seek and desire God and where He may seem to be absent, and only the elements are present. This, in one sense, is the very epitome of absence at the place of desire, and yet the Church teaches that it is the place where God is most present. Similarly, Hooker has revealed God to be present just where he may be thought to be absent – in the darkness of doubt, despair and anxiety, in unbelief itself.

Locating God in the darkness returns us to Shuger's belief that the *Certaintie* sermon is in fact dealing with theodicy. Hooker is wrestling with how Christians can hold on to a God who is both love and goodness in the face of life-experiences that seem to deny that truth. What Shuger's argument does illuminate is that Hooker's concern is not about the certainty of knowing we are saved (we cannot ever be sure) but rather whether we can ever be assured of God's character as good, loving, and just. The difference may seem small but it is crucial for the effect is to turn the spotlight away from the individual and onto God. As he does, the hearer is drawn into the world of hope where God shows His nature through His sharing of His very life with His people. Hooker's answer does not alleviate all doubts and concerns and neither does it pretend that there is not serious evidence to the contrary but these factors are forced into the shadows as the light of Hooker's God slowly emerges as the sermon progresses.

It is this change in focus that is crucial and that leads to Hooker's theology being difficult to categorise. He appears not to be answering, or even asking, the usual questions. Instead, he is turning the spotlight onto God and asking his hearers to turn their faces towards the light. This is the source of Travers' problems as he sought to disseminate Hooker's theology from sermons that simply did not answer the questions Travers was posing.

In the closing paragraph Hooker builds his argument to a crescendo, leading his hearers to the very love and kindness of God as the source of assurance.

The earth may shake, the pillers of the world may tremble underusse, the countenance of the heaven may be appald, the sonn may losse his lyght, the mone hir bewtie, the stares there glorie. But concerning the man that trusteth in god, if the fier have proclaimed it selfe unable as much to singe a heare of his heade, if lions if beastes be ravenous by nature and kene with hunger being set to devower, have as it were religiously adored the very flesh of the faithfull man, what is there in the world that shall change his hart overthro his faith alter his affection towards god or the affection of god to him?²⁷⁷

It is God's love for us that is the source of our certainty and assurance and we know this through our participation in the divine life. Tasting God's goodness, in the community of God's family, leads us beyond emotion and reason, both of which are present and necessary in the life of the Christian. Our lives will change and develop, and this encourages us but the source of our assurance is not in the end such evidence. God's kindness has been shared with us and our knowledge of this empowers us and enlightens us through the dark times, revealing God's presence with us as we actively share His life. In the light of this we can understand Hooker's final words.

²⁷⁷ *Certainitie*, 81.

I have a sheperd full of kindness full of care and full of power: unto him I commit my self; his owne finger haith ingravened this sentense in the tables of my hart,²⁷⁸ *Satan haith desired to winnow the as wheate, butt I have praied that thy faith faile not.*

Therfor the assurance of my hope I will labor to kepe as a jewell unto the end and by labor through the gracious mediation of his praier I shall kepe yt.²⁷⁹

Conclusion.

After plumbing such spiritual depths; after facing the darkness of our own doubts and desires; after grasping hope and assurance as gifts of God through the tasting of His goodness, it is difficult to then ask the question, “How Reformed was Hooker?” It is as if the question itself is alien to the text. Instead there is an holistic theology that views humanity as beloved of God and God as the one who makes Himself known and present to His people. Hooker places the spotlight on God – on His love and goodness, His desire to share Himself with us, and it is from these truths that assurance flows. All other matters recede into the shadows as Hooker locates God in the pivot between belief and doubt, between the place of absence and presence. To strive for a certainty about Hooker’s position on assurance is neither possible nor desirable.

But in addition to this we have discovered that Hooker’s reputation as a theologian who relies primarily, if not solely, on reason, as the means by which God is approached and received, is questionable. It is not that reason does not play a crucial role in Hooker’s life – this is evident in the very way he has structured his sermons as well as the *Lawes*. But, the reasoned arguments point to beyond the intellect, not just to the mystery of the sacraments themselves but also to the adherence of the heart to God – the heart as the place where God’s goodness is tasted and his beauty beheld.

²⁷⁸ Surely another allusion to the Eucharist - the table of the Lord.

²⁷⁹ Cert 82

Truth is dynamically embraced as well as discovered, both through the labyrinths of intellectual rigour and through the tasting of God in and by the heart. Hooker is well aware that life can deliver experiences that cannot be understood through reason, however deep our faith. It is at that point that hope against reason emerges, not as a desperate attempt to cling on to an illusion but as a reality that emerges from an inner participation in God wrought through the tasting of His life. This facet of his theology is often ignored and yet as we have seen it is prevalent throughout his writings: the vista beyond reason, beyond certainty, that can be embraced because God has made Himself known to us and has shared His life with us.

Conclusion

Richard Hooker strides through Anglicanism like a colossus. His words have been used to shape, defend, create and inspire a Church that has sought to lead and influence the world around it. Hooker has smiled down upon the institution from the lofty heights of his pedestal, benignly watching from a distance whilst those below argue as to the real meaning and purpose of the *Lawes*, sifting the evidence in order to discover his true theology and ecclesiastical loyalty. Whatever the outcome, as generations come and go, Hooker remains – perched above the tumult, his meaning contested but his authority intact.

There have, in fact, been many Richard Hooker's over the centuries, his identity changing with the ease of a chameleon. Securely attached to the Church in England, he has kept in step with the Church's changes and has consistently been described and understood in the light of current ecclesiastical practice and theology.

Soon after his death, with Covell as his defender, Hooker became the champion of the avant-garde movement, seeking to distance the Church from its continental counterparts. With Covell as his champion, Laud too became his supporter, emphasising even more his sacramental focus and allegiance to episcopacy, in the comforting knowledge that Hooker's later books, challenging that image, were securely locked away from public gaze. At the Restoration, Walton stepped in and created the mild-mannered, judicious Hooker whose work had been tampered with and whose life had been blighted by his dominant wife. Here was the great man, valiantly supporting Canterbury against Geneva, the magnificent Anglican Divine.

But Hooker had also gained support from men such as Henry Jackson, who had printed his sermons in order to reassert his reformed credentials. At the other end of the spectrum Jesuits were reading Hooker and using his theology to challenge and taunt the English Church. As the eighteenth century dawned, the confusion surrounding Hooker's identity emerges even more clearly – he is “a moderate Whig, a Lockean Whig, a moderate Tory, a ceremonialist parson (or) a Non-juring defender of the Church's apostolic government”¹ Hooker was a figure that carried weight, “(b)y now indeed anyone in English politics who wanted a name to command instant respect or who wanted to score a debating point for their cause was ready to quote Hooker”.²

In the nineteenth century the Oxford Movement famously adopted Hooker and secured his identity not only for their own generation but for the next century. Hooker was the champion of the *via media*, the proponent of a distinctive high-Church Anglicanism and the one who revealed the true and original identity of the church in England. Keble's edition of the *Laws* became the jewel in the crown. Reason, scripture and tradition became his watchwords, and he became *the* representation of Anglo-Catholic Anglicanism, seen as the true and original identity of the Church.

In the 1970s the North American Episcopalians embraced Hooker's *via media* Anglicanism. Even though they reluctantly acknowledged the later consensus that a distinct Anglican Church did not exist in the sixteenth century, they retained their understanding of Hooker as forging a distinctive path for the Church that in effect

¹ MacCulloch, 'Hooker's Reputation', 803.

² *Ibid.*,804

gave rise to Anglicanism. The excellent textual scholarship of the *Folger* edition has kept this image alive and scholars such as Lee Gibbs still espouse the position today.³

Naturally, the *via media*/High Anglican Hooker was rejected or ignored by those holding differing views. As the twentieth century came to a close an alternative voice was heard. Hooker, the High-Church Anglican, was declared to be nothing more than a nineteenth-century myth. Drawing on a stream of less dominant and yet still present views throughout the centuries, Kirby, Atkinson and Simut have recovered and created the Reformed Hooker – the man who was in full agreement with Luther and Calvin, who sought to correct not replace a Reformed understanding of the Church and its doctrines. This new image has not been universally endorsed, but there has been a clear shift in understanding – Hooker was, essentially, a Reformed theologian. Lake, who had himself been challenged by Kirby for asserting that Hooker created Anglicanism and that his theology was novel, conceded that his interpretation was not as certain as he had first proposed. Hooker was, he accepted, essentially Reformed. Lake sought to hold onto this and yet at the same time assert that Hooker was a radical, who “sought to disguise (his views) under a veil of virulently anti-Puritan moderation and irenicism.”⁴ He continued:

To say this is not to deny that Hooker’s own thought was in some sense ‘Reformed’. As a whole series of articles and monographs on Hooker’s view of the royal supremacy, his use of natural law and his sacramental and predestinarian theology have all argued, the source for much of Hooker’s thought were thoroughly Reformed, and in *Anglicans and Puritans I* rather underestimated that fact.⁵

³ For example see Lee W. Gibbs, ‘Richard Hooker’s *Via Media* Doctrine of Justification’, *Harvard Theological Review*, 74:2 (1981), 211-220 and ‘Richard Hooker’s *Via Media* Doctrine of Justification’, *Harvard Theological Review*, 74(2) (1981), 211-220.

⁴ Lake, *Business as Usual*, 484

⁵ *Ibid.*.

Confronted by the evidence, Lake is forced to retreat, yet he still finds that he cannot fully concede his position. His article's message was that after Hooker it was not 'business as usual', and that by taking seriously the immediate reactions to Hooker's works we can see "just how novel and potentially important that thought was."⁶ Voak supports Lake and, whilst once again seeming to agree that Hooker is more or less Reformed, he nonetheless points out ways in which he doesn't quite fit the bill. The methodology is the same – comparing Hooker with those around him and focussing upon where he is in agreement or not and then categorising him accordingly.

In the light of all this it would be easy simply to offer a fresh interpretation of Hooker or to resurrect a previous description and claim that this is the true one. But the history of Hooker scholarship serves as a vivid warning of the dangers of such claims to precise categorization. It is tempting to read him and point out all the ways in which previous categorisations have been wrong; to cite parts of the text that contradict a position or that simply cast doubt on a particular interpretation; to refer to events that can be interpreted differently and as a result to reorganise the pieces to create an alternative picture – claiming that this time the jigsaw is complete and Hooker's true identity has been recovered and restored.

But that is not the purpose of this thesis.

I have indeed sought to challenge some of the existing theories about Hooker, to point out where texts and events have been ignored which, when taken into account, create quite a different picture than the one that is currently popular or that was seen as the

⁶ Ibid., 486.

truth in the past. In particular, I have sought to challenge three commonly held- assumptions regarding Hooker – seen as constants in an ever-changing field of interpretations. Firstly, the claim that Hooker’s theological identity is either synonymous with that of the English Church or can only be understood in relation to it; secondly that his writing style is largely irrelevant when considering his theology and purpose; and thirdly, that he is *the* champion of reason, a theologian for whom faith is first and foremost rational and logical.

However, my aim has not been to show that these statements are wrong but rather that they are not as certain as they initially appear to be nor as certain as they have been declared to be. They indeed point to some truth about Hooker and as such this has not been a refutation of these commonly held-beliefs but a rather tentative “yes, but”. The aim has been to reveal the deep uncertainty that underlies the life and work of Richard Hooker – an uncertainty that can be frustrating, especially when the texts and events refuse to answer the questions we are posing. The reaction in the past has been to keep searching for those answers. But the time has come to simply change the questions.

In chapter one we considered Hooker’s relationship with the Church of his day. That Richard Hooker sought to defend the Elizabethan Church against attack is a given. However, this truth has led to the entwining of Hooker’s identity with that of the Church and in particular the Anglican Church, in a way that that remains as strong today as in the past. Hooker and Anglicanism are seamlessly interwoven: to speak of one is to speak of the other. As the institution has changed and evolved Hooker has changed and evolved with it, his own identity effortlessly intermingled with that of

the English state Church. But as we saw in chapter one, how closely Hooker stood with those in power is open to interpretation and how they viewed him and his contribution is ambiguous. Even after his death it is difficult to see how much his words were used and how much they were creatively shaped. His texts caused problems from the beginning – even for his supporters. His spoken word, though taken as an attack on Puritans such as Travers, was not fully endorsed by those in power. Hooker could well have been described as a loose cannon, quite a different view from Walton’s carefully constructed judicious and mild-mannered paragon. And yet there is a deep irenicism in his writing and a charity that looks for good in others and presumes salvation and virtue in his fellow Christian until the contrary is proven. Neither ‘rebel’ nor ‘yes-man’ sits easily with Hooker.

The *Lawes* themselves are certainly a defence of the *status quo* and yet not in the usual vein or with the expected conclusions. This truth, that the *Lawes* seems to defy and transcend categorisation, means that to say they are *certainly* a defence somehow seems wrong or at least not quite right. Hence, the ‘yes, but’. Reading Hooker’s understanding of law as that which gives us an insight into the workings of God, as the dynamic discourse between God and humanity and God and His created world does not lead easily to the description of the *Lawes* as an apologetic for the Elizabethan Church.

This is not to say that Hooker was not attempting to defend the Church – the *Lawes* shows clearly that this was indeed part of his purpose – but to say this without further comment is to distort its message and with it Hooker’s position and vision. As we have seen, simply to designate the *Lawes* as an apology for the practices of the

Elizabethan Church is to ignore the richness of its theological vision. The real question is not *whether* Hooker was defending the Church but *why*? It is the answer to this question that lifts the text beyond a narrow justification of Anglicanism and liberates its message for all Christians.

When we looked further into Hooker's *Laws* we saw that he was not against reform, *per se*. He makes it clear that change has occurred in the past and may need to do so in the future. He was not a conservative who simply wanted to keep the *status-quo* and yet in effect that is what he argued for. He was not supporting the Church simply because it had managed to create for itself a centre ground sufficiently away from Geneva and Rome, although in many ways that was exactly where his understanding seemed to take him.

When we approach the text asking the question *why* Hooker supported the Church it becomes apparent that the answer appears to be more concerned with God than with Church practice. The reasons behind his support seem to be more because the current practices of the Church allowed and encouraged the worship of God to take place and supported a vision of God that transcended doctrine and practice. It was when the Church, by her practice, discouraged or made it impossible for that worship to take place, for the Christian to participate in the life of God who is goodness, truth and beauty, that change would be needed. Reading the *Laws*, the issue is not simply that Hooker disagrees with the Presbyterian way of ordering Church life, but rather with their claim, made with such certainty, that this is the only possible way ahead for the Church. It is by their assertion that God can only be served in this way and that true Christians recognise this to be the truth that Hooker's hackles rise – for behind these

statements stands a God Hooker cannot recognise as the Christian God and for this he will put pen to paper and begin his defence. “Hooker perceives in this particular attack on the laws of his church matters of more than parochial significance. Nothing less than a way of thinking about God, the world, and human existence is at issue.”⁷

We cannot be certain as to Hooker’s relationship with the Church, and it is when that is acknowledged that the real questions can begin – for beyond that certainty lies a vision of the Church, of Christian practice and of God Himself that is a rich storehouse not just for those who are Anglicans but for all Christians. To say that Hooker’s theological contribution can only be understood when related to the theology of the English Church is to ignore the fact that the *Lawes* goes beyond the current dispute, transcends the usual questions and answers, and raises its own issues.

In chapter two I challenged the assumption that Hooker’s writing style and the rhetoric he uses can be virtually ignored when considering his theology. Whether Hooker’s writing has been praised or criticised, it has been viewed as separate from and largely irrelevant to the questions that are being asked. The literary aspects of Hooker’s *Lawes* have been studied, but as a separate discipline, siphoning off Hooker’s literary gifts as a distinct area of scholarship that does not impinge upon or reveal anything about his theology. But the critique of Hooker’s language and literary techniques showed that this is far from certain. In fact, Hooker’s style and content may well be inextricably linked. It is possible to view Hooker’s writing as an essential part of his purpose, embodying the theology it is seeking to express; the intricate arguments and tightly structured sentences reflecting Hooker’s beliefs and giving

⁷ Patterson, ‘Hooker’s Apprentice,’ 963.

shape to his theology. When viewed in this way a different and more complex picture emerges that challenges this disjuncture between style and purpose.

We considered the evidence that theological writers before Hooker had viewed their work holistically, seeing it not just as the vehicle for information but rather as the message itself – embodying and giving life to the theology it sought to communicate. The change in understanding, wrought at the Reformation, where prose became a container for truth rather than part of the dynamic process whereby truth is discerned and Wisdom approached, left Hooker at the cusp of this change. At first glance, Hooker’s reasoned approach seemed to place him more easily in the emerging genre of ‘the grammar of representation’ but this label sat uneasily with a man for whom the theological concept of participation in God was such a focus in his work.

The question was whether there was a link between Hooker’s understanding of participation in God as a key purpose in the life of the Christian and the participative nature of his prose? There is evidence that Hooker saw the relationship between teacher and student as involving mimicry – not simply as a repetition of passed down truths but rather encouraging an emulation of methodology. For Hooker the practice was one of slow and careful reasoning; a process of discernment that relied upon the individual’s discipline and the willingness to belong to a community that would be a place where conclusions would be checked and challenged as well as encouraged and embraced. Most of all, learning was a life-long vocation.

But there was more to this. Hooker’s understanding of teaching started to make sense when it was compared to his vision of God, for then it became clear that Hooker saw

human teaching as a mimicry of God's own leading of humanity. When viewed alongside Hooker's understanding of how God communicates Himself to humanity there was a close correlation that suggested that Hooker was basing his own teaching style upon God's, as far as he could grasp it. Taking this a step-further, God's purpose was not simply to communicate facts about Himself but was to share His life.

Participation in God was the purpose of God's 'teaching', and this raised the question as to whether Hooker was indeed looking for more than simply persuading his opponents as to the rightness of his position. If Hooker was somehow transcending that purpose, looking instead to guide his readers to participate in God through the text (imperfect as it was) then his refusal to make his arguments easier, to change his rhetoric so as to ensure agreement, started to make more sense.

The picture that materialises is one where participation in God is a key feature in the Christian life, and where that participation is not only a sacramental occurrence but takes place in and through a reading of the world, of ourselves, of God and of the Scriptures that is initiated and guided by God's Spirit. God's desire to share His life with humanity is not a single experience but a life-long journey where we are led by the hand, slowly and step by step. Hooker appears to mimic that image of God in the very way he structures his arguments and builds his prose, looking beyond the discovery of the right answer and instead seeking to create a path that will lead to and encourage a focus upon Wisdom rather than knowledge.

This understanding of Hooker's rhetoric lifts the discussion beyond a simple argument as to whether he was a good writer, or a successful writer. It challenges the assumption that such an answer is largely irrelevant if we are discussing Hooker's

theology and leads to an area that is far from certain, both in its purpose and conclusions. But it does offer a very different image of Hooker that once again transcends denominational and theological categories and questions.

This in-depth study of Hooker's writing did raise other concerns, however, not least that Hooker's faith appears to be cerebral – based upon an individual's ability to reason, which would seem to be in line with the iconic emblem of Hooker as the 'champion of reason'. However, in chapter three this description of Hooker, one of the most popular and enduring images of him, was also challenged – not by seeking to refute the claim but by showing that, standing alone, it distorts Hooker's understanding of faith and how God is known.

But surely, it is without question that Hooker was the champion of reason? He stood against those who claimed a direct line to God that bypassed the need for a reasoned faith and who looked to those who agreed with them as the only true followers of Christ. And indeed he did. He reasserted the God-given gift of reason and encouraged and challenged Christians to seek God in the world around them as well as in the Scriptures. He encouraged his hearers and readers to use their intellectual faculties to consider and assess not just experience but also the Scriptures and particularly their own theological beliefs. We saw this not only in the overview of the *Lawes* but also in the very way Hooker writes and structures his arguments.

At the end of chapter two we noted that simply to describe Hooker as the champion of reason is misleading, for his understanding of reason is very different to that popularly understood. Hooker was not promoting the supremacy of human intellect, instead he

was seeking to encourage and enable Christians to participate in God's life in and through their ability to read the world, the Scriptures and their own experience. This ability to read transcends the simple ability to make reasoned arguments, whilst retaining a love of words and the intellect which Hooker sees as nothing less than God's gift to the world.

But this raised questions as to whether, in effect, participation in God was a primarily intellectual pursuit that relied upon the individual's ability to learn, read and discern God's presence. A close reading of Hooker's theology of certainty, however, showed that once again this statement, whilst true, cannot stand alone. In fact, Hooker witnesses to a profound and sensuous experience of God, that does not negate the need for intellectual rigour but rather transcends the mind and feeds the soul. Such a participation in God is open to all.

The question of assurance was a highly debated and crucial area of doctrine in the sixteenth century. To know that I am saved, that I am one of the elect was an essential part of faith for reformed Christians. With the emphasis upon personal salvation it was an individual's knowledge of her standing before God that provided security and assurance, rather than any role of the Church and its sacraments. This theology, though perfectly coherent in theory, was nonetheless fraught with personal anxiety. Being part of the Golden Chain of salvation made perfect sense when it was described, but entering that circle, and knowing that you had entered that circle, became problematic – not least when doctrines such as temporary and false faith were introduced. And yet, with the dominance of the belief in predestination and the salvation of the elect alone, that sense of knowing became crucial.

Here was a thoroughly reasoned approach to salvation that nonetheless relied upon a type of personal and inner knowing that, whilst supposedly not a simple feeling, was often described in that way. This confidence emerged from examining one's own life and discovering signs of God's Spirit at work. For some it was successful, leading not just to their own comfort but also to a sharp judgment of others. For others, it failed with often terrible personal repercussions.

Richard Hooker was surrounded by this controversy and his response to the questions, concerns and anxieties raised by the issues of certainty and knowing provides us with an example of his deep pastoral concern for his congregations, as well as a window into his own understanding of faith and how Christians come to know God. The picture that emerges is complex and by now we are perhaps not surprised that his response transcends the usual categories. But more than this, it leads us into a vision of God and of the Christian life that moves beyond the certainty offered and desired by individuals and Churches alike.

It is in this area of certainty that the profundity of Hooker's theology can be glimpsed. To begin with, however, some questions must be laid aside, such as how Hooker compares with other Reformed divines and with the Reformers themselves, because it quickly becomes clear that a definitive answer is far from available. Hooker indeed states that certainty of salvation is not available to the Christian, at least not in the way that his contemporaries have preached the doctrine. Certainty of salvation cannot be an ark from which to sit in judgment on those we consider to be drowning. Neither can it offer us a short-cut to Christian virtues – they grow in time and with the aid of the Spirit. In fact, certainty is not good for us as it leads to despair if we believe we do

not possess it and complacency if we do. And yet Hooker believes deeply in the fact that our changed lives can deliver to us evidence of our salvation during times of doubt and wavering, as can the memory through which we unearth and remember the experiences of God in the past and which can bring us comfort and assurance in the present and hope for the future.

Thus Hooker does not reject certainty as much as he looks beyond it. What lies beyond human confidence in our own election is the vision of God as goodness, truth and beauty. It is this image that Hooker points to and which casts into the shadows the human need to control through certainty. This vision of God is not arrived at (solely) through reason but through an apprehension of God, a tasting of God's goodness, in the heart of the believer that allows her to hope in the darkest times of doubt. Thus, the description of Hooker as the champion of reason, whilst not rejected, is qualified by his advocacy of a holistic faith that embraces God not just through the intellect but also through the senses and in the heart.

Hooker's statue, raised in the grounds of Exeter Cathedral, proudly displays a blue plaque heralding him as the "Prophet of Anglicanism." He is appropriately flanked on both sides by the Anglican Church – the great Cathedral and the Church of St Mary Major. A member of the English Church, adopted by those who have sought to shape and create that Church's identity and purpose, Hooker has effectively been confined within its walls. He has been placed at the centre of the English Church's life. Like him or loathe him, his presence has been a constant in the ever-changing theological landscape that has become Anglicanism. He is, first and foremost, the great theologian of the English Church.

What has become apparent through this thesis is that this is a travesty.

The *Lawes* opened up for its readers a transcendent world that was inextricably connected to this earthly one through the timeless working of God's laws. This transcendent world is a world of angels – heavenly beings who lift our eyes to the truth about our worship, our selves and the God we seek to follow. His description of law created a doorway through which can be glimpsed the dynamic creativity of the Author of this world and the breathtaking truth that this God wants to be known by us. Hooker's writing, full of weaving sentences and complex arguments, seeks to emulate the God he worships – teaching through leading; his prose mimicking the difficult and often painful twists and turns of life through which God leads us by the hand, His love the only light and His presence the only constant. Searching for certainty in faith, the security of right doctrine and the safety of surrounding ourselves with like-minded fellow-Christians, seem a poor substitute when compared to the image of glorious assurance that Hooker portrays as available to those who are willing to let go of the despair of fear and the sanctuary of certitude.

It is not true to say that Hooker is a great theologian of the Church of England. He is no such thing. His magisterial theology is not essentially or necessarily attached to any one Church and his legacy has been suppressed and sterilised by the very accolades that brought him to prominence. Like a theological Houdini he has escaped from all the narrow interpretations that have been put forward with such certainty over the centuries. The time has come to step back from the search for the 'real' Hooker and allow the uncertainty of his life and works to be acknowledged. Perhaps

then the Church – Anglican or otherwise, will be able to hear this great theologian once again.

It seems only fitting that the last words should belong to Hooker. One text in particular shows how unfortunate it is that his voice should have been contained within such narrow confines for so long. In this passage he is wrestling with that concept of knowing God, the one Who is unknowable and about Whom we can never have complete certainty. But God's love and goodness and beauty can be known sufficiently, so that worship and not fear or anxiety become the response when limits of knowledge are met and the path beneath our feet feels less than secure. It is a message that goes beyond any denominational boundary, that flows out from a deep longing for God and a heart-felt knowledge that all Hooker longs to say and explore is, in the end, gloriously unspeakable and awesomely unknowable. It is, ultimately, a journey into the presence of God.

*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, How unsearchable are his judgments... That law eternall which God hath made to himselfe, and thereby worketh all things whereof he is the cause and author, that law in the admirable frame whereof he shineth with most perfect bewtie the countenance of that wisdom which hath testified concerning her self, The lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, even before his works of old, I was set up etc. That law which hath bene the pattern to make, and is the card to guide the world by: that law which hath bene of God, and with God everlastingly: that law the author and observer whereof is one only God to be blessed for ever, how should either men or Angels be able perfectly to behold? The book of this law we are neither able nor worthie to open and look into. That little thereof which we darkly apprehend, we admire, the rest with religious ignorance we humbly and meekly adore.*⁸

⁸ Lawes I.61.

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